

# ISSUE #31

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# THRESHOLD

## THE MYSTARA MAGAZINE

### OUR AIMS:

To provide a venue for community members to present material to promote the Vaults of Pandius and the material there to increase the exposure of existing and new articles to encourage authors to revisit and revitalise existing articles to motivate interest in Mystara in general.

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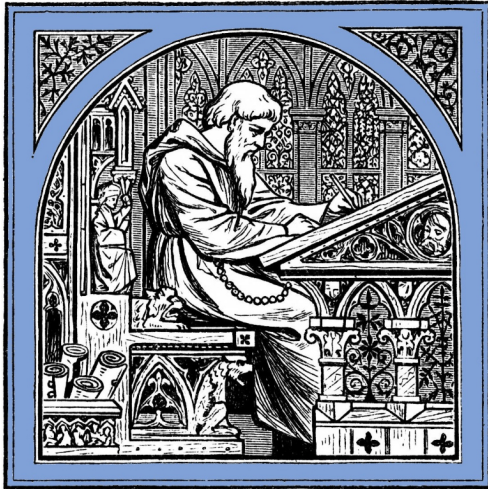
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All issues of THRESHOLD are available for FREE download from the Vaults of Pandius website.

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**THRESHOLD EDITORIAL TEAM**

Francesco Defferrari (Sturm)  
Allan Palmer (AllanP)

**EDITORS EMERITI**

Giampaolo Agosta (Agathokles)  
Andrew Theisen (Cthulhudrew)  
Ashtagon  
Jesper Andersen (Spellweaver)  
John Calvin (Chimpman)  
Joseph Setorius (Julius Cleaver)  
Leland (Argentmantle)  
Shawn Stanley (stanles)  
Thorfinn Tait (Thorf)

*THRESHOLD* logo designed by Thorf

**Issue Credits**

**Editing Issue #31**

Francesco Defferrari (Sturm)  
Allan Palmer (AllanP)  
Hervé Musseau

**Layout**

Allan Palmer (AllanP)

**Art**

I. Calvin  
Jeffrey Kosh  
Sebastien (Senarch)  
V Shane  
William McAusland

**Cartography:**

Pol Ginés  
Francesco Defferrari (Sturm)  
Thorfinn Tait

**Additional Reviewing & Proofreading**

Allan Palmer (AllanP)  
Hervé Musseau  
Jeffrey Kosh  
Rob Koper  
Sean Kennedy  
Shawn Stanley  
Simon Barns

# Under the Waves

This new issue of *THRESHOLD Magazine* starts our exploration of the Undersea of Mystara! It's just the beginning as we have enough material to fill another Undersea issue, which hopefully will be published as soon as possible.

In this issue we also celebrate the first **Ten Years of *THRESHOLD Magazine***, with an article by Allan. Indeed a lot of time has passed since we started this great adventure and a lot of great material has been produced! Next we start our swim under the waves with the first part of my article on **Kingdoms and Empires of the Oceans**, which is also enriched by some wonderful illustrations from Jeffrey Kosh and Senarch, who have donated great art for this and the next issue!

The following articles, also by Senarch, explores the ruins of **Sunken Taymora**, then Cab and Jeffrey show us **The Terrors of the Sea of Dread**, a wonderful collection of pre-historic monsters. Wing of Coot describes the **Magical Bubbles of Undersea**, unique magical items for water-breathing wizards, and Not a Decepticon leads us **Against the Wizards, Underwater Laboratory of Aquan Archmage**, an adventure under the waves off the coast of Sind.

New contributors Eliyah von Llaunas then describes **Aloysius Reef** and the Nixie community, while Matthew Tullius reveals to us the **Hidden Empire of the Kopru**. The last Undersea-themed article for the issue is by Karl David Brown, who describes a **Gnomish Submarine**.

Yet this issue is not done, as we also have **A Mystaran Survey of the Mists** by Doc Nec-

rotic, one more article detailing the Mystara/Ravenloft crossover that the author began on issues #29 and #30. And finally Fabrizio Nuzzaci gives and explains to the Mystaran community his wonderful **Fiefdom Generator** which will allow you to detail the economy of your dominion as you were never able to do before.

As we had some enthusiasm from illustrators and authors for Undersea, the next issue of *THRESHOLD* will hopefully be published by the end of August with more interesting material on the people and regions under the waves! Then onwards to issue #33, dedicated to Dungeons, and planned by the end of 2023. To join the next issues as authors or illustrators please send your proposal to the *THRESHOLD* mail (check Submission guidelines and mail on the last page of the issue) or write in the Call for Contributors thread for issue #32 and #33 which will soon appear in The Piazza forum after publication of this issue.

Even if we usually have no shortage of articles, we always need help for proofreading and editing the submissions. So anyone willing to help the *THRESHOLD* Editorial Team please come forward and let us know through the mail or in the above thread at The Piazza. Helping *THRESHOLD Magazine* certainly needs some time commitment, but is creative and rewarding work.

The *THRESHOLD* Editorial Team and the authors hope you will enjoy this new issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together, and stay tuned for the next issue!

Francesco Defferrari (Sturm)  
Editor, *THRESHOLD* Issue #31

## THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS

**Cab Davidson** is microbiologist and entrepreneur living in Cambridge, UK, and has worked in and studied many different fields over the years. He has been lucky enough to have hunted for the fossils of some of the creatures he has brought back to life for D&D in this issue.

**Doctor Necrotic (Brian Rubinfeld):** despite never being as intense of a fan as much of the fandom, Brian has had a fondness for Mystara stretching back as many eons as the stars! Whether coming up with zany ideas or diving into the earthiness of the setting's lore, he always finds something to love about the Known World and beyond. When not writing for *THRESHOLD*, Brian is an amateur writer and game creator looking into freelance options, as well as currently working in a pharmacy.

**Elijah von Llaunas:** playing D&D since 2012, he is a big rpg lover. He has tried multiple systems, from Star Wars d20 to Far West, always returning to the good old BECMI. Officially playing in Mystara since 2014, he eventually became both player and Dungeon Master. Taught by Pol Ginés, he sometimes is his player and others his DM, but always a father. As a DM he seeks for cool adventures in Atruaghin... with few results. Instead, he retired to the bottom of the sea and he has become one of the (very) few people to develop a completely underwater campaign. As a final fact, he dedicated his last year to seeing documentaries of sea creatures and Jeremy Wade's River Monsters program for his underwater adventures.

**Fabrizio Nuzzaci (fabriziohockey)** met D&D BECMI around 1988, which fascinated him until 2007 and, then, from 2018 to today. He lives in Italy and grew up wishing to read all the original information on Mystara, which has remained unpublished in his country. He likes Mystara's game setting and has dedicated much of his time to managing the domains of players and NPCs; first with pencil and paper, then with spreadsheets and digital maps. To this end in the past 24 years he developed the "Fiefdom Generator," a spreadsheet that will permit you to develop your domains, following 99% of the BECMI Rules. Today he is happy to share it here.

**Jeffrey Kosh** is the pen name of a writer and graphic artist specialized in book covers and movie posters. He collaborates with various publishing companies and authors. His covers range from dark horror to space opera, from thrillers to fantasy. Inspired by great fantasy artists, such as Clyde Caldwell, Larry Elmore, Keith Parkinson, and more, Kosh likes vibrant colors and heavy use of light and a dark contrast. His graphic tends to be moody and evocative. He also likes to work on 'era-specific' movie posters and book covers, trying to recreate the style used in those years, from the 1920s to the 1990s. As a writer he has been published various times.

(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykosh-graphics/home>)

**Karl David Brown** is a biologist living in Melbourne, Australia. He has been writing RPG material since he was twelve. His output includes material on the DM's Guild, RPG Review fanzine, The Piazza Forum, the Vaults of Pandius, and now *THRESHOLD*. His conversion of *Top Ballista* to D&D 5th edition is available on the Vaults of Pandius. He was a playtester of "Papers & Paychecks" and was interviewed by The RPG Academy Podcast for his knowledge of the "Council of Wyrms" setting. His own game "Gulliver's Trading Company" has been in beta for too long.

**Matthew Tullius** is a math teacher on the east coast that has been playing and DMing classic BECMI games since the 5th grade. He has DMed for the first MystaraCon a revamp and rework of the classic adventure *Elwyn the Ardent* that he created. He is a frequent attendee at various renaissance fairs, drinker of meade, and teller of tales. One of two of his favorite memories of the game was when Frank Mentzer made a call on his game in between sessions. The other is when he gifted his son his first-printing *Player's Manual* knowing it would be seen as a treasure to pass on to the next generation.

**Not a Decepticon** has been in love with RPGs since seeing an advert for D&D in a comic book at the age of six. But an opportunity to DM and play regularly only revealed itself recently, with the exception of a brief attempt in college. Now he combines a love for classic campaign settings and the latest edition of the game.

**Sebastien Martineau (Senarch)** started playing D&D again in early 2022, and dusted off his prized GAZ1, promptly falling in love with Mystara again. While he drew all the time as a child, as a teen he was not encouraged to pursue his artistic interests and they faded until a few years ago, when he discovered Daz 3d rendering. He now combines Daz, Ai and digital painting in his artworks, and has started drawing again. A keen OSE/BECMI player, he enjoys the emergent storytelling from random tables found in some OSR games. This, and his love of underwater settings and lost, sunken civilisations, inspired his articles and art for this issue. Some of his work can be found here: <https://www.deviantart.com/senarch/gallery> and he can be contacted here: [senarchpublishing@gmail.com](mailto:senarchpublishing@gmail.com)

Even though **Sturm (a.k.a. Francesco Deferrari)** loves any alternate world, he believes Mystara is incomparably the best for its vibrant community endlessly delving into ethnography, linguistics and history just to make a little sense of it. Something like the real world, but with dragons.

**Thorfinn Tait** hails from the Orkney Islands in northern Scotland, though he has lived in Japan for many years now. Growing up with BECMI and the Known World, he learnt to type by compiling a database of Mystara's timeline. He joined the Mystara online community in 1997, but his true contributions began with the Atlas of Mystara project starting in 2005. Recently he has made the jump to become a published fantasy cartographer, working on Bruce Heard's Calidar series. You can follow his work on his cartography site ([www.thorfmmaps.com](http://www.thorfmmaps.com)) and the Atlas site ([mystara.thorfmmaps.com](http://mystara.thorfmmaps.com)).



**Wings of Coot:** I found the old red box Basic set at about 8, and that classic solo adventure was my introduction to D&D and the entire concept of RPGs. A few years after graduating from college I got back into D&D, and soon after that I found the Piazza and discovered the modern online Mystaran community and *THRESHOLD Magazine*. I have always had an interest in the wilderness areas (Isle of Dread, Serpent Peninsula, etc.) and exotic aspects of Mystara (Immortals and the multiverse, Hollow World, unusual PC types, etc.) so this Undersea issue was a natural fit.

**Allan Palmer (a.k.a. AllanP)** was first introduced to D&D a long time ago (but not quite in a galaxy far away) by a work colleague who set up a gaming group using the last version of the “blue book” rules. While dabbling with RuneQuest and Traveler along the way, he developed a liking for what would become the world of Mystara as the BECMI box sets were released. He has always been fascinated by maps. He is an IT professional and when not indulging in hobbies of panelology, retro tv watching and family history research, uses his various PC skills to consolidate the writings of others into the issues of *THRESHOLD*.

FROM THE  
MYSTARA  
FORUMS at



Some features in issues of *THRESHOLD* carry a “From the Mystara Forum at The Piazza” tagline. These Discussion Boards are an active and dynamic home of creativity for the Mystara community and many other game worlds. We hope you will enjoy the articles from The Piazza website: <https://www.thepiazza.org.uk/bb/index.php>

The image shows a detailed, colorful illustration of a large, open public square in a fantasy city. The square is paved and has several buildings with classical architectural features like columns and arches. In the background, a tall, slender tower with a pointed top rises against a blue sky with light clouds. Below the illustration, the text reads: "The Piazza" in a large, bold, serif font, followed by "The Premier community for discussion of D&D Campaign Worlds" in a smaller, bold, sans-serif font. At the bottom, the URL "http://www.thepiazza.org.uk/bb/index.php" is provided.

FROM  
The Vaults  
of Pandius

Some features in issues of *THRESHOLD* carry a “From the Vaults of Pandius” tagline. As one of our stated aims is “to promote the Vaults of Pandius and the material there”, we hope you will enjoy these revised or extended treasures from the Vaults of Pandius website: <http://pandius.com>

The image is a collage of various Mystara-related materials. At the top, it says "Vaults of Pandius" in a large, serif font, with "The Official Mystara Homepage" underneath. Below this, there are several overlapping images: a map of Mystara, a book cover for "Mystara 2300 B.C.", a book cover for "Shimmering Land: Last Beaches of Drakensis", a book cover for "Hollow Moon", a book cover for "Mystaran Alma", and a book cover for "Where the Treasures of the Immortals Can Be Found!". The collage is set against a background of a large, glowing orb.

# A **MYSTARA** GLOSSARY

The Editors present a list of common abbreviations that authors may use to refer to various Mystara-related game products and events:

- AC#** - Accessory series product (rules supplements, campaign sources, etc)
- BECMI** - Basic, Expert, Companion, Master, Immortals rules (by Frank Mezter, 1983-6)
- BX** - Basic/Expert rules (by Tom Moldvay/David Cook, 1981)
- B#, X#, CM#, M#, IM#** - Basic, Expert, Companion, Immortal level adventure modules
- CoM** - “Champions of Mystara” boxed set
- DA#** - Blackmoor setting adventure modules
- DDA#** - Challenger series adventure modules
- DMR#** - Challenger series rules supplements
- DMSK** - “Dungeon Master’s Survival Kit”
- DotE** - “Dawn of the Emperors” campaign boxed set
- GAZ#** - Gazetteer series campaign sources
- GAZF#** - Fan-produced campaign sources
- GRoF** - the Great Rain of Fire, a cataclysmic event in Mystara’s past that destroyed the ancient Blackmoor civilization
- G:KoM** - “Glantri: Kingdom of Magic” campaign boxed set
- HW** - the Hollow World campaign setting
- HWA#, HWO#** - Hollow World adventure modules
- HWR#** - Hollow World rules supplements
- JA** - “Joshuan’s Almanac & Book of Facts” campaign source
- KW** - the Known World campaign setting
- K:KoA** - “Karamaikos: Kingdom of Adventure” campaign boxed set
- MA** - Mystaran Almanac (fan-produced)
- MCMA** - “Monstrous Compendium, Mystara Appendix” rules supplement
- PC#** - Creature Catalog campaign sources
- PWA** - “Poor Wizard’s Almanac & Book of Facts” I, II & III (AC1010, AC1011 & AC1012)
- PSK** - “Player’s Survival Kit” campaign source
- RC** - “Rules Cyclopedia”
- RS** - Red Steel campaign setting
- SC** - Savage Coast campaign setting
- TM#** - Trail Maps
- VotPA** - “Voyage of the Princess Ark”
- VoP or Vaults** - The Vaults of Pandius website
- WotI** - “Wrath of the Immortals” campaign boxed set

Readers may also find Dave Keyser’s *“An Index to Mystara Products”* and Andrew Theisens’s *“Mystara acronyms”* (both available at the Vaults of Pandius website) of assistance



## NEXT ISSUE



*Cover not final illustration*

The second issue of 2023 will continue our exploration of the realms under the waves

### Return to Undersea

Anticipated contents include:

- Realms of the Mystaran Oceans part II
- Alphatian Undersea expanded
- To Build an Undersea Hex
- Blackmoor Deep-Six Station
- Mappers of Mystara
- The Simian Races of Mystara
- Legends of the Known World Vol I

...and much much more!

### Your Opinions?

The Editorial Team welcomes your feedback on this issue of THRESHOLD. Please post your comments either by posting in [The Piazza Forums](#)

Or by email to the Editorial address: [Threshold.Mystara@gmail.com](mailto:Threshold.Mystara@gmail.com)

Please begin the subject line with the tag "[LETTER]"

# CALL FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The **THRESHOLD** editorial team invites all fans of the Mystara setting to submit contributions to the magazine's next issue. We are especially looking for contributions fitting the following themes:

**Issue #32—Return to Undersea**

The second issue of 2023 will focus on the dominions and peoples below the waves!

**Proposal Deadline:** July 15th, 2023

**Manuscript Deadline:** August 1st, 2023

**Issue Published:** August 2023

*Articles about other topics are still welcome and the editorial team will evaluate their publication for any upcoming issue, taking into account available space and the issue's theme.*

Call for proposals for main themes of forthcoming issues:

**Issue 33—Dungeons!**

The third issue of 2023 will focus on a cornerstone of the D&D game!

**Proposal Deadline:**

September 15th, 2023

**Manuscript Deadline:** November 1st, 2023

**Issue Published:** December 2023

**THRESHOLD** accepts and invites submissions of extended or revised versions of works having appeared on The Piazza or Vaults of Pandius.

Contributions may include, but are not limited to: Articles: short stories, short adventure modules, NPCs, historical treatises and timelines, geographical entries, new monsters and monster ecologies, etc.; and Illustrations: portraits, maps, heraldry, illustrations, etc.

Please refer to our Submission Guidelines elsewhere in this issue.

The **THRESHOLD** editorial team strives for edition neutrality, but edition specific articles (e.g., conversions) are also accepted. Statistics for new monsters and NPCs may be included in articles (e.g., adventure modules, new monsters or NPCs) in any version of Dungeons & Dragons. The editorial team also offers help in providing conversions to some specific rules set, including BECM/RC, 2nd Edition, 3rd edition/Pathfinder. However, this material should be limited to a minimum. For most NPCs, it is sufficient to mention class, level, and alignment. For important NPCs, a one or two line stat block may be included.

# THRESHOLD

## The Mystara Magazine

PDF editions and print-ready files are available for free download from the Vaults of Pandius website:  
<http://www.pandius.com/>



*THRESHOLD: The Mystara Magazine* is a non-commercial, fan-produced magazine. There is no intent to infringe upon anyone's rights, in particular those of Wizards of the Coast, which holds all rights to the original material on which contributors base their work. As the magazine is a free fanzine of original articles inspired by the world of Mystara (trademark of Wizards of the Coast), the Editorial Team cannot sell printed copies of the magazine. We have published issues of the fanzine as PDF documents that are freely downloadable from the Vaults of Pandius website. A list of the issues published follows.

Over time, the *THRESHOLD Magazine* Editorial Team received enquiries about obtaining print versions of its issues. Following continued interest, in 2022 an initial trial using issue #28 created print-ready files of cover and interior page that could be submitted to a print-on-demand service (such as [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com)) by individuals to produce a professionally printed version for their personal use. The trial garnered a positive response and work continued through 2022 to generate print-ready files for all previous issues (as well as incorporating the process in the production of new issues).

The print-ready files are an option provided in addition to the “normal” PDF document version of each issue. Individuals may freely download the two print-ready files (cover and interior) and submit them to a print service for professional printing at their own risk. Any associated financial transaction is between the individual and their chosen print service. Neither the *THRESHOLD Magazine* Editorial Team nor the Vaults of Pandius receive monies in respect of the provision of these print-ready files or from the printing of them.

The print-ready interior and cover files have been formatted to produce an A4-page sized paperback book; no other page size/format is available; the print service will offer users choices of colour quality, paper stock, cover finish, etc. The print-ready files have been successfully used at [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com) to produce a printed book; the Editorial Team cannot guarantee the use of these files with other print services.

The print-ready version of *THRESHOLD Magazine* is provided for personal use only. *THRESHOLD Magazine* in either its PDF or print version cannot be sold in any online or physical store.



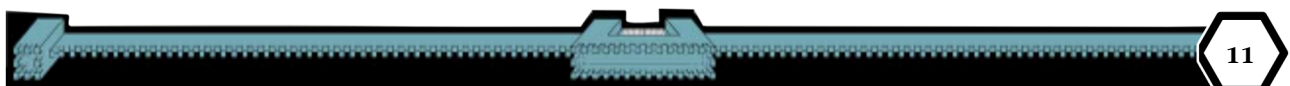
## FREE DOWNLOADS OF PREVIOUS ISSUES



Previous issues of *THRESHOLD* - the Mystara Magazine, both in digital and print-ready format are available for download from the Vaults of Pandius website ([www.pandius.com](http://www.pandius.com))

Also available at the same location are higher resolution versions of the maps that were included in the issue's PDF, allowing greater detail to be viewed.

- |                                          |                                                   |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| #1 (Oct 2013) "Karamaikos"               | #21 (Oct 2018) "Specularum"                       |
| #2 (Jan 2014) "Vaults of pandius"        | #22 (Mar 2019) "Adventures & campaigns"           |
| #3 (Mar 2014) "The sea of dread"         | #23 (Aug 2019) "Adventures & campaigns 2"         |
| #4 (Jun 2014) "Return to dread"          | #24 (Nov 2019) "Adventures & campaigns 3"         |
| #5 (Oct 2014) "Exploring davania"        | #25 (May 2020) "Strongholds"                      |
| #6 (Dec 2014) "The northlands"           | #26 (Dec 2020) "Heroes, villains & organizations" |
| #7 (Apr 2015) "Exploring norwold"        | #27 (Jul 2021) "25th Anniversary of the Vaults"   |
| #8 (Jul 2015) "Warlords of norwold"      | #28 (Jan 2022) "Trade routes and darokin"         |
| #9 (Sep 2015) "Hollow world"             | #29 (Jul 2022) "Vampires and the undead"          |
| #10 (Jan 2016) "Elven realms"            | #30 (Dec 2022) "The Alpathian Sea"                |
| #11 (Apr 2016) "Thyatis & alpathia"      |                                                   |
| #12 (Jul 2016) "Ages past"               |                                                   |
| #13 (Oct 2016) "A crucible of creatures" |                                                   |
| #14 (Jan 2017) "The shadowdeep"          |                                                   |
| #15 (Apr 2017) "Mystaraspace"            |                                                   |
| #16 (Jul 2017) "Dwarves, gnomes & hin"   |                                                   |
| #17 (Oct 2017) "Western brun"            |                                                   |
| #18 (Jan 2018) "Savage coast"            |                                                   |
| #19 (May 2018) "Planes and immortals"    |                                                   |
| #20 (Jul 2018) "Skothar"                 |                                                   |





# TEN YEARS OF **THRESHOLD** The Mystara Magazine

by Allan Palmer

In going back through past issues of *THRESHOLD* to create the print-ready versions of each issue that we now provide in addition to the standard “digital” versions, I realised that 2023 would mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first issue of our Mystara Magazine. Has it really been 10 years?

It all started with a suggestion in the Piazza Forums:



## GENESIS

Well, that post sparked much discussion. By the time this initial topic had run its course two weeks later, 140 posts had been submitted, and the topic had spawned others to develop the concept and make the idea of a Mystara-centric fanzine a reality.

Notably, a major question was “What should the zine be called?” There were many suggestions involving words like “*Mystara*”, “*Known World*”, “*Grimoire*”, “*Journal*”, “*Annals*”, “*Archives*”, and others. The words and structure of the title were debated in the *Piazza* Forums at length, continuing from the main public Mystara forum into a private sub-forum for the nascent Editorial Team. Eventually it was agreed that the suggestion by Thorfinn Tait (Thorf) of “*THRESHOLD: The Mystara Magazine*” was the most appropriate.

At this point, with Giampaolo Acosta (agathokles) riding herd over various aspects of what was needed to produce an issue (see “*The Mystara magazine: Getting Things Going*” topic), I volunteered to handle the magazine layout once we had

decided that it would be made available as a PDF document downloadable from the *Vaults of Pandius* website. (We remain indebted to Shawn Stanley (Stanless) for providing the hosting facility over this time.) For the cover layout of the magazine, I proposed a design that drew on the style of the BECFI boxed sets and various modules of the 1980s. After some debate, it was agreed to proceed with this style as it reflected the source of our shared interest in the game setting. The cover design was significantly enhanced by the excellent *THRESHOLD* logo that Thorf designed and supplied.

For the record, the “Editorial Team” credited in the first issue included:

- Andrew Theisen (Cthulhudrew),
- CmdrCorsiken,
- Francesco Defferrari (Sturm),
- Håvard,
- John Calvin (Chimpman),
- Robert Nuttman (RobJN),
- Simone Neri (Zendrolion),
- Thorf ,
- and myself (AllanP),
- with agathokles as “Editor-in-Chief”.

All contributed in various ways to the launch of *THRESHOLD*. I recall that , John Calvin set up the *threshold.mystara* email account and the Google Drive which became the main collaborative tool to manage articles and artwork. I note that Google launched the Drive service in April 2012, only a year before we started the *THRESHOLD* project – I wonder if we would have made a success of the magazine if we had been trying to set it up in 2003? How would we have managed our globally dispersed team of editors, authors and illustrators back then? John also provided the standard article submission template which

helped the transition of author submissions into a form ready for the layout process.

It had been agreed that each issue of the magazine would have a theme – an area of the planet Mystara, a particular race, some type of activity, or similar. This did not mean that other “unrelated” articles would not be included in an issue, but it gave a sense of purpose and a starting point for contributors. All contributions of fan-produced material would be welcomed. The Editorial Team mutually decided that the theme for issue #1 should be “Kara-meikos”, the starting point for many who began playing D&D, which offered great scope for contributions.

Recognising that if we were successful with the first issue, it was agreed that we should identify a theme for the second issue to encourage further contributions such that they would be available in time to meet our proposed quarterly schedule. The chosen theme for issue #2 was “The Vaults of Pandius”, spotlighting the:

*“...repository of community lore that has helped to keep the flames of Mystara alive and well long after its discontinuation as a campaign world, to allow us to share the wealth of creativity of this international community, and which has served as a resource to fans new and old alike.”*

We didn’t realise back in 2013 that 8 years later another issue (#27) of *THRESHOLD* would celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Vaults website! The first “Call for Contributors” and announcement that *THRESHOLD Magazine* would be produced appeared on 4th June 2013 in the *Piazza* Forums. And we were off and running...!





# LAUNCH

On 30th September 2013, agathokles wrote in the *Piazza* Forums:

*"I'm glad to announce the release of the first issue of Threshold, the new magazine for Mystara! ... I must say it has been a great time editing this issue, and I hope you'll enjoy our magazine, and I look forward to see your comments, as well as to Issue 2, Vaults of Pandius special, which will be shepherded by Cthulbudrew. Thanks to everybody who participated in this effort, which led to 180 pages of pure Mystara goodness!"*

some of the inhabitants of the wildlands of the ancient Dymrak Forest in southeastern Karameikos.

Continuing the Karameikan theme of this first issue, Simone Neri (Zendrolion) provided two detailed articles covering the Demography and History of the region. If you want to learn about the Grand Duchy, these articles are highly recommended. We would be treated to similar detailed articles from Simone in future issues such as the Histories and Demographics of Ierendi and Minrothad beginning in issue #3. Simone also collaborated with Giampaolo Acosta (agathokles) to produce an article describing two of the noble houses of Karameikos: the Stroloca (with ancient Traladaran



Leading off the first issue was an article from Håvard celebrating the "30 Year Anniversary of Red Box D&D", the start of the iconic journey that evolved into Mystara. Håvard also contributed "The Dangers of the Dymrak Wilds", a look at

roots), and Dravonius, an old Thyatian family that gained prominence with the Empire's invasion of the Traladaran lands in AC 900. Family trees and coats of arms abound in this piece.



Agathokles wrote an adventure titled “Guild Wars”, which he described as “...a sort of urban side-trek, taking the form of a classical whodunit”. Using the background of guild politics in *Specularum* (e.g. see module B6: “*The Veiled Society*”), we are treated to an intriguing city-based caper.

Delving into recent history of the region, Demetrios J Sahlas wrote about “Karamaikos: The Hidden Years (901–969 AC)”. Canon material tells us about the Thyatian Invasion of AC 900 and that Stefan Karamaikos III became the territory’s ruler in AC 970, but what happened between those dates? Demetrios uncovered the background to Stefan III’s ancestors and their participation in the evolution of the Grand Duchy. Likewise, Andrew Theisen (Cthiluhdrew) looked at the background of one of *Specularum*’s notable factions in “Unveiling the Radu Clan”, revealing some family secrets.

Away from *Specularum*, Niels Just Rasmussen described the state of affairs in Fort Doom, the stronghold of Baron Von Hendriks in western Karamaikos. John Calvin chronicled the story of “Yuri Molotov – Death Knight”, one-time Master of the Order of the White Drake, and how he could be used in a campaign. A goblin kingdom in the Wulfholde Hills led by Dhrom Dhum was detailed by Francesco Defferrari (Sturm).

One of the aims of *THRESHOLD* was to promote each individual’s personal version of Mystara through a “My Mystara” column. For the first issue, Robert Nutman wrote about his interpretation: “Thorn’s Mystara”, one that is (to quote the author) “... a much darker world, haunted by the long shadow cast by Blackmoor’s ruin.” A further “My Mystara” column appeared from Geoff

Gander in issue #2, but the column did not receive the range of contributions expected so no further examples have yet appeared. (Perhaps we need to re-launch this?)

Another aim of the magazine was to enhance the cohesiveness of the Mystara fan community, and this was successfully addressed by running interviews with noted fan contributors. We got off to a great start with the godfather (or should that be archmage) of Mystara himself, Bruce Heard! Shawn Stanley was in the hot seat for issue #2, followed by Marco Dalmonte (#6), Thorfinn Tait (#11), James Mishler (#12), and Sharon Dornhoff (#15).

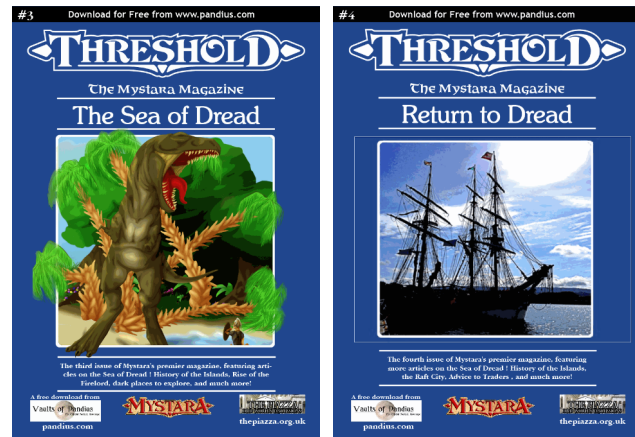
Additionally, the Editorial Team agreed that the magazine should feature both new fan material and revised “gems” from the Vaults of Pandius (which collated much fan material from the Piazza Forums and other sources), and this first issue included “Return to the Ice Wall”, an adventure set in the central Altan Tepes by Shawn Stanley (stanles). John Calvin (Chimpman) contributed the first instalment of “Times Travels”, a Lego model comic strip set in 2300 BC, the time of the Taymoran Empire and others. John continued this column in several subsequent issues (#2–4, 7, 11–13).

Rounding out the inaugural issue was the first instalment of the series describing Koskatep (“the mountain of bones”), a vast mega-dungeon on the upper course of the Achelos River in northwestern Karamaikos. Francesco Defferrari (Sturm) described the history and content of this dungeon level by level in each of the following issues through to #15.

## ONWARD

By the time issue #1 was published, a call for contributions to issue #2 (Vaults of Pandius) had already been posted, and at the beginning of 2014, Andrew Theisen (Cthulhudrew) as Editor-in-Chief for that issue was able to announce its release. Taking the concept of the Vaults as a vast repository of knowledge, Jesper Andersen (Spellweaver) began a column titled “Mystaranomicon - Exploring the Books of Mystara”, describing tomes that could be discovered by adventurers and the like in their travels across the globe. Further instalments appeared in issues #3, 5, and 6. Also in issue #2, John Calvin began a series of articles detailing Matera, Mystara’s Hollow Moon – a concept first proposed by Sharon Dornhoff on the Mystara Mailing List back in 1988. “Once in a Blue Moon” columns continued in issues #3, 9, 10, 13, and 15. A series by Giulio Caroletti and Giampaolo Agosta looking at the organisation and membership of Thyatian Senators began in issue #2, with further parts appearing in issues #3–6.

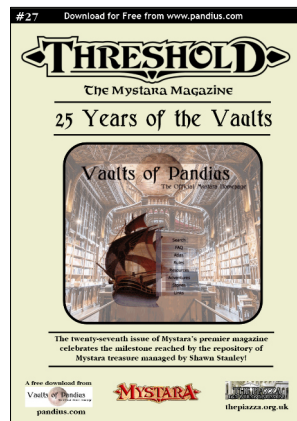
Issue #2 was just two pages bigger than the first issue. However, when John Calvin took the Editor’s chair for issue #3 that had the theme of “The Sea of Dread”, as the manuscripts arrived from the authors it became apparent that there would be a significant increase in the page count. So much so that it was decided that the theme would be split across two issues, resulting in the 246 pages of #3 being followed by a further 218 pages in #4 (titled “Return to Dread”). Mention should be made of the stand-out cover to #3 supplied by John’s daughter, I. “Meandrathel” Calvin. It was clear that in some cases while a theme was chosen for a given issue it might be necessary to split the contributions over multiple issues, other-



wise the larger volume of input would increase the time required for proofreading, layout and editing. Taking this approach allowed the Editorial Team to maintain a roughly quarterly publication schedule which was maintained for the first five years of the magazine. Material for the Northland/Norwold theme was spread across issues #6, 7, and 8, while content for Western Brun/Savage Coast occupied issues #17 and 18. The somewhat generic theme of “Adventures & Campaigns” featured in the three issues: #22–24.

Themes for the issues of *THRESHOLD* have covered a range of topics (see the full list in our Previous Issues section of this issue), with suggestions from many and the community voting for their choices in the Piazza forum. While Andrew Theisen and Joseph Setorius each took the Editor In-Chief’s chair for a single issue, that role was handled by Giampaolo Acosta, Francesco Defferrari and John Calvin on a rotating basis. Due to real world commitments, John had to relinquish his involvement with the project after issue #18, and Giampaolo stepped down from his Editorial role after issue #25. The magazine has continued with myself (Allan Palmer) assisting Francesco more fully on the Editorial side than previously. The reduction in the number of Editors has meant that the fre-





quency of publication has had to be cut back and we are only able to confidently produce 2 issues per year currently.

Notwithstanding the reduced frequency, the army of contributors has continued to provide a tremendous amount of input. For the record, the first 30 issues of *THRESHOLD* comprise 6,612 pages, or an average of 228 pages per issue. The largest issue was #12 (“Ages Past”) at 294 pages, while the smallest was #25 (“Strongholds”) at only (?) 150 pages.

*THRESHOLD* was originally conceived as a digital (PDF) publication which fans could read online or download to their devices. Over time, there have often been requests for a physically printed version, but initially the mechanics of arranging that (in terms of print runs, distribution/shipping, etc) were not practical. However, in 2021 I became aware of Glen Welch’s “*Mystara 5e Player’s Guide*” project (see: <https://www.rpgmp3.com/mystara-players-guide/>) which offered fans the options of either downloading a digital PDF version of his compiled book or of downloading press-ready files that could be submitted to an online print service that would take the print-on-demand interior and cover files and produce a printed version for the individual purchaser. After studying what Glen had done, for issue #28

I created both the “normal” PDF version and a print-on-demand version which I successfully printed using Lulu ([www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com)). This version was made available following the digital version on January 2022 via the Vaults of Pandius website. The response to this option was positive, and I embarked on some minor reformatting of the original *THRESHOLD* PDF files (which included creating separate covers), so that by late 2022, all issues of *THRESHOLD* were available both in digital and print-on-demand formats.

## THANKS

*THRESHOLD* has remained a community effort thanks to so many people. As well as the wordsmiths who have written all those articles that enhanced and developed ideas from the original Mystaran canon, numerous artists have contributed a gallery of illustrations and maps to enliven the words. It is great to see the amount of original artwork increase, saving the Editors time crawling through public domain sources to find suitable images to use. We are all grateful to Thorf for his library of replica maps which have been utilised in many articles. While some individuals have been mentioned in this article, it seems fitting that we try and list all those who have contributed to the success of *THRESHOLD Magazine*’s first 30 issues/10 years in the accompanying “Roll of Honour” (next page).

The Editorial Team are grateful for the many messages of congratulation in respect of the 10-year history of the magazine. For anyone interested, such comments can be found at the *Piazza Forums* topic [‘Celebrating Ten Years of Threshold Magazine!’](#)

## THE HONOUR ROLL OF CONTRIBUTORS

Compiled by Sturm from the Main Index of Threshold articles by issue, theme and author which can be found in this Piazza thread <https://www.thepiazza.org.uk/bb/viewtopic.php?t=17521>

### Authors

Adam Ferreira (Mystic Kind), Agathokles (Giampaolo Agosta), Alexandre de Luna, Allan Palmer, Allen Varney, Andrea Ciceri, Andrew Theisen (Cthulhudrew), Argentmantle, Arnden Quartzspar, Atila Pires dos Santos, Bruce Heard, C. Richard Davies, Cab Davidson, Chimpman (John Calvin), Colin (LordJuss) Wilson, Craig Antoun (Irondrake), Damon Brown, David Keyser, Demetrios J Sahlas (Demos Sachlas), DesertNomad, Doc Necrotic (Brian), eliyah von Llaunas, EPiK Team, Fabrizio Nuzzaci, Galdor aka Glenn Tanner, Giuliano Michelon, Giulio Caroletti (Scaevola), Hausman Santos, Håvard, Ignacio Ramos (Ramelin), Irving Galvez, John Atom, Karl David Brown, Kyle Knight (Gravesguardian), Kilr Kowalski, Korro Zal, Jacques (Jack) Riesling, James Mishler, Joseph Setorius (julius cleaver), JTR (OldDawg), King Everast, Leandro Abrahão, Lost Woodrake, Luca Pezzullo (Cedric), Luc Greenwood, Marco Dalmonte, Matthew Fleet (Carillion), Matthew Tullis, Maxime Beaulieu, Michael Sutherland, Michele "LoZompatore" C., Niels Just Rasmussen (Justinov), Not a Decepticon, Otávio Gadelha, Pol Ginés (Khuzd), Robin D., RobJN (Robert Nuttman), Sean Robert Meaney, Sebastien (Senarch), Seer of Yhog (Geoff Gander), Sharon Dornhoff, Shawn Stanley (Stanles), Simone Neri (Zendrolion), Spellweaver (Jesper Andersen), Stefano Leonardi (Polipone), Sturm (Francesco Defferrari), TheGlen, The Real Nowhere Man, Thorfinn Tait, Trevor Holman, Troy Terrell (CmdrCorsiken), Ville Lahde, Wangalade (Lance Duncan), Wing of Coot.

### Illustrators and mappers

Adamantyr, Agathokles, Allan Palmer, Aleksei-Liakh, Andrea Francolini, Andrew Theisen (Cthulhudrew), Argentmantle, Bruce Heard, Cab Davidson, Christian Constantin, Damon Brown, Dario Odillo, David Keyser, Demos Sachlas, Doc Necrotic (Brian), Douglas Lanford, DJ Hartel, Epik Team, Fabrizio Nuzzacci, Gabriel Packard, George von Zarovich, Giulio Caroletti, Glen Welch, Hasandgo, Hausman Santos, Håvard, Ignacio Ramos (Ramelin), Irving Galvez, Isabella Calvin, Jeffrey Kosh, Jim Holloway, Joey Armstrong, John Calvin, Jonathan Barker, Joseph Setorius (julius cleaver), JTR (OldDawg), Justin Pfeil, Kannea SunTzu, Larry Elmore, Leandro Abrahão, Linus Andersson, LoZompatore, Mario Ciuffini, Matthew Fleet (Carillion), Mike Phillips, Mindszenty, Nathan Park, Omnibus, Paul Holroyd, Pol Ginés (Khuzd), Robin D., Sean Robert Meaney, Sebastien (Senarch), Seer of Yhog (Geoff Gander), Simone Neri (Zendrolion), Sturm (Francesco Defferrari), Thibault Sarlat, Thorfinn Tait, Toni Roads, Trevor Holman, Two Minute Table Top, V Shane, William McAusland, Will Pleydon, Veris Design Roleplay.

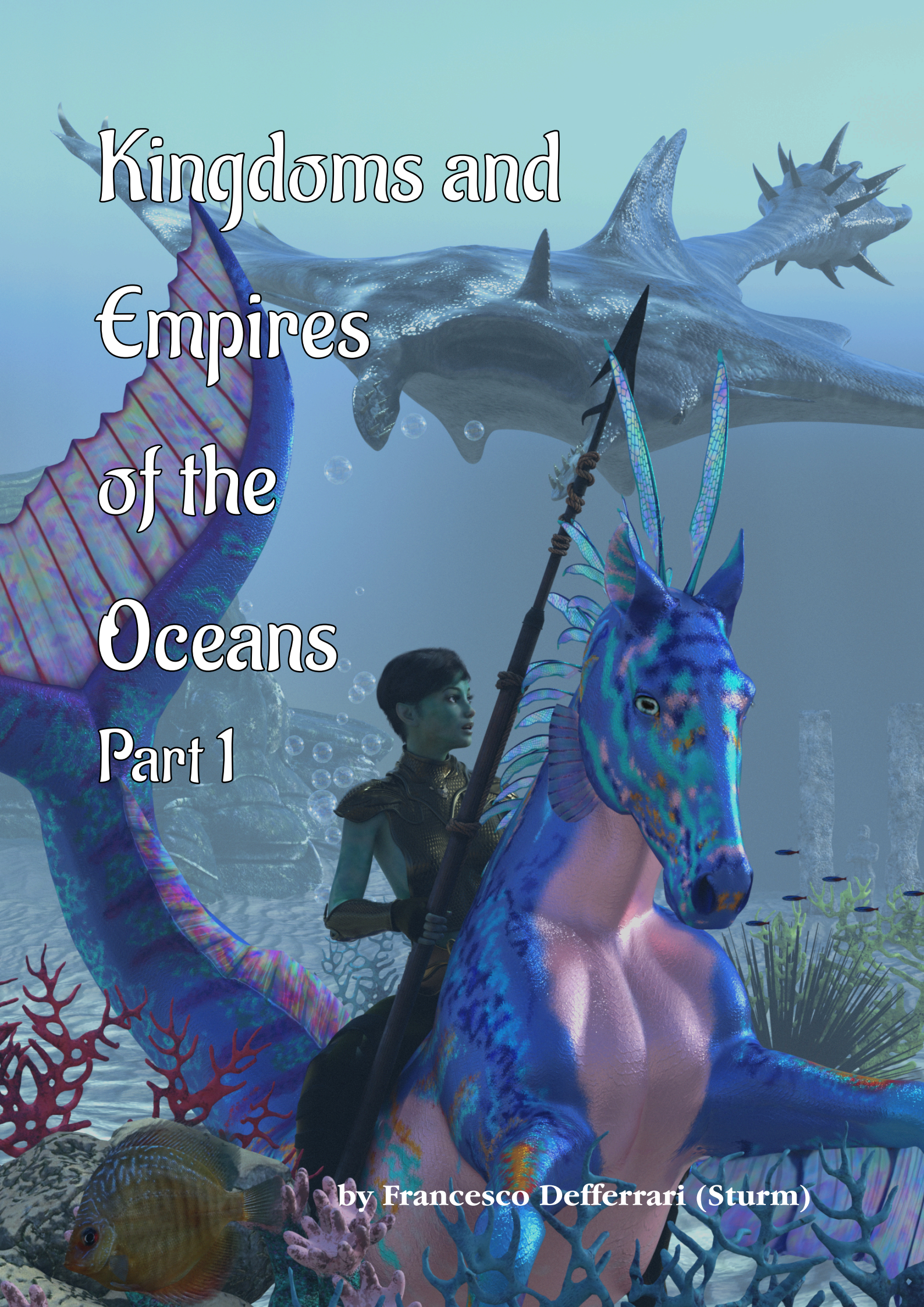
### Proofreaders and editors

Agathokles, Allan Palmer (AllanP), Andrea Ciceri, Andrew Theisen (Cthulhudrew), Ashtagon, Brian O'Carroll, Carl Quaif, Caroline Regina, Chris Seabrook, Cmdr Corsiken, Dan Hyland, Danny Cline, David Finch, David Insley, Eric Wirsing, Glenn Tanner, Harri Maki, Håvard, Hervé Musseau, Joseph Setorius (julius cleaver), John Atom, John Calvin (Chimpman), Kevin Simonich, Michael Berry, Mike Harvey, Murray Neill (Louie the Monk), Nicola Valpiani, Rob Koper, Robin D., Robert Nuttman (RobJN), Shawn Stanley, Simone Neri, Sean Kennedy, Shelby Michlin, Simon Barns, Sturm (Francesco Defferrari), Thomas Rosleff Bækmark, Seer of Yhog (Geoff Gander), Spellweaver (Jesper Andersen), Thorfinn Tait, Tom Bulls Eyes, William Belben.

## THRESHOLD: the Mystara Magazine issues #1—30

Issue	Theme	Pages	Editor-in-Chief	Published
#1	“Karamaikos”	182	agathokles (Giampaolo Agosta)	(Oct 2013)
#2	“Vaults of Pandius”	184	Cthulhudrew (Andrew Theisen)	(Jan 2014)
#3	“The Sea of Dread”	246	Chimpman (John Calvin)	(Mar 2014)
#4	“Return to Dread”	218	Chimpman (John Calvin)	(Jun 2014)
#5	“Exploring Davania”	220	Sturm (Francesco Defferrari)	(Oct 2014)
#6	“The Northlands”	212	agathokles	(Dec 2014)
#7	“Exploring Norwold”	248	Sturm	(Apr 2015)
#8	“Warlords of Norwold”	216	agathokles	(Jul 2015)
#9	“Hollow World”	200	Chimpman	(Sep 2015)
#10	“Elven Realms”	210	julius_cleaver (Joseph Setorius) + Sturm	(Jan 2016)
#11	“Thyatis & Alphatia”	238	Sturm	(Apr 2016)
#12	“Ages Past”	294	Chimpman	(Jul 2016)
#13	“A Crucible of Creatures”	272	agathokles	(Oct 2016)
#14	“The Shadowdeep”	190	Sturm	(Jan 2017)
#15	“Mystaraspace”	282	Chimpman	(Apr 2017)
#16	“Dwarves, Gnomes & Hin”	234	agathokles	(Jul 2017)
#17	“Western Brun”	208	Sturm	(Oct 2017)
#18	“Savage Coast”	206	Sturm	(Jan 2018)
#19	“Planes and Immortals”	266	Chimpman	(May 2018)
#20	“Skothar”	194	Sturm	(Jul 2018)
#21	“Specularum”	258	AllanP (Allan Palmer) w/agathokles	(Oct 2018)
#22	“Adventures & Campaigns”	184	Sturm w/agathokles	(Mar 2019)
#23	“Adventures & Campaigns 2”	238	Sturm w/agathokles + AllanP	(Aug 2019)
#24	“Adventures & Campaigns 3”	198	Sturm w/agathokles + AllanP	(Nov 2019)
#25	“Strongholds”	150	Sturm w/agathokles + AllanP	(May 2020)
#26	“Heroes, Villains & Organizations”	196	Sturm w/AllanP	(Dec 2020)
#27	“25th Anniversary of the Vaults”	206	Sturm w/AllanP	(Jul 2021)
#28	“Trade Routes and Darokin”	206	Sturm w/AllanP	(Jan 2022)
#29	“Vampires and the Undead”	230	Sturm w/AllanP	(Jul 2022)
#30	“The Alphatian Sea”	226	Sturm w/AllanP	(Dec 2022)





Kingdoms and

Empires

of the

Oceans

Part 1

by Francesco Defferrari (Sturm)



## Part I:

# The Izondian Deep, Sunlit, Alphatian, Bellissarian, and White Seas

## INTRODUCTION

We all know about the Sunlit Sea, which was extensively described in PC3: "*The Sea People*" by Jim Bambra<sup>1</sup>. The area of the seas just south of the Known World, roughly around Ierendi and Minrothad, is inhabited by tritons, merrows, kna, nixies, sea giants, sea elves, kopru, and shark-kin, and menaced by the devilfish from the southern Abyss.

PC3 introduced all these people (except for the devilfish) as playable races and gave a lot of details on their history and society, and also described several ruins once belonging to the lost culture of Taymora, sunk beneath the waves in BC 1700.

Starting from this great supplement, fans obviously added several works to the development of Mystara under the sea. In this article I just list some of my and other fans' ideas about the Undersea of Mystara. More details and development will obviously follow in the other articles of this issue!

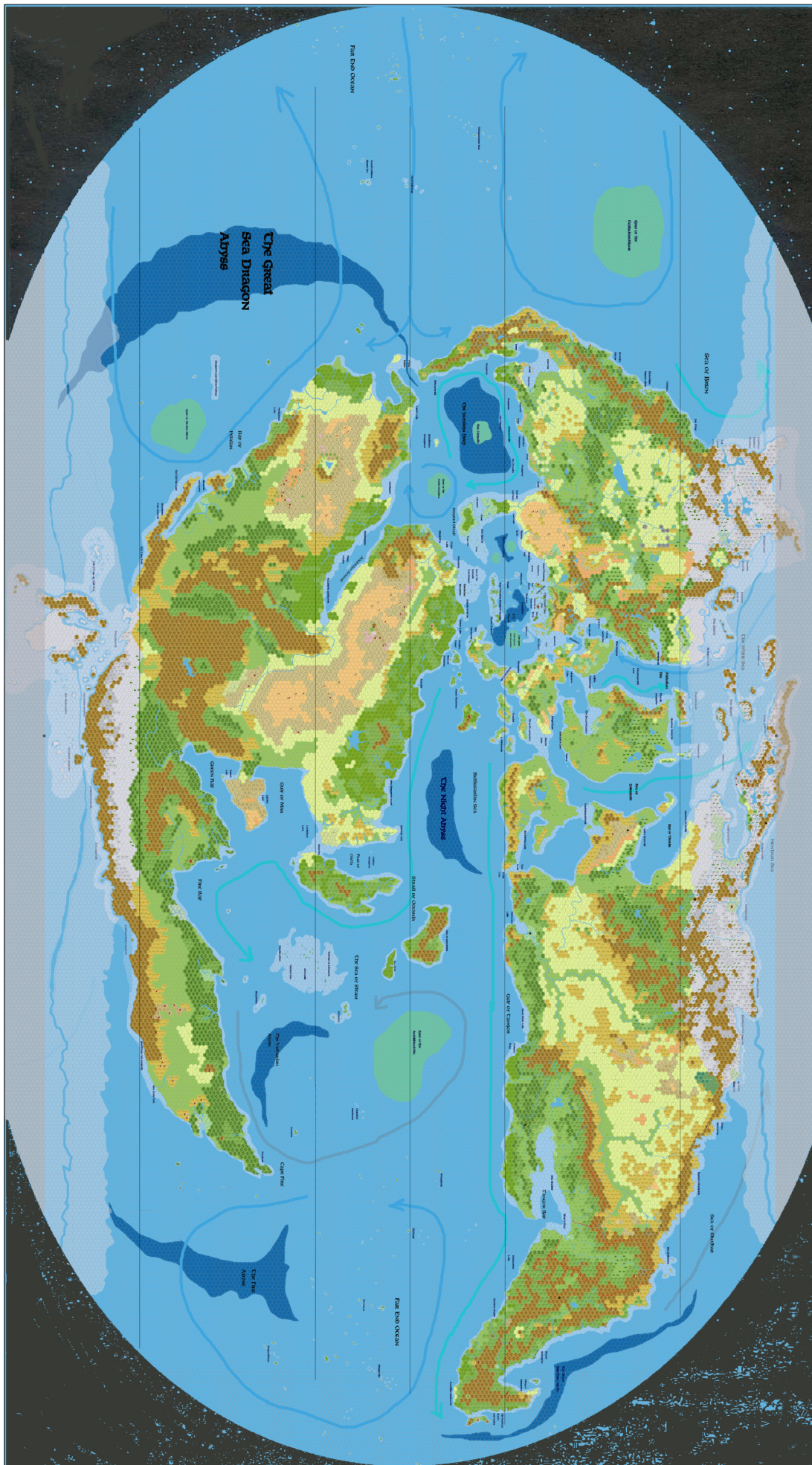
In the bathymetric map of the Mystaran seas on the following page I have indicated only three colors. The light blue one means depth is within 200 meters and it's the real habitable zone of the seas. Only in this limited territory in fact photosynthesis is possible and algae can grow, sustaining a great variety of marine life. This is the only area permanently inhabited by intelligent creatures and dotted with their communities.

The middle blue one indicates a depth from 200 to 3,000 meters. Here there is little light and temperature rapidly drops to 5 or 6°C degrees even in the tropical zone. Pressure goes from 20 to 300 bar. Yet a lot of fish and other marine creatures travel in this zone day and night. Penguins can dive down to 500 meters, hold their breath for almost half an hour and see well also in the dark, but seals see even better, and they can also navigate the dark waters with the vibrations of their whiskers and some can dive down to 1,500 meters. Turtles can dive down to 1,000 meters. Below the depth of about 1,000 meters, not even the little light which can filter from above is visible, and pitch darkness begins. Yet, dolphins and whales can use echolocation to find prey and avoid obstacles in the dark, and they can go at a depth of almost 3,000 meters

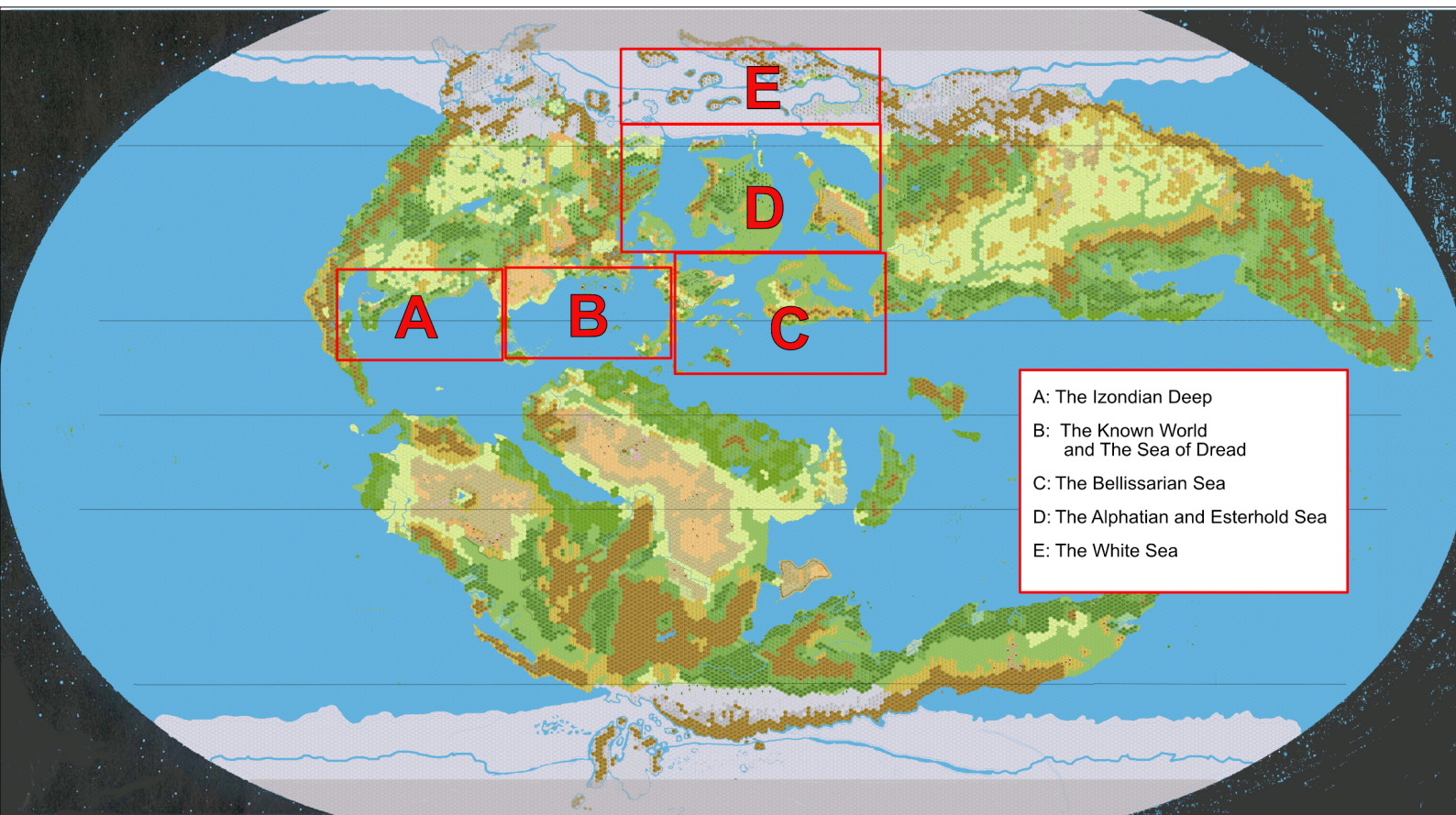
<sup>1</sup> This classic Mystara product is available from [Drivethrurpg.com](http://Drivethrurpg.com)



*Bathymetric map of Mystara in 72 miles per hex, showing also the main sea currents (warm in green, cold in blue, neutral in grey)*







*Mapped regions of Mystara's oceans discussed in this article*

and hold their breath for more than three hours. Intelligent creatures therefore can easily travel the blue sea as well, using marine animals or vessels, but they can hardly build permanent residences, unless they can anchor them to floating algae or some other floating structure.

The deep blue regions are areas from 3,000 meters to 15,000<sup>2</sup> meters deep. Here only abyssal creatures can roam and live, in total darkness, at incredible pressure and temperature of about 2–4°C, sustaining themselves mostly with 'marine snow' i.e. the organic material which falls down from above, and eating each other. Still there is a

<sup>2</sup> Depth of The Abyss in PC3 map is given at more than 50,000 feet.

great variety of life, and even some light, as several deep jellies or deep fish have bioluminescence or use it to lure prey<sup>3</sup>.

Finally, green-blue areas in the map indicate vast regions of floating algae which normally correspond to warm ocean gyre<sup>4</sup>. Such zones are typically inhabited by a lot of marine life and often also by intelligent creatures who can use floating algae to anchor their homes even in regions of deep waters.

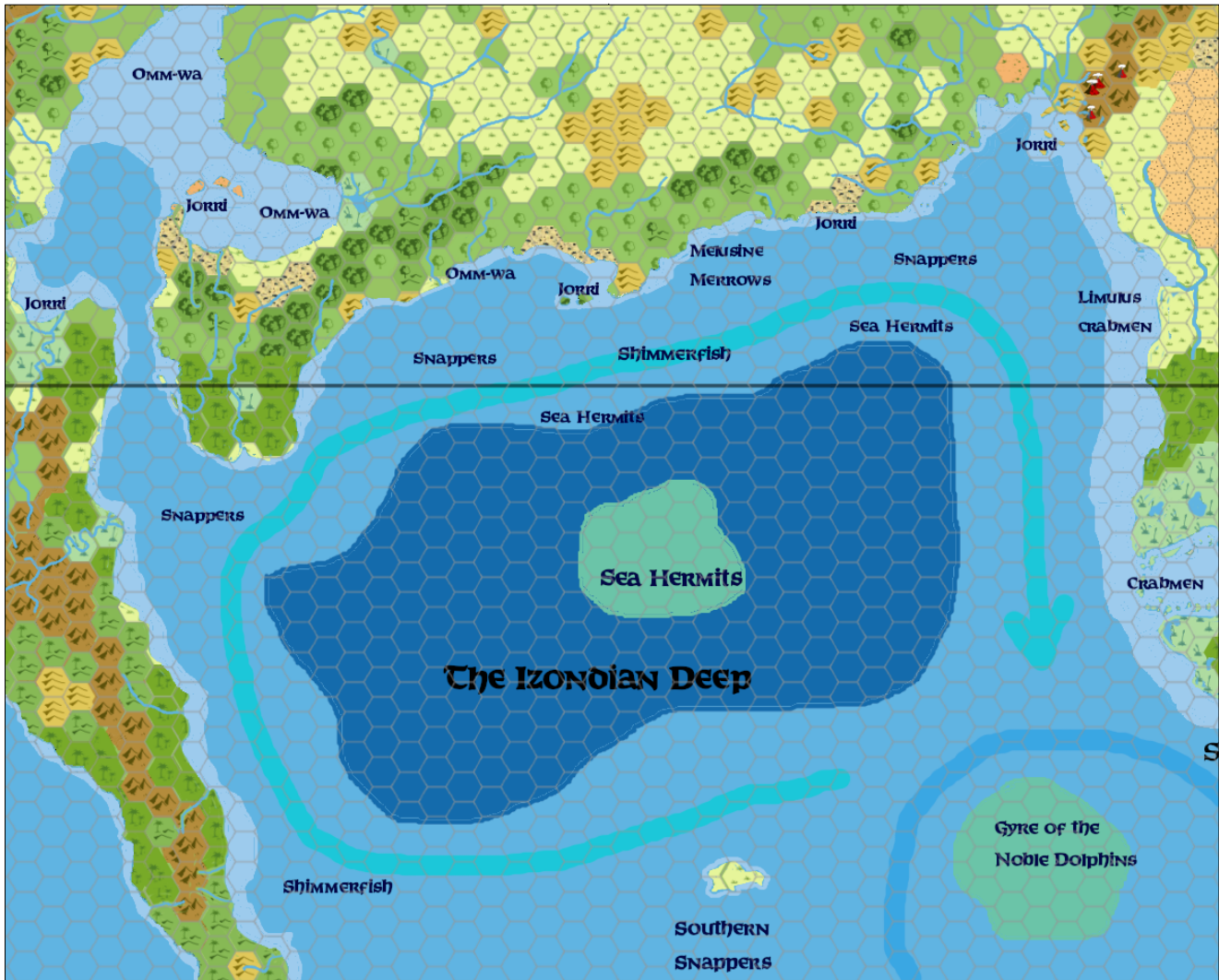
<sup>3</sup> Also see the "[Deep Sea](#)" and "[Deep-sea Community](#)" Wikipedia entries

<sup>4</sup> See this article about the [Ocean gyre](#) on Wikipedia





## A) THE IZONDIAN DEEP



*The Izondian Deep region*

### Crabmen and the Gyre of the Noble Dolphins

Horseshoe crabmen<sup>5</sup> and ‘regular’ crabmen are the main inhabitants of the western coast of the Serpent Peninsula. The habitable area here is extensive however and inhabited also by kna, shark-kin, merrows, and noble dolphins, who are also the main inhabitants of the namesake gyre to the southwest. They keep in check the much

<sup>5</sup> Inspired by these real world [Atlantic horseshoe crab](#) as described on Wikipedia

more hostile shimmerfish<sup>6</sup> and southern snappers<sup>7</sup> who roam the southern part of the Izondian Deep.

<sup>6</sup> [Evil and intelligent dolphins](#) introduced in the “Savage Coast Monstrous Compendium” (SCMC) at the Vaults of Pandius

<sup>7</sup> Marine relatives of [turtles](#) described as primitive and bad-tempered in the “Savage Coast Monstrous Compendium”



## Sea Hermits of the Izondian Deep

Around the Izondian Deep the sea hermits<sup>8</sup> have their underwater kingdoms. These people are likely related to crabmen but very expert in magic and not particularly friendly toward sea- or land-dwellers. However the fact that their nearest neighbors are the normally hostile shimmerfish and snappers could have contributed to their average behavior.

## The habitable sea of the Savage Coast

The habitable area of the coast is rather narrow, generally not more than 10 miles from land. It is mostly inhabited by some peoples who are partially connected to the land and build semi-submerged homes, the jorri and the omm-wa<sup>9</sup>, and by some purely sea-dwelling creatures, mostly kna and merrows. The Melusine merrows, in front of the coasts of Robrenn and Eusdria, are the better organized of such societies. They take their name from a mythical merrow queen who allegedly had also been queen of Eusdria<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Introduced in the "Savage Coast Monstrous Compendium" [at the Vaults](#), and expanded a bit by me in "People of the Savage Coast" in [THRESHOLD Magazine issue #18](#)

<sup>9</sup> Described in the SCMC and in "People of the Savage Coast" article linked in the note above

<sup>10</sup> A reference to a famous [real world legend](#).



Omm-wa drawn by I. Calvin,  
originally published in THRESHOLD Magazine issue #18

## The Trident Bay and the Immortal Arm eastern coast

The Trident Bay has an extensive habitable zone, dominated mostly by omm-wa, jorri, kna, merrows, and shark-kin. All those peoples have established a solid alliance, the Bay Alliance, to keep at bay incursion from snappers and shimmerfish, with great success.

This success does not extend to the eastern coast of the Immortal Arm, where snappers near land and shimmerfish in the open sea are constant threats both to sea-dwelling tribes and to land-dwellers' shipping.





## B) THE KNOWN WORLD AND THE SEA OF DREAD



The Sunlit Sea region

### The Sunlit Sea

Extensively described in PC3 and expanded in several articles of this issue of *THRESHOLD Magazine*, the Sunlit Sea is the region of the sea south of the Known World which surrounds Ierendi and Minrothad, reaching the Atruaghin lands' coast to the west and Thyatis to the east<sup>11</sup>. In the general map below I have indicated roughly the regions inhabited by each race, but nixies are not placed as they live in scattered small communities around the

Sunlit Sea<sup>12</sup>. The people of the Sunlit Sea are not natives of the region, which indeed was above the waves until BC 1700. At the time, however, the sea elves, the Aquarendi, had already reached the area south of Alfeisle in Minrothad. After the lands of Taymora sank beneath the waves, the region became the Sunlit Sea and was first inhabited by merrows, and then by the tritons who came from the south in BC 200, carving their kingdom from among the merrows' lands. These two peoples eventually learned to live peacefully, but then

<sup>11</sup> A full replica map by Thorf of the Sunlit Sea can be found at his *Atlas of Mystara* website.

<sup>12</sup> In this issue of *THRESHOLD Magazine* check the "Aloysius Reef Gazetteer" article by Eliyah von Llaunas for a placement of the nixies of the Sunlit Sea.



suffered a great crisis in AC 443 when lycanthropy, in the form of weresharks, threatened both. After that, in AC 800, the devilfish arrived in the Abyss to menace their triton enemies. The devilfish were defeated in AC 900 but returned after AC 979. By AC 1000, the people of Undersea were facing the threats of devilfish, weresharks, and undead from the south. Between the territories of the tritons and the merrows lies the the lair of Thundar the sea dragon<sup>13</sup>, located within an inactive underwater volcano crater, trying to influence local tritons and merrows to build her own empire.

The module X7: *“The War Raft of Kron”*, published before PC3, describes a floating city inhabited by humans but allied with the apparently independent tritons of Suthus, and also involved with a velya (sea vampire) hiding in the ruins of Colhador, an ancient elven city which sunk in approximately BC 1700<sup>14</sup>.

Undersea and the Sunlit Sea were not mentioned in the events of AC 1000–1013 of either the *“Wrath of the Immortals”* boxed set, or the *“Poor Wizard’s Almanacs”* and *“Josbuan’s Almanac”* so the *Mystaran Almanac* team later developed a timeline for the region in which the area is overrun by devilfish and undead and the survivors, mostly tritons and merrows, escape to Underocean, the region of former Alphatia now beneath the waves<sup>15</sup>. There they had to face internal strife and the menace of aquatic beholders and undead. In AC 1016 the tritons of Underocean contacted Aquas

and offered to join the New Alphatian Confederate Empire (NACE). In AC 1017 they attacked not only the aquatic ghouls in sunken Arogansa, but also the sentient Alphadon undead, leading in AC 1018 to Aquas’s forces siding with the Alphadon against the tritons of Underocean, forcing the tritons to stop their attacks on the Alphadon. Even if in the Sunlit Sea the former triton kingdom was overrun by devilfish and undead, the kna’ and sea elves’ territories still resisted.

## The Azcan Terrace

This region<sup>16</sup> is inhabited by (mostly hostile) crabmen, some merrows and kna, snappers, several intelligent sea mammals such as whales, dolphins and narwhals, and dotted with ancient ruins. There is also a certain number of wereseals. The Atruaghin tribes of the Children of the Turtle have extensive relations with all those peoples.

## Makara and Matsya Lairs

The Sindhi and Sind Desert coast is dominated according to legends by two powerful sea dragons, or sea turtles, one ruling over kna and the other over merrows, sometimes cooperating and sometimes fighting among themselves, using their subjects as proxies.

<sup>13</sup> Created by Bruce Heard in *DRAGON Magazine* issue #171

<sup>14</sup> See also *“Kron – The Raft City”* by Jesper Andersen from [THRESHOLD Magazine issue #4](#) (available at the Vaults).

<sup>15</sup> See Aaron Novack’s articles [“Undersea Timeline”](#) (from AC 1000 to 1015) and [“The Undersea AC 1015”](#) in the Vaults about the situation in AC 1015.

<sup>16</sup> All the regions around the Known World were described in *“Advice for traders in the Sea of Dread”* By Michele “LoZompatore” C. in [THRESHOLD Magazine issue #4](#)





Velya, original artwork by Jeffrey Kosh  
(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)

## The Velya Abyss

The Abyss between Yavdlom and the Sindhi coast would be inhabited by an ancient and powerful velya, some say of ancient Azcan origin, with legions of underwater ghouls, devilfish, and vampires. Two small gyres of floating algae are located north and south of this abyss, inhabited by groups of merrows, kna and shark-kin, who are menaced by undead and devilfish.

## Coast of the Yavdlom Peninsula

This undersea region is big and inhabited by almost all known undersea races, but especially crabmen, snappers, omm-wa, kna and shark-kin. However it is dominated by sea giants below the waves and storm giants above them.

## Cetus Lair

Cetus would be a gigantic whale, or a sea dragon, who occasionally menaces the coast of Davania. It could however be just another name of the Behemoth (see below).

This coast is also inhabited by shark-kin, weresharks and wereseals.

## The Davanian Shallows

This region is also dotted with ancient ruins, often infested by undead, and traveled by the kna of the Katonate Confederacy, who are normally friendly toward other races and surface folk. Other races however live in the area, such as the Eeliistii: a race of merfolk with octopus tails

who are not very friendly to outsiders except for the kna<sup>17</sup>. Other minor races also inhabit the region, such as shark-kin and crabmen. The Twaelar Merrow Empire (see below) would very much like to expand in this area, but so far has been repulsed by strong local resistance from sea dragons, merfolk, and other races, secretly aided by the kna, who officially maintain good relations with the Empire but do not actually want it to dominate their sea.

### A note about Monster's Lairs

All the locations indicated as 'Lair' in the maps are named after mythological sea creatures of the real world<sup>18</sup>, which could be used as inspiration to populate the seas with big creatures such as intelligent whales, sea dragons, sea turtles, sea serpents, or kraken. Such big creatures are likely to also have lairs full of minions.

### A note about werereatures

Weresharks and wereseals are likely tritons, merrows or humans infected with lycanthropy. However if whole communities are infected, it's likely they will form a new society with little or no contact with their former origin communities, forming a de-facto new race. This may be especially true for sea-dwelling werereatures, as they can already breath underwater, unlike human werereatures.

<sup>17</sup> ["The Katonate Confederacy"](#) and ["The Dark Truth of the Eeliistii"](#) created by Christopher Cherrington (both available in the Vaults of Pandius)

<sup>18</sup> See for example the [Mythological aquatic creatures category](#) in Wikipedia



## The Thanegioth waters and the Twaelar Merrow Empire

This empire centered around the Thanegioth archipelago and dominated by merrows appeared first in the AC 1015 *Mystaran Almanac* where its inhabitants began hostilities against Thyatian forces operating in the archipelago, which became a true war in AC 1016, and led to Twaelar land attacks on Thanegioth colonies and Raven Scarp, until a peace treaty was signed in AC 1017. The rulers are Emperor Diviloplop, Empress Igilbolb, and High Priest of Protius Goblopob. The empire is described as being dominated by merrows, who took over from almost forgotten previous rulers, the kopru<sup>19</sup>. The militaristic merrows of the Twaelar Empire<sup>20</sup> are obviously quite different from the free-spirited and relatively peaceful merrows of the Sunlit Sea.

## The Sea of Dread

The proper Sea of Dread is south of the Sunlit Sea and north of the Thanegioth archipelago. The most important feature dominating it is the Abyss, now infested by devilfish and inhabited by other sea monsters and undead. But there are also many islands and the Dragon Teeth reef, whose coral reefs and seabeds are inhabited by

<sup>19</sup> Introduced in the module X1: *"The Isle of Dread"*, and more extensively described in PC3, a kopru-dominated Thanegioth archipelago called ["Adhuza"](#) was developed by John Calvin and others for the 2300 BC subsetting, see also the [Known World index at the Vaults](#) and the [2300 BC sub-forum](#) at The Piazza

<sup>20</sup> As the empire was imagined after the Mystara setting was converted to AD&D 2ed in later products, there are also mostly unwilling sahuagin subjects (in Original D&D Mystara, they could be just a more warlike subspecies of kna) and aquatic ogres (called merrows in AD&D), used as shock troops and blindly loyal to their masters.

shark-kin and kopru, noble dolphins, and some sea dragons and other big creatures.

## The Gyre

The Gyre is a zone of floating algae just south of the Teki-Nura-Ria archipelago, the dangerous group of islands south of Thyatis, inhabited by kara-kara orcs and kal-muru elementals. Both the archipelago and the Gyre are avoided by all commercial shipping as they are very dangerous. The Gyre not only is often the source of many storms, which flood the Sea of Dread and the Thanegioth archipelago, but is also inhabited by wild tritons and merrows who live just under the algae and like to attack surface dwellers.

## The Ochalean Sea

The sea around Ochalea is dominated by sea dragons, each ruling his or her own domain which is also inhabited by merfolk, kna, shark-kin, crabmen and many other creatures. The Strait of Furmenglaive is inhabited by Ceirean, an unknown being who could be a sea dragon, or something else<sup>21</sup> which even dragons fear.

## The Jungle Coast

This region of the sea is supposedly inhabited by a large dragon turtle called Afanc<sup>22</sup>, who rules over many snappers and other creatures. Here, according to legend, would be the hidden Palace of Protius, where the Immortal of the Sea often dwells among tritons, merrows, and other creatures. The realm is forbidden to visitors unless they

<sup>21</sup> Inspired by the real world legend of [Cirein-cròin](#).

<sup>22</sup> Inspired by this real world legend of [Afanc](#).

have permission from the Immortal himself or a high-ranking cleric. Not too far to the southeast there is the realm of Glaucus's<sup>23</sup> merrows, named after a titan in the service of Protius, and populated also by nixies and kna. Glaucus is famous for his prophetic abilities, and is often willing to help heroes and adventurers.

## The Western Sea of Dawn

This region is inhabited mostly by wereseals, sea giants, shark-kin, and kna, but also by the dendans, intelligent whales which have long been hunted by the people of the Northern Reaches and Ylaruam and have therefore become very hostile to humans.



Kopru, original artwork by Jeffrey Kosh  
<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>

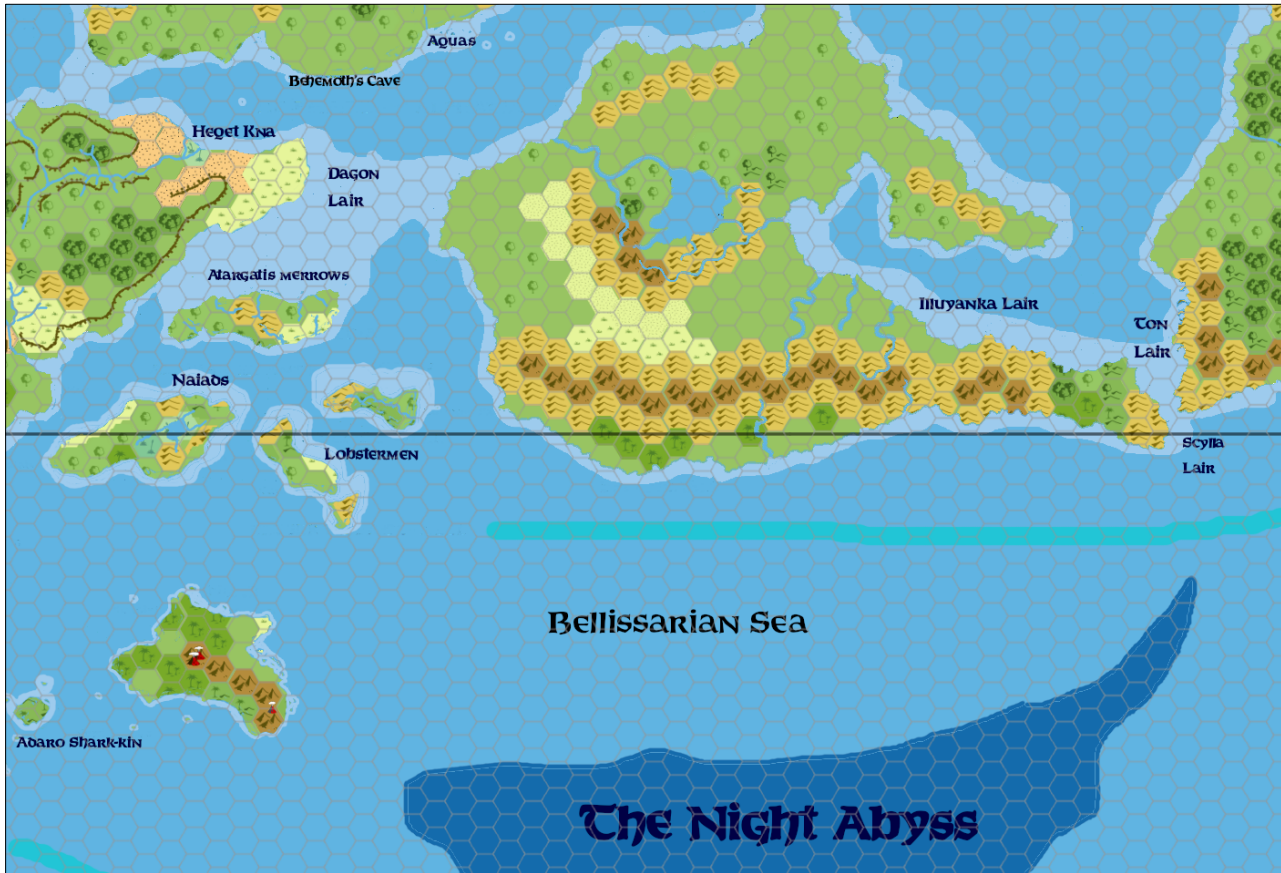
## The Kopru Empire?

This place is the mysterious and hidden Empire of the Kopru described by Matthew Tullius's articles in this and following issues of *THRESHOLD Magazine*.

<sup>23</sup> Inspired by [Glaucus](#) of Greek mythology.



## C) THE BELLISSARIAN SEA



The Bellissarian Sea region

### Aguas and Sunken Alphatia<sup>24</sup> (after AC 1009)

Aguas, an undersea city first described in the *“Dawn of the Emperors”* boxed set, was founded in AC 949 by the Alphatian wizard Zyndryl, who later became lover of Empress Eriadna and father to her children Zandor and Eldrethila. Zyndryl died in AC 1009 during the sinking of Alphatia, protecting Aquas, and therefore his daughter Zynnica (born from the mermaid Lynnia) became

queen. Aquas was also the de-facto capital of what survived of the Alphatian empire until Ionace on Monster Island took its place in AC 1014. Aquas is made of the city of Seashield, inhabited by Alphatian humans, elves, dwarves, and gnomes, under a magical dome, and by the surrounding territories which are inhabited by merrows, tritons, nixies, sea elves, storm giants, and others. In AC 1017 a cooperation developed with the tritons of Underocean, due to the new menace of aquatic ghouls from sunken Alphatia. Aquas began the construction of new domes in Notrion,

<sup>24</sup> More details in the article [“Alphatian Undersea”](#) by Hausman Santos in the Vaults, which will be updated in the next issue of *THRESHOLD Magazine* (#32).







*Behemoth*

Bellissaria to expand Seashield, and advanced submersibles like *The Torpin* to enhance its underwater fleet. Other sentient undead who call themselves Alphadon were discovered in sunken Bluenose, former Arogansa. In AC 1018 the submersible *Torpin* was launched and more were under construction.

The Behemoth's cave could be west of Aquas. He was canonically awakened by Aquas adventurers on Sviftmont 22nd, AC 1010<sup>25</sup>, and later swam to the Ochalean Sea (Flaurmont 22nd, AC 1011) then in the Serpent Strait between Kastelios and Yavdlom (Fyrmont 10th, AC 1012). Later, wizards from Glantri and Karameikos initiated an expedition to find and study it (Felmont 25th, AC 1013).

## The Eastern Sea of Dawn, Alatians and Pearl Islands

The seabed around Thonia is inhabited by the Heqet kna, a branch of the fish people which over the centuries has been influenced by the Thonian culture. The Alatian seas are instead inhabited mainly by the Atargatis merrows, a matriarchal culture, the Naiads, a branch of nixies who have been influenced by the Milenians, and lobstermen<sup>26</sup>, a specific variation of crabmen known to have a pacifist but reclusive culture. An unspecified sea monster named Dagon, or according to others, an undead triton, has carved a domain between Thonia and Bellissaria. The Pearl Islands sea is dominated by the Adaro shark-kin, a rather hostile people who don't like trespassers and have occasionally menaced shipping. But the Pearl Islanders have some sort of

<sup>25</sup> See "Poor Wizard's Almanac I", page 225

<sup>26</sup> The crabmen AD&D or 5ED statistics can be used for them, changing only the appearance.



agreement with them, or at least some truce.

## The Bellissarian Sea

The seabed around Bellissaria is mainly inhabited by tribes of merrows, some kna, and a few tritons, but there are also cephalopodians<sup>27</sup> in the north. These latter people have octopus heads and are not much open to outsiders, even if they trade with kna. They may be related to the kopru, as it seems they have some mental powers too. To the east of Bellissaria, three famous sea monsters live. The lair of Illuyanka is in the Inner Sea of Horken. She should be a very large sea serpent or sea dragon. No one is sure what Ton and Scylla are, two sea monsters that menace the Strait of Minaea. Ton (the name means Him in Minaean)

<sup>27</sup> These creatures are similar to illithids in aspect. The DM may choose to give them psionic powers or not. They could be the ancestors of the more famous Spelljammer illithids.

could be an enormous sea dragon or a dragon turtle, while many suspect Scylla is a sea serpent, or a sea hag which can turn into a sea serpent.

The large Bellissarian sea is the vast and islandless area of the ocean south of the sub-continent. It is crossed by a warm current going to Skothar and teeming with life, so it's not difficult to meet snappers, shark-kin, noble dolphins, dendan whales and devilfish crossing it or setting temporary communities anchored to floating algae.

## The Night Abyss

This great abyss south of the Bellissarian Sea is inhabited by all manners of monsters and undead, some say partially controlled by the Night Dragons of Oceania.



*Shark-kin attack draw with Daz 3d by Senarch*

## D) THE ALPHATIAN AND ESTERHOLD SEAS



The Alphatian Sea region

### The Northwestern Sea of Dawn

The sea of the Northern Reaches is inhabited by the dendan whales, sea giants, and, along Heldann, by the Nokken, who are a group of local nixies dominating the other inhabitants of the seabed. The northern coast of the Isle of Dawn and the southern coast of Norwold are inhabited by the Ceasg merrows, who often swim up the local rivers<sup>28</sup>.

### The Northeastern Sea of Dawn

The northern part of the seabed around the Isle of Dawn and middle-southern Norwold is dominated by the Blue Kelpies<sup>29</sup>, a group, some say a true kingdom, of tritons infamous for attacking ships and creating storms. The Dunadale coast seabed is inhabited by

<sup>28</sup> Inspired by the [Ceasg](#) legend

<sup>29</sup> Inspired by the [Blue men of the Minch](#) legend

the selkie<sup>30</sup>, a group of wereseals which have created a true society, and have relatively good relations with the local humans. The gulf of East Portage is inhabited by Morgawr<sup>31</sup>, a sea serpent or dragon who is feared by the local fishermen.

### Gulf of Aasla

The Gulf of Aasla seabed is populated by several undersea races, mostly merrows, kna, tritons, several wereseals and weresharks, and some Alphatian wizards who are also werereatures or have modified their bodies to breath water. All these people together have formed a society they call 'The Incantocracy' ruled by a Council of wizards. Differently from Aquas, which is well known in the Alphatian mainland, this society so far has tried to maintain its existence unknown to the land-dwellers, because the Council

<sup>30</sup> Inspired by the [Selkie](#) legend

<sup>31</sup> Inspired by the [Morgawr \(folklore\)](#) legend



thinks that otherwise the Empire could try to exploit their abilities for military purposes; and they are probably right.

## The Alphatian Sea

According to old Antalian legends, the sea east of Norwold would be the domain of Jörmungandr, the mythical sea serpent (or dragon?) which fought against the Immortal Thor in many old tales and legends. The seabed along the northwestern coast of Alphatia is inhabited by the Finfolk<sup>32</sup> merrows, a society with great sorcerous abilities which also includes wereseals and from time to time would capture humans as slaves or mates. The gulf of Alpha in Norwold is inhabited by many wereseals, who as usual have the reputation of occasionally kidnapping people. Along the coast north of Littonia, Iku-Turso<sup>33</sup> has his lair, a malevolent sea monster, or a dragon, mentioned in many local legends. Another mysterious and not clearly identified sea monster inhabits the waters north of Qeodhar: Hafgufa<sup>34</sup>, said to be much larger than a whale. This too could be just another name of the Behemoth, or another Behemoth. The northern Alphatia and Yanifey chain seabeds are inhabited mainly by wereseals and by Harbor seafolk. Maybe these creatures were just 'normal' wereseals once but now they all live permanently in sealman form, and even their children are born this way. So if once they had the ability to return to their original merrow or other form, they don't anymore.

<sup>32</sup> Inspired by the [Finfolk](#) legend

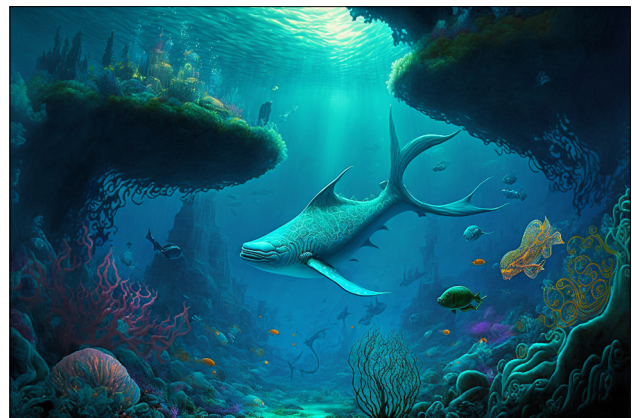
<sup>33</sup> Inspired by the [Iku-Turso](#) legend

<sup>34</sup> Inspired by the [Hafgufa](#) legend

## The Sea of Esterhold AND the Bay of Thorin

The Bay of Thorin is dominated by Spotted seafolk and Grey seafolk<sup>35</sup>. It's hard to say if these people had once been merrows who had been infected with lycanthropy or true near-human races, but certainly now they are. Differently from true seals, they do not need to breathe air, but they can and still have often semi-submerged hideouts along the coast in the most unapproachable cliffs and reefs, or in isolated islands. Kna and merrows also inhabit these waters, generally in amicable relations with the seafolks

The rest of the Sea of Esterhold is inhabited by a variety of sea races, including tribes of kna and shark-kin which are not always peaceful, and many sea monsters. A vast habitable area lies between Esterhold and Bellissaria, dominated by cephalopodians<sup>36</sup>, a race of sea-dwelling creatures with octopus heads. They are organized in matriarchal, normally peaceful tribes, but they are trying to unite in a more organized society to better defend themselves from enemies, which in this area include devilfish, velya, shark-kin, and hostile sea giants.



<sup>35</sup> Inspired by these real animals: [spotted seal](#) and [grey seal](#).

<sup>36</sup> Statistics of the AD&D illithids could be used for them, eliminating their humanoid-enslaving habits.

## E) THE WHITE SEA



The White Sea region

### Sea Giants of the North

The sea north of Alphatia, from the northern Norwold coast and almost to Skothar, is dominated by sea giants and is known as The White Sea. These giants generally have good relations with the frost giants that inhabit these northern coasts and islands in significant numbers. Kna and some merrows also live among the sea giants in relative peace. The sea is inhabited by a relevant number of noble narwhals and by several races of sealfolk.



Vodyanoy

### Northern sealfolk and Kna

The most common sealfolk of the North include Walrus men, Hooded sealfolk, Bearded sealfolk, Ringed sealfolk, and Harp sealfolk<sup>37</sup>. All these peoples can live and breathe underwater and usually have only temporary bases on land or floating ice. Under the sea the other most common inhabitants are the Vodyanoy kna<sup>38</sup>, a sub-race particularly adapted to life in the cold waters.

Merrows, tritons, nixies, shark-kin and kopru usually do not reach these frozen latitudes, but all kinds of intelligent dolphins and whales do.

### To be continued...

In the next issue of *THRESHOLD Magazine*, we will continue to explore the rest of Mystaran seas!

<sup>37</sup> Inspired by these real animals: [walrus](#), [hooded seal](#), [bearded seal](#), [ringed seal](#), and [harp seal](#).

<sup>38</sup> Inspired by the real world legend of the [Vodyanoy](#) of Slavic mythology.





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# SUNKEN TAYMORA

by Senarch

*Cataclysm, produced from Midjourney with prompts from Senarch*

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**“1750 BC:** After many years of war between those who had remained loyal to Nyx and those who had turned to the ways of Thanatos (a battle between nosferatu and vampires), the core of the Taymoran Empire sinks beneath the waves. Geological disasters—volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, enhanced by the massive magical energies invoked by the warring sorcerers—sink most of the remaining Taymoran lands into the sea, and splinter off much of the rest south of the modern-day Five Shires and the Atruaghin Clans.

This cataclysm marks the end of the Taymoran culture.”

---

*“Taymora Land of the Dead”  
by Giampaolo Agosta  
from THRESHOLD Magazine issue #12*

Little is known of Taymora and its fall by most of the peoples around the Sunlit Sea. The elves have stories, and scholars and wizards have an interest, ranging from the purely academic to the thirst for power and immortal life. On land Taymoran ruins are either still firmly buried, or long-plundered, and few adventurers are also historians and archeologists, many being more concerned with loot than the lives of the now-robbled dead. Under the waters the story is quite different. Taymoran ruins litter the seafloor, from villages to cities, arranged around a central conical tower or set of towers. It is often these towers that remain, ugly fingers of stone clawing at the waters. The ruins are mostly infested with undead, and the inhabitants of Undersea know to avoid them; though the waters, like the surface, have their share of adventurers who seek riches or the powerful items which the larger ruins often hold. Overall, the opinions of



the inhabitants of the Sunlit Seas can be summarised thus:

---

“Yes, yes, the fall of Ta-moree we know. Humans blow up their cities and the land, make them sink, make shallow sunlit sea, our home, stupid surface-dwellers. Their poison still harms our home. Stay away from those ruins, you idiots, danger and death only, there. Those in our waters we guard, horror lurks within. Bad, bad, now go away.”

---

—*Guthk' Kssk' Nakarr, Kna Shaman*

On the surface, there is one source of knowledge on Taymora, one great summation, to be found, though very few know of it...

## THE MAP AND THE BOOK

The “Mad Ylari” Abdel ibn Hakim Alzrudha was a little-known scholar whose two main works are now highly sought after. These were *Behemoths and sea monsters of the Sunlit Sea*, a commission for a rich patron and keen seafarer from Darokin, and the legendary and dread tome *The Book of the Dead*. While several copies of *Behemoths* can be found in Darokin, Glantri and Ylaruam, no trace remains of the *Book of the Dead*, though it is bloodily hunted by necromancers and cultists. A large book with a cover said to be made of blackened human skin, it was purported to be the definitive study of ancient Taymora, its necromantic practices and other dark magics, the cults of Tanyt (Nyx) and Sarrattalu (Thanatos), and the devastating wars that brought on the Cataclysm. The horrors contained therein were said to have driven many of its readers mad.



*Abdel, produced by Midjourney from prompts by Senarch*

Some scholars believe these stories to be much exaggerated, as contemporary accounts describe Abdel as an affable and confused little man, with a knack for getting people to tell him stories. Nonetheless *Behemoths* would indicate he was a competent and thorough scholar, as well as a passable dabbler in magic. All that can be said for certain is that Abdel and his brother Faisal travelled extensively in the known world and the Sunlit Sea, researching their works. That is, until the brutal dismemberment of Abdel in a hovel the docks of Athenos, and the subsequent disappearance of Faisal a few days later.

Of particular interest to scholars and treasure hunters is the rumoured *Map of Sunken Taymora*, which Abdel was working on before his murder. Said to be uncannily accurate, if found it would open the door to the vast treasures of ancient Taymora to its fortunate owner. It is said by some that the key to the map is to find Abdel's diary, which has been quoted in other minor works, but which is also lost. Others claim that it is the trail of Faisal that must be followed. Most consider these mad, and likely to find only deeper madness and death if they follow this road of inquiry.





Ruined Taymoran city, produced from Midjourney with prompts from Senarch

## THE SUNKEN CITIES

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“By the Abyss Tamoraz the mightiest of cities lies,  
In its dark deep waters only dread abides.”

---

—From a pamphlet on the rumoured sea elves and their legends.

**Tamoraz** was the primary city-state of the Taymoran Empire, and home to the oldest of the nosferatu sorcerer kings. The city is slowly collapsing into the Abyss and is in the hunting grounds of a kraken. It was once known for its vast libraries and archives, and advanced magical knowledge. The ruins may well contain some of the most powerful magical artefacts and secrets of the Taymoran civilization but remains, as far as anyone knows, undiscovered. As well as the kraken’s occasional visits, it is infested by undead and devilfish.

---

“Great was the palace of Colhador, tallest of the towers of Taymora,  
Riches incalculable its treasure stores contained.”

---

—Fragment from a lost historical text found in a Darokinian library

**Colhador** was once a prosperous and mighty city. It was known for the significant number of Albarendi living within its walls, whose descendants now inhabit Utter Island nearby. Half of it now lies scattered on the seabed, empty except for some sea life, and the rest has fallen off the sea-shelf to destruction. The palace of Colhador still stands, and the velya Hadric<sup>1</sup> now resides in an undercity lair, accessible through the well of Hador.

---

<sup>1</sup> See “Hadric’s Realm of Colhador”, in module X7: “The War Rafts of Kron”, pp. 16–28



---

“I bought five gladiators in Hushu and was not disappointed, though Arz Abulon is a wicked and shrewd bargainer; he charged an outrageous...”

---

—Clay tablet fragment  
from a Glantrian museum

**Hushu** was a small city-state with a population of around 8,000. It was known for its thriving markets and trade due to being placed in the quadrant including Tamoraz, Gader, and Sutzi. It now lies halfway down the terraces amongst mountains and broken lands, known to, but avoided by, the sea giants.

---

“Blessed Barummi at rivers’ meet, how I have loved thy waterways,  
Long summer evenings spent with my love...”

---

—From a poem among the scrolls of the wizard Gygar, gifted to the bard Valiar and found inside his last surviving book in the library of the Patriarch of Threshold.

**Barumini** was a major city with a population of 9,000. Its ruins have mostly been covered by coral and are home to a small community of sea elves. There are still some structures that can be explored, but the ruins have been plundered by treasure hunters due to the relative proximity to Ierendi, Minrothad and Karameikos and the shallow depths within which they lie. The elves discreetly guard some of the more dangerous or unexplored structures.

---

“Sulqi on the lake has the best freshwater fish markets in Taymora”

---

—Graffiti in the ruins of Tursb, translated by the elven sage Galatbran, memoirs of Sir Kratos, Thyatian adventurer, who transcribed it because he found it amusing in its blandness and failure to point to treasure.

**Sulqi** was a city-state with a population of around 7,000. It was a major centre for the fishing industry and was known for its distinctive fishing boats. The nosferatu Sorcerer here was very powerful, and his enemies banded together to destroy him in the days before the Cataclysm. It is said the city burned with magical purple fire for three days, before the ground began to shake, and the sea swallowed it. Its secrets are jealously guarded by the kna, who make sure no interlopers come near the ruins. Whatever magical atrocity occurred, it has left flora and fauna mutated, and even before one gets to whatever abominations lie within, the waters and seabed around the city are plagued by oozes, jellies, and slimes.

---

“Suthus, oh Suthus, how the seas echo with its song”

---

—Statement to Abdel by a triton met off the coast of Utter Island.

**Sutzu** is now the triton city of Suthus<sup>2</sup>, built from the coral accumulated over the ruins long ago. The tritons are mostly unaware of what might still lie under their city, though rare construction work at the city’s base sometimes uncovers passageways that are quickly filled in and forgotten.

---

<sup>2</sup> See “Suthus”, in module X7: “The War Rafts of Kron”, pp. 07–10





Taymoran ruins, produced from Midjourney with prompts from Senarch

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“On the third day the fleet of Bythia arrived, routing the already harassed fleet of the necromancer king of Amarshish, ending the sixth war and placing the defender under the yoke of Bythia for a hundred years”

---

—*Inscription accompanying a fresco, from a ruined shrine in the volcanic heights of Roister Island.*

**Bythia** was a city-state with a population of around 8,500, and was known for its military harbour and vast fleet. Little is known of the state of its ruins due to the proximity of large numbers of shark-kin and the dangers of the waters.

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“I have still found nothing on Tzur or the House of Sethlanis, it is unbelievably frustrating. Also, I am sick and stupid and hate everything and everyone today.”

---

—*Abdel, letter to Faisal.*

**Tzur**, centre of the bronzesmith caste, had a population of 6,750. Little is known of it except its proximity to the religious centre called the House of Sethlanis, the location of which remains lost. It is possible both were destroyed by volcanic activity caused by dark magic during the cataclysm, but few but perhaps the kopru would know.

---

“Do not speak of Sarroch the holy city again, human, for I like you and don’t want to have to eat you.”

---

—*Spoken by a lizardman chieftain, diary of Abdel.*

**Sarroch** was a city-state with a population of around 8,500. It was once home to a significant population of lizardmen, whose descendants still sing of the city. The ruins of Sarroch are mostly covered by sand, but there are still structures that can be explored. It is one of the few ruined cities that was close enough to land to ensure that rumours of it, and the powerful artefacts and treasures buried there, were frequent and relatively well known. The lizardmen of the southern Malpheggi Swamp, who dive there for religious reasons, as well as the turtles of the Tortles Tears, who avoid it, are well aware of the city and its dangers. Due to the shallow waters, it has been extensively plundered over the long years, and if anything remains it is buried deep, and remains very dangerous, since it is claimed that the ghosts of Sarroch’s former inhabitants still haunt the city, and that sirens are known to sing in the waters around it.

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“Serpitaz went to Tarshiz and got the spear-pox!”

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—*Graffiti in the ruins of Tursh, translated by the elven sage Galatbran, memoirs of Sir Kratos, Thyatian adventurer.*

**Tarshiz** was a city-state with a population of around 10,000, and considered a northern backwater by many Taymorans. Nevertheless its necromancer kings were powerful and their armies feared. It was blasted over

by great magical explosions nearby during the cataclysm so the ruins of Tarshiz lay covered in a thick layer of sediment, making exploration difficult. Despite its proximity to Karameikos the city has largely been forgotten. The waters around Tarshiz are home to schools of sharks and barracuda.

---

“Jest not, we still mourn Nan-in-Edhil and the Shrine of Urtni, for our memories are long.”

---

—*Said to Abdel by an elf in Alfeisle, diary of Abdel.*

**Nan-in-Edhil** was once the forested capital of the southern Sheyallia elves, and part of the Taymoran empire where the elves frequently served as mercenaries. It was famous for its advanced mage-craft and its majestic architecture. The ruins of Nan-in-Edhil lie hidden under vast kelp forests, thriving environments for all kinds of sea-life, and are largely untouched by outsiders. The remnants of the Shrine of their Immortal Urtni are said to be near Alfeisle but are lost in a kelp forest of their own. The Aquarendi sea elves may well know more, but they are most certainly not telling outsiders.

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“My lover, the cloak you bought me from the works of Amuraz has made me the envy of the court; I must reward you on your return.”

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—*Love note on a clay tablet, Museum of Glantri.*



**Amuraz** was once a centre of craftsmanship and commerce, particularly well-known for its textiles and clothing and its skilled craftsmen and artisans. It is likely the vast warehouses of goods and the museums filled with the masterworks of great artisans were shattered in the earthquakes, and their fragments swept to sea. Now the ruins of Amuraz have mostly collapsed down the sides of the terraces and are home to giant octopuses and squid.

---

“If I could only find the library of Amarshish, think of the knowledge, Faisal, think of the gold the astronomers would pay in Ylaruam! Mind you, I doubt a single Taymoran library remains dry, the loss, Faisal, the terrible loss of past civilisations.”

---

—Abdel, letter to Faisal.

---

I have grown convinced that the dark man of the sea that my brother wished to meet that fateful night was the vessel or mind-bonded slave of the last unliving Taymoran vampire queen, Ariasha. His notes and diary hinted at a great power trapped beneath rock and waves and speculated it was her, the last survivor of the war and cataclysm, trapped and buried in Amarshish. She plagued his dreams, and now mine too, hungering for release... I fear he refused her and paid the price...”

---

—Faisal, last letter to cousin Waleed ibn Aziz Alzrudba, who threw it in a chest along with the others since he thought both his kin utterly mad.

**Amarshish** was a minor city-state with a population of around 2,000 and a centre for the study of astrology and the stars. It lies untouched, since reaching the ruins is an insanely dangerous journey, traversing through a huge underwater crevasse poked with caverns home to large sea monsters. The city itself is buried under tons of rock, though it might be possible to reach it through the caverns. What is certain is that nothing can come out, for now...

---

“I buried you in Gader, my love, for it was in its gardens our love flourished, and it is where I plan to lie beside you for all eternity.”

---

—Clay tablet, Museum of Glantri.

**Gader** was a quiet city known for its gardens and green spaces. The ruins of Gader are scattered down the terraces in a deep-sea canyon system, and while some of the structures are still recognizable, they are crooked and jumbled together at an angle. The ruins are unexplored since the canyons, like huge downward tears in the terraces, create strong currents and swirling eddies that can trap and sweep away even the strongest swimmers, through the broken lands, and towards the Abyss.

## SINISTER CULTS, WORTHY ADVERSARIES, AND BUMBLING FOOLS SEEKING THE MAP AND THE BOOK

There are a few who seek the book and map. The table below is offered as mere suggestions.

d8 – choose or roll 4 times, repetition increases power	
<b>1</b>	<p><b>The Cult of the Dark One of the Deep</b></p> <p>A shadowy and sinister group of undersea creatures and their human allies who worship Thanatos through his servant, an ancient, eldritch power from the depths, perhaps the last vampire queen of Taymora. They seek the map to the sunken cities of Taymora to locate a powerful artefact that, they believe, will allow them to awaken their dark mistress. Their leader, High Priestess Mara, is a strikingly beautiful triton woman with a hypnotic voice and piercing gaze. A magnetic presence and a skilled sorceress, she uses her powers to charm and manipulate anyone who stands in her way. Prone to violent rages, she does not take well to being challenged or refused.</p>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>The Night Pearl Society</b></p> <p>A group of cutthroat sailors and ruthless pirates who have banded together to seek the riches of Taymora. They are brutal and unsubtle in imposing their will. Their leader, Captain Cyprak, is a stout, muscular man with a thick beard and wild eyes. He is a zealous believer in the riches of the Taymoran ruins and the secrets they hold. He bears the <i>Night Pearl</i>, an artefact he recovered as a youth from a dive in Sarroch. Attuned to the holy places of Nyx, it grants him visions of the cities as they were, under the night sky, when he sails close to a ruin of a city-state that served Night.</p>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>The Order of the Black Star</b></p> <p>This secret organisation of wizards, from various nations, is fanatically focused on dark magic and necromancy. They believe, rightly or wrongly, that the <i>Book of the Dead</i> and its map hold the key to unlocking ancient powers that have long been forgotten. The leader of the Order is an enigmatic figure known only as the Black Star. Rumours of connections to the Black Eagle Barony and the slavers of the Iron Ring, through wizards in their leadership or employ, may be just that. The order is secretive to the point of total paranoia.</p>
<b>4</b>	<p><b>The Arcane Academy of Alchemos</b></p> <p>Despite its distance from the Sunlit Sea, this small but powerful organisation of Alphatian wizards is seeking the book and map for research purposes, and to keep it from falling into the wrong hands. The head of the academy, Archmage Althadak, a mage of the school of Water, is a stoic and kindly figure who values knowledge above all else. He believes Taymora and its secrets are best left alone, to be studied by a select and elite few in the confines of his library in the University of Alchemos. They have a “research institute” in Seahome on Alfeisle.</p>



**d8 – choose or roll 4 times, repetition increases power**

<b>5</b>	<p><b>The Company of the Crimson Tide</b></p> <p>This pirate company with connections to Jaibul is involved in providing transport for the slavers in Karameikos. Unknown to even these associates, the ships are captained by vampires, progeny of Lady Eris Sanguinantis, the head of the group. The vampire leader is obsessed with power and control and wants nothing more than to be a great vampire queen ruling over the seas and island nations, like those of ancient Taymora. The map and book are for her tools to gain more power. Lady Eris is a master manipulator and is aware of several of the other groups, and can often be found playing one side against the other.</p>
<b>6</b>	<p><b>The Society of the Nightblades</b></p> <p>A group of assassins, worshippers of Nyx who believe that the map, if found, will release a powerful servant of their enemy Thanatos. They are the rabid foes of the Cult of the Dark One of the Deep, and murder anyone who gets too close to them as colourfully as possible. The group is led by an ancient Nosferatu.</p>
<b>7</b>	<p><b>The Darokinian College of Cartographers</b></p> <p>This group of academics working out of Athenos specialises in creating and studying maps, and they are desperate to get their hands on the map to sunken Taymora, for mundane reasons of academic prestige. The head of the college, Professor Belinda Eronica, is a scatter-brained and absent-minded scholar who is convinced that the map will salvage her failing career and give her an eternal reputation as the discoverer of a lost civilisation. Ironically, she has the best clue to the book and map's whereabouts but has misfiled it in a romantic novel she never finished reading. She has enlisted the help of a group of adventurous students to retrieve the map for her, whose life expectancy now finds itself radically shortened.</p>
<b>8</b>	<p><b>The Children of the Sun-blessed Waters</b></p> <p>A fraternity of undersea dwellers of all species, and a few surface-dwelling allies, who are aware that the book and map exist and would very much like to see them destroyed. They are deeply worried about the Cult of the Dark One of the Deep and the spread of its power that they perceive. Their leader is Gorthan, a sea giant from the Royster Trench who is plagued by nightmares of the vampire queen.</p>



# WHERE ARE THE MAP AND THE BOOK?

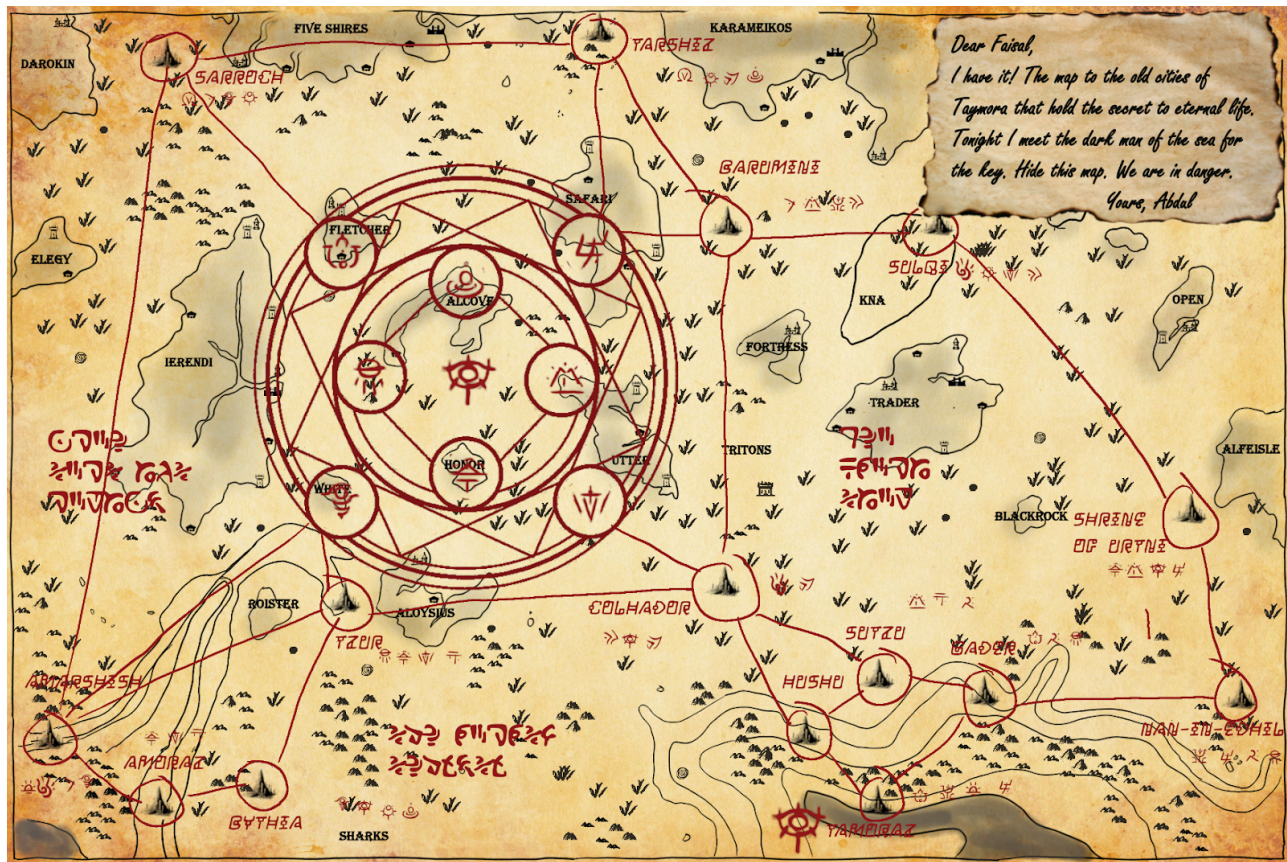
Once again these are only suggestions.

**d8 - roll twice, first is a decoy**

1	Thalkor's Lair, amongst his hoard, in the Malpheggi Swamp.
2	In a chest in a dead assassin's hideout in Athenos.
3	Buried in a pirates' treasure chest in the Turtles' Tears.
4	Forgotten in the storeroom of a halfling bookdealer in Shireton.
5	In the heavily guarded vault of a Thyatian nobleman in Thyatis city.
6	In the <i>White Eagle</i> , flying ship of a reclusive Alpathian archmage.
7	In transit, soon to be delivered to one Lord Bargle in the Black Eagle Barony.
8	In a shipwreck, lost in the Darkweeds between Honor and Utter Islands.

I hope this gives you enough to start the search for the sunken ruins of Taymora.

## The Map





## APPENDIX

“So, you’ve swum to  
a Taymoran ruin...”

by Senarch



*Undersea ruin, produced from Midjourney with prompts from Senarch*

The purpose of this appendix is to quickly generate ideas for a Taymoran ruin adventurers can explore. The next issue of *THRESHOLD* will contain my article, “*To build an Undersea Hex*” which includes ruin creation tables that can be used to determine ruin size and the environment it is in or have chosen them in advance.

The seabed is littered with smaller Taymoran ruins, and these tables are best suited to those, though they can be used as inspiration to make town or city ruins. Roll multiple times on the first table in the case of larger ruins.

Think of these underwater ruins as the skeletons of what once was. The vast majority

of what survived the Cataclysm and the ravages of time underwater is bones, structural walls, now covered in coral or vegetation, and home to a wide variety of sea life. Depth and environment will have a big impact on what is around (see the encounter tables in the previously mentioned article). The most likely structures to survive are the conical towers, from those of each village to the huge structures housing the nosferatu and vampire sorcerer kings and queens. Many are badly damaged by both war and cataclysm. They are likely partially buried, in sand, silt or rubble. Some may have air pockets, magical or otherwise, especially in lower, buried levels, but many will not.



You can use these tables in combination with online random dungeon map generators. Whatever such a generator creates (on multiple levels if you wish) is what is structurally sound, hermetically sealed perhaps, even if flooded, and therefore forms a “Dungeon”.

Population will include creatures from the environment, undead relevant to T1 and dwellers from T2.

T1 d20 What remains?	
1	A library, flooded or in an air pocket
2	Fortifications home to a garrison
3	A pleasure palace or brothel
4	Naval structures, a seaport
5	An astronomical observatory
6	A shrine, temple, or monastery
7	The labyrinthine remains of a slum
8	Mercantile quarter, shops, storerooms
9	The dwellings of nobles
10	The workshops of artisans
11	An arena or hippodrome
12	A statue-filled garden or plaza
13	Offices of the state
14	A bathhouse complex
15	An academy or university
16	A secret refuge of spies or rebels
17	A laboratory or research center
18	A prison and torture chambers
19	A treasury or hidden cache
20	A sorcerer-lord’s chambers

T2 d20 What dwells therein?	
1	A vile coterie of sea-ghouls
2	A deranged wight pirate-king
3	A decadent drug-addled cult
4	An overly friendly hermit
5	A cabal of devilfish spies
6	A trapped lich and its undead minions
7	Sailors digging up secrets for their vampire captain
8	Something(s) cunning and monstrous will hunt, corral, and devour intruders
9	Idolaters worshipping a sea monster
10	A party of adventurers plundering
11	A necromancer gathering minions
12	A shaman cleansing the unholy
13	Mutated refugees and renegades
14	Warring elemental forces
15	The whispering, devouring darkness
16	Tentacled monstrosities of a possibly hallucinogenic nature
17	A sorcerer seeking truths
18	A zealous lawful guardian
19	Mutated, were or undead sea life
20	A litter of baby behemoths

**d8 What stands out?**

1	Corridors narrowed by rubble
2	Ornate frescoes and arcane runes
3	Magical lighting attracting strange fish
4	Heartbreaking signs of lost humanity
5	Epic grandeur, pomp and scale
6	Cold and darkness
7	Lingering signs of violent ends
8	Vibrant life covering forgotten stone

**d12 What is the challenge?**

1	Prevent something from getting out
2	Investigate disappearances nearby
3	Retrieve an artifact
4	Prevent a ritual or experiment
5	Hunt and kill a monster or fiend
6	Spy and report back
7	Gather historical knowledge
8	Track a fugitive or lost soul
9	Lift a curse, restore balance
10	Foil an incursion or invasion
11	Rescue trapped allies
12	Negotiate a boon, truce or alliance

**d8 What's the complication?**

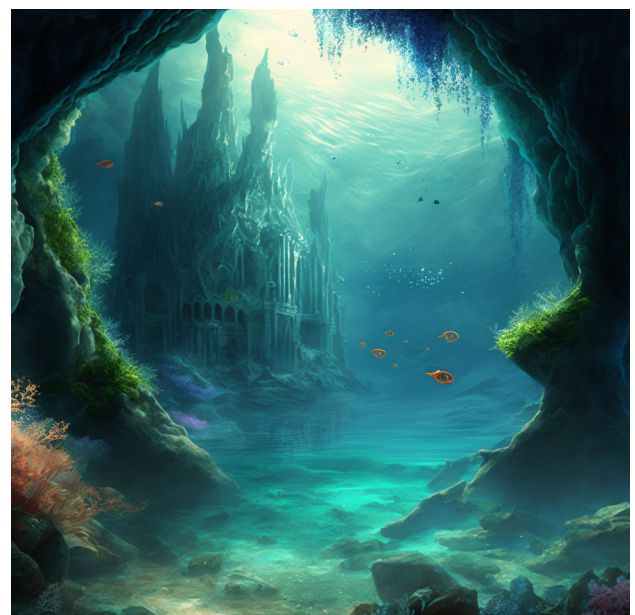
1	Fiendish traps, unsound structures
2	Leaking poisons or magic potions
3	Hybrid or mutated sea life
4	Poisonous or carnivorous plants
5	Dangerous forbidden knowledge
6	Magical guardian constructs
7	Madness inducing illusions
8	Cursed items, haunted relics

Use the bounty table below only if the dungeon or ruin is large enough to warrant it, otherwise use normal treasure tables for the monsters you rolled/selected.

**d12 What bounty awaits?**

1	Masterworks of a famed craftsman
2	A named magical weapon
3	vvA dangerous spell-book or scroll
4	An unforgettable work of art
5	The staff/wand of a famed sorcerer
6	Royal treasure
7	The ring of a Necromancer lord
8	The armor of a general
9	All you need to try necromancy
10	A very tempting but cursed item
11	A unique magical artifact
12	A magical weapon of mass destruction

I hope this is enough to tickle your imagination. See example ideas on the following page. As usual, you can completely ignore rolls that make no sense and imagine something better.







## Examples

### The village of Ga-xul

In the shallows on a wild stretch of the Darokinian coast, lie the ruins of a few houses and out-buildings around two conical towers at either end of a long-house, once an academy for scribes, 50' (15 meters) below the surface. Jellyfish swim over the ruins, while the outer houses are home to giant crabs, occasionally hunted by small parties of tritons and dolphins. The academy is avoided, as it is too eerie. Glowing inscriptions lead to a cellar level, currently home to several devilfish scouting the area. They plan to use a ritual to awaken the skeletons and zombies of the scribes. The school treasury is haunted by the wraith of the academy head, who died while seeking to plunder it and flee.



*'Undead servants of the devilfish', original digital artwork by Senarch*

### The Spear of Amarshish Fortress (8 levels)

A sea giant hero has not returned from scouting this location. It is a large, fortified outpost of the city state of Amarshish, subsided deep into the Roister Trench, but well-preserved, though the deeper one goes the less safe the structure becomes. The area is very dark and cold, high-pressured, with little sea life nearby, possibly due to the schools of ghoulish fish swimming in and out of the fort from openings and cracks in the walls.

Skeleton guards march along the walls and corridors, trapped in an undead travesty of their former roles. Deeper still oozes line the ceilings, and traps guard the prison and haunted torture chambers. In the darkest depths, tentacled horrors await to devour the unwary, amongst the royal treasures of a fleeing Amarshish princess.







# TERRORS OF THE SEA OF DREAD

by Cab

FROM THE JOURNAL  
OF AVERYX,

*Inquisitor for  
the Sphere of Time,  
Finder of lost Immortals,  
Patron of  
Alphatia in Majesty,  
Futures, Investigations,  
Resources and Expansion  
(AIM FIRE).*

## I. ON THE SUBJECT OF RIVALRY

In hardball it is Sundsvaal Freeman vs. Draco Rex. In the Thyatian arena it is the Retarii vs. the Samntites. And who can forget the fabulous era of annual contests between Strongheart and Warduke for the crown of Ierendi. In sports enduring rivalries captivate and thrill us most. To Immortals the greatest sport of all is the quest to join our ranks. And as an Alphatian, I can say with great pride that nobody does rivalries like we do.

The greatest, most enduring, longest lasting and (in my view) most important was the centuries-long political standoff between Gargantua and Thaneg, of which the Sea of Dread still shows the metaphysical scars. Each was a great Alphatian in the truest expansionist sense – Gargantua claiming rule over new territories in the far north of Norwold with apprentices as obsessed with creating giant creatures as he was, and Thaneg settling on what would become known as the Isle of Dread with a cadre of geologically inclined spellcasters and a lot of clone

spells. While it may appear that each should have little to do with the other, they fought over funding, military and economic support from the Imperial crown, and favour among members of the Grand Council, and their political machinations are only rivalled by gross physical intrusions into each other's projects.

And it was one such intrusion by Gargantua right into the heart of Thaneg's operation that so changed the nature of the sea that, as a result, it became known as the Sea of Dread. A temporal bomb of such shocking intensity that the denizens thereof are now forever beholden to those changes – residents from the Sunlit Sea in the north to those of the Jungle Coast in the south, from Thanegia to Furmenglaive, their lives all radically different as a result. The fauna of the ocean is now defined by that event.

The events Averyx refers to, and which he will go on to describe in more detail, define much of the fauna of the Sea of Dread. Gargantua and his followers' interference with Thaneg's work was never intended to stop Thaneg cloning prehistoric creatures, the intent was to make the continuation of that work to its completion (and Thaneg's ascent to immortality) impossible. In this effort Gargantua was spectacularly successful – and the fauna of the Sea of Dread remains affected to this day.

Simply, in and around the Isle of Dread, creatures native to the Cretaceous or Jurassic eras (or Dinosaur Times, in Mystara terms) are most common, whereas as one travels from the coastal waters around the Thanegioth Archipelago to the (relatively benign) waters of Minrothad and Ierendi, more modern forms of marine life become dominant, but stranger (and often more dangerous) creatures from earlier periods

are still found. The waters immediately around the Isle of Dread team with life forms native to the time period of *Tyrannosaurus rex* and *Triceratops horridus*, while around Minrothad most creatures are modern but occasional specimens that originate in the Carboniferous era (5 times further back even than the Cretaceous) are found. Skilled navigators understand that while different areas may, on the surface, seem entirely similar, the dangers of those zones may be radically different.

It is the Cretaceous zone, and the creatures that inhabit it, that will be described first.



## CRETACEOUS ZONE CREATURES

### Archelon

AC:	2
HD:	15
Movement (swimming):	120' (40')
(land):	30' (10')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	2d8
Number Appearing:	0 (1d4)
Save As:	F8
Morale:	8
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	2
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	1,650

The archelon is a giant sea turtle, feeding on fish, crustaceans, and other slow-moving marine creatures. Other than the dragon turtle, it is the largest known turtle to have lived, measuring up to 15 feet in length and weighing over 4,000 pounds. The archelon's shell is its primary defence, protecting it from predators and other dangers in the ocean. However, if threatened, Archelon can use its powerful jaws to deliver a bite.

The archelon is rarely encountered on land and is primarily a sea creature, only returning to land to lay its eggs. It is a solitary creature and tends to avoid conflict unless provoked or its nesting site disturbed. Despite its massive size, the archelon is relatively peaceful, and sailors of the Sea of Dread are known to view them as a bringer of good luck, and larger, and distinctively marked specimens can become well known among the crews of merchant ships, who look out for them on each ocean crossing.





## Aristonectes

AC:	3
HD:	10*
Movement (swimming):	20' (40')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	2d6 + special
Number Appearing:	0 (1)
Save As:	F5
Morale:	9
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	2
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	1,750

The aristonectes is a massive marine reptile, a plesiosaur with a long, robust neck. It can grow up to 40' long, with a powerful, extended neck and four thick flippers. Its body is protected by tough, scaly skin, and its jaws are tightly packed with conical teeth. The aristonectes is a solitary creature and is rarely encountered by humans. It spends most of its time swimming far from shore, near the ocean surface, seeking out dense shoals of small fish and shellfish.

The aristonectes is usually a peaceful filter feeder, grabbing mouthfuls of prey and filtering them out of seawater using its teeth. If it mis-times this with a larger creature, however, its bite can easily crush bones, and it is capable of dragging a full-grown human underwater with ease. While not primarily preying on such large creatures, if they do catch a human or demi-human they typically take them to deeper water to drown them before consuming. A victim of an aristonectes's bite must make a saving throw vs. paralysis or be trapped, and while they take only a small amount of



damage each round (1d8) from being crushed, normal rules for drowning also apply. Once trapped, a character can only be freed by either killing the aristonectes or forcing it to fail a morale check.



## ELASMOSAURUS

AC:	6
HD:	6+3
Movement (swimming):	90' (30')
Attacks:	1 bite/1 tail slap
Damage:	2d6/1d8
Number Appearing:	0 (1d6)
Save As:	F4
Morale:	8
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	350

The elasmosaurus is a massive sea creature resembling a plesiosaur, with an extremely long neck and a relatively small head. It can reach lengths of up to 40 feet and weighs several tons. The elasmosaurus is a predator of fish, squid, and other sea creatures. It is not aggressive towards humans but can become territorial and defensive if its territory is threatened. The elasmosaurus attacks with a powerful bite from its jaws and can also use its long tail to strike its enemies. Despite its massive size, it is surprisingly agile and can manoeuvre quickly in the water. While typically solitary it is most often encountered with others of its species, gathering to hunt great shoals of fish and squid, its head darting in to grab individual prey. In such scenarios, the elasmosaurus becomes far less discriminating in prey selection, and can in its haste attack much larger creatures.

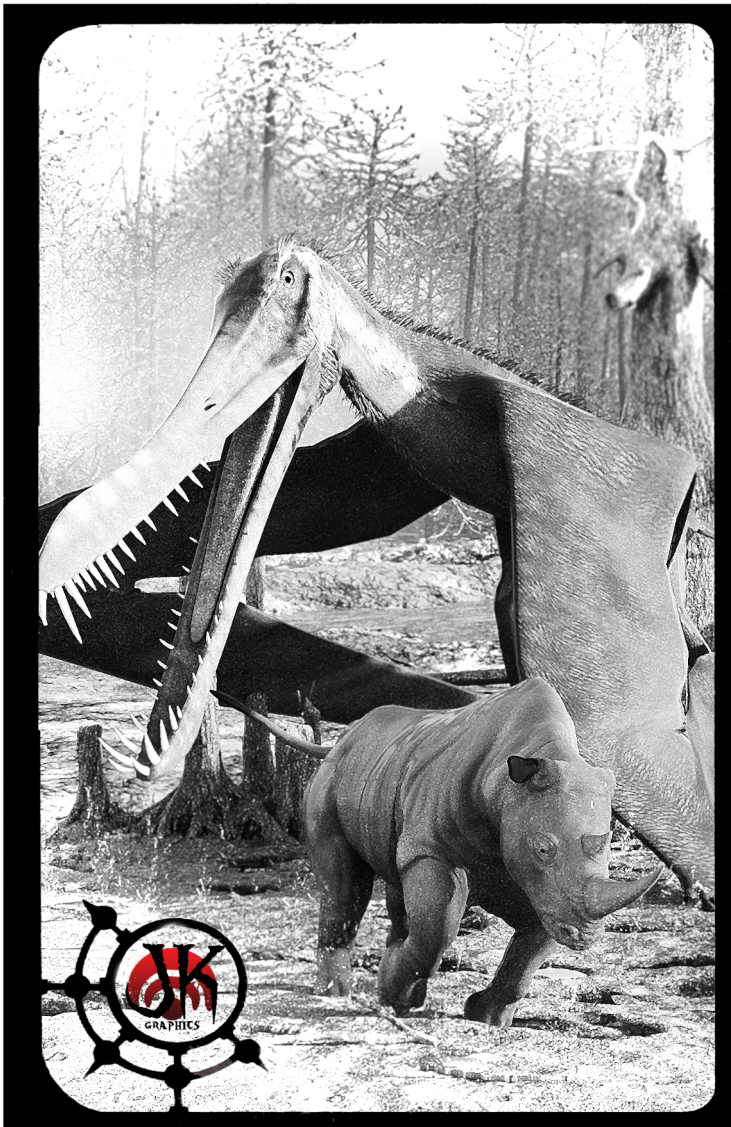


## Hatzegopteryx

AC:	5
HD:	13
Movement (flying):	180' (60')
(walking):	180' (60')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	6d6
Number Appearing:	0 (1d2)
Save As:	F7
Morale:	9
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	2
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	1,350

The hatzegopteryx is a huge (50'-wingspan), long-necked azhdarchid pterosaur, and while it is not specifically a marine animal it hunts across islands of the Sea of Dread. On those islands, it is the alpha predator of small- and medium-sized animals. Somewhat more heavily built but slightly smaller than the quetzalcoatlus, it is as capable of running down prey on land as it is at attacking from the air, having a wide, sharp beak with which it can make a devastating attack. It can swallow human-sized prey on 18–20 on an attack roll, and a dwarf-sized or smaller creature on a 17–20.

While perhaps not as fearsome as many land-based predators of its era, its capacity to launch from flat ground using all four of its limbs to push off into the air, after which it can glide for hundreds of miles between islands almost effortlessly, has allowed it to become the undisputed alpha predator across a wide area.





## Mosasaurus

AC:	3
HD:	15
Movement (swimming):	180' (60')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	6d6
Number Appearing:	0 (1)
Save As:	F8
Morale:	12
Treasure Type:	Vx2
Intelligence:	2
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	1,650

The mosasaurus is one of the most massive ocean-going predators of its own or any era. It can grow up to 50 feet in length, with four powerful flippers and a strong tail allowing it to reach a shocking speed for its scale, forcing its massive torpedo-like bulk

through the water with enormous force. It has a powerful bite that can crush its prey, and while it can swallow human-sized or smaller victims whole on an attack roll of 19–20 it usually prefers to make multiple bite attacks to immobilise or kill its prey first. The mosasaurus is a solitary predator that hunts in the deep waters of the ocean, preferring to ambush prey from below, but it is capable of chasing down all but the swiftest prey. It may occasionally venture close to shore if there appears to be prey there. It has a thick, scaly hide that protects it from most attacks. And while it is an air-breathing reptile, it can spend prolonged periods sleeping on or near the sea floor, preferring broken ground such as submerged ruins to make its lair. Therein the excreted and regurgitated indigestible remains of prey may often be found, including any treasures they carried.



## Thalassotitan

AC:	5
HD:	15*
Movement(swimming):	120' (40')
Attacks:	1 tail slap or 1 bite
Damage:	4d8 or 2d10
Number Appearing:	1
Save As:	F8
Morale:	11
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	2
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	2,700

The thalassotitan is a massive aquatic reptile, similar to mosasaur in being able to propel its massive, torpedo-like bulk through the water with great force facilitated by four powerful flippers and an enormous tail. It is one of the largest

marine reptiles known, with a length of over 50 feet and a weight of over 70 tons. The thalassotitan can strike its enemies with its tail, as well as attacking with a large head full of sharp teeth. It prefers to bask in surface waters, stalking the great kelp and sargasso forests for prey, able to lie motionless therein for hours at a time, usually attacking any prey with surprise (1-4 on 1d6). It can swallow man-sized or smaller prey on an attack roll of 19-20, and if it succeeds in doing so it typically retreats to deeper water to digest its meal.

While not typically keen to hunt humans, it tends to view any ships passing through its hunting ground as another large predator threatening its territory. It will usually respond with loud grunts and snarls, threatening its foe, and if the ship continues through its territory it will align itself with it under the water and start beating on the hull with its tail. The damage it inflicts can make crewmen fall into the water, and causes significant damage to the ship.





## Tusoteuthis

AC:	5
HD:	15**
Movement (swimming):	240' (80')
Attacks:	2 tentacles/1 bite
Damage:	1d8/1d8/5d8
Number Appearing:	1
Save As:	F8
Morale:	10
Treasure Type:	H
Intelligence:	3
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	3,750

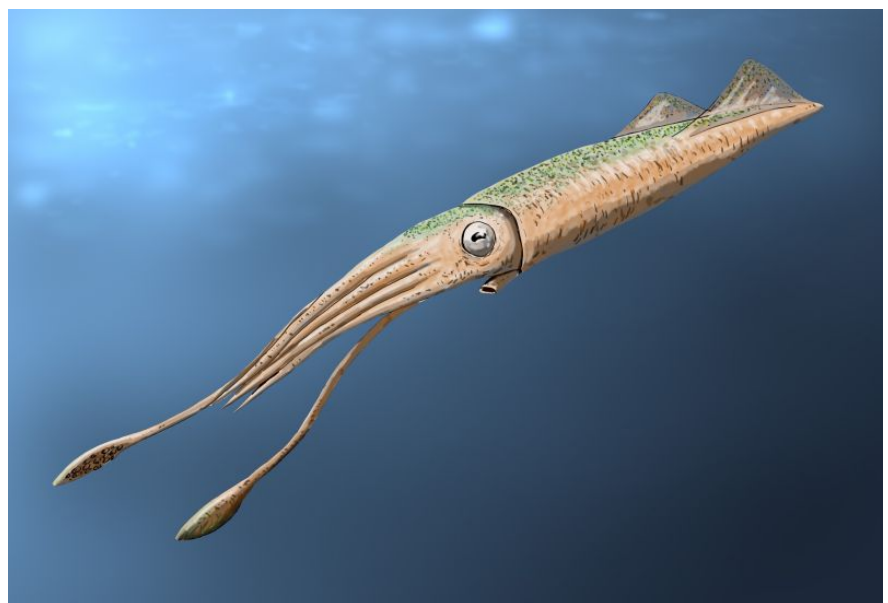
The tusoteuthis is a huge squid (50' long, with a further reach of 50') that hunts the deep sea. It is known for its long, whip-like tentacles used to snare prey, and its powerful beak that can crush even the strongest of bones. Tusoteuthis is an intelligent creature, and while not aggressive it is an opportunistic predator and will treat adventurers as prey, if the odds seem in its favour.

Encountering a tusoteuthis in the deep can be a deadly affair. Its tentacles can reach up to 50' in length, and it can use them to pull even large creatures towards its beak. Creatures thus struck with tentacles are, next round, drawn back to the mouth of the creature to be bitten. Its beak is strong enough to easily crush most foes, and on a bite attack roll of 19–20 a victim of up to ogre-size is swallowed whole. It has exceptional (90') infravision, often allowing it to see potential prey well before it can be detected, and usually it

will slowly manoeuvre to a point where it can attack with surprise. Unwary foes will be surprised on a 1–5 on 1d6, and once it has taken prey it retreats to the ocean depths.

The tusoteuthis is known to be attracted to light, hunting many of the bioluminescent organisms of the depths. In the darkness of night, it rises to shallow waters, hunting prey by the shadows cast in moonlight.

Individuals of the species may live to a great age, many being over 200 years old. They prefer to make a lair in the crushing depths of the deepest parts of the ocean, where they gather all of the light-reflecting materials they find. In amongst shards of glass, iridescent shells and other valueless trinkets elderly specimens may amass vast hoards of treasure, equal to those of dragons.





## Tylosaurus



AC:	4
HD:	12+2
Movement (swimming):	150' (50')
Attacks:	1 bite/1 tail slap
Damage:	2d8/2d6
Number Appearing:	0 (1)
Save As:	F7
Morale:	9
Treasure Type:	Vx2
Intelligence:	2
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	1,350

The tylosaurus is a huge predator, measuring up to 35 feet long and resembling a massive crocodile, but with powerful flippers in place of legs and a great tail closer to that of a whale. While it can leave the water, it does so only to lay eggs, and is a specialist predator of estuaries and shallow waters around coral reefs, where it is a cunning hunter with many different strategies to catch prey. Typically, it relies upon its incredible speed and strength to catch prey, which includes other large marine reptiles. But it can also hide amongst detritus after storms, and will conceal itself among wreckage from sunken ships, even among survivors, waiting until larger numbers of rescuers turn up to provide more prey.

The tylosaurus tends to keep a clear ledge or cave within the reef where it takes freshly killed prey to store until it has aged to suit its tastes. While the creature itself does not value treasure, the belongings of victims are often to be found there.





## Xiphactinus

AC:	5
HD:	8
Movement (swimming):	180' (60')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	2d10
Number Appearing:	0 (1d4)
Save As:	F4
Morale:	8
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	650

The xiphactinus is a massive prehistoric fish that can grow up to 20 feet in length. It has a long, slender body with sharp teeth and a powerful jaw capable of crushing the shellfish it prefers to feed upon. It is a fierce predator and often hunts in small packs. Despite its size and predatory nature, xiphactinus rarely attacks prey as large as humans, preferring to prey on smaller turtles and shellfish, which it can crush with ease. It has however been known to take speculative bites from slower-moving adventurers that in some ways resemble their typical prey, especially any armoured characters on or near the sea bed.



## 2. THE TEMPORAL LENS

Other than the near unsolvable issue of linguistics (how one refers to something one intends to have already done yesterday in one's own future, is more of a crisis of syntax and grammar than continuity), perhaps the hardest things to understand about time is that it is both linear and, well, not. Mortals frequently refer to the sands of time, as if each grain is an event flowing through the aperture of an hourglass, a perception based on the quite extraordinary stability of Mystaran time enforced by the hierarchs of our sphere. If left unpoliced, being unconstrained by thought, liberated from the ordering of matter, and free of the requirement to dissipate the chaos of energy, time is a very different entity indeed, and the past and future themselves become malleable realities. But this understanding is dangerous, and mortal minds cannot fully assimilate it. Thus the most potent artifacts of time, those that confer such understanding, are also by far the most dangerous.

This brings me to the Temporal Lens, an ancient, pure diamond sphere formed by the collapsing matter of the final stars of a now long-dead universe, endowed with the potency of a whole pantheon of Immortals of Time, created such that their own existence might outlast their own reality. The device itself had to possess an Immortal's perception of time, thus any mortal who holds it can likewise perceive and manipulate time. Thaneg pinned much of his hope on this artifact, making its theft, destruction, or even mere subversion a priority for Gargantua.

Thaneg had adventured to the edge of the solar system to find the Lens. With his apprentices and allies he outwitted a self-sustaining colony of meks on the outermost planet, Nyx, and had returned with their prize. He could now obtain specimens from any time in Mystara's history for his cloning projects, and thus his quest for immortality (involving the creation of a unique environment with unique inhabitants from vastly different eras) accelerated rapidly, along with his wider influence in the Sea of Dread area. This also drew in more investors from mainland Alphatia, and the rate of speculative trade and colonisation projects therein increased tenfold. For a few short years it appeared as if the future of Alphatia on Mystara would be a civilisation settled around all of the shores of the Sea of Dread – an alternative reality I may visit, one day.

To Gargantua, who had relied on the income from precisely the same settlers and traders to come towards Norwold to support his own project involving super-sized creatures, this was a disaster. At this time, it was unlikely that even the might of Alphatia could support both projects. Thus, the stage was set – a battle for control of the Temporal Lens, with the winner aspiring to claim his place in the ranks of the Immortals.



## JURASSIC ZONE CREATURES

### Dearc

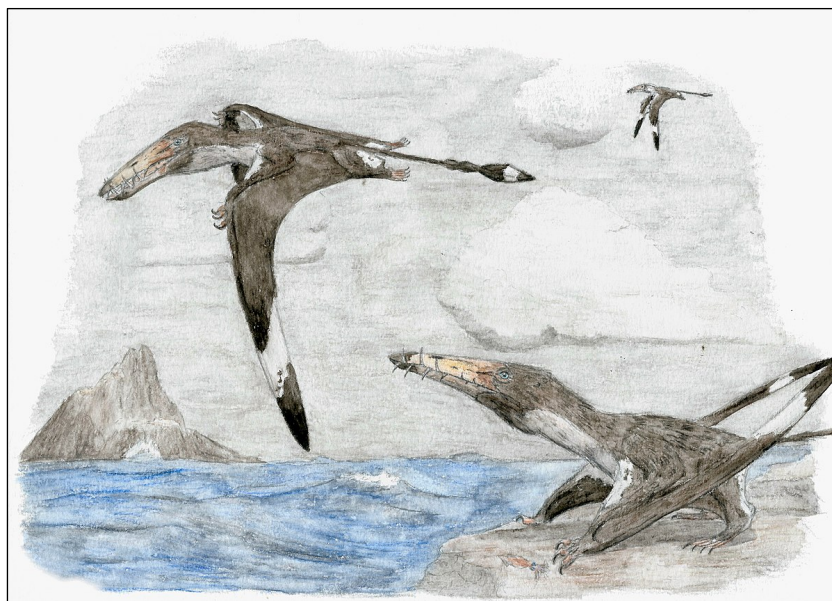
AC:	6
HD:	4**
Movement (flying):	240' (80')
(swimming):	180' (60')
(land):	120' (40')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	1d6+special
Number Appearing:	0 (4d8)
Save As:	F2
Morale:	9
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	125

The dearc is a medium-sized pterodactyl, with a wing span of around 9'. Its body is coloured in a way reminiscent of a penguin or guillemot, with a black back and white chest, and its beak is thronged with many jagged teeth from which prey cannot easily

escape. It thrives both on the surface of the ocean and on land, usually roosting on islands and cliff tops that are hard to access by any creatures that cannot fly.

It primarily preys on fish and cephalopods, which it picks out when flying above the ocean. When it spots a shoal, it chooses targets therein and dives towards them at great speed, reaching up to twice its normal flying speed in a dive, tucking in to a tight form allowing it to attack pretty up to 10' below the ocean's surface by surprise (1-4 on 1d6).

The dearc prefers small prey, but when hungry it will swoop down to attack sailors on the deck of a ship, tearing great chunks of flesh from them with its horrible bite attack. Its jagged teeth leave wounds that bleed profusely, meaning that unless an injured character stops to bind the wound it will continue to bleed for 2d6 rounds, inflicting 1 point of damage per round. Thus if a wound is not rapidly attended to (taking 2 rounds to bandage) it may be fatal, and a flock of dearc can thus be a serious threat.



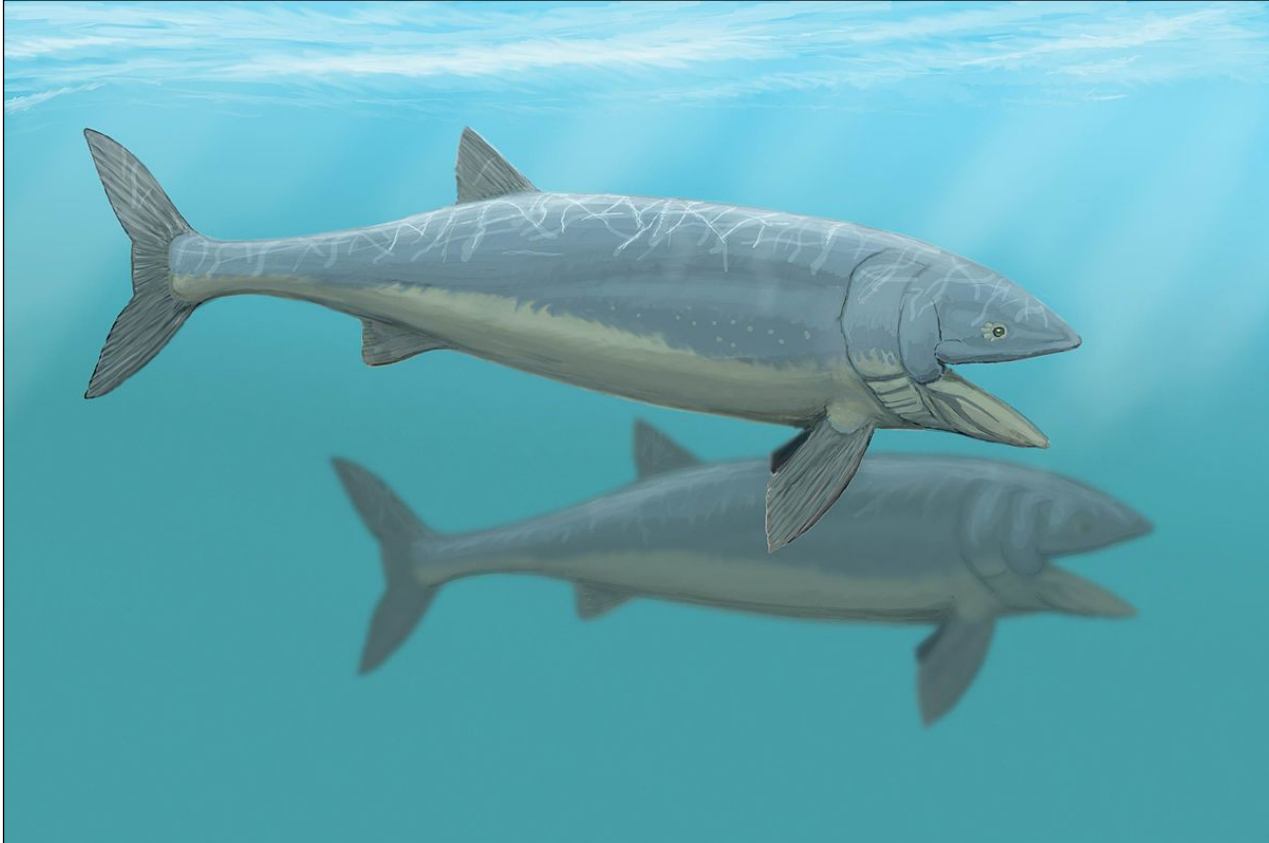
## Leedsichthys

AC:	3
HD:	19
Movement (swimming):	180' (60')
Attacks:	1 ram
Damage:	4d4
Number Appearing:	0 (4d8)
Save As:	F2
Morale:	7
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	2,250

This colossal (up to 90') creature may be the largest bony fish to ever live. It has a huge, gaping mouth held open most of the time, as it sedately swims just beneath the ocean surface filter-feeding. It consumes vast amounts of plankton, but rarely takes prey

bigger than small fry. It is a gentle giant, and none have ever been known to attack humans or humanoids of any sort. It has been known to accidentally capsize smaller fishing vessels, and if attacked it may ram opponents before invariably swimming away.

Sailors crossing the Sea of Dread often view the sightings of leedsichthys as a good omen, these huge, harmless creatures frequently following in the wake of sailing ships, attracted to their phosphorescent wakes.





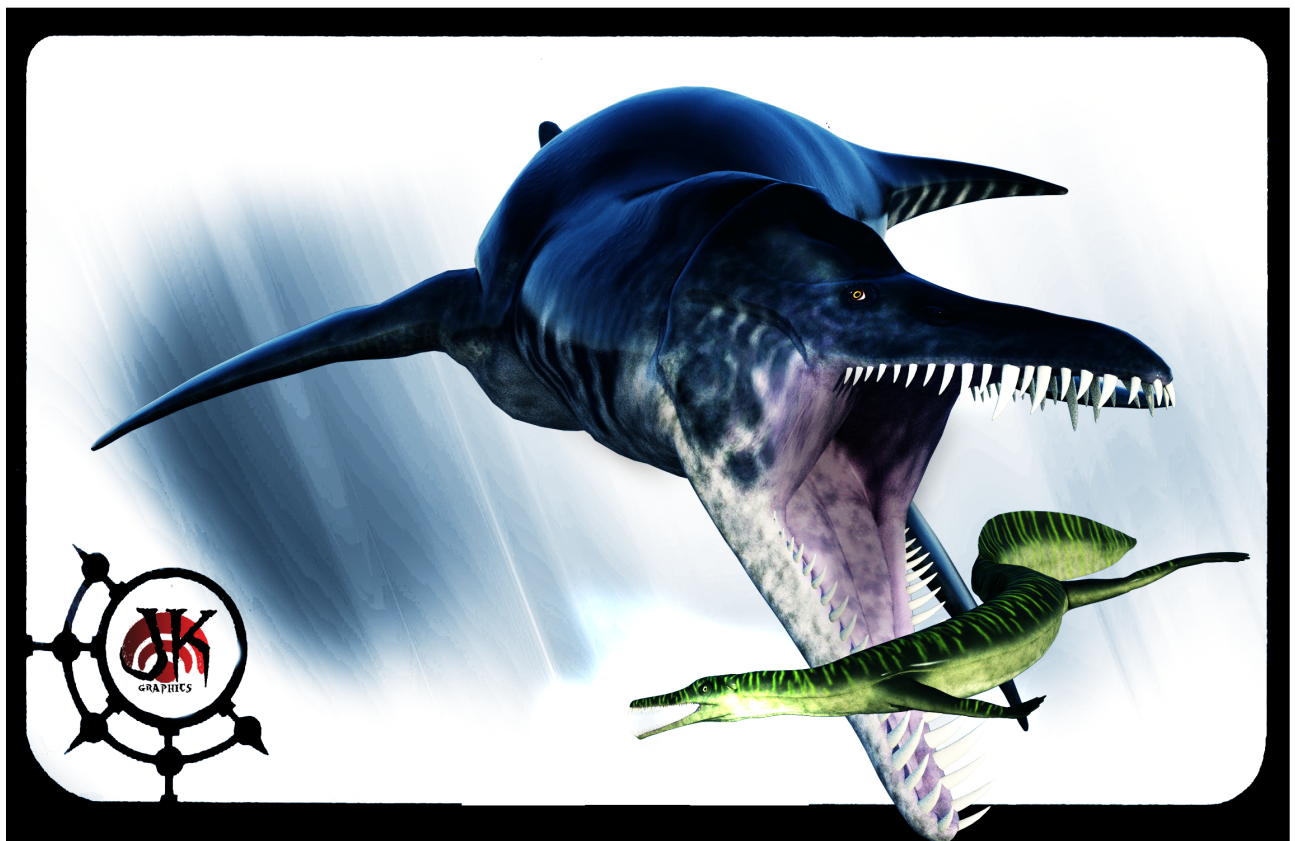
## Liopleurodon

AC:	4
HD:	20*
Movement (swimming)	150' (50')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	4d8
Number Appearing:	0 (1)
Save As:	F9
Morale:	10
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	3
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	4,175

One of the most dangerous predators of the Jurassic zone, the liopleurodon is an enormous (up to 25' long) pliosaur, essentially resembling a flipped crocodile of immense scale. It is primarily an ambush predator, preferring to hunt prey near the surface of the ocean, most often smaller

marine reptiles as they surface for air. When attacking from below it can gain surprise on a 1–3 on 1d6, often then retreating for a short while before returning to surprise its foe again. It can swallow man-sized or smaller creatures on a hit roll of 19 or 20, and swallowed creatures suffer 2d8 acid damage and a further 1d8 crushing damage due to the abrasive action of gastroliths (rocks swallowed to crush food) in the creature's stomach.

The liopleurodon is rather more cunning than most other marine reptiles, possessing slightly more than rudimentary intelligence. It is capable of strategic thinking, and often plans its attacks on ships with great care, choosing to nudge a vessel when a sailor is precariously placed, falling into the water to be lost without anyone on deck noticing that they are absent until it is too late.





## Pliosaurus



AC:	3
HD:	12
Movement (swimming):	120' (40')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	3d6
Number Appearing:	0 (1)
Save As:	F5
Morale:	8
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	1,250

The pliosaurus is a large, powerful marine reptile with a crocodile-like head, short neck, and long, broad flippers. It can grow up to 40 feet in length and is a formidable predator. Its jaws are filled with sharp, conical teeth, and it can deliver a powerful bite to crush the shells of its prey. Despite its size and strength, the pliosaurus is not as fast as some other predators, favouring ambush over chasing down prey, usually attacking from beneath (and when doing so it gains surprise on a 1–4 on 1d6). While it rarely attacks humans and demi-humans, it can easily mistake small boats for prey animals, and has been known to attack those rowing to or away from islands in the Sea of Dread.





## TEMNODONTOSAURUS

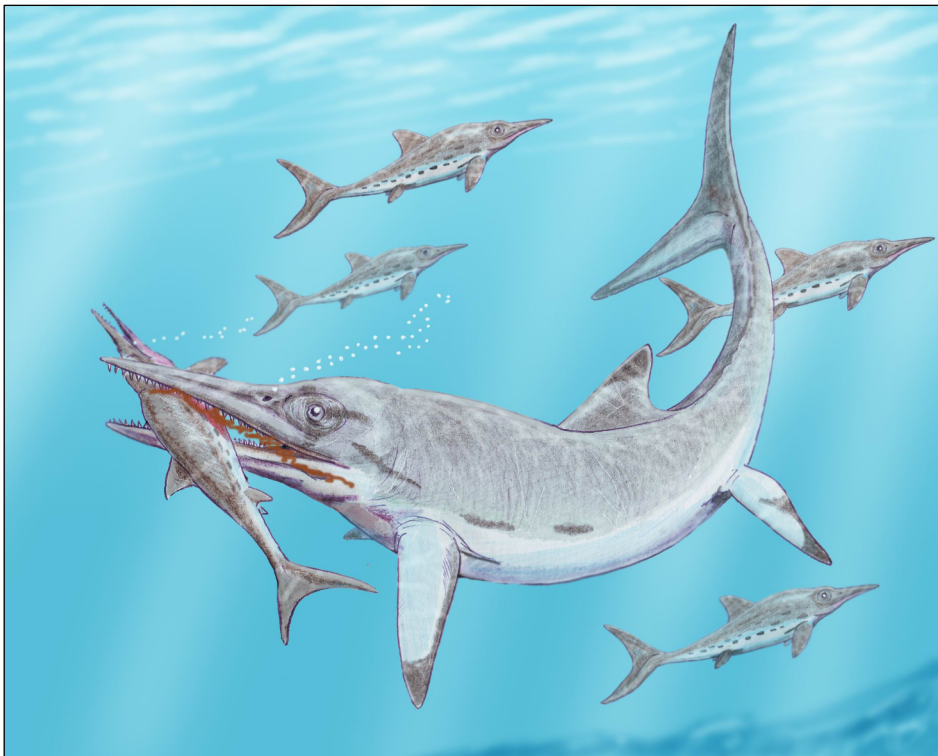
AC:	4
HD:	8**
Movement (swimming):	180' (60')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	4d6
Number Appearing:	0 (4d4)
Save As:	F8
Morale:	8
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	3
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	1,750

The temnodontosaurus is a large marine reptile, one of the larger ichthyosaurs (reptiles resembling fish) measuring up to 35 feet in length with a streamlined body with powerful jaws and sharp teeth. It has long, slender jaws filled with sharp-pointed teeth, which are usually used to catch fish and squid. It has a lifestyle similar to that of large dolphin or killer whale species,

forming small pods that hunt cooperatively, led by an older female.

It is a fast and agile swimmer, capable of catching prey in an open chase. Likewise, when threatened it can escape at great speed. It has excellent vision and can track its prey even in low light conditions. It can communicate with others of its species up to 1 mile away, using ultrasound, and can use the same sensitivity to sound to determine if creatures in the water with it are hostile (effectively having the ability to detect enemies in a 240' radius).

While not typically thought of as predators of humans and demi-humans, it is an intelligent and wily hunter, able to adapt its feeding strategy to new prey. Whole settlements on isolated islands near the Isle of Dread have been lost to the temnodontosaurus, which can observe and learn from the daily patterns of land-dwelling creatures and adapt its hunting to catch them when they must cross any bodies of water.



## Vampyropod

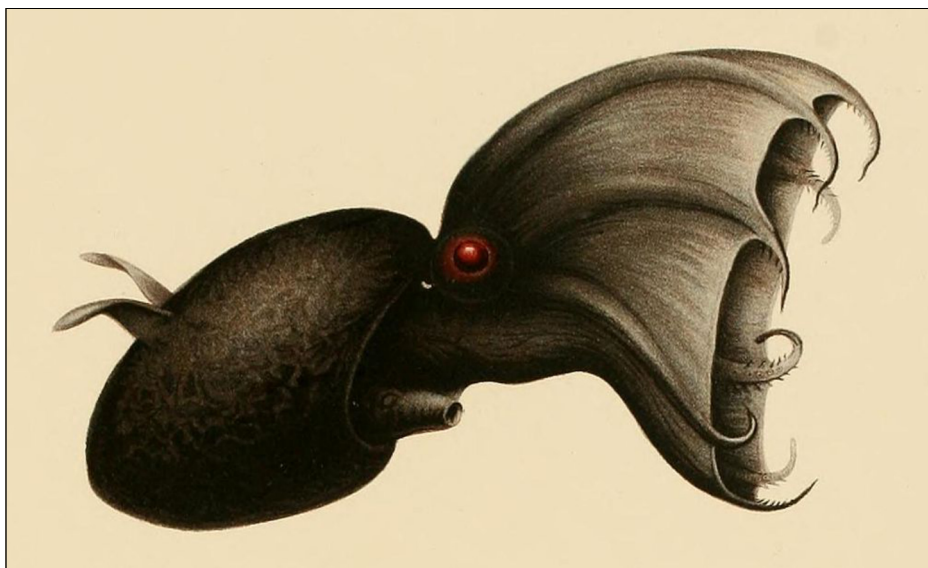
AC:	5
HD:	1**
Movement (swimming):	180' (60')
Attacks:	1 tentacle
Damage:	1 + energy drain
Number Appearing:	(0) 2d8
Save As:	F1
Morale:	12
Treasure Type:	Special
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Chaotic
XP Value:	12

Vampyropods are small (1' to 2' long) undead creatures resembling cuttlefish, being somewhat flattened, and containing a stiff bone or 'pen' running along most of the length of their body giving them a strange, stiff appearance. They are among the most sinister creatures of the waters in which they reside, preferring to hunt around deep water mountains, volcanos and shipwrecks that attract the large creatures upon which they prey.

They are drawn to sources of life energy, primarily towards whichever creature has the highest number of levels or hit dice within 360' of them. They shun sunlight, and are never found at a depth above 500', being perfectly suited to the abyss. With superb (90') infravision and incredible hearing (meaning they are surprised on only a 1 on 1d10), they quietly and almost invisibly stalk their prey.

They strike with a single tentacle, inflicting only a single point of damage, but also energy draining 1 level or hit dice from their victim. After draining a level, they take on a deep violet glow, and immediately retreat into the depths. This colour of light does not penetrate the deep water very far, and they are only visible for 240', usually as they head downwards.

How long they continue to glow, or whether there is any goal in their predation, is unknown. There are rumours from the deep that they are gathering life energy to restore their leader, the Great Vampyropod, in his fortress at the bottom of a great crack in the ocean floor. The truth or otherwise of this rumour will no doubt emerge in time.



Vampyropods are immune to all sleep, charm and hold spells, all mind affecting magic, and can be turned as ghouls.



### 3. THE BATTLE OF MOUNT ORCA

Picture it. The caldera of a sleeping volcano, on an island around 100 miles to the north of the Isle of Dread. Thaneg constructed one of his research facilities there, specifically to allow him to experiment with the Temporal Lens without damaging the still vulnerable ecologies he was nurturing on the main island, the results of which were already spectacular. He had sent teams into the Cretaceous, obtaining specimens for cloning, and was reporting great success. It was this island that Gargantua attacked, bringing many of his own creations. Massive (Gargantuan, in fact) lizards, amphibians and birds attacking simultaneously from the sea and the sky. The battle raged long, and Gargantua's victory by force of arms alone was far from certain. The factor that handed him a strategic victory was that Thaneg failed to grasp Gargantua's purpose, which was not one of conquest or even one of simple destruction. He required but a few moments with the Lens.

Sacrificing his last mega-frogs and colossal gannets in a distracting assault on Thaneg's northern flank, Gargantua entered the central complex of the island and gained his few moments alone with the lens. In this short time he merely did one thing – he forced the energy of the lens into accelerating the timeline of the cloning project in the Sea of Dread. The result was magnificent.

Within hours, the ocean was full of creatures from different eras – zones full of monsters from the Cretaceous and Jurassic teemed in the tropical, warm oceans. And further away, as far as distant Hattias, Minrothad and Ierendi, creatures from more ancient and strange eras began to emerge. The volcano itself, made unstable by one of the largest expenditures of artifact power in Mystaran history, erupted, and sank beneath the waves.

Within days, ships started disappearing from the surface of the Sea. Within a month trade had slowed to a near standstill, and planned Alphantian colonies on the Serpent Peninsula and on the continent of Davania were put on hold. Thaneg's income stream dried up, and the whole focus of the Empire's expansion instead looked north and west, rather than to the south.

Thaneg was not yet thwarted – the final events of the glorious but destructive rivalry of the two greatest wizards of their era is one I will return to later. But his plans were for the moment in tatters. And the ecology of the Sea of Dread (as it is known as a result) forever changed.

## TRIASSIC ZONE CREATURES

### Atopodontatus

AC:	7
HD:	4
Movement (land):	60' (20')
(swimming):	120' (40')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	1d6+2
Number Appearing:	0 (1d4)
Save As:	F2
Morale:	6
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	75

The atopodontatus is a medium-sized (7' to 9' long) marine reptile with a long, slender body and a distinctive beak-like snout lined with sharp, peg-like teeth. This is used to root around for shellfish in sand and sediment, but at a push it can deliver a painful bite. Its small, curved teeth are well-suited for scraping algae from rocks, but are not particularly effective in combat. The atopodontatus is generally docile and will avoid conflict if possible, but can become aggressive if threatened or cornered. It is often to be found sunning itself on rocky shores on islands in the Sea of Dread, rapidly leaping into the sea to avoid danger.

Whether encountered on land or sea, the atopodontatus will attempt to flee if it perceives a threat.





## Atychodracon

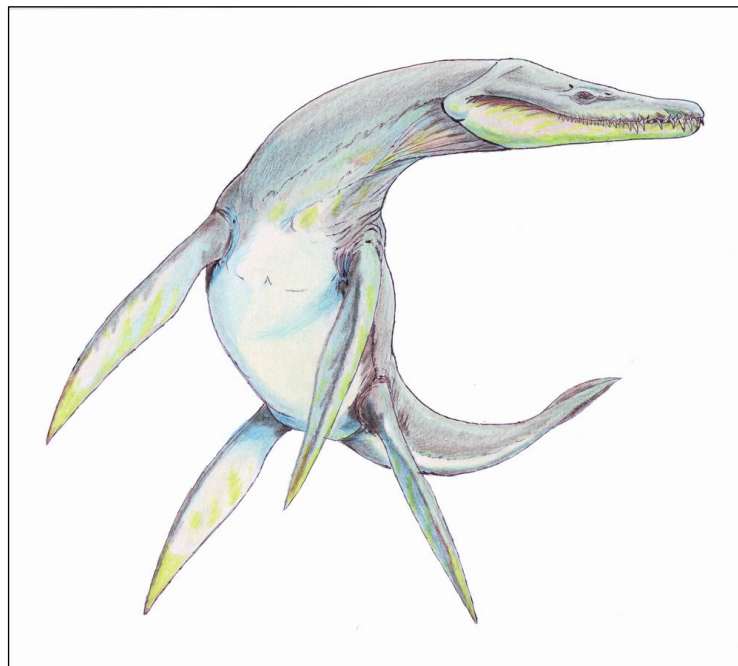
AC:	6
HD:	6+3*
Movement (swimming):	150' (50')
Attacks:	1 bite or 1 breath
Damage:	4d6 or by breath
Number Appearing:	0 (2d4)
Save As:	F4
Morale:	8
Treasure Type:	H
Intelligence:	3
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	650

The atychodracon is a medium-sized plesiosaur, with a shorter neck than many of its relatives, and a head that measures almost a fifth of its (up to 20' long) body. The head is lined with sharp teeth that it uses to grasp and tear at prey, and its enormous size means that the creature can swallow far larger prey than might be anticipated from its size, being able to swallow man-sized or smaller creatures on an attack roll of 19–20.

Unusually, the atychodracon possesses a rudimentary breath weapon. It consumes, in addition to meat, a huge amount of seaweed, which ferments within its gut to form gases so flammable that they ignite when expelled, even in water. This creates a cone of fire, 30' long and 20' wide at the furthest end, and all creatures within this area must save vs. dragon breath or suffer damage equal to the atychodracon's current hit point total. It is itself immune to fire- and heat-based damage.

The atychodracon is never found alone, living either in pairs or in small groups of related individuals. It makes a rudimentary lair on the seabed, usually near the heart of its hunting territory. There, it hoards treasure.

Rumours that an ancient Immortal used the atychodracon as a model for creating the first dragons persist, although there is no evidence that this is true. If this is the case, nobody has identified the Immortal, and if the dragons know they're not saying.

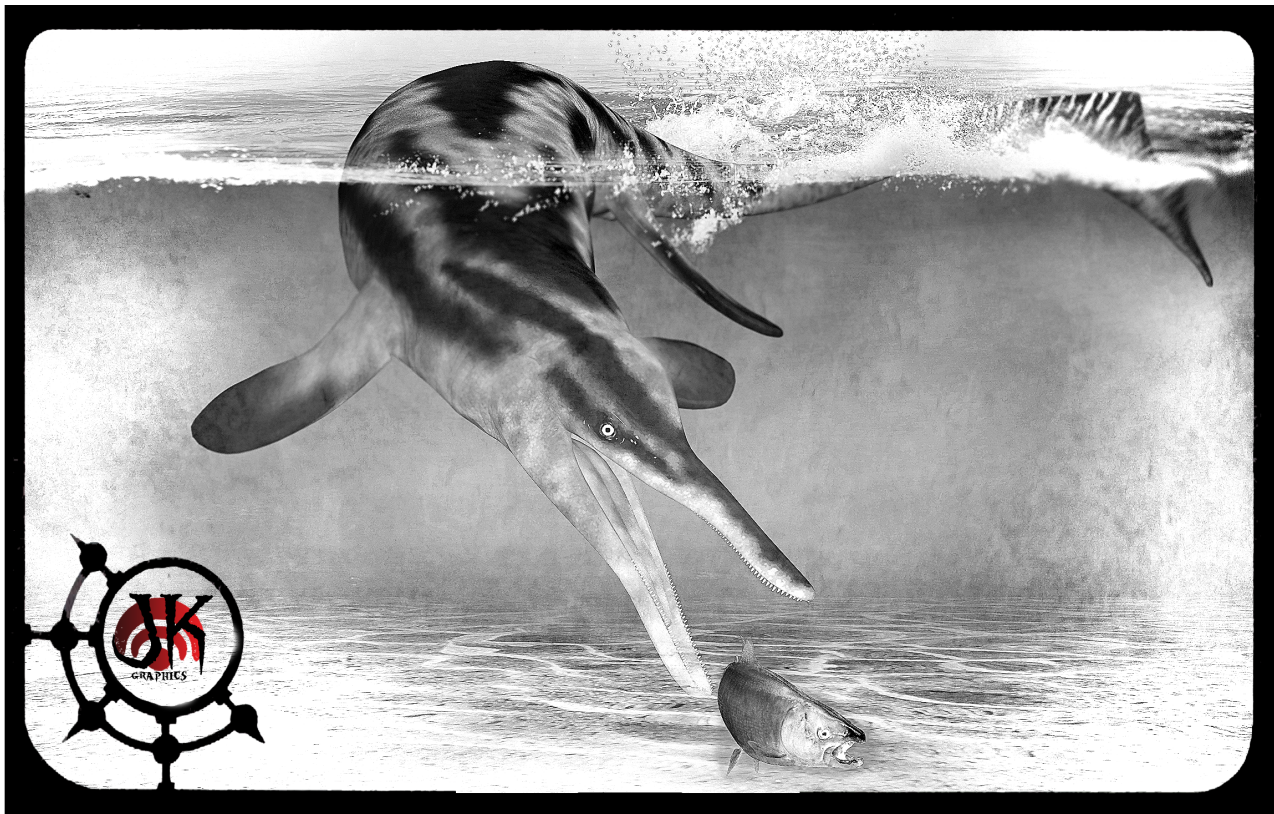


## Cymbospondylus

AC:	4
HD:	12
Movement (swimming):	150'(50')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	4d8
Number Appearing:	0 (1d6)
Save As:	F6
Morale:	11
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	1,250

The cymbospondylus is a large marine reptile, a primitive ichthyosaur, measuring up to 60 feet in length. It has a long, streamlined body with four flippers and a powerful tail. Its head is large and powerful, with sharp teeth for grasping and tearing prey. It has only a small dorsal fin, and an extended lower fluke on its tail, giving it an appearance almost as if a colossally bulky elongated snake.

The cymbospondylus hunts in the shallow waters along the coast, preying on fish and other small marine creatures. It is an aggressive and territorial creature, attacking anything that it perceives as a threat. Small pods, often containing up to 6 individuals, defend hunting territories from others of their own kind, and they try to drive off other predators. While they do not see humans and demi-humans as a threat, they may perceive ships as just such rival predators.



## Shonisaurus

AC:	5
HD:	20
Movement (swimming):	150' (50')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	4d10
Number Appearing:	0 (3d6)
Save As:	F20
Morale:	8
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	2
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	2,375

The shonisaurus is a huge (up to 70'), primitive ichthyosaur. Its body is streamlined with a long neck and tail, and four flippers that it uses to swim through the water, but at a fairly sedate speed relative to some of its relatives. It has a huge, barrel-like chest, containing blubber for warmth and huge lungs, allowing it to dive for extended periods, to a tremendous depth.

While its immense size may imply that it is a hazardous predator, it is disinterested in hunting near the surface, and instead chooses to bask, rest and socialise with others of its species during the day. At night, it heads down to the depths to hunt ammonite species that rise to shallower waters themselves to feed as the sun goes down. The shonisaurus, warmed by the sun's heat, is not the fastest predator of the depths but it is faster than the (still cold) cephalopods that are rising from the cold depths at night, and it catches and crushes its prey as it rests in warmer water preparing at the start of its own nightly hunt.

The shonisaurus is therefore not aggressive and often follows ships for a period of time just out of curiosity. If attacked, it typically retreats, but it is wise not to anger it as it can deliver a terrifying bite if forced to do so.





## ENCOUNTERS IN THE SEA OF DREAD

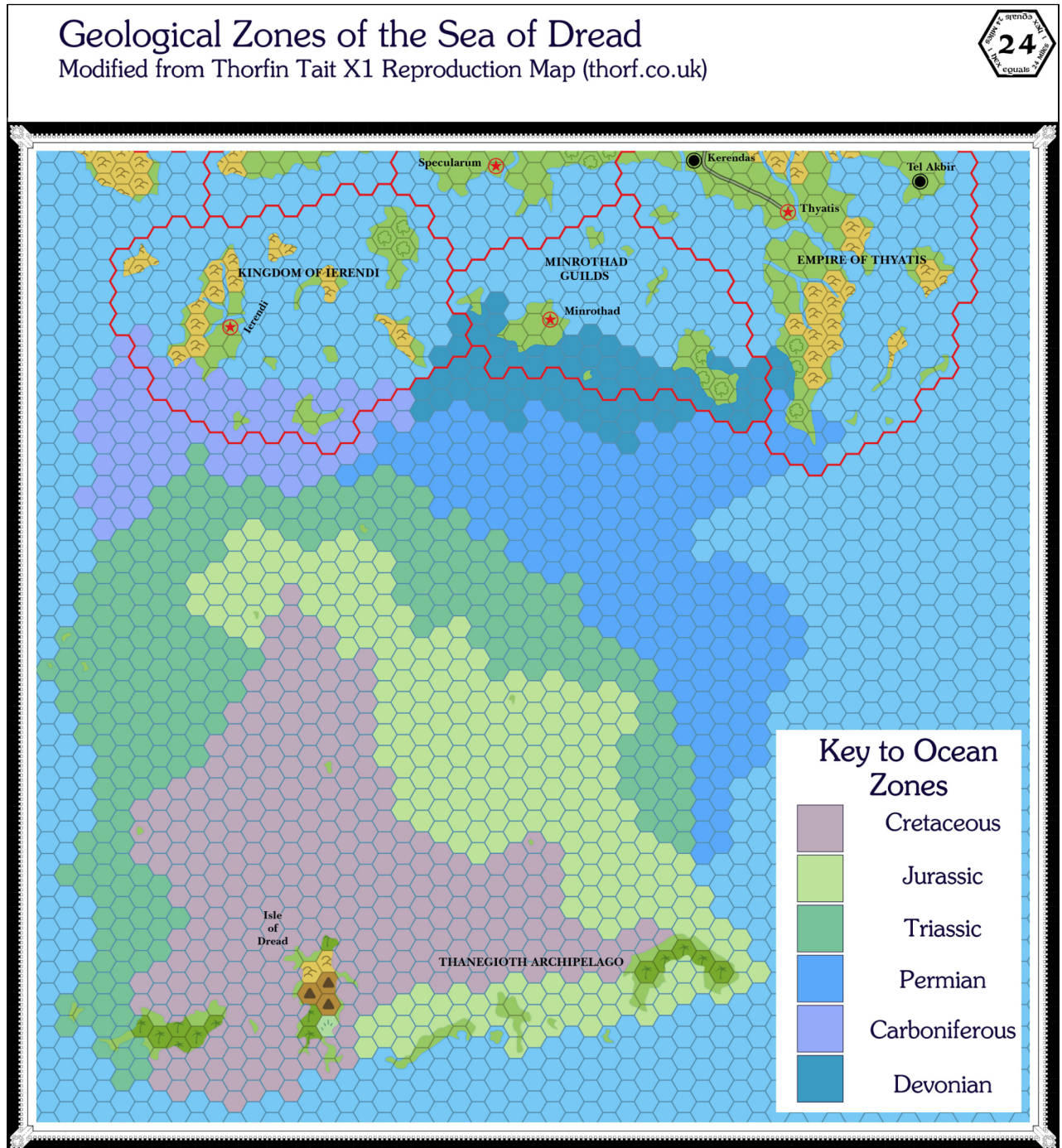
Map 1 shows zones of the Sea of Dread where monsters associated with different periods of geological history will occur. Zones closer to Mount Orca, a lost volcanic island around 100 miles north of the Isle of Dread, are more dominated by creatures that would otherwise be extinct than those further away. Thus when determining random encounters in the ocean, refer to Table 1 to determine the probability of encountering such a creature.

The probability of random encounters remains the same in all zones, but a second roll should be made before determining the type of encounter. If a prehistoric creature is determined, the DM should select an appropriate encounter for the party.

Note that not all random encounters must be horrifying, or even dangerous, and many such may simply instill a sense of wonder. For example a Devonian encounter may be with a shallow reef teeming with strange trilobites, or a Cretaceous encounter might perhaps be with giant (but harmless) ammonites bumping into a ship.

Zone	% chance of prehistoric encounter
Cretaceous	80%
Jurassic	70%
Triassic	50%
Permian	30%
Carboniferous	10%
Devonian	10%

Map 1:

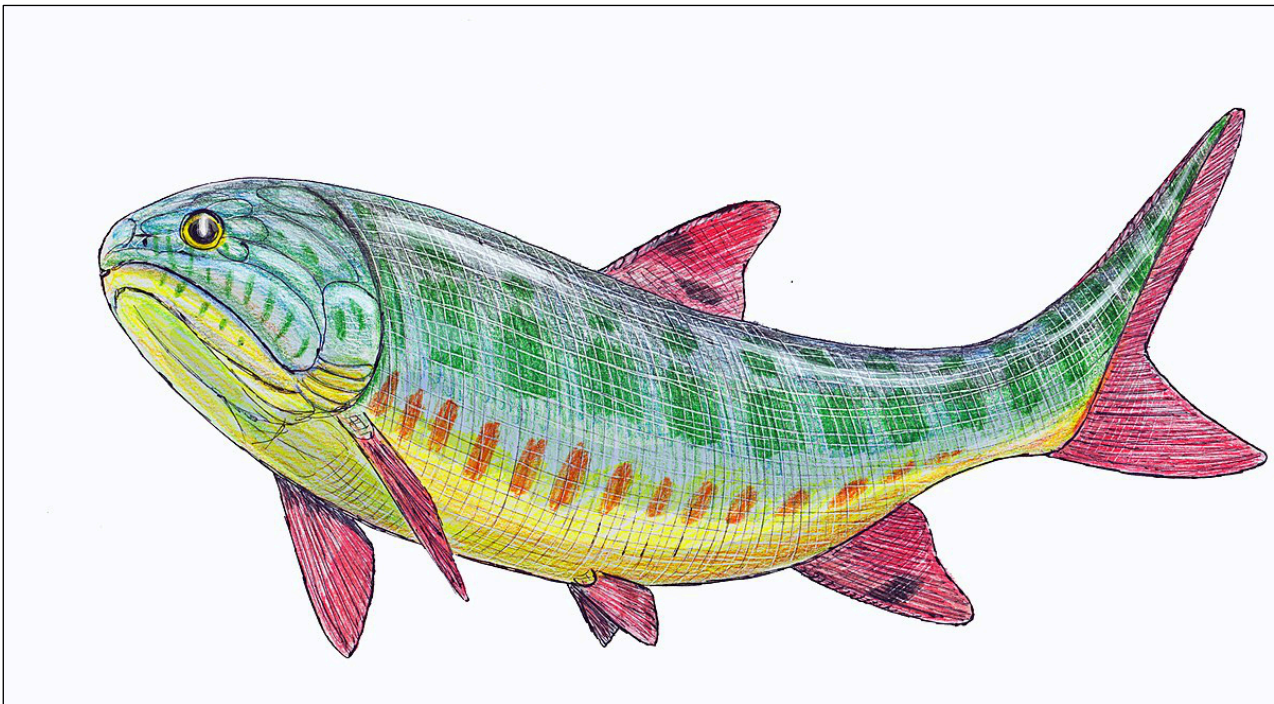


## PERMIAN ERA CREATURES

### Acrolepis

AC:	5
HD:	1
Movement (swimming):	150' (50')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	1d4
Number Appearing:	0 (2d6)
Save As:	F1
Morale:	7
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	10

The acrolepis is a bony-headed fish with a slender body and sharp teeth. It is typically 4 feet in length and inhabits shallow estuaries and surface waters around islands in the Sea of Dread. The acrolepis hunts smaller fish and other aquatic creatures for food and is often preyed upon by larger predators. Alone, it is not a particularly dangerous creature, but its sharp teeth can inflict painful wounds, and if encountered as a shoal it can be hazardous.





## Archegosaurus

AC:	6
HD:	4
Movement (swimming):	150' (50')
(land)	90' (30')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	2d4
Number Appearing:	0 (3d6)
Save As:	F2
Morale:	8
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	275

This curious creature resembles a small (up to 5') crocodile, although with a more fish-like head, without the protruding teeth of a crocodilian, and with a finely pointed snout and shorter legs. It is in fact an amphibian, being comfortable on the many small, uncharted islands on which it makes its home. It hunts small fish, and is rarely aggressive towards larger creatures if encountered in the ocean, but it returns to the sheltered waters of ponds and creeks on islands to lay its eggs. Here, it is more dangerous, becoming territorial and trying to drive other large creatures away from the pools in which its eggs are brooded. It has been known to attack and kill sailors trying to replenish their fresh water supplies.



## Helicoprion

AC:	4
HD:	12*
Movement (swimming):	120' (40')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	4d6+special
Number Appearing:	0 (1)
Save As:	F7
Morale:	10
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	2,125

The helicoprion is a large (up to 24') shark-like species, torpedo-shaped with a pointed snout, and a wickedly curled spiral of teeth on its lower jaw with which it can give terrible bites. The spiral constantly grows and unwinds as the creature ages, always exposing new horrifically sharp, serrated teeth with which it tears and rasps at its prey. It prefers to attack from below, and when doing so it can surprise a foe on a 1-4 on 1d6. It takes a single bite, inflicting 4d6 damage, leaving an open wound that continues to cause 1d4 damage each round until either the victim makes a saving throw vs. paralysis (which they may make each round), spends a whole round staunching the blood flow, or dies. A helicoprion will normally circle its prey, going ever deeper, waiting to see if its bitten victim dies or whether it needs to return to strike it again.

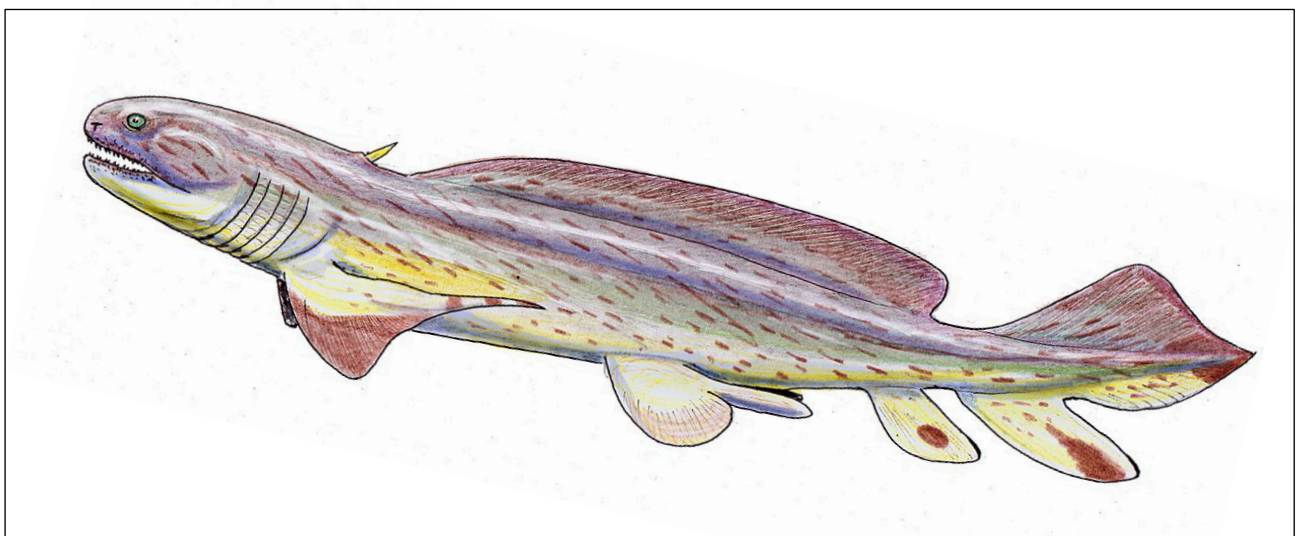


## Lebachacanthus

AC:	5
HD:	6*
Movement (swimming):	150' (50')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	2d6+special
Number Appearing:	0 (1)
Save As:	F3
Morale:	9
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	450

The lebachacanthus is a shark-like fish, rather elongated with a thin dorsal fin running most of the length of its somewhat eel-like back, and muscled pectoral fins with which it can manoeuvre in the narrow, muddy confines of creeks, estuaries, coral reefs and coastal waters in which it makes its home. It tries to get as close as possible to prey before making a single darting attack, and if it hits victims must make a saving throw vs. paralysis or be stuck to their pointed, cusped teeth. In the following round, the lebachacanthus will try to swallow its prey, being able to swallow any prey up to the size of a human if it has first been impaled. This is achieved by further bite attack against the impaled foe, but to successfully swallow a trapped victim it must only hit armour class 9. The swallowed victim takes full bite damage (12) that round, after which standard rules for being swallowed apply.

The lebachacanthus stalks shallow waters of the Sea of Dread, and it makes no distinction between animal and humanoid prey.

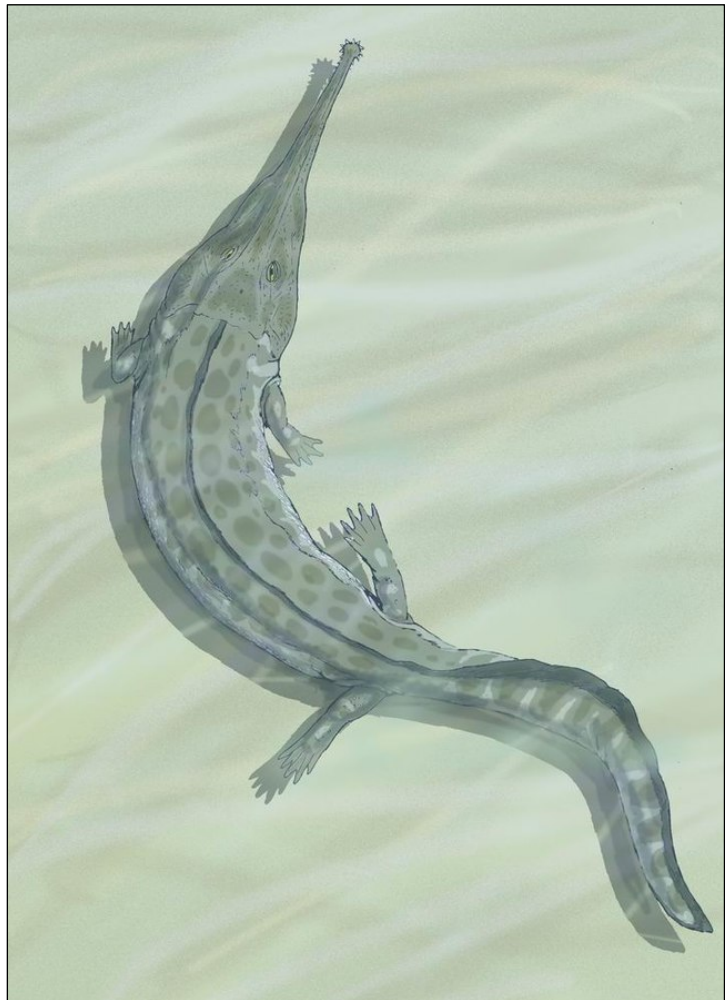




## Prionosuchus

AC:	8
HD:	14
Movement (swimming):	180' (60')
(land):	60' (20')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	4d4
Number Appearing:	0 (1)
Save As:	F8
Morale:	9
Treasure Type:	Nil
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	650

A huge crocodile-like amphibian with an elongated, pointed snout, typically a hunter of fish and squid, the prionosuchus is a predator found among coral reefs, islands and coastlines. It has short legs and a powerful flat tail, moving from side to side to provide rapid movement in the water, making it slow and cumbersome on land. It is territorial, and does not tolerate other large predators or even other examples of its own species within its hunting grounds. Attacks on creatures as large as humans and demi-humans are rare, but do occur if a prionosuchus feels its territory is threatened.



## CARBONIFEROUS ERA CREATURES

### Diplocaulus

AC:	6
HD:	1*
Movement (swimming):	120' (40')
(land):	60' (20')
Attacks:	1 bite/1 shock
Damage:	1d4/2d6
Number appearing:	0 (2d4)
Save As:	F1
Morale:	7
Treasure Type:	0
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	11

A slow-moving, medium-sized amphibian, somewhat similar to a newt, growing to round 3' long. Its most striking feature is that it has a huge, arrow-shaped head. It most commonly hunts amongst coastal seaweed and rock pools, where it uses small electrical shocks to stun prey before consuming it.

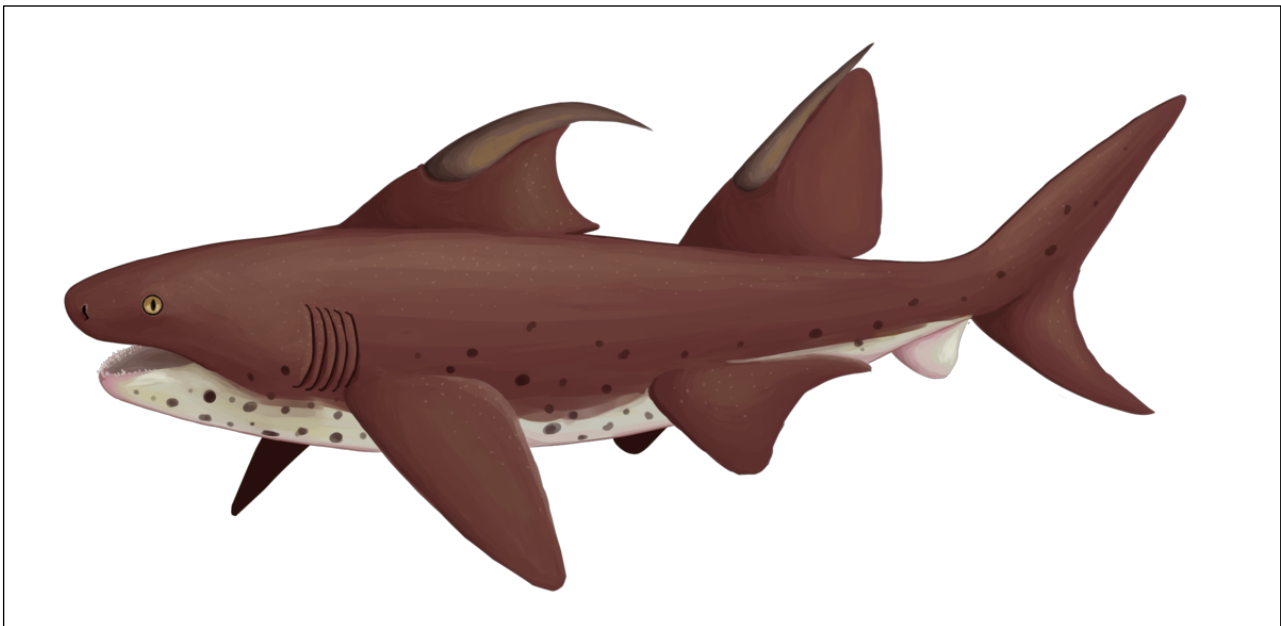
While it is not aggressive, and will try to escape if attacked, if encountered it can use electrical shocks in defence. Once every 2 rounds a diplocaulus can create an electrical shock that causes any foes within 5' to save vs. wands or take 2d6 damage (with half damage taken if the saving throw is successful).



## Dracopristis

AC:	6
HD:	4*
Movement (swimming):	180' (60')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	4d8
Number Appearing:	(0) 1
Save As:	F2
Morale:	8
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	100

A small (rarely more than 5' long) shark-like fish species that frequents coral reefs and shallow, rocky shores, where it is a specialist ambush hunter. It typically makes a single darting attack from a hidden cave or crevasse entrance at twice its normal movement speed, an incredible pace it can maintain for only one round, before darting back. It has a particularly unpleasant bite attack, with multiple rows of teeth inflicting terrible damage. Compared with other sharks and shark-like predators, it is inflexible, with huge fins, making following it back into its lair or pulling it back out a difficult task – essentially when it has retreated back into its lair it is treated as having an AC of -4, and all attacks made against it inflict only half damage.

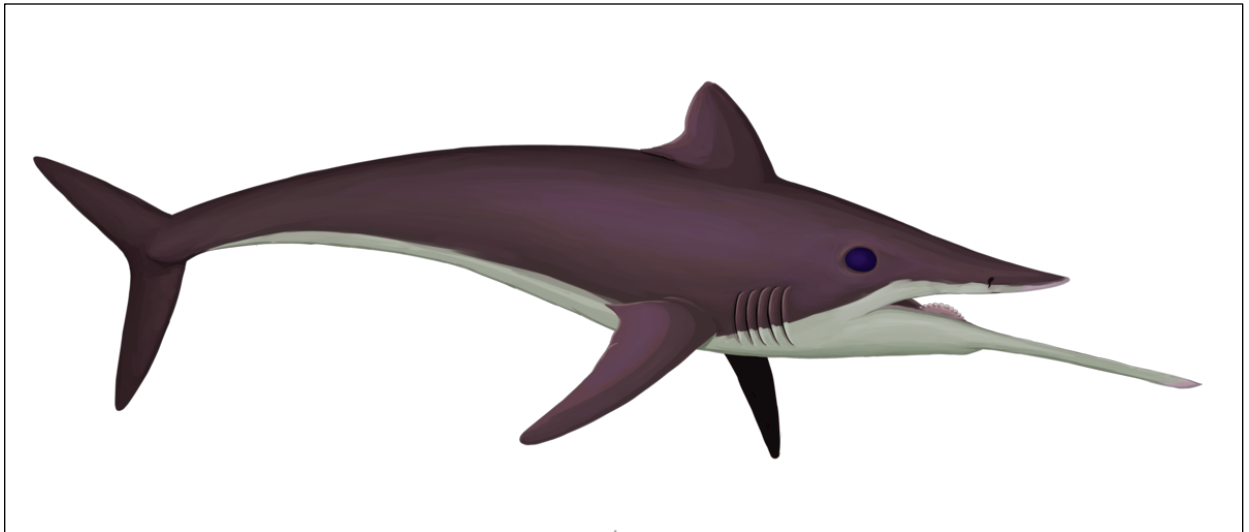




## ORNITHOPRION

AC:	6
HD:	5+3
Movement (swimming):	180' (60')
Attacks:	1 skewer
Damage:	3d6
Number Appearing:	(0) 1-2
Save As:	F3
Morale:	10
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	225

The ornithoprion is a large (about 30 feet long) prehistoric fish that resembles a modern-day swordfish. It has a long, pointed snout that it uses to spear its prey, which includes other fish and smaller marine reptiles. The ornithoprion is a swift swimmer and can move through the water at great speeds, making it difficult to catch or to escape from. As a solitary hunter it is usually only encountered alone, but may be found in pairs during the breeding season (winter). The ornithoprion is not known to attack humans, but unwary fishermen have been known to catch them, and the result is usually tragic.



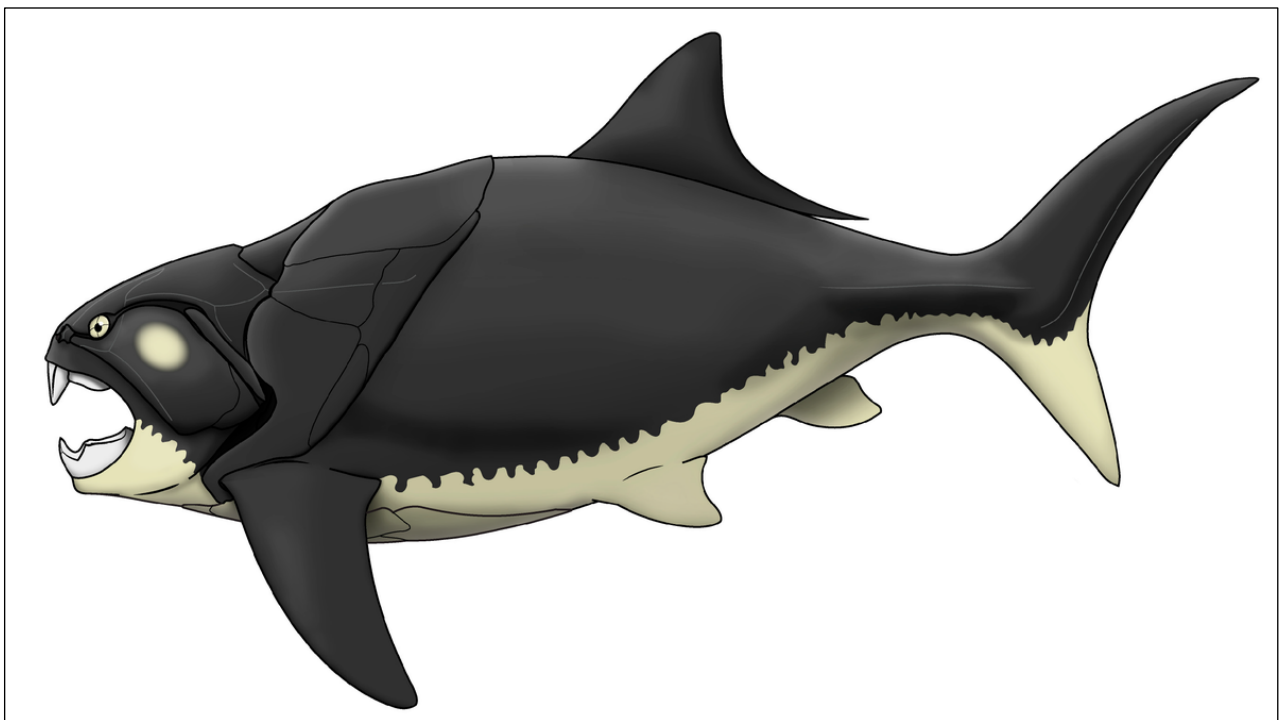
## DEVONIAN ERA CREATURES

### Dunkleosteus

AC:	3
HD:	14*
Movement (swimming):	120' (40')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	6d6+death
Number Appearing:	0 (1)
Save As:	F7
Morale:	10
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	650

The fearsome dunkleosteus is a horrific pre-historic terror of the oceans. Easily reaching 30' long, with enormous, gaping mouths at the front of heavily armoured heads, it hunts by swimming to within 30' of a target, at which point it sucks water and extends its grotesque, bony jaws forward 15', well in front of its body, before closing its mouth in a horrific bite attack. On a roll of 15–20 its victim must make a saving throw vs. death ray or be cut in two and instantly killed by the unimaginable force of the bite. If they succeed they still take 6d6 damage. In addition, on an attack roll of 19 or 20 the victim is swallowed (no saving throw).

The dunkleosteus views almost anything it sees that is smaller than itself as prey, and can crush armour as easily as shellfish. Thankfully, it is confined to the depths of oceans in very small areas, although persistent rumours of populations of them surviving elsewhere in deeper ocean trenches do persist.



## Jaekelopterus

AC:	2
HD:	8
Movement(swimming):	120' (40')
Attacks:	2 pincers/1 bite
Damage:	1d8/1d8/3d6
Number Appearing:	0 (1d2)
Save As:	F4
Morale:	11
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	1
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	650

The jaekelopterus is a giant prehistoric sea scorpion that can grow up to 8' long. It has a long, narrow body with a large tail spine, and two large pincers on the front of its segmented body. Its third pair of limbs are modified into swimming paddles, allowing it to move quickly through the water. It is a fierce predator, and will attack any creature it comes across, including humans. Its pincers are strong enough to crush bones, and its bite can cause serious injury or even death.

While it is typically a solitary creature, it may be occasionally found with others of its species if there is sufficient prey. Unusually, despite being a large predator, it is not territorial. It prefers to hunt in shallow waters, where it can easily ambush its prey from below.



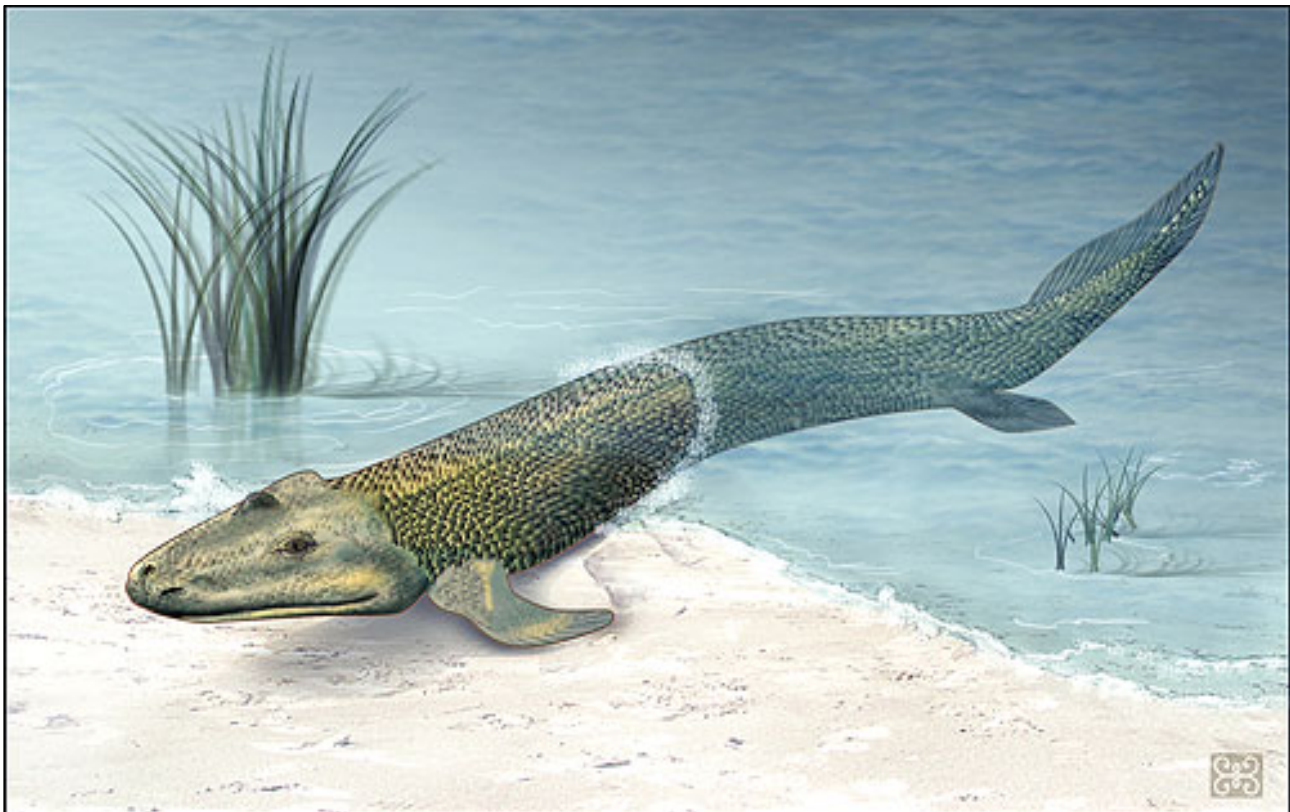


## Tiktaalik

Armor Class:	9
Hit Dice:	6
Movement (swimming):	150' (50')
(land):	60' (20')
Attacks:	1 bite/2 punches
Damage:	2d6/1d6/1d6
Number Appearing:	0 (1d4)
Save As:	F6
Morale:	8
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	3
Alignment:	Neutral
XP Value:	275

The tiktaalik is a large, predatory fish-like creature that has the ability to move on land using its powerful forelimbs. It has a long, flat body with large, sharp teeth and eyes on top of its head that allow it to see above the water's surface. It is around 9' long when fully grown, and it is a voracious but opportunistic predator of shallow seas and islands.

When encountered, the tiktaalik will attack with its bite and powerful forelimbs. The tiktaalik sits at something of a transition between fish and limbed animals, and has gained a reasonable intelligence from its need to hunt in a diverse range of habitats.



# Magical Bubbles of Undersea

by Wing of Coot

Created by underwater spellcasters, a magical bubble is similar to a potion: a one-use item which contains a magical substance that has an (usually temporary) effect on a living creature. Many types also share effects with potions.

However, unlike potions, magical bubbles affect a number of characters/creatures at once, as they produce an area effect.

A magical bubble looks like a soap bubble 1' in diameter; however, its filmy surface is unexpectedly strong. Though it is easily punctured by a sharp weapon or tool (no

roll is required), it will not burst during ordinary handling. When punctured, a magical bubble bursts, and its effect applies to all characters/creatures within 30 feet.

A magical bubble only works properly in water, but it can survive outside of water and can be transported. If punctured outside of water, however, only characters/creatures touching the bubble at the time it bursts are affected.

Each bubble's description has both BECMI and 5E stats.

*"No Gilber you goon,  
it's a bubble of  
diminution!"*  
– Original digital  
composition by  
Senarch





## Bubble of Healing

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**BECMI:** When this bubble bursts, everyone in the area regains 1d8 hit points.

**5E:** *Bubble, uncommon.* This bubble is reduced. When this bubble bursts, everyone in the area regains 2d4+2 hit points.

## Bubble of Diminution

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**BECMI:** When this bubble bursts, everyone in the area is affected as by a *potion of diminution* for 1 hour. Characters/creatures who wish to resist the effect can make a Saving Throw vs. Spells to be unaffected.

**5E:** *Bubble, rare.* This bubble shows rings of light constantly contracting towards its center. Creatures who wish to resist the effect can make a DC 15 Constitution save to negate the effect.

## Bubble of Growth

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**BECMI:** When this bubble bursts, everyone in the area is affected as by a *potion of growth* for 1 hour. Characters/creatures who wish to resist the effect can make a Saving Throw vs. Spells to be unaffected.

**5E:** *Bubble, rare.* This bubble shows rings of light constantly expanding outwards from its center. Creatures who wish to resist the effect can make a DC 15 Constitution save to negate the effect.

**History/Purpose:** *Bubbles of growth* and *diminution* were developed by undersea spellcasters to simplify interactions between sea giants and the other societies of Undersea. A *bubble of diminution* allows a group of sea giants to enter a structure built for

smaller beings, while a *bubble of growth* makes it much easier for smaller beings to traverse a structure built for giants.

## Bubble of Air Breathing

---

**BECMI:** When this bubble bursts, everyone in the area gains the ability to breathe air for 8 hours. This is otherwise as a *water breathing* spell.

**5E:** *Bubble, rare.* This bubble is filled with a faintly visible blue-white gas. When this bubble bursts, all creatures in the area gain the ability to breathe air for 8 hours. This is otherwise as a Water Breathing spell.

## Bubble of Water Breathing

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**BECMI:** When this bubble bursts, everyone in the area receives the effect of *water breathing* for 8 hours.

**5E:** *Bubble, rare.* This bubble is a deep blue-green. When this bubble bursts, all creatures in the area receive the effect of Water Breathing for 8 hours.

## Bubble of Freedom

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**BECMI:** When this bubble bursts, all creatures in the area gain a +4 bonus on Saving Throws against *charm* or *hold* spells or monster abilities with similar effects (such as a ghoul or gelatinous cube's paralysis, a harpy's song, or a kopru's charm). Any characters currently *charmed*, *paralyzed*, or *held* can make a new Saving Throw to end the effect. The effect lasts 1 hour.

**5E:** *Bubble, rare.* This bubble glows with a faint pearly light. When this bubble bursts,



### Adventurers encountering Bubbles

for 1 hour, all creatures in the area gain advantage on saves against effects that would impose the charmed or paralyzed condition. Any characters currently charmed or paralyzed can make a new saving throw to end the effect.

**History:** These bubbles were once far more common. They were developed by the free spellcasters of Undersea thousands of years ago during the heyday of the Kopru Dominarchy as a defense against kopru. When the kopru fell from power and became a dwindling nearly-extinct species, the need for these bubbles greatly diminished.

Today, these bubbles are mostly used for protection against a few paralyzing monsters.

### Bubble of Shock Resistance

**BECMI:** When this bubble bursts, all creatures in the area become immune to normal electrical attacks (such as an electric eel's attack). Against magical lightning (*lightning bolt* spell, blue dragon, etc.) affected creatures gain +2 on Saving Throws and subtract 1 from each die of damage. The effect lasts 1 hour.

**5E:** *Bubble, rare.* This bubble is filled with a pale violet mist. When this bubble bursts, all creatures in the area gain lightning resistance for 1 hour.



### Bubble of Antidote

**BECMI:** When this bubble bursts, all creatures in the area are affected as by a *potion of antidote* for 1 hour. These bubbles may be of varying strength, as per the potion's description.

**5E:** *Bubble, rare.* This bubble is filled with a pale green mist. When this bubble bursts, all creatures in the area gain poison resistance for 1 hour.

### Bubble of Shock

**BECMI:** When this bubble bursts, everyone in the area suffers 6d6 damage from a burst of lightning (Saving Throw vs. Spells halves the damage).

**5E:** *Bubble, very rare.* This bubble flickers with electric sparks within its filmy surface. When this bubble bursts, everyone in the area must make a DC 15 Dexterity save,

taking 8d6 (28) lightning damage on a failed save, or half that much damage on a successful one.

### Bubble of Poison

**BECMI:** When this bubble bursts, every creature within 30 feet must make a Saving Throw vs. Poison. Creatures with 6 HD/levels or less which fail the save die; those with 7 HD/levels or more take 6d6 damage. Those which succeed at the Saving Throw take no damage.

**5E:** *Bubble, very rare.* This bubble roils with deep green mist. When this bubble bursts, everyone in the area must make a DC 15 Constitution save, taking 8d6 (28) poison damage on a failed save.

**History:** This dangerous item was created by the Taymoran lich Erishum, who survived the sinking of Taymora with his well-protected arcane laboratories and rebuilt his undead forces underwater from the innumerable drowned dead of the cataclysm. Though eventually slain by early Alphantian adventurers, Erishum's research survived.

*Bubbles of poison* are often used by undead, who are unharmed by their effect.

### Bubble of Blending

**BECMI:** When this bubble bursts, everyone in the area gains the benefit of a *potion of blending* for 1 hour.

**5E:** *Bubble, very rare.* This bubble is filled with a faintly visible gas of constantly changing color. When this bubble bursts, everyone in the area gains advantage on Stealth

checks to hide in natural, underground, or underwater environments for 1 hour.

### Bubble of ESP

**BECMI:** When this bubble bursts, all creatures within 30 feet gain the benefit of a *potion of ESP* for 1 hour.

**5E:** *Bubble, very rare.* This bubble is filled with purplish gas. When this bubble bursts, everyone in the area gains the effect of a *potion of mind reading* for 1 hour.

### Bubble of Trapped Air

**BECMI:** When this bubble bursts, a creature from the Elemental Plane of Air is released. It is not controlled by the user of the bubble. When the bubble bursts, make a reaction roll. If the result is neutral or positive, the creature disappears back to the Plane of Air; if the reaction is hostile, the creature attacks immediately.

Roll 1d20 to determine what is released:

1-8 : Air elemental (12 HD)

9-14 : Invisible stalker

15-20 : Djinni (lesser)

If the reaction roll is an unmodified 12, the djinni will perform one brief service (no more than one day) for the character who punctured the bubble

**5E:** *Bubble, very rare.* This bubble appears to be filled with transparent air. When this bubble bursts, a creature from the Elemental Plane of Air is released.

Roll 1d20 to determine what is released:

1-8: Air elemental

9-14: Invisible stalker

15-20: Djinni



When the bubble bursts, the character who punctured it must make a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check. On a success, the creature departs peacefully to the Plane of Air; on a failure, the creature attacks immediately. A djinni will perform one brief service (no more than one day) only if the reaction roll is a natural 20.

## Collapsing Bubble

**BECMI:** When this bubble bursts, a dangerous implosion occurs that inflicts 6d6 points of damage on all creatures/characters within 30 feet (Saving Throw vs. Spells for half damage).

**5E:** *Bubble, very rare.* This bubble appears to be filled with transparent air. When this bubble bursts, a dangerous implosion occurs. Every creature within 30 feet must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 8d6 thunder damage on a failed save, or half that much damage on a successful one.

## Force Field Bubble

**BECMI:** When this bubble bursts, an impenetrable force field appears, keeping everything inside from leaving and preventing everything outside from entering. It can't be broken by physical means, can't be crossed except by teleportation, and can't be dispelled by *dispel magic*. A *disintegrate* spell will destroy

it, however. The force field vanishes after 1 minute.

**5E:** *Bubble, very rare.* This bubble appears transparent, but shimmers frequently. When this bubble bursts, it creates a 30-foot-radius spherical *forcecage*, otherwise as the solid box version of that spell. It lasts only 1 minute, however.

## Bubble of Adaptation

**BECMI:** When this bubble bursts, every creature in the area gains the ability to survive without breathing. In addition, creatures gain a land speed and a swimming speed of 120' (40'), the ability to fly at 120' (40'), and the ability to burrow through earth, sand, gravel, etc.—though not solid rock/bedrock—at a speed of 60' (20'),

*A surprised hin adventurer inside a Force Field Bubble*





unless their existing speed is higher. The effect lasts 24 hours.

**5E:** *Bubble, very rare.* This bubble shimmers with many colors. When this bubble bursts, all creatures in the area gain the ability to survive without breathing and a land speed of 30 ft, swim speed of 30 ft, fly speed of 30 ft, and burrow speed of 15 ft—unless their existing speed is higher. The effect lasts 24 hours.

**Notes:** These items are used by underwater adventurers to travel in land or underground environments.

### Bubble of the Water's Heart

**BECMI:** When this bubble bursts, a 30'-radius vortex connecting to a wormhole leading to the Elemental Plane of Water appears centered on the bubble's location. Characters/monsters in the area that want to avoid traveling to the Elemental Plane must make a Saving Throw vs. Spells to escape while the vortex is forming. The vortex is permanent and forms a permanent gate unless closed by a *wish*; *dispel magic* closes it for 1d4 rounds.

**5E:** *Bubble, legendary.* This bubble is deep blue. Creatures in the area when the portal forms may make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw to avoid traveling to the Plane of Water. When this bubble bursts, a 30' radius portal to the Elemental Plane of Water appears centered on the bubble's location.

**Variants:** Other bubbles of this sort may open gates to watery Outer Planes ruled by Immortals of the Sphere of Time. The only examples of this sort known in legend are linked to Protius's Home Plane, and are said to be the first ever created.

**History:** A legendary creation, few have ever been seen. They are said to be the first magical bubbles ever made, their prototypes given by the Immortal Protius to mortals in the days when the Kopru Dominarchy first grew strong.

### Random Bubble Table (d%)

01–15:	Bubble of Healing
16–25:	Bubble of Diminution
26–35:	Bubble of Growth
36–45:	Bubble of Air Breathing
46–55:	Bubble of Water Breathing
56–65:	Bubble of Freedom
66–70:	Bubble of Shock Resistance
71–74:	Bubble of Antidote
75–78:	Bubble of Shock
79–82:	Bubble of Poison
83–86:	Bubble of Blending
87–90:	Bubble of ESP
91–93:	Bubble of Trapped Air
94–96:	Collapsing Bubble
97–98:	Force Field Bubble
99–00:	Bubble of Adaptation

Note that Bubbles of the Water's Heart will not be found randomly.

### Background

In my campaign where these originated, my original idea was for a version of a *potion of water breathing* that would affect a whole party of characters (to be given to the PCs by an underwater ally). This struck me as something the game was missing, as one-person-each water breathing items or spells make underwater adventures awkward. The concept built from there, and the PCs visited a storm giant wizard that was experimenting with magical bubble formulas.

# Against the Wizards

## The Undersea Laboratory of an Aquan Archmage

*A D&D 5th Edition Adventure for a party of 12th Level*

by Not a Decepticon

At the bottom of the Undersea, near the coast of Sind, occupying Alphantian forces have built a laboratory. Inside, on the orders of Emperor Zandor the Mad, ruthless mages are researching new means of fighting the civil war that consumed their fatherland. In white-clean corridors magic becomes science and office politics play in the shadows of horrors this world has never seen.





Undersea laboratory

## SYNOPSIS

The adventure is intended to be set in an alternate timeline described in “*War On All Sides*”<sup>1</sup> at the Vaults of Pandius and the YouTube video “*Mystara 1030 timeline*”<sup>2</sup> by Glen Welch, with changes carrying over from my own campaign, especially regarding shark-kin. It is located in waters of the Sea of Dread on the coast of Sind. It may require adjustments to place it in other timelines or locations, but any nation occupied by Alphatia with access to the sea, especially Sea of Dread, should do.

The adventure is balanced around a party of 4 12th level characters. After completing it they should advance to level 13.

The adventure assumes that the PCs are accomplished adventurers who have been heard of in the region; characters who carry ill will towards Alphatia or have worked with or sympathize with Sindi people and their plight.

<sup>1</sup> See the “[War on All Sides](#)” PDF at the Vaults of Pandius

<sup>2</sup> Only the part from timestamp: <https://youtu.be/YjeHqNGoIVs?t=412> to 10:20 is necessary, although it may also help to watch the video on Alphatia: [https://youtu.be/LA\\_PY17JQs4](https://youtu.be/LA_PY17JQs4)

The three main themes of the adventure are:

### **1. Any sufficiently advanced magic is indistinguishable from science**

This is accomplished by giving the location a look more out of a science-fiction story, despite all machines being inherently magical, in order to cause a sense of unease and discomfort among player characters.

### **2. Picking up your battles**

High-level PCs are absolutely overpowered in 5e. As such, the adventure has been designed by throwing balance out of the window, often putting deadly fight after deadly fight. This is an encounter dungeon, where charging ahead will get the whole thing crashing down on you. PCs need to learn to pick their battles and use stealth, lies, diplomacy and treachery to get ahead.

### **3. Playing with forces you cannot control**

A lot of the rooms are examples of classic Wizard Hubris, with Alphatian wizards poking every possible hornet’s nest they could find, all at once. It is very likely the PCs’ actions will make this whole thing spiral out of control and to that I say: ride the wave. If things go straight into the recreation of *Cabin in the Woods* climax, embrace it and let it happen. There are many ways in which consequences of PCs’ decisions will come to haunt them.



## BACKGROUND AND SETUP

In this timeline Sind has been “liberated” from the Master’s forces by Alphatians, who promptly occupied it themselves. However, Alphatia is distant and has recently descended into a civil war of succession. With his claim to the throne challenged, Emperor Zandor has begun moving troops from Sind. It is finally time for the nation to rise and throw off the oppressors



When occupation began, the legendary artifact, *Black Hole Diamond*, was stolen by Alphatian forces, in order to study its magical properties. Its religious importance as a symbol of the Immortal Ganetra (Sindi form of Ssu-Ma), has been of great cultural significance and recovering it could be seen as a sign of divine approval of the revolution, greatly raising morale and recruitment.

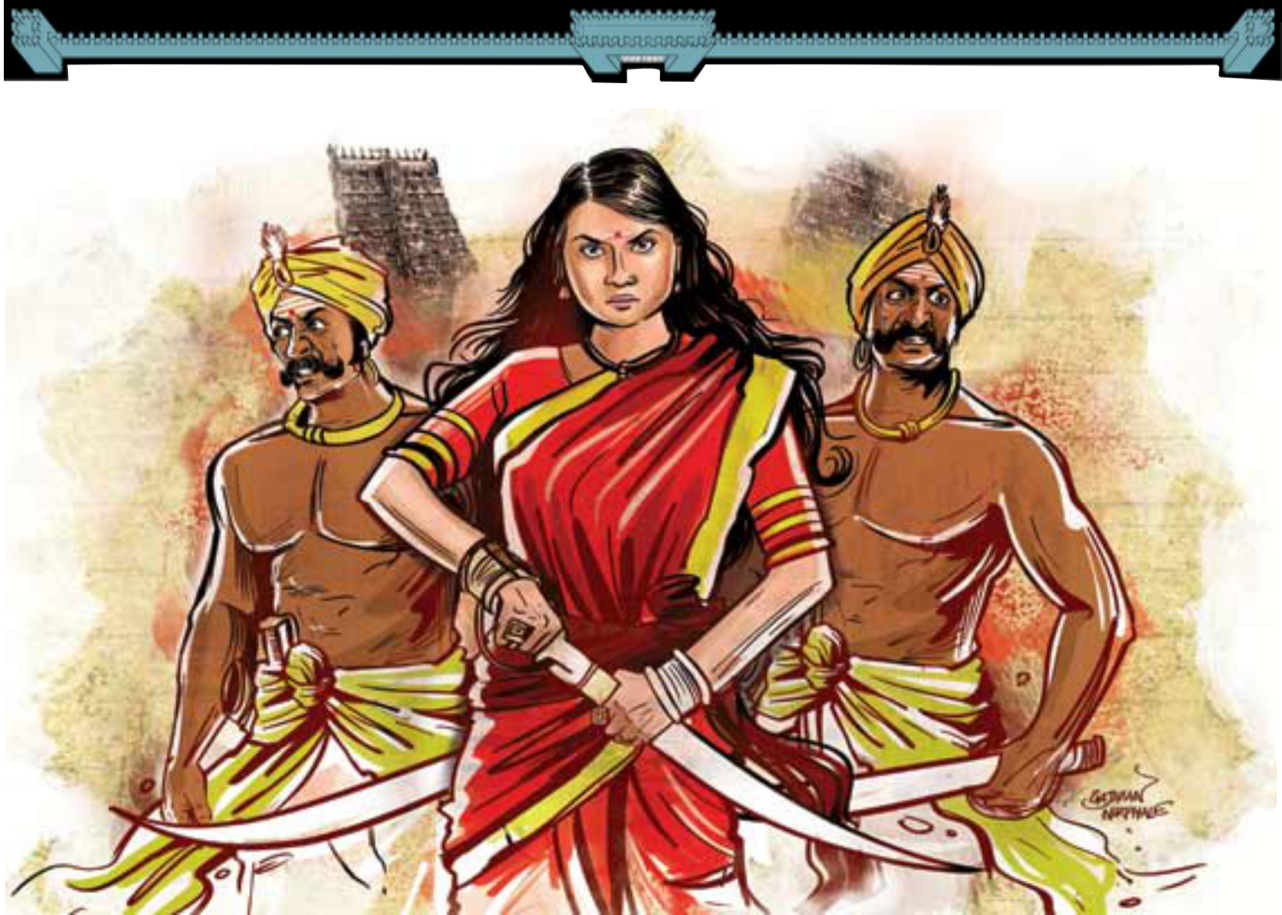
The artifact is currently being held in a laboratory built at the bottom of the Undersea, a few miles from the coast of Sind.

Shivangi Adhira (CG Human **Scout**), one of the leaders of the Sindi resistance cell in the

region, approaches the party in secret. If the PCs are famous in the region, she will have a letter delivered to them by one of the secret sympathizers, in which she appeals to their sense of justice and compassion, asking to meet in the city of Kandaputra. There the PCs will be led by subtle signs and actions from beggars and former members of Untouchable class, to a small wine cellar away from the main streets. There they’ll meet a middle-aged woman with a bow and arrows, who clearly has seen many hardships, but still carries herself with the dignity of a higher born.

Shivangi will reveal she heard of the PCs’ exploits, naming at least one deed per PC, slightly exaggerating them. She will see interpretation of various acts that prove the PCs’ compassion, altruism and bravery against tyranny. With that she’ll segue to asking their help, describing the current situation of people in Jalawar. They hadn’t had a chance to rebuild after the Master’s occupation, before the Alphatian governor of this province began emptying remaining coffers. And for the last few years he’s been dragging able-bodied men and women as young as thirteen as slaves or “volunteers,” shipping them across the ocean to fight in Zandor’s war. But many people in the province wish for restoration of old ways, so her resistance, with its reformist stance, is struggling. She had considered joining a more conservative resistance cell, but they were wiped out by some new weapon<sup>3</sup>, making her group the last in the region. Recovering the artifact could paint her group as having Immortal blessing, rallying people to her banner.

<sup>3</sup> You may use this opportunity to foreshadow any of many horrors awaiting in the laboratory



*Sindhi Resistance*

Shivangi hopes to appeal both to the PCs' altruistic side and egos. However, if pressured about payment, she admits the resistance, like most, is strapped for cash. So instead, she offers them the Golden Key: one of three keys to open a secret legendary vault where the last Rajah of free Sind kept hidden vast riches beyond imagination. The key will serve as advanced payment, and if the PCs will serve their purpose, she will also provide them with the location of said hidden vault. With her revolutionary views, Shivangi believes this money would only consume the revolution in greed-induced squabbles, so it is better to hand it to a dangerous third party, which hopefully may have a vested interest in investing in the restoration of Sind.

The party will likely find her offer too good to be true. If any of them wants to roll for Insight, you can tell a PC with the highest

modifier they don't even need to roll, they see Shivangi is honest, to an outright unsettling level. However, if the PCs wish to investigate her, allow them to choose the method and roll for whichever skill feels appropriate. For every two points over 10 on the roll, reveal one of the following sentences about Shivangi: She has lost her family's fortune to machinations of another noble. Her two sons were slain by the Master's forces. Her elderly husband died from working the fields under the occupant. She found new love with a member of the untouchable caste, only to watch him die during the long winter. She saw the man who took her fortune sacrifice his life to save her from an explosion during Alpha-tian "liberation." She learned archery from legendary hero Raahinya. Her goal is a Sind free of both the colonizers and the old caste system and Rajahs.

## MONSTER ADJUSTMENT

Due to not wanting to design every spellcaster and warrior, I use substitution of existing statblocks from *Monster Manual* (these monsters, due to wide availability of SRD, do not have their source listed), *Ghosts of Saltmarsh*, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, *Tales from the Yawning Portal*, *Volo's Guide to Monsters* and 3rd party adventure *Sea King's Malice*. As I know not everyone will have access to them, I will provide Challenge Rating of these creatures, for easy substitution of the DM's own choice. In other places I will be using homebrew monster conversions, mostly those done by Glen Welch, Sheldon Morris or Seethyr, available at the Vaults of Pandius and linked for each individual creature in the annotations. I take no credit for the design of any creature in this adventure.

If an NPC uses statistics of a drow, they are instead an aquatic elf from the Kingdom of Aqua. They lose *Sunlight Sensitivity* Trait and gain *Amphibious*, allowing them to breathe both air and water, and swimming speed equal to their walking speed.



Giant Manta Ray

Shark-kin working for Alphatians are a result of experiments on regular shark-kin, making them even more dangerous. These mutants are bipedal, but look more like main characters of the *Street Sharks* animated series, rather than the creatures whose statblocks they use, the sahuagin. In addition, having been spliced with electric eels, all mutant shark-kin in this adventure gain the following traits:

- **Damage Immunities:** lightning.
- **Lunge:** Shark-kin's first attack in a turn deals additional 2d6 damage if it has moved at least 20 feet in a straight line before making it.
- **Electric Explosion:** When a shark-kin dies, it explodes with electric energy. All creatures within 10 ft from it must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity Saving Throw, taking 8 (2d6) lightning damage on a failed save, half as much on a successful one. If the shark-kin's size is above Medium at the moment of its death, increase the range of explosion by 5 ft, Save DC by 2 and damage by 4 (1d6) per size category.
- **Electrified Body** (applies only to shark-kin size Large or above): A creature touching a shark-kin, hitting it, or getting hit by it with a melee weapon attack, takes 5 points of lightning damage.

These traits are something I added to shark-kin mutants in my campaign when using them as substitutes for original monsters from adventure *The Secret of Skyborn Lighthouse*<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> By Kelsey Dionne at [DungeonMastersGuild](https://www.dungeondm.com/)





## ADVENTURE LOCATION

The Laboratory is located at the sea bottom not far away from the border with Atrughin Clans, sixteen miles south of the Royal Elephant Gardens in the Province of Jalawar and forty miles east of Kandaputra. It is a complex built into the sea bottom itself, majoritarily underground, with tunnels and rooms built into the rock.

On the way there the PCs may have a random encounter; roll a d4 to determine what they run into:

1. A bored sea giant<sup>5</sup> that will seek a fight unless the PCs find a way to entertain him. He retreats if reduced to less than a half of his hit point maximum
2. 4 giant manta rays<sup>6</sup> trying to ambush the party
3. Swarm of giant jellyfish<sup>7</sup> composed of 1d4+1 death's heads, 2d4+1 marauders, and 2d6+1 galleys, occupying the narrow passage in coral reef the PCs must take
4. Nothing, the journey is uneventful

<sup>5</sup> See "[Giant, Sea](#)" by Sheldon Morris at the Vaults

<sup>6</sup> See "[Manta Ray, Giant](#)" by Sheldon Morris at the Vaults

<sup>7</sup> See "[Jellyfish](#)" at the Vaults of Pandius

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Walls:** The walls, ceilings and floors of all rooms and corridors are made out of magically-reinforced adamantine, covered on the inside with adamantine-reinforced ceramic. As such they all have AC of 23, hardness of 20, and hit points appropriate to size. All checks to climb the walls or avoid being knocked prone are made with disadvantage. If more than half of the walls in the room all are destroyed, it will flood in 5d10 minutes

**Light:** Within each room there is one of three possible light sources that double as a surveillance system, remotely operated by the sea hags in Area 35, installed in the center of the ceiling. Whenever PCs enter a numbered room, roll 1d4 to determine which one. 1: a shark's head with eyes plucked out and *continuous light* cast on its teeth. As an action a hag can use it to make a smell-based Wisdom (Perception) check to detect all creatures in the room, making it at advantage if any of these creatures is below its hit point maximum. 2: A dolphin's head with *continuous light* cast on it. As an action a hag can make it emit a dolphin sound, learning the number and type of creatures in the room. A DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to fall prone can be used to avoid detection. 3–4: A small hole with hag's eye inside it and a spell of *continuous light* cast in such a way as to remove all shadows from the area. Hags can see through the eye as normal, but, due to close proximity of the light, they make all Perception checks through it with disadvantage.

If all the dolphin heads begin making noise at once, it means the alarm went off.



**Doors:** All doors are made of the same material as the walls and possess the same object statistics. The doors are made of three wavy squares, two that extend from the ceiling and one that extends from the floor, so that when the door is closed, it looks like a wavy A symbol. The door can be forced open with a DC 25 Athletic check. Next to each door is a panel that can be used to open or close the door with possession of the right password (usually a simple magical formula), DC 15 Arcana Check or DC 20 Dexterity Check using thieves' tools or spending a spell slot of level 1 or lower. The doors are all protected against the *knock* spell. If a room or corridor begins to flood, all doors in it lock automatically and can only be opened with force until water is removed. Each door holds for a number of hours equal d12 minus the number of flooded rooms connected to one directly behind it. Eg. if Areas 11 and 17 flood, door to Area 22 holds for 2d12-2 hours.

**Prison Cells:** All rooms named Prison Cell are equipped with manacles and chains attached to the walls, made of adamantine. The panels to open the doors to these rooms are installed only on the outside, but the doors can still be forced open with brute strength.

**Scrying:** False Hydra in Area 32 had its powers redirected to shield the laboratory from Divination magic. All magical attempts at inferring knowledge from outside the lab will succeed, but the caster and everyone else will instantly forget any knowledge learned through it. However, the DM should note what knowledge has been gained this way, as if the Hydra is slain, the party will regain all lost memories. In addition, at any point during exploration of the lab, the DM can decide to have the player character make a DC 20 Wisdom saving

throw, allowing them to recall a piece of knowledge; I would suggest one relevant to the nearest room.

**Teleportation:** All teleportation magic used to enter the laboratory results in all creatures affected by the spell to appear at the sea bottom near the false entrance to the laboratory. The Alphasians regularly send out golems to retrieve any gear of enemies drowned that way. The only exceptions to that rule are attempts at teleporting to the Teleportation Circle in Area 1 and only if the caster knows a secret password. Passwords change each 24 hours, with people often coming in and out of the facility possessing a special cipher key they use to learn new passwords. Passwords are usually based on the phases of the moon during historical events in the Alphasian calendar.

In addition, in each dead end of a corridor (which are where digging work into the rock has been stopped or is in progress), there is a teleport platform. Stepping into it allows a creature and all creatures touching it to teleport to any of the other teleport platforms in the complex. The teleportation can be directed with a DC 30 Arcana check done by a creature stepping on the platform. Any subsequent use of the platforms lowers the DC by 1. If the check fails, the creature is teleported to a random platform within the complex. Undergoing week-long special training mandatory for the staff reduces DC to 10. Being instructed by a creature who did undergo such training gains advantage on the roll.

**Anti-Magic:** The magic reinforcing the ceramic covering also has built-in wards that trigger whenever someone attempts to cast *anti-magic field* or *dispel magic*, automatically casting *counterspell* of appropri-

ate level on the caster. This is installed in the walls with a *wish* spell in order to prevent removal of magic that keeps the structure from being crushed under the immense pressure of rock and ocean. While the wards are integrated into the ceramic and made near-invisible, they can be detected with a DC 30 Perception or Investigation check. DC 15 Arcana check reveals the purpose of these enchantments.

Named NPCs with *dispel magic* on their spell list have temporary clearance allowing them to be ignored by the wards, being trusted to use the spell in case of emergency. The admission process takes 24 hours, so if a higher-ranked NPC that should have such clearance doesn't, assume they're in the middle of renewing it.

**Entrances:** There are two ways to enter the complex. There is an adamantine hatch visible on the bottom floor. It can be opened with DC 15 Athletics check or with use of a *knock* spell. Alternatively, a DC 13 Dexterity check using thieves' tools (or other appropriate tools of player's choice), can be used to remove it from the hinges. The low difficulty of these checks and the fact no effort was put into hiding this hatch will probably tip your players off that this is the false entrance that is used to lure unwanted guests. If it did not, they can only blame themselves for what is to follow.

The hatch opens to a downward slide to a small natural cave, where water will form a small pool. The water leaks through many cracks in the floor, so the PCs can leave towards the nearby ascending staircase, without fear of drowning. The staircase leads to a small 5 by 5 feet platform (unmarked room in top right corner of the map). Any creature standing on the platform it teleported to Area 1. Creatures that

enter this way do not follow recompression procedure and suffer decompression sickness: they instantly gain one level of exhaustion and must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw each real time hour or gain another level of exhaustion, until *lesser restoration* or similar spell is cast on them.

The true entrance is hidden sixty feet west from the false one. It is painted and covered up to blend into the ocean floor, requiring a DC 20 Perception or Investigation check to be discovered, and cannot be found through use of passive checks. This hatch is adamantine and requires a DC 20 Athletics check to force it open. It is not possible to take it off its hinges or to open it with a *knock* spell. The mages assume any creature knowing of this entrance is capable of opening its traditional way and any magic-user would possess the password to teleport into the complex. This hatch opens to a downward stair that leads to an isolated room, in which water is drained by grates in the floor and redirected back to the ocean. The door on the opposite end of the room opens automatically when there is no water, leading to an upward staircase, leading to Area 2.

**Alarm:** Any of the NPCs with official titles or rank of Inquisitor has a modified *wand of sending* they can use to raise alarm. Other NPCs can run to nearest areas where such NPC are to be found. Some Areas list a percentile possibility an NPC will be in the room. In a situation an NPC runs to them to raise an alarm, assume that NPC is there. NPC with access to spells like *message* or *sending* will use them for direct contact but will still leave the room to meet with reinforcements. Alarm immediately sends a modified *sending* message with a brief description for the reason (example: "A



dwarf, an Ethengarian, a sea elf and a Makai have been spotted in Area twenty, they are armed and dangerous.”) to be heard in all rooms. NPC in Areas 5, 7, 9, 13, 15, 16, 25, 31, 34, 35 and Professor Admiral from Area 38 arrive in the area within 1d4 rounds, starting from those who are nearest, then each new group arrives a round later. If the PCs move, they may still run into the groups as they converge on the area, as would be reasonable. Alarm lasts for 1d10 minutes, unless there have been any updates made through another *sending*. All through it the Archmage is handling all information sent to him and forwarding it through mass *sending* with his wand. If reinforcements lose the track of the intruders, the Archmage will direct the search and taunt the PCs with further *sendings*.

**Equipment:** Every NPC who does not possess an ability to breathe underwater has been equipped with a *cloak of the manta ray*. Every NPC who needs to breathe water and isn't a prisoner has a *mask of air breathing* (Wondrous Item, Common, while wearing this you can breathe air).

**Shattered Mind Zones:** Areas marked with letters on the map are suffering from manifestations of broken mind and broken magic of Inmate #28 (see Area 28). Whenever a creature enters the marked square, roll d100 on Shattered Mind Surge table below, causing an Inmate's escaped thought to appear in their head as their own. It is added to the creature's Personality, Ideals, Bonds or Flaws (which one is determined randomly with roll of d4). If an effect of a thought calls for a saving throw, it is a Wisdom saving throw, unless specified otherwise. Save DC is 15 the first time, then increases by 2 every next time the situation

calls for it. Effects last until the affected creature succeeds on three saving throws in a roll, or *greater restoration*, *remove curse*, or higher-level spell of similar effect is cast on them. In addition whenever a creature is subjected to one of those thoughts, roll 1d4+1. This is a number of days after which, if not removed, the thought becomes permanent and can no longer be removed. In addition, a creature that lets this happen rolls on an Indefinite Madness Table. A creature can be affected by multiple Shattered Mind Surges at the same time. Their effects overlap, and if two would nullify each other, only the nullified part isn't in effect, while others are. If a roll determines a thought that has already been rolled, roll again. Once there are no thoughts left, these areas do not trigger anymore. Once triggered, the Shattered Mind area does not trigger again for 1 minute.



Alphatian mage Alenusa



Table: Shattered Mind Surge

Result	Thought	Positive Effect	Negative Effect
1–4	None	None	None
5–8	“I AM THE LAW!”	Advantage on Deception, Intimidation, and Persuasion checks to establish your dominance.	You must succeed on a saving throw whenever wanting to de-escalate conflict or admit being wrong or you cannot say anything.
9–12	“What do I have to fear?”	You have advantage on saving throws against being frightened or, if you already had such ability, you are immune to frightened condition.	You must succeed on a saving throw to take a disengage action or leave combat.
13–16	“...connoisseur of all things beautiful”	Advantage on all checks relating to all forms of art.	Whenever presented with an opportunity to spend money on art pieces or participate in art performances, you must succeed on a saving throw or have to do it.
17–20	“It’s all a matter of hand-eye coordination”	Advantage on ranged attack rolls.	When in combat you want to take an action other than a ranged attack action, you must succeed on a saving throw or must take a ranged attack action instead.
21–24	“This party is only getting started!”	Advantage on Performance checks.	Whenever you try to make a Stealth or Sleight of Hand roll, you must succeed on a saving throw or break into a loud performance.



Table: Shattered Mind Surge (continued)

Result	Thought	Positive Effect	Negative Effect
25–28	“One more round, please!”	You remove a level of exhaustion whenever engaging in any addictions you have.	If you do not suffer any addictions, you gain one as determined by you and the DM in private. Whenever taking a short or long rest without having indulged your addiction since the last one, you must pass a saving throw or suffer a level of exhaustion.
29–32	“...is right, I should put myself more in other people’s shoes”	Advantage on Insight checks.	Whenever you try to take an offensive action (attack, spell that causes damage, etc.) against an enemy, you must succeed on a saving throw or you must spend that action taking Persuasion or Deception check instead.
33–36	“Do I ever leave the library? Kid, I AM the library!”	Advantage on all Knowledge Skills.	Whenever attempting another Skill check you must pass a saving throw or must try to apply a Knowledge check of your choice instead. If the task is not something a Knowledge check can be applied to, you automatically fail.
37–40	“Just... bear the... pain...for a little.... longer...”	Advantage on Constitution saving throws.	Disadvantage on all Dexterity saving throws to avoid taking damage.
41–44	“You snooze, you lose, moron”	Advantage on Intimidation checks and on attack rolls against creatures who haven’t made their first turn in combat.	Disadvantage on Saving Throws to avoid being frightened.





Table: Shattered Mind Surge (continued)

Result	Thought	Positive Effect	Negative Effect
45–48	“...the whimsy and strange beauty found under every rock, in every grain of sand...”	Advantage on all rolls to recall knowledge about Aberrations, Celestials, Elementals, Fiends, Monstrosities, or Undead.	Disadvantage on all saving throws and ability checks to avoid being charmed, frightened, or tricked by illusions.
49–52	“Always have right tool for the job”	Advantage on all checks requiring the use of tools.	Whenever presented with an opportunity to use tools you are proficient with, you must succeed on a saving throw or take it.
53–56	“Unlike you, I am perfectly logical”	Advantage on Intelligence checks and Saving Throws.	Disadvantage on all Animal Handling, Deception, Intimidation, and Persuasion checks.
57–60	“I must been so in the zone, I didn’t even notice when she stabbed me”	Advantage on Concentration checks.	Whenever you make a choice to avoid taking damage (eg. not entering an area of poisonous gas while walking) you must succeed on a saving throw or forget about the danger and act in a way that will make you take that damage.
61–64	“You’re missing the forest for the trees!”	Advantage on Perception checks.	Disadvantage on Investigation checks.
65–68	“We’re gonna do it like my good old daddy used to!”	Advantage on all melee attacks.	Whenever you take an action in combat other than melee attack, you must pass DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or you must take melee attack action instead.



Table: Shattered Mind Surge (continued)

Result	Thought	Positive Effect	Negative Effect
69–72	“..but if I’m quick, I should be able to tackle him before...”	Advantage on Initiative Rolls and Dexterity Saving Throws	Whenever trying to peacefully engage a hostile creature, you must succeed on a saving throw or enter combat.
73–76	“What’s the matter? Scared of an honest debate?!”	Advantage on Deception, Intimidation, and Persuasion checks.	Whenever meeting a person holding any strong beliefs, you must succeed on a saving throw or must engage in a debate with the opposite position, even if you do not believe it.
77–80	“I feel like I could run the walls, dance on the rooftop’s edges, jump to the moon if I wanted”	Advantage on Acrobatics, Athletics, and Performance checks.	Whenever standing or sitting in the same spot for more than one round, you must succeed on a saving throw or must immediately move and do something requiring Athletics or Acrobatics check.
81–84	“Do you feel it? It’s the city, whispering to me sweet secrets and painful truths. Blood has flown down these streets.”	Advantage on all checks to recall information about cities and navigate city streets, laws and customs.	When in a city, once every 12 hours you must succeed on a saving throw, or be incapacitated for 10 minutes, as your mind and senses are pleasantly overwhelmed by the city.
85–88	“You want these kids? You’ll have to go through me!”	Whenever an effect is targeting an ally within 5 feet of you, you can use your reaction to redirect it to yourself. However, unless you succeed on a saving throw, you must use this ability.	



Table: Shattered Mind Surge (continued)

Result	Thought	Positive Effect	Negative Effect
89–92	“The truth is, I’m so afraid of disappointing anyone, I end up disappointing everyone”	Advantage on Deception, Intimidation, and Persuasion checks.	Whenever you’re about to do or say something that you know will negatively change the attitude of someone who likes you towards you, you must succeed on a saving throw or you cannot do it.
93–96	“The construction of this room, don’t you think it’s a little odd?”	Advantage on Perception and Investigation checks.	Analytical approach to your surroundings imposes disadvantage on all Initiative rolls.
97–100	“Keep yourself together, you goddamn fool!”	Advantage on Wisdom Saving Throws, except those related to effects of this table.	Choose one Ability Score other than Wisdom. You have disadvantage on saving throws of that Ability Score.



## WANDERING MONSTERS

The DM should roll for a random encounter every hour of real-life game the party spends in the laboratory. On a result of 1

the DM should roll 2d8-1 or select one of encounters in the table below:

Roll 2d8-1	Wandering Monster
1	Shark-kin Patrol: 1 Commander ( <b>Sahuagin Baron</b> ), 2 Priestesses ( <b>Sahuagin High Priestess</b> ) and 10 shark-kin mutants ( <b>Sahuagin</b> ). They are instructed to attack intruders, but they can be fooled into believing the party are members of the staff with a DC 18 Deception check. The check is made with disadvantage if the party is doing anything suspicious and becomes impossible if they are doing anything hostile or blatantly out of character for a staff member.
2	Sea Hag Patrol: 9 sea hags, grouped into 3 sea hag covens. As they are being controlled by kopru, they attack immediately and fight to the death and cannot be fooled. Moreover, if they notice the intruders, the kopru will immediately raise an alarm and inform everyone of the party's presence.
3	Junior Researchers: 3 <b>Mages</b> engrossed in a conversation about their research. The conversation makes them pay little attention and they are taught to not question their superiors. Combination of these factors make all checks to hide or deceive them to be made with an advantage.
4	Researcher: One <b>Archmage</b> on the way either to their lab, quarters or cafeteria. Researcher walks by, eating a sandwich and reading a new report, so engrossed in the lecture all checks to hide from them are made with an advantage. However, they know by name all of the personnel, so it is impossible to deceive them that the party is working here and all other checks to lie to them are made with disadvantage.
5	Harini the Deer (see Area 3) on her way to another maintenance job. The party can avoid her with a DC 10 Stealth check or convince her they're working here with a DC 10 Deception check, since she tends to avoid people and does not know the staff very well. Otherwise she follows the rules outlined in description of Area 3.
6	Roll on Shattered Mind Surge Table for a single PC, reroll results below 5.

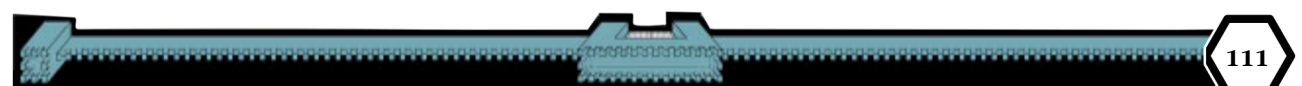


Roll 2d8-1	Wandering Monster
7	<p>Seahawk and Weehawk. Twin brothers born from a romance between a Turtle Clan man and a sea elf from the Minrothad Guilds. Seahawk (NG, Human <b>Swashbuckler</b>, <i>Volo's Guide to Monsters</i>, CR 3) is a bombastic, if a bit cowardly, wannabe pirate and adventurer, who had been captured when trying to sabotage an Alphatian ship. Weehawk (CG Aquatic Elf, <b>Berserker</b>), his serious, but prone to solving all problems through fighting, trans brother, heard about it, set off on a rescue quest...and promptly got himself captured. The brothers managed to escape from Area 19 when it was overtaken by Crazy Hassan, and are now looking for an exit, bickering about which way to go. The party will hear their arguments, in a mix of Minrothaddan and Atruaghin languages, from a good way ahead, giving PCs a full round to hide. DC 10 check is needed to avoid being noticed by them. If they do notice the party, Weehawk will rush them, yelling "YOU WILL NEVER TAKE US ALIVE, ALPHATIAN SCUM!" and attack, while Seahawk will grab his head and scream "Mom's gonna kill me!". It should be relatively easy, except for potential language barrier, to convince the two that the PCs are not Alphatians. At worst, DC 12 Persuasion check will suffice, but good arguments may allow PCs to pass without having to roll. The brothers are eager to escape, but the PCs can convince them to help fight the Alphatians, gaining potential allies. However, their constant arguments do impose disadvantage on the group's Stealth checks to avoid being heard. If either of the brothers is slain, the other one will swear revenge and dedicate his life fighting his killers, be it the PCs or Alphatians. As the two are completely lost, they are too confused to deliver any meaningful information on the laboratory.</p>
8	<p>Interns: 1d4 <b>Apprentice Mages</b> (<i>Volo's Guide to Monsters</i>) in hurry carrying on one important task or another. If they spot the PCs, they run away to the nearest allies to raise the alarm. They can be deceived with a DC 15 Deception check or intimidated with a DC 10 Intimidation check.</p>
9	<p>Chief of Security: Samaeel the All-Seeing (See Area 5) on his morning round around the facility (which, despite being "morning round," he does whenever he feels like). Due to being distracted by his new conspiracies, all Stealth rolls to hide from him have an advantage. He can be interacted with just as described in Area 5.</p>
10	<p>Grand Inquisitor Aleenusa (See Area 5) is on one of her regularly scheduled patrols across the whole complex and is on high alert, making all rolls to hide from her to be rolled at a disadvantage. She can be interacted with as described in that Area.</p>

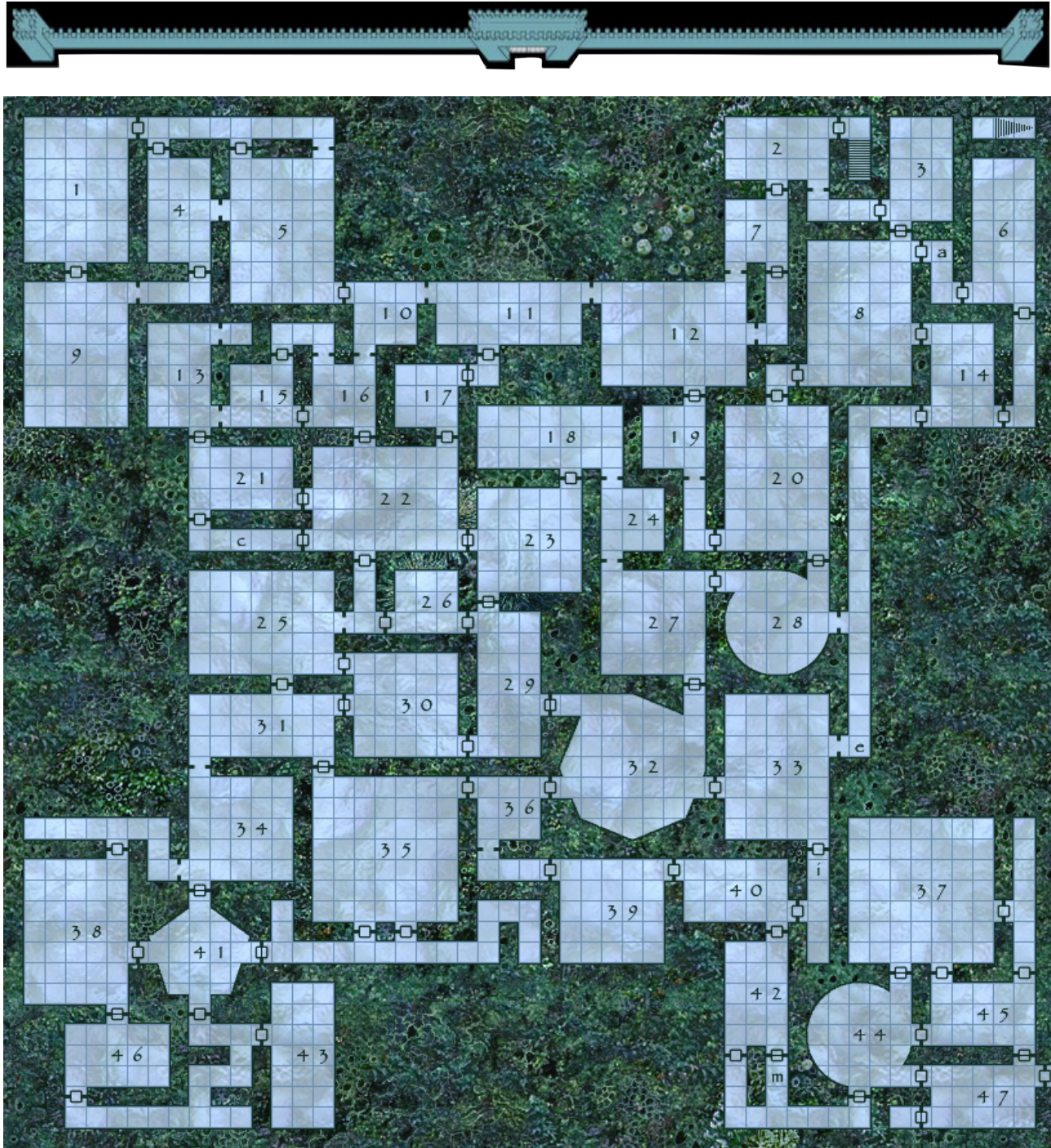




Roll 2d8-1	Wandering Monster
11	Poe & Chandler: Detective Poe (see Area 16) is scolding Junior Detective Chandler (See Area 15) after the latter's mess-up. Due to that the PCs have advantage on Stealth checks to avoid them. If combat breaks out, Poe sends Chandler for reinforcements, raising the alarm, while he holds the PCs off.
12	David the Kobarian (See Area 13) has left the hideout to scavenge for food. He acts as if encountered in Area 13.
13	The Inquisition: Three members of Alphatian Inquisition who went to celebrate promotion of one of Trainees to full-fledged Inquisitor, have spotted the party and set up an ambush at the next turn, wanting to capture them for themselves and assuming the PCs will not be expecting that. Members of this trio use statistics of <b>Drow Elite Warrior</b> , <b>Drow Priestess of Lolth</b> and <b>Drow House Captain</b> ( <i>Mordekainen's Tome of Foes</i> , CR 9). The ambush can be spotted with a DC 18 Perception check, otherwise PCs begin the combat surprised. The PCs can try to avoid the ambush altogether, but that will require DC 16 group Stealth check or the ambushers will notice it and begin chasing the PCs down to fight. They fight to the death, as they fear the humiliation awaiting them if they fail, more than death.
14	Lead Researcher: Professor Admiral Patrisha de Fray-Seaserpent ( <b>Drow Matron Mother</b> , <i>Volo's Guide to Monsters</i> , CR 20) is approaching the nearest laboratory to discuss some matter or another. She immediately raises an alarm and attacks the PCs if she spots them, wishing to capture and study them.
15	A single Malignant Thought, that is "trying" to pass unnoticed but can be spotted with a DC 12 Perception check. It runs away but always can be seen taking turns away from each room, as if trying to lead the PCs to Area 27 (which is exactly what it is doing).







Map of the Undersea Laboratory

The map has been generated using donjon, <https://donjon.bin.sh/fantasy/dungeon>. I picked up the map and didn't read its ideas on how to fill it. The website is, however, responsible for the chaotic manner in which the rooms have been numbered. I tried to make the best of it.



## THE LABORATORY ROOM BY ROOM

### 1. Teleportation Room

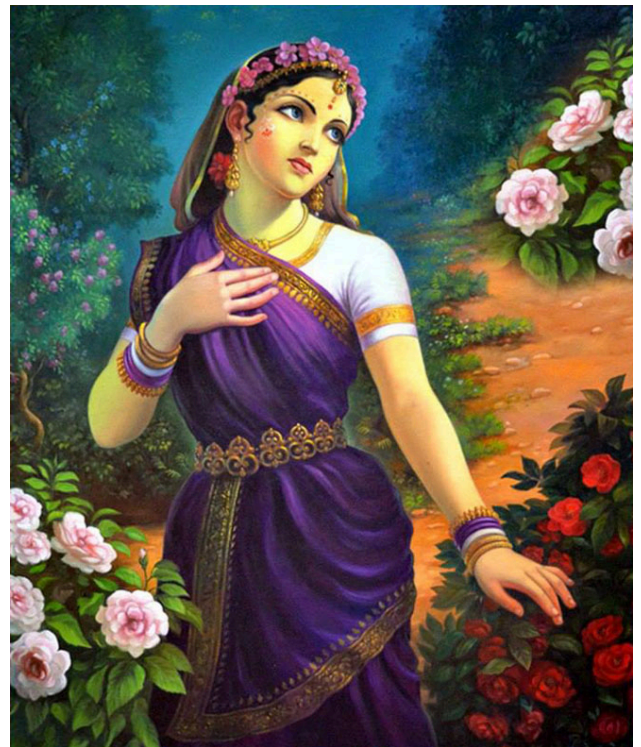
Walls of this room have been covered in glyphs that trigger whenever any creature is teleported into the room without the password. On Initiative Order 20 the glyphs cast *hypnotic pattern* with Spell Save DC of 20 on the whole room. Next round, on Initiative turn of 20 the glyphs cast *bold monster* with Spell Save DC of 20 on all remaining creatures unaffected by the *hypnotic pattern*. If all creatures are incapacitated, the soldiers in Area 9 enter the room, strip them of all weapons and equipment and deliver them to area 25. If any of the creatures are left capable of fighting back, the guards enter the room and attack, fighting to knock unconscious, not to kill.

### 2. Recompression Chamber

This chamber serves to allow for controlled recompression of the creatures entering the area. Magic in the room regulates the pressure differences, allowing for peaceful adjustment. The process starts once creatures enter the room. Doors on the opposite end do not open until the process is complete. Once it is, the door to Area 3 opens automatically, while the door to Area 7 remains closed. A creature that interrupts the process or forces their way through the chamber deeper into the lab before it is finished suffers decompression sickness as if it entered the other way.

### 3. Maintenance Room

This room is used to store tools necessary for maintaining the spells in the laboratory, including rare spell components, metallurgy tools, and wands of *metal shape*, a spell which works like *stone shape*, but operates on metal or metal-infused objects, used to repair the walls. There is a sleeping bag in the corner of the room.



Harini

Harini the Deer (**Apprentice Wizard**, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*) works and lives there, even sleeping in the sleeping bag. There is a 25% chance the party will encounter her whenever they enter this room. She is a native Sindi, who works for Alphatians in exchange for providing her impoverished family better means of life and sending her younger brother into an Alphatian school of magic. She cares for neither Alphatian occupation nor the liberation of Sind, but fears retribution to her family if she's found out doing anything treacherous. She is also



extremely diligent and a workaholic, who believes neglecting her job would count as treason. She also suffers from social anxiety, which earned her the nickname the Deer, due to her habit of running away from people. All these combined should make her frustrating to talk to for the players. However, she can be relatively easily persuaded into not raising an alarm, so allow DC 13 Persuasion or Deception check if the party makes good arguments. DC 18 Check is necessary to convince her to provide any information, as that would be actively aiding the enemy of Alphatia, which is treason. Any attempts at intimidation or use of force will cause her to flee to Area 7, raising an alarm. She fights only if cornered.

Harini can provide the PCs with all information outlined in Features of the Area section. She can also list 3 Horrible Rooms—places that cause the biggest maintenance problems around the laboratory. In fact, most of her work is revolving around these rooms.

- “Madman’s Room” (Area 28): There is a single madman being experimented on. His screams are haunting and it seems he can infect people with his madness.
- “Skeleton Room” (Area 41): There is a corpse of something horrible and great in it; she has seen the substance being drained from its bones to “turn people into monsters and monsters into even worse monsters.”
- “Uuum...”: Third room is Area 32, but Harini cannot tell what exactly is a problem here, she knows she cannot enter this room without the company of Magister Garvit, whose office is in Area 40. He has the only key to open the door to this area and even higher-rank-

ing mages do not go there without him. At some point during the conversation or as the PCs are leaving, Harini’s eyes will suddenly widen with fear and she will mutter to herself “It’s always hungry... Just eats and eats and eats... so many people.” But when pressed about it, she will have no recollection of ever saying that.

Harini can also point to the location of the rooms.

#### 4. Interrogation Room

This room features a single table with two chairs on opposite ends. One of the chairs has manacles attached to its arms and legs. A large Venetian mirror is placed in one of the eastern walls. It is enchanted to connect to the other side of the wall across the stone.

A permanent *zone of truth* spell is cast on this room. Any creature entering it must pass a DC 15 Charisma Saving Throw or be unable to lie. If a creature passes a saving throw, a hidden compartment in the end of the table opposite to the chair with manacles reveals itself. Otherwise, it can be discovered with a DC 20 Investigation check and unlocked with a *knock* spell or DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves’ tools. Inside is a set of torturer’s tools worth 100 gp at any shady fence or 300 gp from a collector of macabre and horrible things. It is kept in a black leather case, with bright gold and pink letters saying “To the Best Mommy in the World—Alexander and Sophia” on the side. The second object is a pair of leather gauntlets with small, round, flat blue crystals installed on the palm and back of each hand. These are *shock gauntlets*. It also contains a *wand of cure light wounds* and a *wand of revivify*.





Sitting on the chair makes the manacles automatically clasp around the target's hands and legs. It requires a *knock* spell, DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools from another person, or DC 30 check from the trapped person to unlock them. They can be broken free with a DC 18 Athletics check from another person or DC 25 from the trapped person.

Every time a person without protection from lie-detecting magic lies in this room, it receives lightning damage equal to the number of times it has already lied + 1. This damage is nonlethal.

### ***Shock Gauntlets***

Wondrous Item, common.

Select one Ability Score. You can cast *shocking grasp* like a spellcaster of appropriate level or lower, if you choose so. Selected Ability Score is your Spellcasting Ability for this item.

## **5. Security Office**

There is a large Venetian mirror in one of the western walls, corresponding to a mirror in Area 4.

A large stone desk is placed at the southern end of the room, covered in whole stacks of documents, ledgers, books, all concerning various cases. Behind it the whole wall is covered in a corkboard full of documents, photos, dates, pins and strings in a somewhat incomprehensible mess. Any creature attempting to decipher it must succeed at DC 20 Wisdom saving throw, taking 2d6 psychic damage on a failed save, half as much on a successful one. This conspiracy board is incomprehensible.

This is the working desk of Chief of Security Samaeel the All-Seeing (**Death Tyrant**). There is a 25% chance he is in the office when PCs enter it. In this case, he is treating this room as his lair. His personality is a mixture of a conspiracy theorist and a loud police chief threatening to take away a cowboy cop's badge in every crime movie. He can be bargained with due to his conflicting loyalties. While he takes a lot of pride in his job as chief of security and will ruthlessly kill any intruders, he's also a worshiper of Nyx and a member of the Knights of Ebony, an organization dedicated to hunting down creatures from other worlds. As such he is very unhappy about the experiment performed by Magister Garvit, but has been overturned whenever voicing complaints about it. He is willing to "turn a blind eye, pun very much intended" on the PCs' presence in the complex if they assassinate for him Inmate #28 (Area 28) and False Hydra (Area 32), and place incriminating evidence in Magister Garvit's Office (Area 40). He is earnest in his offer and will honor it.

At the northern end of the room is a desk made of fine ebony wood and beautiful tablecloths with "Immortals Don't Play Dice" knitted onto it. There are six locked drawers, each one requiring DC 18 Dexterity check using thieves' tools to unlock, and each protected with a poison needle trap that deals 1d4 piercing damage and forces target to make DC 20 Constitution saving throw each hour for 1d8 hours, or suffer 1d2 cumulative loss of an Ability Score. Which Ability Score is drained is determined by 1d6 roll when the target fails their first saving throw, reroll if that Ability Score already was selected this way for a different drawer. Results are permanent but can be removed with *lesser restoration* or a stronger spell. Traps can be noticed with

DC 25 Investigation or Perception check and disabled with a DC 25 check using thieves' tools each. A set of keys can open the drawers without triggering the trap. Drawers contain, from top to bottom:

1. *Dagger of venom* with golden dedication "from Ebenezer to my beautiful wife" on the handle
2. *Ring of spell storing*, containing a single *bold monster* spell, disguised with magic to look like *ring of mind shielding*
3. One thousand platinum pieces' worth of zsonga weed, confiscated from the staff and preserved to be resold on black market
4. *Bag of holding* containing disguise kit, alchemist supplies, elven rations, traveler's outfit, +1 *whip*, navigator's tools, thieves' tools, and 500 gp
5. An investigation file of Claudia Avelone (see Area 41), with notes suspecting she's taking bribes from Prince Halde-mar, but there is no solid evidence to prove it
6. A small painting of a happy family consisting of a young elven woman, a middle-aged human man in wizard robes and a pair of children, human boy and elven girl, bearing clear resemblance to both the man and the woman

This desk belongs to Grand Inquisitor Arleenusa (use statistics of **Drow Inquisitor** from *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, but give her +15 bonus to Deception, *ring of mind shielding*, and keys to all the drawers). There's a 30% chance she is in the room when the PCs enter. She is a beautiful, ath-

letic woman with a serious expression, who takes her job very seriously. She took this position to advance her career and get better status for her two children, Alexander and Sophia. She is frustrated by working under a mad Death Tyrant rambling about conspiracy theories—when he isn't threatening to "eat her badge," whatever that is. She is willing to parlay with the PCs if they help her destroy Samaeel in a manner that makes her look good and heroic enough to get promoted to his position. She is willing to provide her *ring of spell storing* from drawer 2 and offers contents of drawer 3 as a reward. She will not uphold her end of the deal and plans to betray and kill the PCs the moment Samaeel is dealt with, to get rid of the loose ends. An Insight check opposed to her Deception check can reveal that fact. If she's reduced to below half of her HP in combat, she offers both her rings and content of Drawer 3 in exchange for letting her leave. She will then grab contents of Drawers 1, 4 and 5 and leave the complex.

Both desks have specific magical alert buttons that, when activated, call creatures in Areas 9, 13 and 18 to come to aid. Owner of the desk knows where the button is and how not to press it. Any creature inspecting the desk needs a DC 20 Perception check to notice it or must make DC 15 Dexterity Saving throw to avoid pressing it.

In slight chance both Samaeel and Arleenusa are in the room at the same time, neither is willing to parlay and fights to the death to throw off suspicion of their respective treachery. Arleenusa will however fight in a way that gives her plausible excuse to let PCs kill Samaeel, hoping they will be weakened enough to finish them off once he is gone.

## 6. Bathroom

This is used by the workers in the northern part of the laboratory and has showers and toilet cubicles. Sinks are on the north wall. There is a hydraulics system installed to redirect dirty water and waste into the ocean and it also hosts two **Hydraxes**<sup>8</sup> summoned to take care of maintaining it in operational state and to viciously attack anyone or anything trying to tamper with the pipes on either side. They cannot be detected but remain non hostile as long as the PCs do not destroy or tamper with anything. If they do provoke the elementals, they appear and fight until slain or until the PCs leave the area.

## 7. Guard Post

5 **Knights** and 2 **Mages** are stationed in this room. They are made aware whenever a creature enters Area 2, staying on standby in case of intruders. However, they know Harini is often performing maintenance and tests and leaves directly to Area 3, so they will not become suspicious if the party does the same.

## 8. Cafeteria

This is a place where everyone goes to eat during the working hours. It consists of 4 large tables with benches on both sides and a kitchen in the northwest end of the room. The kitchen contains a human-sized magic-carved bust of a goblin with a large mustache that, when touched, demands to name a kind of dish and beverage. When told any, it magically summons it, then demands payment that is more than twice of what such dish would usually cost. If refused payment, it casts *disintegrate* on

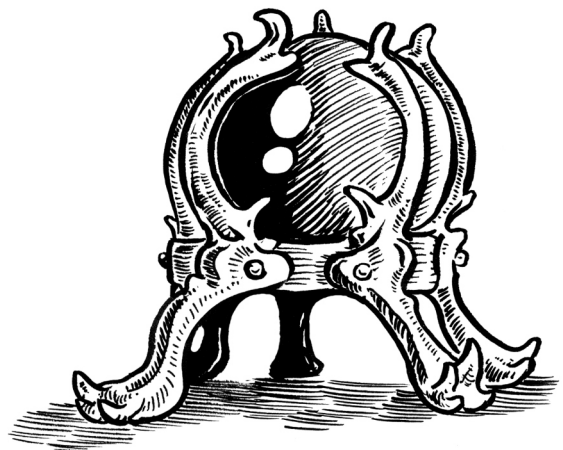
<sup>8</sup>See "[Elemental, Hydrax](#)" at the Vaults of Pandius

the whole dish, destroying it, then produces a single glass of dirty water and a single slice of bread with melted cheese on it. This is part of Emperor Zandor's official policy to teach citizens fiscal responsibility. Consumption of these items results in diarrhea lasting for 1d6+1 days or until *remove poison* is cast on the unfortunate person.

## 9. Guard Post

5 **Knights** and 1 **Mage** are stationed in this room, awaiting development in Area 1. They fight to subdue or knock unconscious.

## 10. The Crystal Ball of Slup Yensid



A crystal ball is placed on a dais in the center of the room. Any creature can attempt to use it to scry over the complex. Next to the ball lies an instruction manual, explaining that this ball is the only means of scrying over the area, while bypassing the protections, and it is used for security purposes only. It has been modified to project the results on the southern wall. Any magical means will identify the object as a *crystal ball of scrying*, but a DC 20 Arcana check while using *identify* or *detect magic*



will reveal the ball is filled with Enhancement, Illusion, and Evocation magic, not Divination. A result of 30 or more reveals the ball's true nature and all features. The ball has AC 10, 10 HP, and immunity to psychic and poison damage. If destroyed it explodes, forcing all creatures within 20 ft to make a DC 20 Dexterity Saving Throw, taking 8d6 lightning damage on a failed save, half as much on a successful one.

When trying to use the ball, it begins to project on the wall, and the doors to this room are closed shut. On Initiative of 20 all creatures that see the projection are asked to create Crystal Ball Memory of themselves and must succeed on DC 15 Wisdom Saving throw. On Initiative of 15 all creatures are asked to download a special Ball Scrying Enhancement on their mind, and must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence Saving Throw. On Initiative of 10 all creatures are asked to make Shared Scrying Call and must Succeed on DC 15 Charisma Saving Throw. On Initiative 5 all creatures are informed their broadcast has been interrupted with a request of signing up to Emperor Zandor's Special Scrying Spy Network and must succeed on DC 15 Constitution Saving Throw. On Initiative of 1 the ball proclaims scrying broadcast failure and begins the process anew. Failing any of the Saving Throws results in 3d8 psychic damage, half as much on a successful one. If a creature failed three saving throws, it must roll for short-term madness. Six and ten failed saving throws require similar rolls on long-term and indefinite madness tables, respectively. In addition, any creature reduced to zero hit points through psychic damage gains temporary hit points equal to its hit point maximum and flies into mindless rage, attacking everyone and everything in sight until temporary hit points are reduced

to zero or *lesser restoration* is cast on the creature.

Any NPC staff member will tell the party about this trap, when interacted with in a peaceful manner, as long as the PCs ask about any traps. Exceptions are Samaeel and Arleenusa, who will respectively forget and decide people who would fall for something this simple are not worth working with.

### 11. Common Room

This is a room where people come to relax and socialize; it features a few benches and tables, and a bookshelf filled with books and board games. The room is enhanced with time magic, making time inside flow at the half rate of time outside, meaning a regular hour in any other room is two hours in this room. This is done to effectively cut the break times in half, without decreasing the morale or health of the staff.

The books are part of the best-selling in Alphatia series *Daring and Scandalous Adventures of Great Ramen in Land of Myoshima*, a heavily fictionalized mixture of fantasy, science fiction, erotica and orientalist tropes disguised as historical records of a made-up Myoshiman legendary hero, allegedly recovered by Prince Haldemar during his travel to Myoshima. Haldemar, for the record, resents the allegations. The books are utter nonsense, written by a bunch of Alphantian lupins under the pseudonym I. M. Weeb, none of which has ever been to Myoshima. On the moon nation itself, the books are regarded as so bad they flip back into being hilarious, and are subject to wide-spread mockery among all levels of society.

Board games include several standard games as well as a number of games in a

series titled *Trains: The Mechanic*, in which players assume roles of mundane humans living in a world resembling Earth in the 1960's. Each game's main goal is to win the affection of various women working as train mechanics, before other players. The game had a very short run before cancellation in Alphatia due to lack of interest, but is very popular among mutant shark-kin, beholder-kin, and sea hags, for reasons that both baffle and fascinate Alphasians.

On the southern wall there is a panel that allows paying 100 gold to rent the room, locking it for up to the next four hours of outside time (8 hours in the room). It is a common practice among members of both the Undersea Alphasian Book Club and Train: the Mechanic Appreciation Society. This is the only room where PCs can safely take a long rest, but only if they're careful to not be spotted, as the renting mechanism can be disabled by the Security and it is automatically disabled whenever an alarm is raised. Taking a long rest in this room more often than once per sixteen in-game hours will arise suspicion, leading to two Inquisitor Teams (2 **Drow Elite Warriors**, 2 **Drow Priestesses of Lolth** and a **Drow House Captain** from *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, see Area 13 for more information) to be dispatched and interrupt the party's long rest.

## 12. Gym and Dance Room

This room is filled with training equipment used in mandatory gym training. The room is also used as a dance practice room. Due to the high value of the equipment, totality of which can be sold as a set for 5,000 platinum pieces, a protective ward has been placed against all attempts at removing it from the room or otherwise messing around with it. In the same room a special spell was used in an attempt at creating

automated trainers for the crew. The two spells interacted weirdly with one another. When PCs interact with the training equipment, roll a d20. On a result of 1 or if PCs try to put any piece of equipment into a container or carry it out of the room, a Workout Trap activates.

**Workout Trap:** Complex Trap. When triggered, it begins to play energetic music and summons an Animated Armor for each creature in the room. Armors have +10 bonus to Athletics, Acrobatics and Performance checks, are immune to all damage, and effects of all spells are reflected from them at the caster. Each Armor points at one other creature not chosen by one of the other Armors and moves in initiative before that creature. On each of its turns Armors will perform one action from the following list. Actions with multiple checks are still one action:

- Attempt to grapple the creature, if successful making it pick that creature up and lift it above its head ten times (two Athletics checks)
- A series of backflips (three Acrobatic checks)
- Quick dance in multiple styles (four Performance checks)

A creature that Armor selected must match or exceed at least half of the Armor's rolls in corresponding series of checks for each Action, or suffer a level of exhaustion. Once all armors perform all three actions, they disappear and the exercise ends.

The commotion makes creatures in Area 7 come to investigate in 1d4+1 rounds, attacking the PCs if they find them there.



### 13. Inquisition Office

This is the working office of a special unit of elves, part of the Security, under command of Grand Inquisitor, whose job is to investigate any wrongdoing or treachery from mages working at the facility. There are always two teams of Inquisitors active at the same time, one a woman (**Drow Priestess of Lolth**) and a male partner (**Drow House Captain, Mordekainen's Tome of Foes**), one a woman with two Trainees (**Drow Elite Guard**), from which she has yet to select one to be promoted as her partner. There is 50% chance one Inquisitor and two Trainees are in the room when the PCs enter, 25% that a pair of male and female Inquisitors is, and 10% chance it's both. These elves are career-minded and professional and will try to subdue the PCs or kill them; if that proves impossible, they will retreat and raise alarm whenever they take any casualties.

The room has five desks next to the walls, and a 15-foot long, 1-ft wide metal pole has been put horizontally on two dais in the middle, welded to them with magic. This is where the Inquisitors duel each other to retain their sharpness. If PCs' weapons and gear have been taken away from them, they're on one of the desks, having not yet been cataloged. Everything but any *bags of holding* or *portable holes* or similar items is placed in a *chest of holding* made of the same material as the walls. If there is no one in the room, the chest is locked and requires a DC 25 Dexterity check using thieves' tools to open, made with disadvantage in case of improvised tools. Any member of the Inquisition has a matching key. If one of the Inquisitor teams is in the room, one of them has opened the chest and is pulling out items one by one for cataloging.

In the northeast wall there's a hidden room that Inquisitors do not know about. The entrance can be found with a DC 20 Investigation check. Inside is the hiding place of David the Kobarian (**Neutral Half Red Dragon Veteran** with disadvantage on saving throws against being frightened and who, if frightened, must every turn make DC 15 Wisdom Saving throw or run away screaming), a kobold that has been subjected to many experiments at creating a super soldier, becoming a hulking, dragon-like monstrosity capable of breathing fire. However, his mind is still that of a cowardly kobold. When he escaped, he found this secret room and hid in here, only leaving when it was safe to scavenge for food. His oppressors assumed he tried to swim to the surface and drowned and were no longer looking for him. David is armed with the +1 *talking sword* Apharaxia, which insults him telepathically whenever he shows cowardice. Which is always. David can be easily bullied into aiding the PCs, assuming they won't feel too bad for the guy. He is quite miserable.

How was David able to hide from the Inquisition in what is basically their own closet? There are questions even the Immortals do not know the answers to...

### 14. Kitchen

This is a more traditional kitchen than an automated one in Area 8. It has a number of magical lockers next to the walls, that are bigger on the inside than on the outside, kept in low temperatures, and protected from all kinds of mundane pests like insects or mice. Each is connected to different food suppliers, new deliveries being magically teleported from the farm into it. Lockers are labeled in Alphatian "beef," "poultry," "milk," "fruits," "vegetables," "milk &





cheese,” and “drinks.” They are stocked with food at all times, which is how no one noticed that David from Area 13 has been sneaking food from here. Kitchen also has a stove powered by the spell of *continuous flame*, all smoke being redirected by a chimney into the ocean, a set of cook utensils, and a 5-foot wide, 10-foot long kitchen table.

### 15. Junior Detectives' Office

These are the quarters of Junior Detectives Abott Chandler and Mina Rankin (each one is a **Spectator**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*), where they reside when not on errands for Samaeel or Detective Poe. They take care of training their ten Junior Deputy Detectives (**Gazers**, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*). None of them is very smart and can be easily tricked into thinking the PCs are new hires and act very friendly towards them. However, if called for help to Area 13 or Area 16, they will join the fight and fight to death due to being too dumb to understand the concept of death.

### 16. Detective's Office

These are the headquarters of Detective Robert Philips Poe (**Death Kiss**, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*), Samaeel's best detective. He always wears a detective hat and talks like a protagonist in a film noir. He will immediately recognize PCs as intruders and try to pretend he confused them with new “clients,” but will in reality try to get them to Area 15, even fleeing there if attacked, to get its residents to join the fight against them.

This room contains a stylized desk, a small pot over a plate with a spell of *continuous flame* cast on it, and a fridge powered by a diminutive portal to the Elemental Plane of

Ice, filled to the brim with bags of frozen blood. When stressed, Robert tends to heat a bag of blood before drinking it, usually muttering he picked the wrong day to stop bloodsucking.

### 17. Humanoid Prison Cell

This is where humanoids are being kept before being processed into Skum in Area 22. Currently the cell holds 4 Kara-Kara<sup>9</sup> and one Kara-Kara Chief (**Orc Claw of Luthic**, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, CR 2, but possessing War Song trait of other Kara-Kara), stripped of all weapons, armor and gear. If freed and armed, they can be persuaded easily to join the fight against the Alphatians.



Orc

There's a 10% chance that, while the PCs are here, Galvas Magen and Hypnos Magen from Area 22 will arrive to drag a Kara-Kara for processing. This chance increases by 10% for each 30 minutes of real time the PCs stay in this room. If the PCs leave without freeing the Kara-Kara or disrupting the process in Area 22, next time they

<sup>9</sup>See "[Kara-Kara](#)" at the Vaults of Pandius

arrive, there will be one less Kara-Kara in this room and one more Skum in Area 22.

### **18. Sea People Processing Facility**

Three tables have been placed within 5 feet from one another in the middle of the room. On two lie dead tritons, while the corpse of a kna lies in the middle table, comically too large to fit. They were experimented on with new kinds of drugs and substances produced in Area 38. However, despite being declared dead, the bodies have been undergoing horrible transformations. Within 1d2+1 rounds from PCs entering the room, bodies burst with blood that forms vengeful and hungry oozes, which attempt to feed on the PCs. The oozes produced by the two triton corpses both use statistics of an **Adult Oblex**, while the kna corpse produces one using statistics of an **Elder Oblex**

Ten **Bone Golems**<sup>10</sup> have been placed along the walls; they activate and attack only if an unauthorized personnel messes with the test subjects. If oozes emerge on their own, bone golems do not move. If PCs interact with the corpses before oozes' emergence, the oozes wait and observe. If bone golems are winning or one of the PCs is reduced below half of their hit points while within 5 feet of one of the corpses, oozes emerge and attack. If the PCs are winning, oozes attempt to sneak away from the room and hunt PCs using typical Oblex tactics<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> See "[Golem, Bone](#)" by Sheldon Morris at the Vaults

<sup>11</sup> See the article "[Oblex Tactics](#)" at the "The Monsters Know What They're Doing" blog

### **19. Crazy Hassan's Used Camel Emporium (Temporary Location)**

Crazy Hassan (Chaotic Neutral Sidhe Mage), a powerful sidhe as obsessed with Desert Nomads as he is ignorant of their culture, has impersonated a Desert Nomad and was arrested, then placed in this prison cell. He promptly broke off and turned it into a store, where he buys and sells used camels, for half the price of a regular camel. He has the personality of a bombastic, loud used car salesman. This room is much larger than it appears on the map and any attempts at comprehending what has been done to its geometry or the logic of trying to sell camels underwater result in 1d6 psychic damage. Alphasians have decided to leave him alone. Anyone passing through this room does so in a hurry, not interacting with him and, if possible, everyone tries to avoid this room.

If the PCs slay Crazy Hassan, **Malt-y-Nos**<sup>12</sup>, Lady of the Wild Hunt, will take interest in them. Crazy Hassan, before he decided to pretend he's a Desert Nomad camel merchant, had once earned a promise she will seek to avenge his next death. It's a fact he'll brag about, but will be too afraid to utter Malt-y-Nos' name, out of fear. However, because he's been annoying, Malt-y-Nos will turn this into a game. She did promise to merely try to avenge the guy, after all. At a random point within 3 weeks' time, the PCs will be woken up upon dawn by horn of Malt-y-Nos who will pursue them with twelve **Cwn Annwn**<sup>13</sup>. If they avoid capture or death until nightfall or slay her, the hunt ends. If the PCs manage to do it 3 days in a row, she will gracefully relent and grant the character who impressed her the most an Epic Boon of DM's choice.

<sup>12</sup> See "[Malt-y-Nos](#)" at the Vaults of Pandius

<sup>13</sup> See "[Cwn Annwn](#)" at the Vaults of Pandius

## 20. Fish Tank

This room is 60 feet tall. A fish tank, 20 feet wide, 25 feet long, 50 feet tall, has been placed in the middle of it. Its walls are made of a *wall of force* and it's filled with water up to 45 feet. The lid of the fish tank is a crate made of enhanced adamantine, making it several times heavier than a regular thing. If the *wall of force* were to be destroyed, like with *disintegrate*, the crate would inevitably crush what is inside this construction, killing it.

And what is inside is Seaghast, **Sea Dragon**<sup>14</sup> captured by the Alphatians for study. She's extremely hateful of her captors and will try to speak in Draconic to any creature she considers Alphatian enemies. She will plead for her freedom, and is willing to negotiate. Her starting offer is to never terrorize Sindi sea or attack Sindi ships, but a DC 15 Persuasion check can convince her to swear to protect the seas from pirates and invading forces for future generations. DC 20 check will make her offer a Rare Magic Item from her lair, and DC 25 check will bump it to a Very Rare Magic Item. What item it is is left to the



<sup>14</sup> See "[Sea Dragon](#)" at the Vaults of Pandius

DM's discretion, but anyway Seaghast needs to get to her lair to retrieve it. If freed, she will leave, unless persuaded with DC 20 check to join the fight. Either way, as she's literally tearing through the narrow corridors and breaking all doors in her way, every room she passes through will quickly flood, and soon the whole complex may flood as well.

There are additional wards in this room that cast *counterspell* on any creature trying to cast *disintegrate* on the fish tank and instantly raise the Alarm. Attempts at moving the crate results in **20 Animated Armors** being summoned in the room and attacking the PCs.

## 21. Prison Cell

This is a prison cell, with a set of manacles and chains lined on the wall. Captured creatures are put in here until they're taken to specialized prison cells in Areas 17 (humans and other humanoids), 24 (aquatic elves and other sea people), 26 (shark-kin) and 36 (sea hags).

If the party is defeated, they are stripped of all their gear and put in this prison. They will be sent to a specific cell in 2d6 hours, once all paperwork is filled. In the meantime they will be individually interrogated in Area 4 by Arleenusa (See Area 5) and can postpone their separation and processing if they convince her they're more useful alive and unchanged. PCs' weapons and gear are taken to Area 13 for cataloging.

## 22. Humanoid Processing Facility

A 25 foot-long, 15-foot wide, 30-foot deep swimming pool filled with substances created in Area 38 has been installed in this room. It serves the process of turning



humanoids into **Skum** (*Ghosts of Saltmarsh*, CR 5). There are currently 4 skum swimming deep in the pool. The pool works as water under Mucous Cloud ability of an aboleth, and a creature exposed to it for long enough will begin transformation into skum. The process is irreversible, except for *greater restoration* or a stronger spell of similar effect.

Magister Magus Dorna (**Drow Mage**), elven woman in white labcoat, with green tint hinting at some orcish blood, is overseeing the process. Her bodyguard and lover, Kimiyo Kobayashi, who appears as a woman in samurai armor, but is actually a female **Oni** in disguise, is accompanying her at all times. Dorna is a younger half-sister of Grand Inquisitor Arleenusa (see Area 5), who has been shunned by her family due to having an orcish father. This makes her despise orcs, and take near sadistic glee in subjecting Kara-Kara to a transformation into skum. She also named these creatures, choosing the name precisely to add insult to injury. Her hatred and sadism are what made an oni fall in love with her, but she gets away with it by targeting a subspecies of orcs even other orcs don't care for. Arleenusa has got her this job less out of sisterly love and more because she knew Dorna would do everything to not disappoint.

If PCs were to negotiate with Dorna, whatever they offer her is no deal until they can either convince her they are working with her sister (granting them advantage on Persuasion checks towards her) or PCs can guarantee safety of Dorna, her sister and her lover.

Dorna is currently attuned to *ring of skum control* (Wondrous Item, Uncommon, requires attunement). Attuned creature is

believed by skum to be the aboleth the skum is charmed by, giving her command over the creatures.

Dorna also has a collection of magen consisting of one **Caldron Magen**, one **Demos Magen**, one **Galvan Magen**, one **Hypnos Magen**<sup>15</sup> and one **Scalos Magen**<sup>16</sup>. The galvan magen is tasked with delivering, grappling and dragging to the room one of the prisoners from Area 17, with the hypnos magen ready to help with more combative "guests." The transformation process itself is as simple as it is brutal and consists just of the galvan magen forcibly holding the victim down in a pool. Even if the creature drowns, after one minute it begins transforming into a living skum. Other magen are to stand the watch and protect Dorna.

If combat breaks out, Dorna calls upon the skum and magen to fight the PCs, while she and Kimiyo flee to Area 5, raising the Alarm. They fight if cornered or backed up by reinforcements, with Kimiyo protecting Dorna with her life.

### 23. Shark-kin Uplifting Lab

There are three machines—two large at the northern and southern wall, opposite to one another, and one, medium-sized, at the eastern wall. They serve respectively in the creation of shark-kin mutant commanders, shark-kin mutant champions and shark-kin mutant priestesses. Accomplished mutants are selected for this process by King Gore and his royal family (see Area 34) and ordered to walk to this room, where they are subjected to the process, after which surviving members (with 1 to 3 survival ratio) are returned to their brethren and

<sup>15</sup> All using the statistics from [these descriptions of Magen](#) at the Vaults of Pandius

<sup>16</sup> See "[Scalos Magen](#)" at the Vaults of Pandius

given new roles. There is one of each of these creatures in the machine, undergoing the process currently.

Doctor A (**Abjurer**, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, CR 9), Doctor J (**Transmuter**, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, CR 5) and Doctor K (**War Priest**, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, CR 10) oversee the process. They are seen as brilliant researchers but also extremely unprofessional, to the point that no one in the complex wants to work with them. Doctor A and Doctor K absolutely HATE one another, due to some past incident, and Doctor J is exploiting this for his own sick amusement, pitting the two against each other. Currently their argument is over whether champions or commanders are the superior creations, with A favoring commanders and K champions. Their arguments are heard from far away almost as often as the screaming of their "patients." PCs can infer, either from eavesdropping or capturing Doctor J, who is quite a coward and eager to share any information in order to save his skin, about the conflict.

If PCs reveal themselves to the three doctors, a DC 18 Deception check can convince them the party is part of the personnel. However, even if the party fails, doctors simply question them and try to learn anything interesting, before one of them offers to escort the party to Area 21. If the PCs agree, on the way that doctor will offer the PCs a thousand gp each for sabotaging one of the machines in the room, with A and K wanting to destroy the one favored by the other, and J wanting to destroy either. If they agree and manage to sneak past the remaining doctors, they will need 3 successful checks with DC 17, 15 and 13 with tools of their choice to sabotage the machine. Casting any spell of level 1 or higher will automatically succeed on a single check but

players should not be told that and instead be encouraged to explain how exactly that spell would help.

If one of the machines is successfully sabotaged, either Doctor A or K flies into blind rage and begins attacking the other doctor, who responds in kind. Doctor J's laugh makes the other two turn against him and the trio begin hurling spells at each other, quickly moving to different areas and causing a lot of destruction.

If the PCs attack the doctors or attempt to openly destroy one of the machines, the doctors respond by hurling at them their strongest spells first, hoping to kill the intruders fast and get back to work, then releasing creatures in the machines to aid them. Each of them flees if reduced to below half of their hit point maximum, but the destruction they cause by their combat method will raise the alarm after just the first round of combat.

#### 24. Sea People Prison Cell

Here sea people are being kept before being processed in Area 18. Currently in the room there are 1d4-1 aquatic elves (**Oceanus**, *Ghosts of Saltmarsh*, CR 1/2) and 1d4-1 *kna*<sup>17</sup>. They have been stripped of all weapons and armor but given water bags to help them breathe. If freed and armed they can be persuaded to join the fight against Alphasians.

#### 25. Mutant Shark-kin Lair

A 15-foot wide, 25-foot long, 30-foot deep swimming pool is built into the surface of this room.

<sup>17</sup> See "[Kna](#)" at the Vaults of Pandius

This is the lair where mutated shark-kin are residing. At any given time there are 1d6+10 shark-kin mutants (**Sahuagin**), 1d2 shark-kin mutant commanders (**Sahuagin Baron**) and 1d4 shark-kin priestesses (**Sahuagin Priestess**) resting in this room, while the rest is on patrol or in other rooms. They are brainwashed into fanatical obedience and attack on sight, fighting to the death. However, a single shark-kin mutant will be dispatched to raise the alarm by running into Areas 31 and 34.

### **26. Shark-kin Prison Cell**

Here shark-kin are being kept before being processed into Alphatian-serving mutants in Area 29. There are 1d4+1 shark-kin<sup>18</sup> in this area. They have been stripped of all weapons and armor but given water bags to help them breathe. If freed and provided means of transportation, like flooding the corridors, they charge to Area 29 and then 30, viciously attacking all Alphatians and kopru they can get their hands on.

There is a 10% chance a flesh golem from Area 29 arrives to drag one of the shark-kin for processing while PCs are here. This chance increases by 10% for each 30 minutes of real-time PCs stay in this room. If the PCs leave without freeing the shark-kin, next time they return there should be one shark-kin less in the room.

### **27. Grey Philosopher**

This room consists of a pair of large magical screens continuously scrying on Areas 28 and 32 (actually showing the creature inside the latter) and a study desk and chair, currently occupied. This room served

for observation of two most dangerous test subjects. However, one of the researchers, Doctor W, has been obsessed over the study of a crystal skull he has found, eventually becoming a **Grey Philosopher**<sup>19</sup>, still holding a skull in his hands. Now only Magister Gravit sometimes uses this room.

The skull actually belongs to a deceased kopru and has been used to give anchor to this place for a kopru elder hive mind, an idea introduced originally in Goodman Games' revised and expanded *Isle of Dread*. It's a hive mind of the eldest and most powerful kopru, who have ascended to a higher plane of existence, but found themselves cut off from the material plane. When PCs enter the room the hive mind, which has laid low to hide from Alphatians, will contact them telepathically. They offer a huge reward in the form of ancient wisdom, and can easily be persuaded to also add financial reward in the form of treasure in Areas 44 and 45. The hive mind wants the PCs to take the skull and place it against forehead of Inmate #28 (Area 28), False Hydra (Area 32), Archmage General Alaman Seaserpent the Third (either Area 37 or 47), and Professor Admiral Patrisha de Fray-Seaserpent (Area 38). Any of these creatures this is done to loses consciousness and cannot be woken up, and the creature who has done this receives permanent unspecified, cumulative 1d4 bonus to, of their choice, Intelligence, Wisdom or Charisma, that can raise an Ability Score above 20. A PC who received this benefit is also eligible for Warlock pact with the hive mind as either Great Old One or Undead patron, while an NPC automatically gains one level of it.

<sup>18</sup> As they have not been transformed yet, they use [these Shark-Kin statistics](#) at the Vaults of Pandius

<sup>19</sup> See "[Grey Philosopher 5E](#)" by Sheldon Morris at the Vaults of Pandius



If the PCs do it to all 4 targets, they wake up 20 hours later, on the shore east of Kandaputra with promised rewards, all loot they took, no recollection of what has happened and without any NPC allies. The attempts to return to the laboratory will reveal it is utterly gone: only solid rock, untouched by human hand, remains. In the following months they will hear of increased attacks on ships and seaside settlements from all kinds of undersea creatures and sea monsters that appear extremely coordinated. Exactly one year after these events, the aquatic elven kingdom of Seahome will be attacked from all fronts by hordes of monsters serving the new Kopru Empire. But that is a story for another time...

### 28. Inmate #28

This room has the shape of an orb, 25 feet in radius. In the middle of it, held by powerful magical generators in the ceiling and floor, is a middle-aged man in a chain-bound straight-jacket, whose face betrays that he suffered frequent physical abuse and older, equally frequent, alcohol and drug abuse. This is Inmate #28 (Archmage with 8 Wisdom), who claims to come from a place called Faerun and be a famous mage in his home land. He will try to present himself as one of several iconic figures of the Forgotten Realms setting, including Elminster,



Manshoon, or Halaster Blackcloak<sup>20</sup>, and be baffled by how the PCs could never have heard of him, seemingly unaware he is far from home. However, a DC 10 Insight check can recognize that he has no idea about his own identity. As a matter of fact, he forgot his whole past, probably a side-effect of trying to break the barrier to Mystara while both drunk and high on multiple drugs. The entering also messed up his powers, causing him to be responsible for the Shattered Mind Areas. He is unable to control it and Alphasians have been subjecting him to studies (which he'd rather call torture), to try to rein in or even harness this power. He will try to convince the PCs to destroy the magical generators holding him in place and free him. Generators have the same AC and hardness as the walls. If freed, he may either leave to his home plane, causing effects of his powers to cease, or aid the PCs. He knows all Archmage spells, but cannot regain spell slots, and every time he casts a spell, he and all creatures within 5 feet of him must roll on the Shattered Mind Surge table.

If convinced to stay, this man will wander the world, being dangerous to everyone he encounters and slowly leaving more and more of his mind behind, creating further dangers to the world.

### 29. Shark-kin Processing Facility

The main feature of this room is a huge machine with an open mouth in its north and south ends, which covers most of the room, leaving only a 5-foot wide path around it. Near the northern wall a table with manacles is floating. From time to time a flesh golem goes to area 26 and drags a

<sup>20</sup> For humorous effect you can have him mispronounce the names, claiming to be "Monsoon," "El Maestro," or "Halberd Blackpants".



shark-kin to this room. The shark-kin is tied to the table, which then slowly moves to the southern end of the room in a straight line, through the machine, with a speed of 5 ft per turn, during which the creature is transformed into a shark-kin mutant. Only 1 in 5 shark-kin survives the process, but is driven insane by the pain. The dead ones are dropped through a hatch next door to Area 32, where they're devoured by False Hydra. Surviving ones are dragged by flesh golems to Area 30.

Fleshwarper Brothers (**Transmuters**, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, CR 5), named Bale, Dale and Gale, each accompanied by a **Flesh Golem**, oversee the process. They resent the doctors from Area 23 and often talk about wanting to take their position. If they'd hear something bad happened to their rivals, especially if it was self-inflicted and humiliating, they'd march to Area 38 and demand to be given their position from Professor Admiral. If attacked, golems fight to the death, while brothers flee to Area 38, warning creatures in Areas 30, 31, and 34, and raising the alarm. They fight if cornered.

### **30. Koprū Lair**

The floor in this room has been turned into a 60-foot deep, 15-square-foot surface swimming pool filled with hot water and toxic substances that fill the air with poisonous mist. Any creature entering the area for the first time must pass a DC 13 Constitution Saving Throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. Alphasians have been trained to be immune to this effect. A creature entering the water takes 2d6 fire and 2d6 acid damage each turn. Koprū are immune to all of those effects. The water is so murky that a koprū who swims underwater gains full

concealment, and even a surfacing one benefits from half concealment.

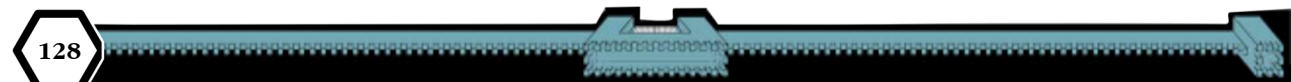
Five **Koprū**<sup>21</sup> live in this pool. When attacked they attempt to dominate the most dangerous-looking enemies to make them fight among themselves. If that fails, they use their powers to alert all creatures dominated by them, meaning all qhark-kin mutants and sea hags, and swim below the surface. On their turn they arise and attack with tail attack. If a koprū in the pool has a creature restrained by its tail, it can swim down, automatically dragging the creature down with it (ignoring grapple rules about movement). Koprū are cowards and more than happy waiting for the PCs out while the reinforcements arrive. If reduced below ¼ hit points, koprū attempt to parlay and offer to betray Alphasians, if allowed to be left alone with their servants. If the PCs agree, they order all dominated creatures to turn against Alphasians and, once the Alphasians are slain, let the PCs go freely. They will begin turning the lab into their own lair and soon start kidnapping shark-kin and other creatures to create more mutants and more slaves, carrying on most of the Alphasian plans as their own.

The koprū dismiss all claims of a koprū elder hive mind as "childish tales told to scare new hatchlings."

### **31. Mutant Shark-kin Garrison**

The floor of this room has been replaced with a 30-foot deep swimming pool. Six shark-kin mutant champions (**Sahuagin Champion**, except Large, *Ghosts of Saltmarsh*, CR 3), four shark-kin mutant priestesses, two shark-kin mutant commanders and one shark-kin shaman (**Sahuagin**

<sup>21</sup> See "[Koprū](#)" at the Vaults of Pandius



**Waveshaper**, *Ghosts of Saltmarsh*, CR 5) are stationed here at all time, ready and at full alert. Any attempts at sneaking past them is made with disadvantage.

### 32. False Hydra's Prison



This room is a prison for Magister Gravit's greatest creation, **False Hydra**<sup>22</sup>. Gravit (see Area 40) has purged knowledge of similar creatures from another world from Inmate #28 and set off to create one of his own through dark magic. He was hoping he could extract from its flesh a cure for his state, but unfortunately even its abilities to erase memories are impotent against a pachidermion's perfect memory. Enraged, Gravit chained the creature by each head in the center of this 35 feet in radius room. Shock collars are placed on each head, and a special redirecting mechanism is attached above their jaws, projecting False Hydra's song outwards. If more than one head is not singing at all time, Gravit activates the collars, causing electric shock that deals 1d6 lightning damage per head to False Hydra. Gravit also maintains the gravity field used to keep it floating above ground, so that its body cannot spread new heads underground. He personally feeds the

creature prisoners from Areas 22 and 24 each day, and is present at all experiments and maintenance of it. He possesses the only key to all doors of this room, each of which has been enforced (+5 to DC of all attempts at opening the door without the key) and locked with an *arcane lock* spell only the key can bypass.

The room has locked, reinforced windows installed in the walls connected with each of the other rooms, to observe the creature. Entrances are placed on the level of a platform attached to a wall halfway through the height of the room, allowing movement between entrances.

False Hydra is an intelligent creature and will attempt to bargain with the PCs, offering them its aid in defeating the Alphas, but a successful DC 17 Insight check will reveal it plans to eat the party and go on a rampage, killing indiscriminately. If they agree to help, the creature will explain that Gravit has the key to the collars and gravity field; otherwise it attacks. A successful DC 22 Intimidation, DC 25 Deception, or DC 28 Persuasion check can convince it to, once freed, leave the area and travel somewhere far away, to be someone else's problem.

As this creature does not exist normally in Mystara and this particular one is a wizard's creation based on memories of a madman, all Knowledge checks about this creature fail. If False Hydra is slain or escapes, the PCs who attempted scrying of the area learn all information about it that was previously blocked from their minds.

<sup>22</sup> See "[False Hydra](#)" at [gmbuilder.com](#)





### 33. Mutated Masher

A **Masher**<sup>23</sup> captured by the Alphatians has been locked in this room and pumped full of drugs created in Area 38. It is Magister Gravit's "insurance," as he is hoping to create something capable of killing False Hydra in Area 32. In pain, the masher lashes furiously at all creatures who enter, but can be calmed down with a successful DC 25 Animal Handling check. The enduring mutations didn't just cause it a great deal of pain, but also made the creature's body unstable. Whenever the masher is dealt damage, roll a d20. On a roll of 1 or if the masher is reduced below a quarter of its hit point maximum, it drastically mutates, its body literally splitting off the back like a cocoon. A horrifying abomination (**Neothelid**, "*Volo's Guide to Monsters*", CR 13) emerges from its back and attacks the PCs with increased ferocity, fighting until slain. Unlike a regular masher, it can squeeze through narrow corridors and easily break through the doors, chasing after fleeing creatures, then going after the most intelligent creatures it can sense.

### 34. Royal Family

The floor of this room has been replaced by a 25-foot deep swimming pool. In this throne room resides King Gore Reborn (**King Bachzarisaa the Insatiable**, *Sea King's Malice*, CR 9), as well as the royal family composed of his wife, Nameless High Priestess of Jormungandr the Great Maw<sup>24</sup> (**Enzu, High Priestess of Dajobas**, *Sea King's Malice*, CR 9), their daughter One of

<sup>23</sup> See "*Masher*" at the Vaults of Pandius

<sup>24</sup> In my campaign the mutated shark-kin worship Jormungandr from Norse mythology, who is also Leviathan from sourcebook *Elder Evils*. You may decide to make it a different thing in your game. Demogorgon works well in particular.

Blessed Jaws (**Sahuagin High Priestess**, *Ghosts of Saltmarsh*, CR 5), and son the Butcher (**Sahuagin Blademaster**, *Ghosts of Saltmarsh*, CR 6), with 3 shark-kin mutant champions and 1 shark-kin mutant priestess for protection. They fight to the death with a ferocity and fanaticism that grants them advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

The royal family were previously the real family of mighty shark-kin chieftain Grishnak the Black, who led his tribe in a desperate assault against Alphatians who kidnapped their people and turned them into abominations. They have been defeated, captured and brainwashed and mutated so thoroughly that they forgot their own identities and names, becoming grotesque caricatures of their former selves, devoid of any honor or compassion, and only loyal to the Alphatians through the mind-control of the kopru. A combination of DC 20 Knowledge History, Nature and Arcana from three separate PCs can reveal this to the players.

If the kopru have been slain, King Gore (or any surviving member of the royal family, if he is slain), will call all surviving shark-kin mutants to himself, then lead them against the Alphatians. However, all members of the royal family have been corrupted to the point they no longer seek the good of their people, but destruction of the surface world for the glory of Jormungandr. They will fight to capture Areas 23, 29, 38, and 41, so they can take control over the process of transformation. They will be willing to parlay with the PCs, offering aid against the Alphatians in exchange for being left to their own devices. If the PCs agree and do not destroy resources in all three rooms, within a decade mutants shall use it



to conquer and convert all the shark-kin in the Sea of Dread.

### 35. A Room Full of Hags

Forty five **Sea Hags**, paired into 15 covens, are being held in this room. As they are all dominated by kopru, some of them are allowed to patrol the laboratory or participate in other tasks. There are never less than 8 covens (24 hags) present in the room at the same time. When the party enters there are  $1d6+8$  sea hag covens present.

In the center of the room is a small pedestal with a figurine of a kopru. Any creature that looks at it must make a DC 15 Wisdom Saving Throw or become dominated by the kopru. Alphatians know about it and avoid looking at the figurine. If the hags are freed from kopru control, they can be bargained with and convinced to turn against their slave masters.

If done so, they'll gleefully attack all creatures other than the party, going so far as to even try to force open the door to Area 32 and blast False Hydra into oblivion with spells. If not, the hags can be questioned for information and are capable of seeing into every room where the surveillance system was not destroyed. They can also inform on the plan for which they have been gathered and are currently working on: Casting a massive combined *sleep* spell on the whole population of Kandaputra and gorging themselves on their children when everyone is asleep, replacing them all with copies that will later grow into new sea hags, ready to serve in the Alphatian army.

### 36. Sea Hag Prison Cell

This is where sea hags are being kept before being brainwashed in Area 39. There are  $1d4+1$  sea hags currently trapped there. If freed, they can be persuaded to join the fight against the Alphatians, but will request time to form covens with one another or, if there aren't enough of them for it, with one of the PCs.

While PCs are in this room, there's a 10% chance a manscorpion from Area 39 will show up to drag a hag for brainwashing. This possibility increases by 10% for every hour PCs spend in this room. If the PCs leave without freeing the hags or dealing with the kopru in Area 39, the next time they enter this room, there is one hag less here and one hag more in Area 35.

### 37. Archmage's Last Stand

The center of this room is filled by a swimming pool, in which lies a **Hydra**, leaving only a narrow 5-foot wide path under each wall to walk around it. The pool has a depth of 60 feet.



Archmage Alaman

If at any point during the adventure the PCs raise the alarm or free any of the prisoners, the man in charge of this complex, Archmage General Alaman Seaserpent the Third, will be waiting here for the PCs. He is accompanied by a **Shield Guardian** with permanent *water walk* cast on it, and an above-mentioned hydra, which is under his control. If encountered here, he will be fighting to the death. He begins the fight with *fire shield*, *foresight*, *mage armor*, *mind blank*, and *globe of invulnerability* already cast on himself. He will be waiting for the PCs at the far end of the room, hiding behind his shield guardian. In combat he will try to force the PCs into the water, then use spells like *whirlwind* to keep them there, at the hydra's mercy. If that fails, he will try to trap whoever looks most dangerous in a *resilient sphere*. If PCs reach him in combat, he will cast *baste* on himself and fight with his scimitar. If reduced below half of his hit point maximum, he will try to flee and escape the laboratory through either a teleporting platform at the end of the corridor leading north from the door in the eastern wall or, if that has been disabled, a secret passage in Area 47. If reduced below a quarter of his hit point maximum, he will surrender and tell his remaining subordinates to stand down. He will expect honorable treatment befitting a prisoner of war. He can be ransomed back to Alphatia for a price not exceeding 5,000 gp, but he will try to claim he is worth at least twice as much. It is not a lie, that's how much the previous Empress would pay for him, but Emperor Zandor is stingy.

Alaman uses statistics of **Drow Favored Consort** (*Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 18) with the following changes:

- His scimitar is a weapon +3
- He wears *slippers of water walking* and a *ring of spell turning*, which is his wedding ring
- He has advantage on all saving throw against spells and magical effects
- He has the following spells prepared:
  - Cantrips: *mage hand*, *message*, *poison spray*, *ray of frost*, *shocking grasp*
  - 1st Level (4 Slots): *detect magic*, *identify*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*
  - 2nd Level (3 Slots): *gust of wind*, *mirror image*, *misty step*, *shatter*
  - 3rd Level (3 Slots): *counterspell*, *baste*, *tidal wave*
  - 4th Level (3 Slots): *banishment*, *dimension door*, *fire shield*, *otiluke's resilient sphere*
  - 5th Level (3 Slots): *cone of cold*, *scrying*, *wall of force*
  - 6th Level (1 Slot): *globe of invulnerability*
  - 7th Level (1 Slot): *whirlwind*
  - 8th Level (1 Slot): *mind blank*
  - 9th Level (1 Slot): *foresight*

### 38. Biochemistry Department

Here is where the Alphatians make their various drugs and new chemicals that are used for the purpose of mutating the creatures they captured. There are three tanks close to the western wall, in which a **Malfera**<sup>25</sup>, an **Oard**<sup>26</sup>, and **Velya**<sup>27</sup> are being

<sup>25</sup> See "[Malfera](#)" at the Vaults of Pandius

<sup>26</sup> See "[Oard](#)" at the Vaults of Pandius

<sup>27</sup> See "[Velya](#)" at the Vaults of Pandius



kept, and a huge tank in the southern end of the room, where the Alphatians keep a **Kartoeba**<sup>28</sup>. All of them are restrained, and many tubes are connected to their bodies, used to suck away various body fluids and even small bits of their flesh. The tanks look as if made out of glass, but in reality are made from *wall of force*, and an Intern (**Apprentice Wizard**, “*Volo’s Guide to Monsters*”, CR ¼) with a *wand of counterspell* is stationed next to it, with the sole purpose of stopping any attempt at destroying the tanks. If freed, the creatures lash at every living thing but each other, rampaging through the complex to slaughter as many of their oppressors as they can in horrifying ways.

On the east wall there is a huge machine that is automatically draining the creatures in the tanks and can mix their material with the one delivered from Area 41. There is a 25% chance when the PCs enter the room that Assistant Researcher Selene and a bronze golem from Area 41 are working with the machine, the latter serving to carry the cylinder of substances from the aboleth’s corpse. For every hour the PCs spend in the room, there is 25% chance they may enter, the golem carrying a large cylinder of substances.

Overseeing the project is Professor Admiral Patrisha de Fray-Seaserpent (**Drow Matron Mother**, “*Volo’s Guide to Monsters*”, CR 20, but with a *ring of spell turning*, which is her wedding ring), always accompanied by 4 **Guardian Warriors**<sup>29</sup>. Her personality combines a mage who revels in slapping laws of physics in the face, a scientist who thinks natural order is a mere suggestion, and a general for whom the road to abso-

lute military dominance must be paved with the corpses of soldiers and innocent bystanders. She more or less runs this facility, being both married and second in rank only to the man in charge.

There’s a 10% chance she’s in the room when the PCs enter, then for every 10 minutes they spend there the chance she enters the room increases by 5%. If the PCs free any of the creatures in this room while she’s not here, she will appear at initiative 20 of the next round.

There is no outwitting or negotiating with her; if she spots the PCs she will immediately raise the alarm and fight to capture them, seeing them as new toys for her to “mold in her hands.” If they are defeated by her, she will turn the PCs into monsters that will be unleashed on the Sindi people for daring to dislike “the Alphatian torch of true civilization” she believes the occupation brought. If reduced below half of her hit point maximum, she flees to Area 37 to join her husband in his last stand. At the same time, if reduced below ¼ of her hit point maximum, she surrenders and expects to be captured as a prisoner of war and treated with respect. She can be ransomed to Alphatia for 7,000 gp, which a DC 15 Persuasion check done through written letter or direct contact (and as such with disadvantage) can bump to 10,000 gp.

### 39. Sea Hag Processing Facility

The room is built identical to Area 30. There are 2 **Kopru** residing here, accompanied by their **Manscorpion**<sup>30</sup> servant. Whenever the kopru feel like it, the manscorpion will go to Area 36, pick up a sea hag, then throw it into the pool, where the kopru will grapple

<sup>28</sup> See “[Kartoeba](#)” at the Vaults of Pandius

<sup>29</sup> See “[Guardian Warrior](#)” at the Vaults of Pandius

<sup>30</sup> See “[Manscorpion](#)” at the Vaults of Pandius



her with her tails and dominate her mind, at which point the hag will be free to leave the pool and join her sisters in Area 35.

You may question why kopru use a method that is so painful to the subject and may even kill the hag through heat, acid, and tail spikes. The answer is... they're assholes.

#### **40. Magister Gravit's Office**

Magister Gravit is a Sindi pachydermion **Enchanter** (*"Volo's Guide to Monsters"*), for whom his people's perfect memory became a curse. Having served in the Sindi army during the Master's conquest, Gravit witnessed firsthand the cruelty of the Master's invading forces. The horrors of war have left a mark on him, and made him curse the Immortals for allowing this to happen. Suffering from severe PTSD, Gravit began studies of the arcane in hope of finding a way to heal his trauma by erasing the painful memories. When offered a job as researcher by the Alphatian occupant, he took it eagerly. However, he has found his own mind resisting even the strongest spells; even *modify memory* could only work temporarily and even then, lingering pieces of his trauma would remain. In his desperation he turned to torture and experiment on amnesiac Inmate #28 and, using a random piece of his recovered memories, created False Hydra, which he also imprisoned and tortured. He is currently working on an extract of its blood, to create a *superior amnesia potion*.

Gravit has on himself a *ring of aberration protection* (Wondrous Item, requires attunement, Aberrations treat you as under the effects of *protection from good and evil*; once per long rest, as an action you can force an aberration to make a Wisdom saving throw against your spell save DC; if it

fails it cannot attack you and other creatures in your presence; you can only have this effect affecting one Aberration at a time), a control device to manipulate the gravity force field in Area 32, a control device to activate False Hydra's shock collars, and the only key to all entrances to Area 32. He is being watched by his loyal **Iron Golem**. He is selfish and bitter, will stop at nothing to fix his condition, but is close to believe at this stage only a *wish* spell can help him. He can be bargained with, but will never do anything to release Inmate #28 or False Hydra, as he is genuinely horrified by both of them. He knows all the staff and cannot be fooled by pretending to be new hires. If attacked he casts *bold monster* on any of the casters in the party and tries to flee, leaving fighting to the golem, and raising the alarm. A DC 30 Persuasion check is needed to convince him his way of dealing with his trauma is toxic, making him quit. He leaves to area 46 to pack his things, then to drop Area 1, where he wants to use the teleport to leave this place altogether. He takes the golem with him.

#### **41. Aboleth's Corpse**

Aboleths were mentioned in ancient texts of Mystara and have been known to ancient Blackmoor. However, by now they are extinct. Most did not survive the Great Rain of Fire, while the rest had been hunted down and devoured by kopru during the times of Elemental Chaos that followed. The kopru working for the Alphatians struck the deal, offering the location of an aboleth's corpse, which has been transported to the laboratory for harvesting and experiments. The goal is to see how useful the creature may be, as the kopru promise the location of a whole graveyard of such bodies, in exchange for further privileges they enjoy. Currently the process of harvest-



ing genetic material from the corpse is overseen by Senior Researcher Claudia Avelone (Human, NE **Necromancer**, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, CR 9), with most of the physical tasks being done by Assistant Researcher Selene (**Drow Mage**) and a **Bronze Golem**<sup>31</sup>, who after each hour of work leave the room to Area 38 with a large cylinder of harvested material, returning in around 30 minutes.

Claudia has recently received a hefty bribe from Prince Haldemar to sabotage the project and destroy it. She plans to do it by pretending the aboleth's corpse is speaking to her and controlling her, planning to resurrect it, while dodging responsibility. If the PCs will reveal themselves to her, she will pretend to be a mad fanatic of "our true lord and master" and will try to convince them to join her. If the PCs agree, she needs them to harvest material from all creatures in Area 38, enough to kill them, while one of the PCs casts a part of the special spell she will provide them. While she will be casting the other half of the spell on the corpse, PCs must carry the cylinders of harvested material and inject them into the aboleth corpse. If this is done, the corpse will be resurrected as a horrifying abomination, even by aboleth standards (**Elder Brain**, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, CR 14). The creature will attempt to slay everything it cannot bring under its control, then take over the complex for its own nefarious plans.

<sup>31</sup> See "[Golem, Bronze](#)" by Shelson Morris at the Vaults

## 42. Crab Rave

This area leads to the private headquarters of the Archmage General and his Professor Admiral wife. They are the only two people who know the password to the door at the southern end of this room (name of their only child, who was a stillborn). There are two doors, each leading to separate antechambers for husband and wife, where they can switch their shoes to *slippers of water walking*, and hang out their coats. Both doors are trapped by magical glyphs that can be noticed with *detect magic*. Any attempt at opening the door without the correct password will result in Crab Rave.



**Crab Rave:** complex trap. On initiative of 20 all creatures standing within 10 feet from the door are pushed 10 feet away from it. At Initiative of 18 a **Huge Giant Crab** (*Tales from the Yawning Portal*, CR 8) is summoned in the room between the door and other creatures, and immediately attacks. At Initiative of 15 *otto's irresistible dance* with Spell Save DC 20 is cast on all creatures in the room. If the crab is killed, the door summons another one. Initiative 20 and 15 effects repeat each turn. Only when a total of three crabs are defeated does the trap end. It resets within 15 minutes; in this window the PCs can attempt to break through the door.



### 43. Bathroom

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This area is identical to Area 6 and is used by personnel operating in the southern part of the complex.

### 44. Teleportation Room

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This entire chamber is flooded, with all corridor entrances being above the water, 10 feet below the ceiling. At the center of it is a platform, on which lies the *Black Hole Diamond*. It is currently attuned to the Archmage in Area 37 and shields the area from teleportation, except for trap at false entrance, teleport platforms in dead ends, “reverse elevator” in Area 47, and rooms made with *rope trick* in Area 46. All these effects are removed if the diamond is taken away from this area.

A **Wastrilith** (“*Mordekainen’s Tome of Foes*”, CR 14) captured by Prince Haldemar during one of his interdimensional voyages and then sold to the Archmage, guards the artifact. It is bound to fight to the death to defend it. Sounds of combat alarm the Archmage, whether he’s in Area 37 or 47, who will arrive in 1 round, cast *wall of force* to cut off all exits from this room except to Area 37, where he’ll retreat for his last stand.

#### ***Black Hole Diamond***

(Minor Artifact, Requires Attunement)

This is a statue made of utterly black diamond-like substance, in the shape of pachydermion Immortal Ganetra writing down legendary Rig Veda.

While attuned, you are immune to all effects of spells and magical effects that involve any sort of teleportation or interplanar travel, regardless if it teleports you

or other creatures (for example, a spell like *steel wind strike*, which teleports the caster, cannot target you for an attack), except of those you consent to.

You can also connect it to a specific location, shielding it from all forms of teleportation except for the ones you approve of. You can design all ways and locations in which teleportation is active or even automatic in the area, as well as all rules it has to follow.

Whenever you cast a spell that instantly transports you and others, allows you to travel to another plane, or makes you “vanish and reappear” in another location, roll a d100; if you roll above ten times the spell level, you do not lose the spell slot.

Attuning to *Black Hole Diamond* also gives two random minor beneficial effects and two random minor detrimental effects.

### 45. Treasury

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This room is locked with *arcane lock* and only Archmage General Alaman Seaserpent the Third has the keys. This is the treasury of the laboratory. There are 30,000 gp worth of gold and gems in coffers, as well as 1 Very Rare Magic Item, 1d4 Rare ones, 1d8-1 Uncommon ones and 1d10 Common ones, confiscated from previously captured adventurers. I leave the choice of items to the Dungeon Master, as the PCs deserve something nice and tailored to them, considering what they went through to get here.

#### 46. Mage Sleeping Quarters

This room is full of multicolored ropes hanging from the air. Each leads to a permanent multidimensional room created with a modified *rope trick* spell, and each magic-user in the complex has memorized the color combination of their rope and is the only one who can access it, except for the Archmage General, Professor Admiral and Chief of Security. Each rope leads to a small room with a bed, light source, bookcase, desk, and a closet.

#### 47. Archmage's Office

This is a cozy room with a pair of mahogany desks on opposite walls, a fireplace directing smoke straight to the water outside, a bear rug on the floor, and a large bookcase of books about magical research done at the facility, including spellbooks of both residents of this place, containing all their spells. In the southwest corner there is a door to a "reverse elevator;" a control panel next to it lets you select a way to a small demiplane the door then leads to. The buttons lead to 1 - bedroom, 2 - toilet, 3 - bathroom & jacuzzi, 4 - wardrobes, 5 - fully staffed kitchen. Each of these is designed for the convenience and pleasure of the married couple running this operation.

A tunnel is hidden behind the bookcase on the southeast wall, which can be found with a DC 20 Perception check, and opened by finding a false book with a DC 15 Investigation check. It opens to a tunnel with a single wagon that is enhanced to drive itself once a button is pressed. It can carry two people and has a *chest of holding* prepared on the backseat. The tunnel leads to the Sindi shore and the wagon can arrive there in thirty minutes.

Archmage General Alaman Seaserpent the Third (see Area 37 for statblock) is in this room. If the alarm hasn't been raised, he will be reading a book. He is an extremely ambitious mage, and cares for nothing but advancing magical sciences through any means necessary, and sees everyone as a worthy sacrifice for the progress, with the exception of his wife. However, he is soft-spoken and polite and will try to negotiate with the PCs, offering them magic items from area 45 in exchange for his life. If the PCs come to blows with him, he will attempt to flee to Area 37 and make his last stand, otherwise he fights without *fire shield* and *globe of invulnerability*.

If it looks like the laboratory is about to be destroyed, Alaman will take the treasures from Area 45, the artifact from Area 44, and spellbooks from this room and load them into the *chest of holding* in the wagon, and wait for his wife to appear. If the destruction of the laboratory is imminent, Patrisha will abandon her staff and attempt to flee to this location. If she makes it, the two will flee the area. Only if water or monsters break into the room before her will Alaman leave without her, swearing vengeance on the people responsible.

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The PCs who deliver the *Black Hole Diamond* to Shivangi find out that she “had some friends” pull in for a modest bonus of 1d10 thousand gp. DC 10 Insight check will reveal she likely murdered and robbed a rich Alphatian to get it. She will then tell them the location of the Rajah’s secret vault. However, she will reveal that to open the vault, additional keys are required, if the PCs do not know that yet. And she knows where the next one is located... But that is a story for another time.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND GRATITUDE

I want to acknowledge the contributions of Mystara fans, in particular 5e conversions of Mystaran monsters by Glen Welch, Sheldon Morris, and Seethyr. I thank the Vaults of Pandius for being such valuable resources in finding them. I also thank youtubers Dungeon Dad and Hidden Nerdy Side for inspiration, especially the latter whose video on sea hags helped me break from a writer’s block.

False Hydra was created by Goblin Punch and the statblock for it was found on GMBinder but lacks authorial credit.







Extract from Thorf's Replica Map of the Kingdom of Ierendi

Sailors from Ierendi try to avoid Aloysius Reef, a dangerous area for ships. But, under the sea, this reef has many secrets.

Aloysius Reef has five large coral areas and a volcanic island. Each coral area is named after its color: Red Reef, Yellow Reef, Pink, Azure, and Gray. The volcano, originally known as “the volcano of the reef” is called “The Fire’s Coral” by Ierendians, and underwater cultures now use that name.

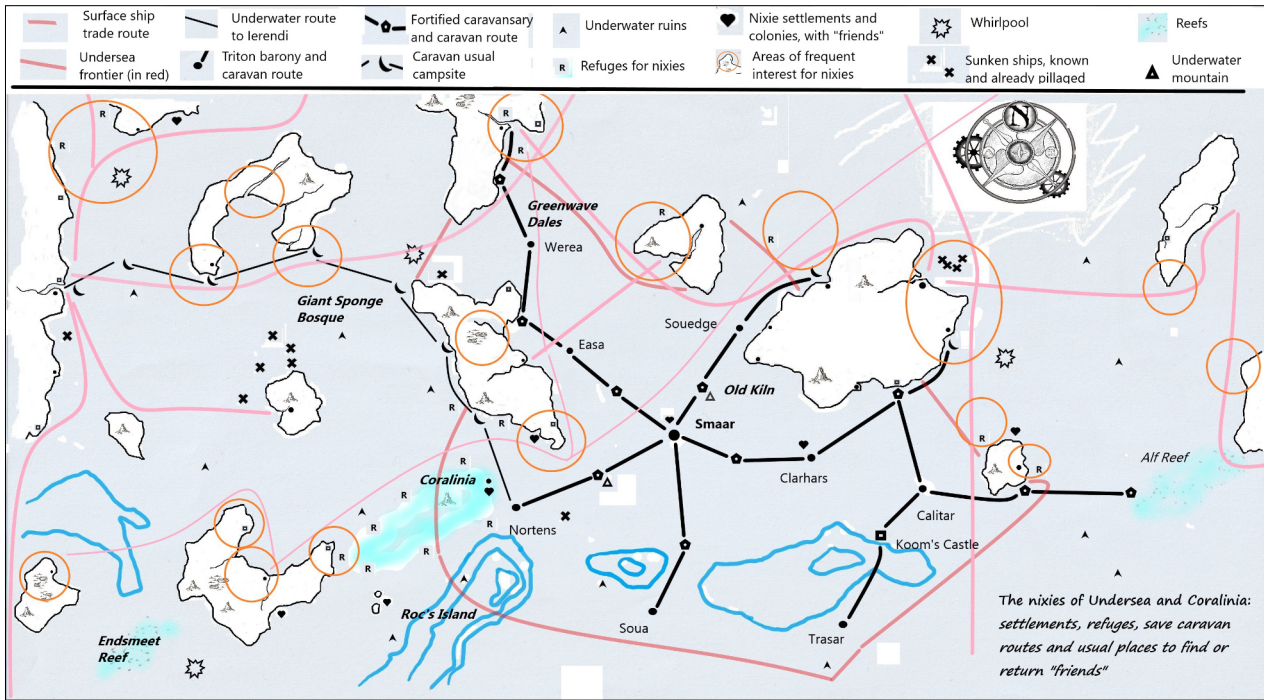
## Red Reef

This mass of red coral is home to red fish. There is a small islet used as a lair by the famous halfling pirate Captain Panzalonso. The captain and his crew visit the island thrice a year, during the spring and summer. They stay on the island for 2–3 days and depart again in search of swag. Some dragons in the area know that these pirates hide something there, but the pirates keep their treasures in a small cave complex with a very narrow entrance. These dragons are looking for some small minions or servants that can infiltrate that place.

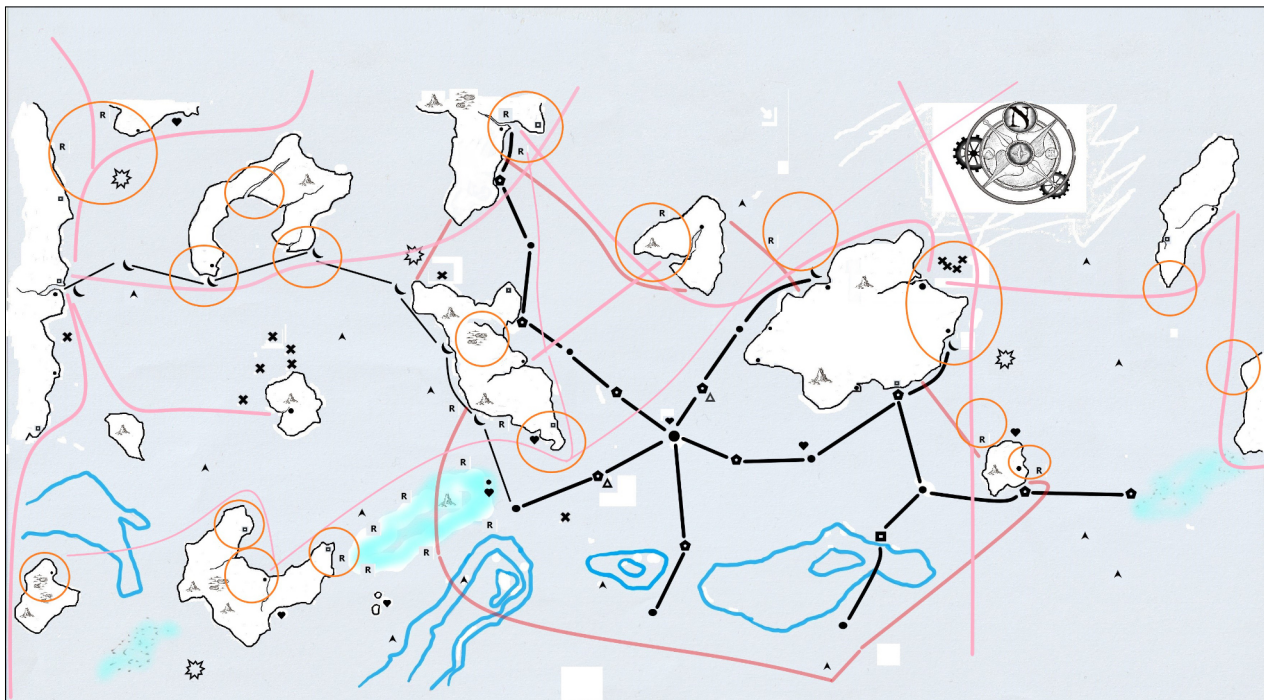
Under the water, the predators are many, but not very varied. The small reef shark (treat as a bull shark without headbutt attack) is the most common. They use their sharp sense of smell to hunt. They are lonely predators, but if they smell blood, many will come. Manta rays (both normal



DM's Map of the Nixies of Undersea and Coralinia by Pol Ginés



Player's Map of the Nixies of Undersea and Coralinia by Pol Ginés





and giant) compete with sharks for food. There are many sea serpents (lesser ones only, 6HD).

The most powerful inhabitant in this reef is the large sea dragon Hurricane (12HD, treat him as an amphibious large green dragon, with clumsy wings and without claws). He serves Thundar, the great sea dragon of Thun. He is not very territorial and allows other predators to hunt in his reef. This is because he considers himself as the superpredator of the reef and no other predator can match him. His lair is a submerged cavern complex with labyrinthine tunnels and he doesn't mind leaving it for long hunting journeys. He enjoys talking with intelligent "dry-skin" creatures, as they can tell him valuable information such as recent shipwrecks, pirates in the vicinity, and skirmishes near the coastal lines. He is often looking for treasure and is ready to pay for useful information, with pearls up to 1,000 gp value.

## Yellow Reef

Here there are beautiful yellow fish and corals. There are no islets, but you can find some volcanic boulders that have up to 10 square feet of land, where a shipwreck survivor can stand and wait for help (good luck). Here you can find plenty of reef sharks and manta rays. There are also giant octopi. However, the most feared creature in this reef is the electric eel, both the normal and giant versions. Other predators don't come close because of its aggressiveness.

Here dwells the spectre of a sunken sailor and his former crew, now wights. This Thyatian captain, Julianus, died when his ship was sunk by a red dragon, Flamagon, who inhabits the volcano. His resentment towards the dragon drew upon entropic energy to reanimate him as a specially powerful spectre, and his crew as 20 wights under his control. But this same entropic



Shipwreck



power is the reason that he can't fulfill his revenge: he can't leave the 3-mile radius of his sunken ship. He looks for intelligent creatures that might help him attract the dragon to an ambush. If they are able to make him believe that they will bring the dragon to him, he will not attack them. If they are not, he will attack them. He has a magical, immaterial *short sword* +2, +3 *against dragons* created by the entropic curse. He may attack by spectral touch or with the sword. Due to his hate of the dragon, even if killed or destroyed by a powerful cleric, he will reappear after 3 days somewhere within the 3 miles radius, with his sword. In the same way, his crew will respawn seven days later. Only reliable proof of Flamagon's death will allow Julianus to rest, leaving behind his sword.

#### **Julianus, 10HD, special "spectre"**

AC 1; HD 10; HP 65, Mov 300'. Attacks: touch or sword. Damage: Double energy drain plus 1 wisdom or 1d6+5. ST: F10. Note: when attacking with his sword, he has the magical bonus of the sword to attack. May be turned as a phantom. Half damage from fire, as an entropic gift since he died because of the red dragon's breath. Full control of his crew of wights, even if it surpasses his HD limit.

## **Pink Reef, the Nixie Kingdom**

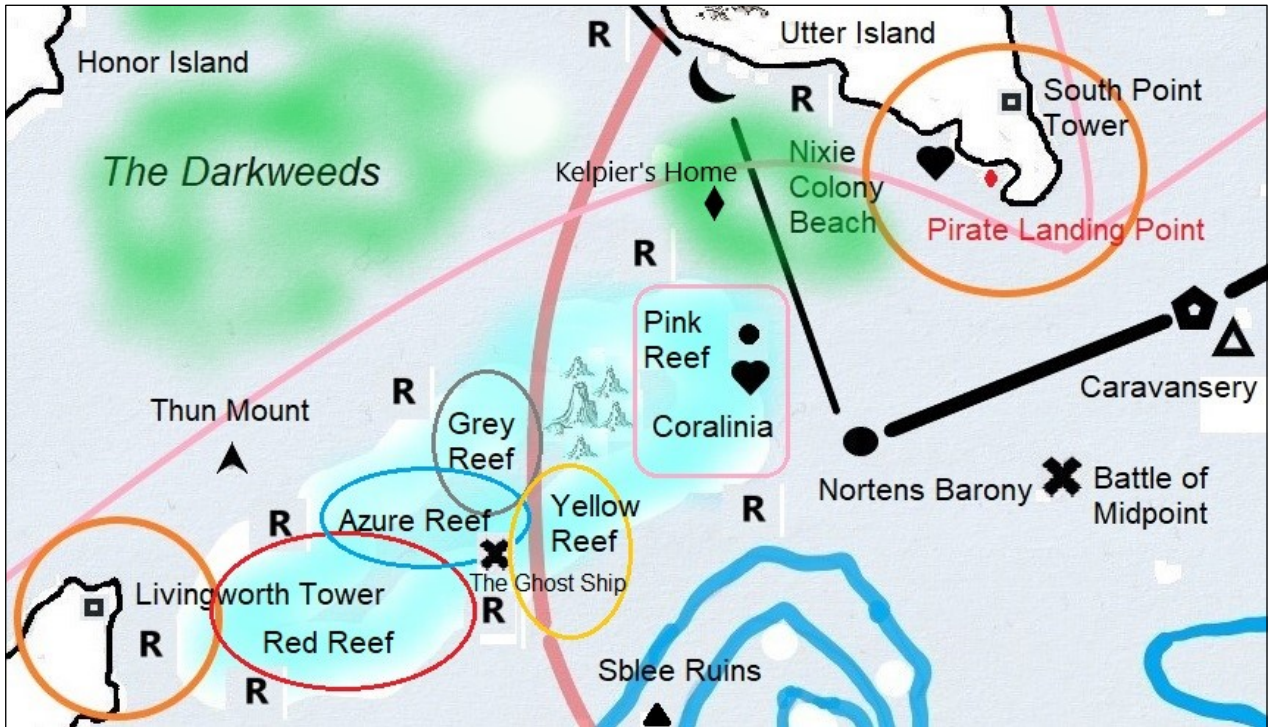
This is the reef area nearest to Utter Island and the triton barony of Nortens. It is famous not only for its pink coral, but also for the great variety of intelligent creatures that live there. This is due to a large clan of more than a hundred nixies that maintain there the capital of their "kingdom," a cute underwater village called Coralina. They *charm* both surface and underwater "friends" to live there with them, serve them and protect them. Some of those "friends" live in three special colonies: a hidden beach in Utter Island, another one in Aloysius Island, and in the waters surrounding Roc Island.

Nixies have a disordered lifestyle, full of fun, music, dance, and laziness. But they also work hard to obtain "friends," treasure, and jewelry. They enjoy gems and jewels, but also appreciate money's ability to buy security for their kingdom. They have amassed a great treasure; most of it is kept in the bank of Smaar, where it can be used to hire mercenaries when necessary. Another hoard is hidden in their capital in the Pink Reef. And three other treasures are buried near their land colonies.

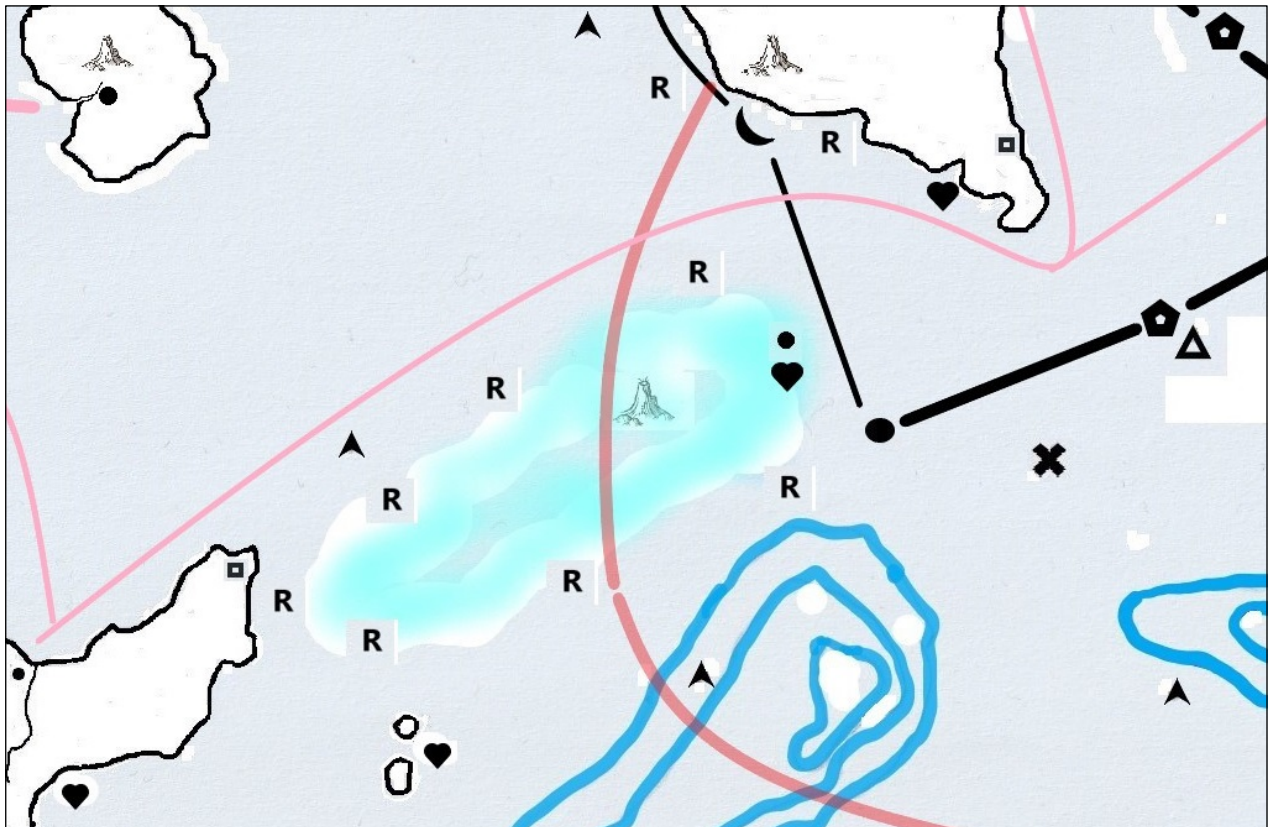
Nixies live in groups of 10 (the number that allows them their *charm* effect) in small grottos inside the reefs, beautifully decorated with shells, corals and little (1- to 5-gp) pearls. They ask triton "friends" to work their corals. As they are all female and born from the water, they refer to one another as sisters.

Nixies always wear colorful and extravagant jewels, trying to look better than their sisters. Monthly, they change their outfits and hairstyles, leading to striking combinations. They enjoy their chaotic lives, both

DM's Map of the Nixie Kingdom by Pol Ginés



Player's Map of the Nixie Kingdom by Pol Ginés



day and night, having fun, thanks to *eternal light* spells that their triton “friends” have cast. When they combine them with colorful crystals, they obtain bright and amazing results.

Magical lights bring predators and curious animals to the Pink Reef, especially by night, but they are scared off by dozens of giant bass, the finned friends of the nixies. When the predator is bigger than usual, the nixies ask their *charmed* “friends” to help.

Nixies keep their “friends” *charmed* only for a year. In the last week of the effect, the nixies take the “friends” to Utter Island, to the beach near Southpoint Tower, a place where they can find a permanent group of people to charme, as Minrothaddan pirates usually leave here crews from pillaged ships. Problematic and nasty “friends” of the nixies (such as pirates, troglodytes, or humanoids) are left in the mosquito-infested beaches of Aloysius Island instead.

Nixies have an agreement with the Nortens barony of Undersea. Nixies allow the tritons to “harvest” the coral, and the tritons pay them in pearls and nixie-sized jewels and don’t disturb the nixie kingdom. Tritons allow nixies to *charm* any creature that enters their territory without authorization. Undersea authorities will not try to recover such trespassers for a year. Relatives and families can try to negotiate or pay for the freedom of a family member. Anyway, they know that, after a year, they will return (200-year lifespans makes it seem like a long vacation).

### **Nixie Commodities**

Nixies really appreciate some goods and try hard to obtain them. Sometimes they pay money or pearls, usually in underwater baronies, Smaar or Aquarendi settlements, or

to kna traders. Other times, they try to steal them in human towns and villages, or they charm human traders, Makai sailors, or pirates in human trading routes to obtain them.

For the maintenance of their “friends” and happy land colonies they look for: beer, wine, preserved fish, preserved meat, living goats, metal tools (axes, machetes...).

For themselves, nixies want: resistant glass and porcelain, semi-precious stones, raw walrus or elephant ivory and ivory objects, gems and jewelry, water-resistant statues of all sizes.

### **Nixie Routes**

When traveling, nixies and their finned friends usually join triton and merrow caravans and use the official caravan routes, resting in caravansaries, well defended by the triton realm. They can go to Alf Reef, near Alfeisle, to trade with the Aquarendi. They enjoy parties at Calitar barony. They buy pretty things at Smaar.

In caravans, they sometimes bring *charmed* humans, lizard men, or shark-kin as bodyguards or servants, as they are not Undersea citizens. They can not bring *charmed* merrows, tritons, nor kna, or they would have troubles with triton authorities, that would cast *dispel magic* on creatures suspected to be *charmed*. (Of course, the nixies can bring true friends or paid mercenaries.)

Nixies feel free to do as they want outside Undersea frontiers, to *charm*, steal or cheat. They sometimes *charm* monsters and sell them to the tourist industry of Safari Island. They try to *charm* dwarves in Fortress Island or traders in northern Minrothad. They look for “friends” in Utter



Island and Aloysius Island, sometimes even in Roister or Alcove Island. They never go to Honor Island nor White Island, because they think those are cursed and dangerous places.

### Nixie Refuges

Nixies have built some refuges or hideouts near their reefs and some other key locations (marked as “R” in the map). Refuges are always hidden and underwater, usually caves with 3 or 4 entrances, only one of them big enough for humans. Some refugees at island coasts have at least one room with air pockets. The entrances have portcullises or grilles: sharks, devilfish or shark-kins can not enter, but some octopuses, serpents and eels can. Nixies usually hide keys near the entrances (with secret signals—colors, shapes—to help find them). Nixies keep in their refuges objects with *eternal light* effects, but usually hidden under shells when they are not inside.

Each refuge is big enough to accommodate 20 nixies, 20 giant bass, and 4 human-size “friends.” They keep there some food (mainly shellfish), 1d4 bags of shark or squid repellent, 1d4 bags of squid ink (also useful against hunters by smell), a first aid kit, 1d3 flasks of sea snake venom antidote, 1d6 daggers, 1d6 spears (useful to fight through the grille), 1d2 *potions of cure light wounds*, 1d2 *potions of ventriloquy*, and a flask with a very greasy paralyzing poison (effective for creatures up to 7HD, Save versus Poison). They can anoint up to



Nixie refuge

6 weapons (usually spears), but poison in the weapon will be dispelled by water action after 10 rounds. When besieged, they use all their tricks to distract or paralyze their enemies, while sending a messenger to ask for help. If they are enough to cast a *charm* effect, they can wait behind the grille and try once per day.

Similarly, nixies have an unwritten agreement with their kopru neighbors in the volcano: they agree not to *charm* each other, nor each other’s “friends,” to keep peace in the reef.

Pink Reef has some predators. The most common is the giant barracuda (AC7, HD 1+1, Bite 1d6, 240' (80'), solitary), the giant bass (which are always friendly to nixies), and the feared giant sturgeon, capable of easily swallowing a nixie. They are rare in the reef and giant basses and nixies’ “friends” hunt them quickly.

## Nixies and “Friends”



Nixie

There are 113 nixies in the clan. They organize rotation shifts to watch and take care of their colonies. 78 live in the reef, in Coralinia or very near. There are 12 on guard in the colony of Aloysius Island. A group of 13 are enjoying the beautiful beach colony in Utter Island. A group of 10 stay around Roc Island.

In Coralinia Village are present about 50 *charmed* “friends” of the nixies: 12 mermen, 5 tritons (2 mages, 3 clerics), 4 kna (they don’t have families to miss them), 10 human sailors the nixies find cute, 2 human clerics, 4 halfling sailors, and 4 dwarven merchants (all artisans from Min-rothad), 7 lizardmen, 1 black dragon (HD 7; he was passing by and had bad luck). The nixies ask their dwarven and halfling friends to train with underwater crossbows until they are proficient enough. As artisans, they also tell them about jewels and gems and other valuable items.

A neighbor of note is Burbu “the Wise,” a merman shaman (Me4/Sh3). He is grumpy, quite deaf, and not very nice. He lives alone on the edge of Coralinia. The nixies allow him to stay as he heals them for free when needed with his magic. Another neighbor is Martinianus, a mage triton, the ambassador from Nortens barony. He is smart and gentle. He acts as negotiator for *charmed* tritons, ensuring they return home when their year of “holiday” ends. Also, he negotiates the release of illegally *charmed* tritons.

## Important Nixies

### Marella, Nixie Shaman (Nx5/Sh4)

Even if Marella isn’t the fashionest of the nixies, she is the closest thing to a leader that they have. She is wise (Wis 16) and beautiful (Char 15). She always understands the problems of the community and looks for solutions. All her sisters rely on her. Because of her high level, she is able to cast *charm* on her own. Her giant bass is called Moon’s Sailor.

### Bellonia, the Nixie Warrior (Nx6)

Treated by most of the nixies as a freak, Bellonia is considered a tacky butch (Str 15). Even if her 9 partners tried to make her feel loved, she did not feel good about herself. To make her feel better, her friends stitched the most beautiful shell armor a nixie could have. Since then, Bellonia has been aware of the love of her partners and ignored the contempt of her other sisters. She is skilled in both net and trident (by Weapon mastery rules).



## Nixie Colonies

The nixies only keep 50 “friends” in Coralinia, but they have more *charmed* “friends” in their other 3 settlements: a beach on Utter Island, another beach on Aloysius, and the waters around Roc’s Island. Those are “friends” that nixies don’t want to take to their beautiful reef, but that can be useful or interesting for them. If an enemy were to try to conquer Coralinia, they would gather all their “friends” from the 3 colonies, hire some mercenaries with the money they hide, and take revenge or reconquer their



*Nixies charming a man, original digital artwork by Senarch*

precious reef. Also, their “friends” in the colonies can give information about what is going on in the islands. Nixies especially appreciate lizard men because they are amphibious and obedient, they fight without weapons, have tough skin, and are good at finding their own food.

### Aloysius Colony

Here there is a guard of 10 normal nixies and a 3rd level leader. They take care of 4 Makai, 3 Ierendian thieves (all of them are fugitives from the island’s penitentiaries); 5 lizard men, and 2 dwarves from the southern mines of the island. Makai and lizard men are good at obtaining food, hunting, foraging, and fishing. The dwarves are good at making jewelry from shells and corals, and the Ierendians are mid-level thieves (3rd, 4th and 6th) and are good at vigilance and searching for potential new “friends.”

### Utter Colony

The southern point of Utter Island is the place where Minrothaddan pirates usually leave crews and passengers of the ships they steal. It is near the border between countries and there is a Ierendian guard tower not very far. Nixies keep an eye here to make “friends” and hear news. They take new “friends” to a hidden beach where they will be quite happy and relaxed, singing, playing the ukulele, swimming, and making beautiful presents for their little new “friends.” Nixies try to obtain wine and some good food for their “friends” here, from ships or towns. The nixie group consists of 10 normal nixies, one 1st level nixie and one shaman (Nix2/Sh2). Among their “friends” at the beach there are 9 Makai, 3 local albinos, 4 lizard men, 1 triton cleric (Undersea government doesn’t know about that, and the nixies don’t want them to know) and an ex-pirate halfling. Nixies know that albinos, with their good sight in





the dark, are good as night guards. The halfling was a pirate whose ship was caught by the navy and he jumped overboard. He was saved by the nixies, who enchanted him, and now he lives with them.

There is a Makai druid on Utter island that knows about the nixies and their camp (but not the exact location). Sometimes he provides the nixies with more “friends” and, in exchange, he gets rid of problematic people without killing or harming them (“come here, there is something pretty cool in this pool”). Nixies know there is a swamp in the northern half of the island and can try to organize “pilgrimages of friendship” there to *charm* lizard men or troglodytes. They also love Gaamo, the albino city, because of its beauty, and because it is full of springs and waterways. Sometimes they try to take artists or even tourists to their beach community.

### Roc’s Island Outpost

Nixies know there are dangerous rocs flying over this island. There is a guard of 9 normal nixies and 1 wokani nixie (Nix3/Wok2). This outpost is an underwater settlement where nixies have located a bank of “friendly” shark-kins. There are 40 shark-kins and 15 mako sharks, with half a dozen of the shark-kin leaders *charmed* by the nixies. The nixies keep this group as a useful fighting force, that they can quickly summon when needed.

### The Druid in the Kelp Forest

North of the pink reef, in the Nortens barony, there is a kelp forest. These algae reach almost up to the surface, leaving only



*Kelp forest*

about 2 to 3 meters between the surface and the top of the forest. The stems extend up to 12m deep in the deepest zone. In addition, the entire forest has a very strong taste/smell that prevents hunting based on smell (in addition to the fact that the algae themselves hinder visibility), leaving many predators at a disadvantage.

In this ecosystem live the kelp eels (normal and giant), which mimic the forest, and the kelp sharks. These sharks hunt based on the vibration of the water, instead of smell. When they sense a vibration in the water that is different from the usual movement of the sea, they know there is an anomaly and come to look around. Another predator of this kelp forest is the decapus, which, with its great intelligence, its 10 tentacles and mimic abilities, is a dangerous hunter in these waters.

Due to the bad smell of these waters and its silent predators, few intelligent creatures move around. The only interesting inhabitant of the area is a merman druid (Mer12/Dr9) named Kelpier Wisebeard, and his merman apprentice, Minor Sagacioustail (Mer2/Dr1).

Kelpier is 140 years old, has a sea-green beard and long hair pulled back in a braid to keep it from getting tangled in seaweed. He is a wise and pleasant merman, who happily welcomes visitors. He is a good cook and will offer the specialty of the forest, seaweed shark with seaweed spices. It has a strong, but tasty flavor. Minor, his 24-year-old apprentice, is an impulsive young merman with a shaved head, to avoid getting tangled up in the seaweed. His master always tells him: "The wise man's wisdom shows in his beard. However, the young man's hair shows his foolishness." Minor takes this very seriously and does not doubt his master's words. Wisebeard is the merman to whom the nixies talk when they need a powerful shaman but cannot go to the tritons (this happens frequently, due to the non-completely-legal actions that the nixies take). Wisebeard and his apprentice have both an *amulet of protection vs charm*, something that he obtained during adventures in his youthness.

They live with 2 dolphins, Shininghead and Shiningfin. They have a hut in a clearing inside the kelp forest and rarely receive visitors, as Kelpier wishes to prevent his apprentice from being distracted by the worries of the outside world. Still, Kelpier is well aware of all that is going on in the outside world, as his dolphin friend and the seagulls he talks to, with the *speak with animals* spell, tell him much information about what is happening on the shores of Ierendi and the waters of the Nortens barony, as well as the happenings in Coralinia.

Once a year, in spring, Kelpier is visited by a sea giant, former adventure companion, Burbatyr (Lv2, HD 10). He stays with him for one week; they celebrate memories about old times while exchanging news.

## Azure Reef

This reef, next to the volcano, is both the resting place for a nomadic merrow bank, and the lair of a dragon turtle.

The mermen swim through this reef twice a year: in early winter and early spring. They swim there trying to avoid as much as they can the volcano, the kopru, and the nixies. More than once a youngster decided to "explore" and did not return until the next year. Merrow stay one or two days, hiding in the corals and resting. Then, they continue their travel (to the north in spring, southward in winter).

The dragon sleeps here all the autumn and winter. When spring arrives, he wakes up and goes west to hunt, away from the tritons, leaving his lair empty. To avoid being detected, this dragon turtle has developed the ability to grow corals on his shell, which he uses as camouflage during the slumber season. He avoids the volcano because of the annoying neighbors. He is grumpy and very ill-tempered, spooking with his breath or biting those who pass next to him. Other dragons in the reef are aware of his presence and stay away (very away) from him. He hates human vessels and, during hunting season, he attacks them. If a naval battle happens near him, he probably will go and finish the confrontation, sinking all the vessels from all factions.

The dragon turtle isn't the only predator, of course. Reef sharks and manta rays are common. But here we have one more important predator: the poisonous giant blue-ringed octopus.



### Giant Blue-ringed Octopus

AC7, HD 5, mov 90' (30'); 8 tentacles/1 beak; damage: 1d2x8/1d4+poison.



Blue-ringed Octopus

If hit with the beak, ST vs poison or die in 3d6 rounds, and be unable to act from the bite to the death (or recovery, if any). If it feels endangered, it sprays a 40'-radius ink globe and flees. Venom loses its effect 1 round after extraction.

### Gray Reef

This is the only reef whose color is not related to its coral, but to volcanic formations. It is more desolate and holds less vegetation than the others. This is due to the underwater magma currents that flow in the bottom, burn repeatedly the sea floor and prevent algae and coral from spreading.

Even more importantly, this reef is the home of the sea dragon Tempest, who claims to dominate Aloysius Reef. Nixies know about her and try to not infuriate her, since she has proved to be immune to their *charm* powers, but she rarely cares about them. Her lair is inside a cave which twists

repeatedly and gets even under the lava flow—a cave of unmelting stone.

She also has a “partner,” Mareanor, a stupid sea dragon, incapable of talk, who does whatever she says to him. She tries to keep him away from the nixies and kopru, since he can be *charmed* by them.

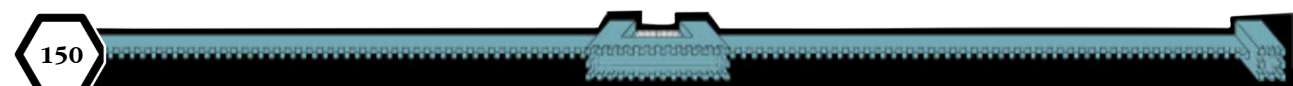
Tempest can't stand the taste of mermen and tritons, so she doesn't hunt them. She has an inflated ego and will easily get infuriated if someone casts doubts about her dominance of the reef (which isn't that extensive). She despises especially the red dragon of the volcano, Flamagon, and wants him dead (and his hoard in her lair, obviously). Since they live in different environments, it is impractical for them to try and kill each other, so they both will use pawns. She is capable of casting clerical spells (as a shaman) and serves the Old Dragon of the Sea (Manwara) instead of The Great One. Finally, she has an *amulet of protection vs charm*, which has allowed her to not get overwhelmed by the *charming* powers of other inhabitants of the sea.

Treat her as a large green dragon when applicable (keep in mind that she has no claws, but she has a tail and wings).

Among other predators, here dwell mako sharks, searching for easy food, and giant crabs, who eat the leftovers of the sharks and dragons.

### Fire's Coral Island

This small island covers only a few miles around the volcano that gives it its name. It has a main vent in the island and a few more outside the island. These vents are the lairs and homes for several fire-loving





creatures and even some natives from the elemental plane of fire, like organized fire giants, lava lizards, and even an efreet.

### Volcano's Zones

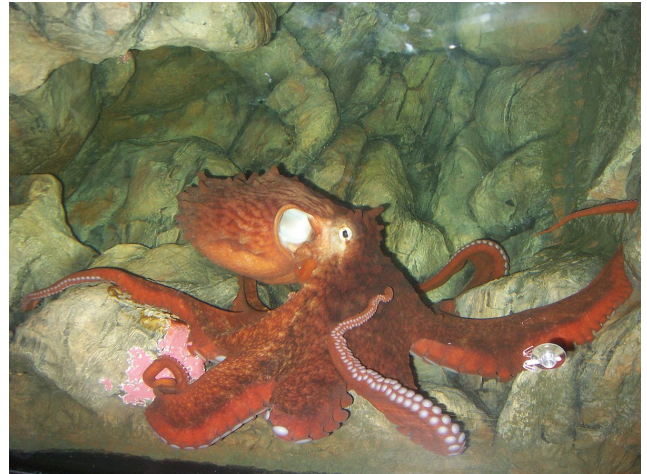
Dragon's vent	Flamagon's lair
Main vent	forge, store, and giant's lair
Island	surface
Kopru's vent	kopru's resting lair
Efreet vent	Nar Mushtaelia's lair
Trading vent	resting point for the kna and meeting place to trade

### Red Dragon's Vent

This vent is connected to the main one by an underground lava river, which makes it impassable to anyone except for some natives of the Plane of Fire.

It's the lair of a large red dragon called Flamagon. He is the culprit in the death of the specter Julian, and possesses a huge hoard. He hunts the ships that travel through the sea route between Aloysius and Utter. To recover their treasures, he employs the lizard men who serve him.

He is cruel and enjoys the suffering of his victims. When attacking a ship, one of his favorite tactics is *polymorphing* himself into a giant octopus and throwing overboard the sailors, while they battle in odd circumstances against his lizard men. He also *charms* some sailors to ask them where the treasure is hidden and who has the keys. He avoids sinking ships as he knows that there can be valuable objects (such as scrolls or



Flamagon as Octopus

furs) which can rot in the water. Another tactic he loves is to use *ballucinatory terrain* to make sailors believe that there are reefs or whirlpools in their route, and make them alter course to his domains.

His cave has a large entrance through the chimney of the vent, another, hidden, on one side, and another from the sea, diving. All of them are guarded by the lizard men. His own cave, where he sleeps on his treasure, is out of reach of the lizard men, across a river of lava, a vestige of the ancient activity of the volcano.

He works with the kopru in his forge using his powerful breath, but will never use more than 2 breaths a day in the forge, saving 1 for self-defense. He also brings them the weapons and armor of the ships he sinks to recast in the forge. In exchange, the kopru give him part of the profits and respect his territory and freedom.

His enemies are the sea dragons that compete with him for the waters of the area and try to steal the spoils of the ships he sinks. He is usually able to spook them, but cannot effectively pursue them underwater.

## Flamagon (Large Red Dragon, Spellcaster)

AC -3 (-5 with his *ring* +2);

DG 16\*\*\*\*\*; PG 110

Spells: 6/4/3/3

1st: *magic missile, light, charm person, sleep, read tongues, shield, detect magic.*

2nd: *eternal light, detect invisible, invisibility, ESP, mirror image.*

3rd: *lightning ray, breathe underwater, haste, protection vs. normal missiles, infravision.*

4th: *gaseous form, polymorph self, mass-morphia* (he knows the underwater version for kelp forests), *hallucinatory terrain.*

Hoard: Among other things, Flamagon possesses a +2 *ring*, a *ring of protection vs. cold*, a *medallion of cure-all* 1/week, and a *lightning wand* with 3 charges. The rest of the treasure (Hx2, due to his advanced age and good business) is up to the master.

### Lizard Men

They faithfully serve Flamagon as the lord of the volcano. There are 20 NM lizard men and 5 of 3rd level, skilled at trident. They know how to use spears and nets, capturing more effectively the victims of the ships. They lack shamans or wokani. There are always 4 on guard at each entrance, rotating throughout the day. When Flamagon goes hunting he takes about 12 of them with him, leaving at least 2 of the 3rd level lizard men guarding the lair along with the normal ones.

## Efreet's Vent

This is another of the volcano's vents and is the domain of an efreet, named Nar Mushtaelia. He lives on the island and spends much of his time on the volcano itself. He arrived when a passage to the Plane of Fire opened inside the volcano, while escaping from an Amir he had angered (he flirted with his wife) and having no intention of returning. Unfortunately for him, he can't cross the sea, so he's stuck on his island. This puts him in a bad mood and he often starts talking to himself. Most likely the PCs will find him in a monologue as he circles around the crater. If they talk to him he will most likely be glad to have someone to talk to and will ask them all sorts of inane questions (What animals do you eat at home? Is it true that humans are short-lived? What does a "holse" look like?).

He will welcome any story they tell him, but he has become paranoid about his stay and thinks that any other fire creature is an agent sent to bring him back to the Amir. To these he will react with violence if he sees them as weak, or with fear if they seem stronger. This has prevented the kopru from recruiting him for their forge and, in fact, they stay away from his island, as he is annoying and troublesome. Thanks to the volcano's connection to the Plane of Fire, Nar Mushtaelia is able to use some of the powers he would have on his plane. To the adventurers, he is a willing host to give them shelter for a good while, but he won't be able to offer much information beyond that some "talking monster fish" threatened to take him to some fire giants (who he believes serve the Amir) and that he spooked them. He also knows that they did not suffer much from his fire, but that they no longer bother him. He also knows about

the red dragon in the area, but hides from it, thinking it is another agent of the Amir.

He lacks the usual treasure, but possesses a scimitar from the City of Brass. It is a +2 *scimitar*, but in the volcano it is only +1 and outside it lacks a bonus. However, this scimitar does not melt on contact with lava lizards nor by the fire dragon's fire breath, as it originates from the Plane of Fire.



*Efreet*

Because of the special situation of the volcano, he has some changed statistics:

### **Nar Mushtaelia (Efreet)**

CA 3; DG 10\*, 1 fist (2d8) or scimitar (1d8+2); ST:F15; chaotic.

While in the volcano:

- Immunity to earth-based effects (earthquakes, tremors, landslides...)
- Immunity to 1st level spells
- See invisible

He has all the special abilities of a normal efreet in the Prime Plane.

Treasure: City of Brass's *scimitar* +2 (non-native, +1 in the volcano, no bonus outside it); turban with emerald, 500 gp; 2 gold bracelets (value 650 gp each).

## **Kopru's Vent**

This vent has 3 entrances: one through the chimney; another through a subway tunnel that connects to the forge; and the last one, through the water. A large part of the vent is flooded and the kopru live inside the grottos. As it is very warm and flooded, it is the ideal place for them to live. Predators do not approach because of the heat, and it is uncomfortable for any other creature, either because of the humidity or because of the heat itself.

In this vent live 15 kopru (10 males and 5 females), of which 5 are learning the work of blacksmithing, 2 already know it, although very rudimentarily, and the rest are guards and hunters. This kopru community is led by Melzzak, a particularly large and intelligent kopru. He knows blacksmithing and has decided to create a forge in the volcano, as it has a constant supply of heat and water, ideal for working metals. He works with the fire giants on the main island, who teach him how to forge better works, as well as teaching his companions. In return, the kopru hunt to feed the giants, who are short of food due to their lack of fishing skills.

Melzzak is especially happy knowing that the giants' lives are in his hands. He is cunning and devious, but above all he is a fish with a keen eye for business. He has a business deal with a kna family, who bring him the raw materials for his forge (iron, copper, and bronze, mainly) and to whom they give the finished product: giant-sized



weapons of good quality (they break with difficulty and do +1 to damage). They come twice a year to make exchanges. Kna buy them some giant weapons, commissioned by giant leaders or brave heroes of great size. Among the generic stock are: swords (1- or 2-handed), axes (1- or 2-handed), spears, giant pikes (never been charged by a roc?) and shields (no spikes).

Weapons they usually make: offensive shields, armor (almost custom-made), giant crossbows, giant bolts, cestus, and huge tridents.

At the moment they are focused on selling to giants, as the fire giants dominate smithing at that level. However, Melzzak is looking to expand the market to underwater giants and smaller sea creatures. To this end, they are looking for dwarven blacksmiths to find the best way to ensure that the metal does not rust, or at least takes longer to rust. Since they live so far from them, they are having problems finding one.

The kopru community is not only home to kopru. There are always several *charmed* minions: lizard men, easy to find on Aloysius Island, or the mermen, wanderers of the place. They take advantage of their enchanted minions to increase the fishing and guard personnel and do not hesitate to use them as spies, scouts, or cannon fodder. As a rule, 5 of the 8 kopru guards, and 3 of the blacksmith apprentices keep an enchanted one. The rest, including Melzzak himself, don't keep *charmed* ones in order to be able to respond in case of unwanted visitors.

## Melzzak (6<sup>th</sup> Level Kopru, Leader)

AC 2 (0 when dodging); HD 12+4\*; HP 70; Attacks: bite (1d4) and tail (3d6) or by weapon. ST:F13, Chaotic. Str 12, Int 15, Dex 13, Wis 9, Con 12, Cha 15.

General skills: Dodge (Dex), Deception (Cha), Bargaining (Cha), Forgery (Int), Knowledge about giants (Int). Speaks Kopru, trading Kna, and Giantish.

Weapon masteries: Skilled with trident.

Equipment: silver tail pins (1 round to put them on, without disturbance), bronze-headed pike, heavy crossbow, 5 *quarrels* +1, *spear* +1, pearl necklace (700 gp), 2 bracelets (400 gp), *ring of protection from evil* (as the spell, while wearing), 3 rings for the tails (150 gp, 250 for kopru customers).

### Kopru community summary

#### Melzzak

1 blacksmith	NM, uses javelin, Dex 13
5 blacksmith apprentices	4 NM and 1 1st level, use spears
8 hunters/guards	(2 of them are 2nd level)
5 lizard men	all of them <i>dominated</i> , to hunt and gather information.
3 mermen	



*Kna, original digital artwork by Senarch*

## Trading Vent

This vent of the volcano connects to the main chimney by means of a subway tunnel through which lava used to flow. The conduit is large enough to allow the giants to pass through, albeit a bit crouched, carrying the goods in carts. The structure was reinforced and shored up by the giants, so there is no risk of collapse except in the event of a magical earthquake.

On the seaward side, this vent is accessible by a wide corridor between two reef masses, allowing easy movement for the mashers, and leads to a beach in a wide grotto of the vent. This is where the exchange takes place.

The kopru take the goods and wrap them to protect them from the salt water of the sea

and exchange them to the kna, who give them their share of the profit from the deliveries of the last order, bring them the new consignment of material, and tell them the new orders. This kna family has hired a 3rd level Aquarendi, Saliel, to go to the surface, negotiate and talk to the giants.

The kna follow a route passing through all islands and coastal areas with giants, with the exception of the islands of Minrothad. This is because the Guilds persecute them and prevent them from trading in their waters. As a result, no Minrothaddan giants have access to the weapons of the kopru's forge.

The vent contains both underwater and land-based grottoes, so the kna can spend a night or two there. There is a specially enlarged grotto for the masher.

## The Kna Family (Hardscale)

1 masher:

HD 20, AC7, Bite 3d8, 18+ swallows humans or smaller (3d6/as), ST: F4

5 NM kna:

HD 7, CA5, Crossbow (2d4+5) or spear (1d6+5), ST: F7

2 "crossbowman" kna:

HD 8, 13 Dex, Crossbow (2d4+5)

4 siege ballista kna:

HD 7, CA5, ballista (1d8+9; 60'/120'/180'), 2 in each ballista, if forced melee will use spears.

1 Fighter kna:

Lv3, HD 10, Str 16, skilled with spear, *spear +1, +2 against goblinoids, 1 potion of superhealing.*

1 Shaman kna:

Sh4. HD 7-7. Crossbow (2d4+4). He exchanged part of his vitality for faster magical abilities. Spells: 2/1. The family cares about him.

Saliel, the Aquarendi:

3rd level, AC 5. Spells: 2/1; 1st: *read languages, light, shield, protection from evil*. 2nd: *wizard lock, web, mirror image*.

Equipment:

layered shell armor, spear, short sword, crossbow, net, *wand of haste* (4 charges). Speaks Kna, Elvish, Giantish, and merman languages.

Treasure:

The kna are always changing what they carry, having a wide variety of products that change throughout the year: one trip

they can have magical two-handed swords and 3 months later they have *wands of light*. You can decide the kna's treasure as you wish or throw it random, but don't hesitate to give them seemingly useless magical items underwater, such as axes or clubs, or useless above water, such as *potions of ascension* or *air-breathing*. For reference, the kna family may have up to 30,000 gp in magic items and another 45,000 gp in various combinations of pearls, underwater jewelry, dwarven goldwork, giant skins, small dresses for nixies, and various forms of heavy treasure that is difficult to carry and trade.

## Volcano's Island and Main Vent

The island is not too large with a length of 2.5 miles and a width of 4.5 miles. It has a palm forest that occupies the western half of the island. There live some tropical birds, seagulls and turtles. During the day there are about a dozen lava lizards on the island, hunting for food, but they stay away from the shore because they do not like water. They are curious and find it hard to hunt birds, so they will attack the adventurers and fight to the death. During the night they return to the volcano because the temperature becomes too cold for them. It is then that the giant chameleons that were hiding from the lava lizards come out to hunt. These lizards are more cautious and more successful with birds, so they will try to avoid the adventurers.

On the coast there are turtles and seagulls. The coastal waters contain a great variety of fish of different colors and sizes. There is only one predator in the coastal waters: the stingray. They hide in the sand and attack



their prey with their stingers as they approach, but will not attack creatures larger than a halfling. There are no sharks near the coast, as they prefer the surrounding coral reefs with better prey. You may also find in the coastal waters some charmed lizard men or mermaids in search of food for their masters. They will prefer to move away and warn their masters rather than attack.

The most interesting part of the island is the volcano itself: the Fire Coral. The volcano is an apparition point for creatures from the Plane of Fire and every 4d12 months it opens for a few hours, allowing some creatures to cross it from there (if any are near). The portal opens suddenly at any of the volcano's vents, though most often at the large one (1d10: 1–6 island, 7 dragon vent, 8 efreet vent, 9 kopru's vent, 10 exchange vent). It is an ever-smoking mountain with a system of caves and grottoes inside where lava lizards and their owners, the fire giants, dwell.

The giants came through the portal, fleeing from a battle against efrees in which much of their army perished. Led by Perennial-flame, their great shaman leader, they went to the portal, more stable at the time, and crossed to the other side, ending up in the volcano. They wiped out the then inhabitants of the place, a plague of fire and ash mephits that occupied the place. They settled in the volcano and tamed the lava lizards that lived there. Those left behind on their home plane believe these giants to have been killed in combat.

For a few months they lived by hunting lizards on the island, but the lizards ran out (the reality is that the chameleons hid very well from them and the giants thought there were none left). They also didn't have

enough lava lizards to make a hatchery. It was then that the kopru appeared and made them an offer: to build a forge taking advantage of the volcano. The kopru would provide the raw material, give them part of the profit, and get them food based on fish and shellfish. The giants accepted, glad to be able to have food, even if it was seafood.

They produce about 60 stock weapons a year, which the kna then take with them to sell in places they know. All these weapons do +1 damage, break less easily, and do not melt on contact with high temperatures, such as lava lizards, dragon fire, or the like.

The forge has two sections: the dry section, for fire giants' use; and the sunken section, for kopru's use.

### **Giants in the Volcano (16)**

10 fighters (with good armors and big shields, trained in battle. More powerful than normal ones). 4 of them are the lava lizards' tamers.

AC2, HD 12+2, 1 giant sword or spear (5d6+1) or boulder (3d6). Save as F12.

4 lieutenants

(good gear, as above. They are more skilled and know to disarm. 2 of them are "swordgiants" and can deflect. The other 2 use giant tusked shields).

"Swordgiants": AC2, HD 13+2, Deflect (1). With sword, damage 5d6+5. Save as F13. HP 70

"Shield warriors": AC0, HD 13+2, 2 attacks/round, damage 4d6+4. Save as F13, HP 75

1 captain, Torchgard Cinderbeard (magic weapons, skilled in battle axe and very tough. He hates the nickname "Cinderello").

**Torchgard:**

AC 1, HD 14+2, Stuns with his battle axe (-2 to ST vs Paralysis), damage 4d8+6. Save as F14, HP 95.

Magical gear: Giant *plate mail* +1, giant *battle axe* +1, *protecting ring* +1, *necklace of cold resistance*, *potion of haste*, *potion of super-healing*.

1 shaman and leader of the giants, Perennialflame (serves Vulcan, the Forger. He is treated with respect by his followers because of his powers. Wise and strong, he can forge magic weapons, but will not sell them. They are only for his people. His most important duty is to protect the other giants, and is ready to die for it).

AC 3, HD 13+2, giant staff, 5d6+3, Deflect (2). Saves as C13, HP 78.

Magic gear: Giant *staff* +2, *protection ring* +2, giant bronze *staff of cure serious wounds* (8 charges), giant *boulder* +1 (3d6+1), *potion of prot. from evil*.

Spells: 3/3/3/2. He can cast the druidic spell *heat metal*.

16 lava lizards. During the day they hunt across the isle. At night they return to the volcano to recover warmth. They don't attack the giants but only obey the tamers.

**Forge of the Giants and Koprū**

The vast majority of the merchandise is made by the giants, and they always have 10 items in stock in the warehouse for every month that has passed since the last kna visit. The items are randomized and the stock is reduced to 0 when the kna arrive.

The koprū train in the forge with their giant masters. During the day there are at least 8 giants in the forge and 4 koprū, plus 4 lava lizards. The others usually rest in their caves.

There is a night shift, but only with 2 giants. 4 lava lizards sleep here.

Wood and iron are ordered from the kna. There is a shortage of wood here as palm trees are sparse and their wood isn't good.

**Prices for Giant-sized Weapons**

Weapon	Price
Hand axe	50gp
Bae Axe	75gp
Normal sword	100gp
2-handed sword	150gp
Pike	35gp
Poleaxe	80gp
Spear	30gp
Shield	100gp
30 quarrels*	100gp
Crossbow**	200gp
Halberd	90gp
Trident***	50gp
Knife shield	700gp
Plate mail	600gp
Suit armor	2,500gp

\* they have them in stock because those with crossbows require them

\*\* 1d6+5, 18/36/54m, they take less metal and are cheaper, but they take longer to make because the wood is ordered to the kna

\*\*\* sea giants normally know how to use it

### Prices for “pet” barding

#### Bear

Chain (AC5) 200 gp

Plate (AC3) 750gp

+10% for white bears,  
+20% for cave bears,  
(bear type must be specified)

#### Hellhounds

Plate (AC3) 500gp

Field (AC2) 600gp

+20% for hellhounds with  
6–7 HD

Business flow: Kna come twice a year and they trade money, raw materials and profits from sales, and also some magical objects.

## POSSIBLE ADVENTURES ON ALOYSIUS REEF

### Basic (Underwater)

#### Message to Kelpier

An important Undersea personality or an old friend asks the heroes to send a message to Kelpier (engraved on a shell). To do so, they must cross the green algae forest, overcoming sharks and other monsters that may be present, as well as the other reefs they pass through.

### Basic (Land)

#### Return My Relative to Me

A rich lady hires the PCs to look for her husband, who is somewhere in Utter Island. Minrothaddan pirates dropped him in the southern point, with some other passengers. But he disappeared that night. From a *communion* spell she knows he is alive somewhere on Utter Island. The druid of Utter perhaps can tell them about the nixies in exchange for a service (maybe fighting evil wood imps or troglodytes). The nixies will exchange their “friend” for 2 or 3 useful lizard men that the PCs have to bring alive and healthy to an exchange point.





### **Expert (Underwater)**

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#### **The Nixies in Danger**

The heroes are sent to the nixie village by Undersea to take away a charmed triton for whom Martinianus, the triton ambassador, has interceded. They have to return him to his parents. Unfortunately, the nixie village has sent their hunting parties to Aloysius Island to look for “friends,” and there are only a dozen nixies and a few “friends” left (the black dragon is away doing other things and the larger “friends” have gone to protect the hunting parties).

It is then, when they are in the village, that a giant sturgeon attacks. Will the heroes be able to defend the nixies and spook the creature away?

#### **The Spectre**

Julianus, the spectre, should be put to rest. When the adventurers finish him and think the job is done... he returns from the grave! Again! They will need to kill the dragon Flamagon or, if smart enough, trick Julianus to think he is already dead.

### **Expert (Land)**

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#### **Stop the Pirates**

Captain Panzalonso attacks many merchant ships, either from the Ierendians or Min-rothaddans. The heroes are hired by a merchant guild to stop the pirates. Rumors will be spread about an important shipment (false) and the heroes will go as an escort, along with several soldiers (at least 3 skilled in bow or short sword and 10 of 2nd level) to lure and stop the pirates. The plan of attack is up to the heroes (let them approach, attack with ballistas as soon as they are in sight, ...). If they manage to defeat Captain Panzalonso, they can interrogate the survivors to tell them where they are keeping their treasure. If they try to take it, Hurricane, the sea dragon of the Red Reef, will attack them when they have already recovered it. He will fight intelligently and will not hesitate to flee or surrender if things get ugly.

### **Companion (Underwater or Land)**

## **ON THE HUNT FOR THE DRAGON**

### *Underwater version*

The red dragon Flamagon, *polymorphed* as a nobleman or merchant, hires the heroes to hunt down Hurricane, the sea dragon. He tells them where he lives and what places he frequents, and about his great treasure. He will also tell them that he is resistant to cold magic (this is a lie, in order to later ambush them so that they have no ice magic to harm him). If they ask him where he got all the information from, he will say that he spent several years investigating him because of personal grudges. He will also tell them that, although there are lizard men in the area, they are not hostile and can even guide them for a low price (to protect his lizard-kin minions). The dragon's plan is that once they are weak from the fight and have collected the treasure, Flamagon will attack with his lizard men. He will attack in or out of the water, depending on what he sees as more advantageous to him. Inside the water he will attack *polymorphed* into an octopus or giant squid, in order to have as many attacks as possible and be able to hold off his enemies. If he is in trouble, he will *polymorph* into a fast fish and swim away at high speed (barracuda or swordfish). If they attack out of the water (on an islet or similar) he will attack in his dragon form with all his strength, trying to get a breath in in the first round and then using magic to avoid hurting his minions (good minions are hard to come by). He will never fight to the death and will retreat if he sees the situation turning badly, hoping to finish off the heroes another time.

### *Land version*

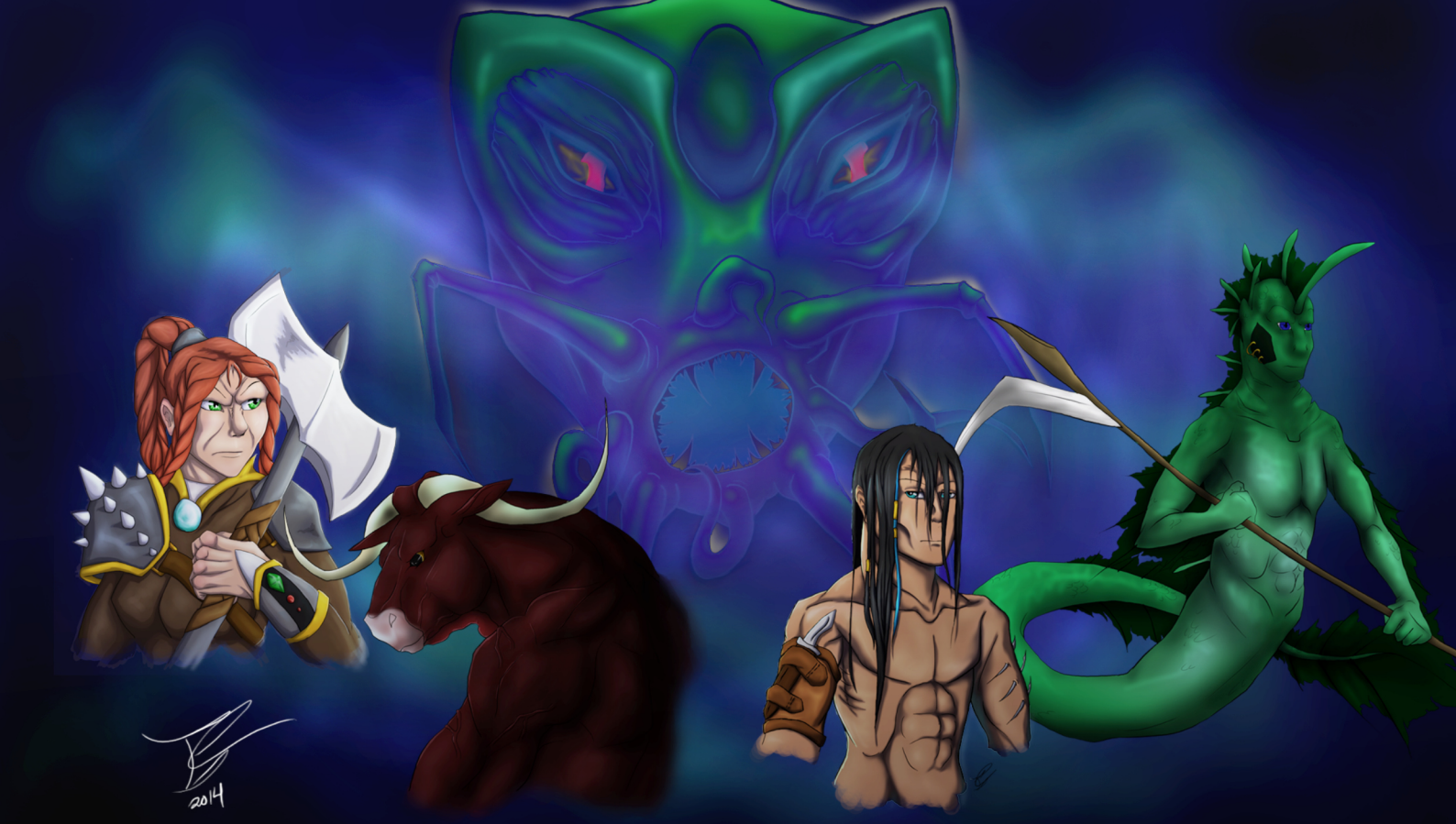
Torment, the sea dragon of the reef, wishes to finish off Flamagon, the red dragon of the volcano. She is unable to enter his lair so she will pay the adventurers to do this. She will seek powerful mercenaries, tell them about the great hoard and the evil doings of the red dragon, and pay them about 20,000 gp (5,000 before the job, the rest after killing the dragon). She will tell them all that she knows about him (lizard-men minions, magic he wields, ...). If she sees the opportunity, she will try to steal the treasure of Flamagon from the adventurers (or maybe try to reach an agreement: 50–50 or 40–60, who knows?).

### **Companion (Land)**

## **The Volcano Forge Should Be Destroyed**

Giants of the continent or of the islands are getting much better weapons from unsuspected providers. This is causing trouble for the authorities, or even to the land-owning PCs. The heroes must discover who is the provider (the *kna*), who is the maker (the giants and the *kopru*), and stop the forge's work. But this is an uneasy task, as the island is far away and the reef makes navigation difficult. Will the heroes be able to stop the spread of high-quality weapons among the fierce giants?





# Hidden Empires of the Kopru

by Matthew Tullius

## Part One: A Tour of the Temples

*Kopru domination, drawing by I. Calvin made for the Kopru Dominarchy of Adhuza in the Thanegioth Archipelago, from THRESHOLD Magazine issue #4*

**“You are the chosen human representative of the slaves?”**

The slimy beast turned toward me as the smell of its greasy, rancid skin invaded my nostrils. Not wanting to respond to the *thing*, but knowing that I must or I risked them throwing me back to the slave pens at best, the breeding pens to produce “calves,” or even worse to the food pens to be the next meal. I wrinkled my nose, in distaste as much from the smell as having to be subservient to the kopru masters. “You could say that. I wasn’t chosen by humans. Your kind... *not mine* forced me here. I have no interest in representing your kind to



anyone! There was very little in the way of choice on the matter.” I spat out the last line, showing my disgust. I didn’t know why these *things* even wanted a representative for slaves and food. It made little sense to me.

The *thing* looked down at me and its mouth hole compressed in an incomprehensible expression. It hissed loudly. Was it angry?

“I can see why you were chosen, human.” Its mass jiggled and shook as it made the hiss sound a second time. A laugh. Even in mirth these *things* were foul. “Strong willed, even for an escapee.”

“I’ve never been able to esca—” I began.

“Escape is relative, human!” it cut me off with an aspirated hiss. Annoyance. Different hiss meant a different emotion. I knew enough to tell that I was sent here to learn kopru culture, for what reason I could only guess, but perhaps the information could be used to improve the lives of us humans. The more I could learn and understand and pass to others, the more likely we could fight the control of our masters. No. Captors. I needed to stop thinking of them as masters.

“Those of your kind that resist domination have ‘escaped.’ Most humans and other species that are here have no will. We know every thought, every emotion, and every memory. We command every movement, every action, and every thought. There can be no more true definition of escape than that of having your own thoughts and having your own will guide your actions as others remain happily in a prison of obedience. Do you not agree, human?” the *thing* spoke sternly and rapidly as though he was admonishing a child.

“I do.” I found myself in the unenviable position of agreeing with one of these *things*. I despised this *thing* calling me ‘human.’ One thing though gave me a small victory and was a source of tremendous pride: I could resist them as few others were able. I was born not obeying these *things*. I was an individual, and I had a name.

“Ryessa.”

The thing tilted its head backward and turned its eyes down toward me. I didn’t understand what it was doing. “What?” it asked. Confusion.

“Ryessa. My name isn’t ‘human.’ It’s Ryessa.” I tried to look more defiant than I felt. It was easy to feel vulnerable wearing only sandals before one of my mas—... captors.

“I never thought to consider speaking with one of your kind individually. We are used to using our minds to command, not to communicate. At any rate, Ryessa, let us discuss the temple, the Immortals, and why...” It paused and one eye squinted as it looked away just slightly. Distracted? It turned back looking intently at me. Thought. That’s what it was. Not distraction but thought. “Who decided *it* would carry that name?”

I didn’t much care for the way the *thing* called me an “it.” “I don’t know. My family, I guess. I overheard one of the keepers use my name when they thought I wasn’t listening.” I trailed off thinking of the traumatic memory of my experiences in the breeding pens, “... during my time in the breeding pens. As I was fighting off rapists in the pens, I overheard one of the pen keepers say to the other ‘The one they are so interested in breeding with is Ryessa.’ It was the

first time I heard my name.” My parents had been dominated when I was bred and because of this I had no real relationship with them beyond my immediate physical needs for survival when I was young. I didn’t even know my name until I was of age and thrown into the breeding pens. It was a victory I guarded and held close. It felt good to lord it over one of these *things* that I knew my name. I had my own *individual* identity.

It made the laugh hiss the moment I finished my statement. It was laughing at my pain and trying to take my hard-fought victory away! I could feel anger swelling in me as I balled my fists. It continued making the hiss over and over as its form quivered in amusement. Its skin excreted droplets of ooze that slowly rolled down its skin or flicked off as it quivered.

Through clenched teeth I growled at it, smelling the odor from fresh skin secretions. Stronger or not it was about to get hit. “What is so funny?!? The breeding pens were a nightmare! Or is it that you are amused I learned my own name???” I felt my temperature rising in the already steamy cavern as I screamed at it.

“I imagine your experiences were... trying.” The *thing* was no longer quivering in its large laughing motions and hissing. Instead, it was very still and shivering. I could feel the logical side of my brain push through the hurt and anger trying to analyze what it was doing. The *thing’s* shivering slowed as it continued to talk.

“Let us continue to the Temple. It will be the first of several stops as you learn your place. You have much to learn about our Immortals, that it might be passed to the other escapees.” The *thing* turned and

began to slide toward the temple’s entrance. It had stifled its emotion and was unreactive to my outburst. Why? Politeness? Was it trying to spare my feelings? It didn’t make sense but that was the only explanation I could come up with until I had more information on how this one behaved. My rage slowed and returned to its usual of a slow simmer as we walked to the temple in silence. If I was going to learn about these *things*, I needed to learn them as individuals too. I stopped walking before he slimed past the door.

“What is your name?” I asked.

The *thing* stopped at the entrance and did a full turn around to face me. The *thing* squinted one eye and then turned its head away slightly. I had seen this expression from it before. It was confused. It was confused about its own name? That didn’t make sense. It continued looking at me in that manner for a long moment without moving. It was unsettling how still it could be in this dripping place.

Suddenly the thing moved. “It never occurred to me to introduce myself to one of your kind.” The *thing* wasn’t confused. It was surprised, and must have been surprised before, too. “I am called Thrissh, meaning ‘divine’ in your language. You are... Ryessa...” It paused with the amusement look as it spoke my name. “... Now, come. It is important to our purposes that you learn.”

While I knew there was some reason the kopru wanted me to learn their culture, I didn’t like the idea that I was somehow useful to them.

We entered the temple and there were four statues with little else in the way of

accessories. Before each statue was a large bowl that seemed to be for offerings. Thrish motioned to the largest statue to the right. The statue was two or three times the mass of the next largest statue.

“This is Kahrysshalis. The Warrior.”

“He’s huge.” I said with genuine awe. While I hated these *things*, I honestly admired both the size and craftsmanship of the statue as it was clearly made with extreme care.

“SSSShe!” Thrish said with the aspirated hiss of annoyance. “Kahrysshalis is Mistress of Unity and Order, in many ways the counterpart of Manwara.” My blank expression must have been easy for it to read. “Manwara you will meet next. He is the Immortal of Diversity and Chaos.”

I nodded, trying to take everything in. So far, nothing he was telling me seemed useful to my kind.

“Kahrysshalis once was a kopru of tremendous size and strength. She was unlike many of her days. The truth is she was unlike many even of her kopru brood.”

“Brood?” I questioned.

“There are multiple strains of kopru. You probably have not noticed as the keepers of the slave pens tend to be more of Shalis brood only. This is the brood that is directly related to Kahrysshalis. It is she that is their great-mother centuries removed. Kahrysshalis was the greatest general of the kopru and led many daring raids. She had an unparalleled record for capturing and enslaving the most difficult and strong specimens of so many species and races! She was magnificent!” As he stared up at her

statue Thrish’s tissue surrounding his teeth contracted back, exposing the teeth nearly to the roots. I made note of the action. It could be admiration, or even as disgusting as the thought might be—lust.

“In time her great size and strength as well as keen mind attracted many males to breed. She was not flashy but quiet, patient, direct, and strong.” Lust, or something approaching romantic love, she decided. She never thought of these *things* as being emotional or loving.

“But she had a rival: Slizzark the Lurker, who was to become her enemy, even after both ascended into Immortality. Slizzark was in many ways the opposite of Kahrysshalis. A braggart, impatient, demonstrative, and underhanded. They both were females, and so competed for males and genetic variety in their offspring. They each had something to offer: one—resistance to magic, the other—perfection of physical form. Kahrysshalis mated very selectively—only the biggest, strongest, most intelligent males would suffice for her. Slizzark mated with every kopru she could find. What do you think was the result of this mating, Ryessa?”

I thought about it a moment. In the breeding pens the kopru seemed to try to produce specific qualities in their slaves. Some people they wanted smaller to fit in tight places, others they wanted strong to do heavy labor, and some were desired for their agility or balance.

“Breeding for a purpose,” I said.

“Yes. But two different purposes. Kahrysshalis selectively mated in small clutches with the best mates possible. Slizzark with as many as possible as frequently as possible. One



chose the strategy of quantity, the other the strategy of quality.” Thrissh looked pleased with himself. “Which offspring produced the next great Kopru Empire?” asked Thrissh.

“Kahrysshalis, obviously,” I said, as I opened up my arms and motioned to the rest of the temple.

“Obvious, but wrong,” said Thrissh. “Sometimes, quantity can be its own reward. A great many of lesser value or strength may overwhelm a smaller but better force.”

I nodded and smiled. They must worry about us rebelling one day and destroying them and their system. My kind outnumbered them easily two to one. “I see,” I said.

Thrissh’s mouth sphincter compressed and contracted, as he jiggled slightly. He was amused again. “I do not need to dominate you to see your mind’s eye, Ryessa. Your kind is far weaker than ours. Even at a ten to one ratio your kind cannot hope to fight the might of the Empire.” His body adopted a different position, then Thrissh said in a matter-of-fact tone, “Slizzark’s brood, the so called ‘Dominarchy,’ swept over the Triad and pushed them back.”

I knew that the Triad was the governing body of the Kopru Empire. I didn’t know they had ever been defeated, and that meant it was *possible*. I nodded to let Thrissh know I was still paying attention and not lost on thoughts of rebellion.

“The Triad pulled back and bided its time, as we were few and they were many. As expected, we did not have to wait forever. Slizzark’s ‘Dominarchy’ was not to last.” Thrissh seemed pleased as he said the last phrase with a slow relish of enjoyment.

My heart sank a little. I nodded slowly and sadly. “You were able to beat them,” I said.

“We did not have to, Ryessa,” said Thrissh. “They beat themselves.”

“Civil war?” I asked. It felt wrong, but it was the only thing that made sense with the Dominarchy fighting themselves.

“No,” said Thrissh. “They were foolish. They were able to exile the Triad through numbers alone. They allowed their slaves to outnumber them uncontrolled. They grew decadent, soft, and overconfident in their ability to resist magic. Do you see the flaw, Ryessa, in their strategy?” Thrissh cut me off before I could respond and continued. “Not the part about being outnumbered. That should be obvious, even to one such as you.”

I tried not to appear annoyed at Thrissh’s insinuation of stupidity on my part. “Well, you said overconfidence...” I trailed off. I didn’t understand the question he was really asking. The question behind the question.

“Their magic resistance was their undoing, in a way. It is what brought about their overconfidence,” Thrissh said. “They were so dependent on magic resistance, it never occurred to them that it did not matter. When you have slave races such as your kind, having magic resistance is irrelevant.” Thrissh hissed his largest hiss of laughter. “Who would teach magic to a slave?? Resistance to magic is useless against swarms of *expendables*.”

I quietly snarled at the way Thrissh referred to humans as expendable. I knew there were no mages, or religious leaders, among the kopru slaves, and as such—no magic.

What he said made sense. No magic means no need to defend against magic.

“In their magical overconfidence, they made no attempt to improve themselves physically. Their bodies atrophied and weakened. They allowed uncontrolled slave breeding and just depended on their presence to cow their slaves. We do not allow such folly of—overpopulation of those we cannot enthrall or dominate,” Thrishh said with self-assuredness.

Thrishh motioned to the next figure, at one of the corners. The figure was a bit smaller than the first that was shown. “This is Glissh: Lord of Elemental Magics and Immortal of Many Faces.”

I moved around this statue carved in the slimy deep green rock. There was an odd habit about this statue. From one side the figure appeared to have the angry or annoyed pose I had seen on Thrishh many times. But a few steps and looking at it dead center, it appeared cold and emotionless. The emotional transition was seamless, and continued as you moved to the other side. From the other side the figure appeared to be making the laughing face.

Thrishh looked down at me. “I can see you can tell why he is called the many-faced. Note on his flukes there are sigils carved into his very flesh. They are designed to help channel his extreme elemental might. But, there was a cost to such power. In arcane bargains to control this power his mind was compromised, fractured actually, and he became many.”

“He was insane,” I said forcefully, annoyed at his reverence for this *thing*.



*Kopru and human slave,  
original digital drawing by Senarch*

Thrishh hissed with annoyance. “Watch your foul tongue, human!”

I was back to being “human” again.

Thrishh’s annoyance was not as short-lived as usual, and his voice rose in volume. “Glissh has power you cannot conceive, human! It is through Glissh that we will be the final empire of this world!” Thrishh was pulsing and hissing almost in a hyperventilating pant. It was then I noticed for the first time the same sigils on Thrishh’s fluked tail. I kept quiet and tried to appear chastised. I had found a weakness in Thrishh and didn’t

want to let him know I had quietly made note of it. Thrishh simmered for long minutes, hissing to himself.

On calming himself down, Thrishh continued his dissertation. He was still unhappy, but did an unconvincing job of hiding it. “Glissh was once a powerful mage. He channeled the might of the elements themselves through powerful sigils engraved on his very flesh. He rose to prominence and established his own strong brood. It is from Glissh that our tradition of harnessing the elements as weapons comes. But this was only the beginning of Glissh’s ascension! Glissh would be born again three other times, each with a whole different set of skills and even personalities. That is why he has so many aspects, *human*. His is the Many-Faced One.” He said the last sentence slowly with both reverence and awe.

“How did Glissh end up born again multiple times? Isn’t that impossible?” I asked.

“Such is the mystery and power of Glissh.” Thrishh opened his arms wide toward the idol in praise and I could hear genuine awe in his watery voice. “Many lives were needed to complete his movement to an Immortal worthy of worship. It was in this completed state that Kahrysshalis found him and lifted him past the mortal coil.”

“So, it wasn’t completely on his own?” I asked.

“Kahrysshalis needs multiple mates, as do all kopru,” said Thrishh. “Only the best will do! For this reason, after, she uplifted Piteesth as one of her mates.” Thrishh pointed to the next of the statues. This one was smaller, but also more delicate and slender. It was made of a fragile-looking yellowing coral that looked as though it could

be broken with ease. What was even more unusual about it more so than its make and coloration was that metallic decorations hung from various appendages. Light pulsed off of parts of some of the metal in an eerie way. This visage made me even more uncomfortable than the last.

“Piteesth was once one of the most disrespected of his kind. He was born ill and weaker than other kopru. A reminder that even in pitiful degradation can greatness rise.” Thrishh looked long at me in silence. I returned his gaze, refusing to look away first. Was he insulting me? Was this some sort of backhanded compliment? Maybe something else? I didn’t have time to think more, and he broke eye contact and continued his monologue.

“The gift of Piteesth was his mind and his understanding of areas that the kopru had not mastered, as well as his skill at creating intricate plots. He also had a unique gift—he could dominate a mind but also use that same dominated mind to peek into the minds of people close to him.” Thrishh arched up looking overly pleased with himself. “Piteesth’s gift was unique, but also because of the times in which he was alive and the one that he had chosen to dominate it was even more special. Thousands of years ago when Piteesth was mortal he dominated an unassuming man from a far-away land.”

This intrigued me. We did not learn about other people in other lands. The idea that elsewhere my people were different was important information. Thrishh didn’t realize that he was handing me an arsenal of information. It was at times like this that I was grateful that these things couldn’t look into my mind.



“Blackmoor was its name. Blackmoor was as much a place, as it was a time, and a way of thinking. That man was someone that Piteesth felt odd kinship with knowing. He too was overlooked and disregarded in his society. He cleaned the refuse and the homes of his betters.” Thrishsh showed his typical mirth. The idea of a lowly person doing menial things being connected to Piteesth seemed to cause Thrishsh joy.

“This lowly man, though, made Piteesth feel connected and even have a measure of understanding. This refuse man was like a loved long-distance pet. Even from tens of thousands of miles Piteesth learned he could read the minds around the refuse man he had dominated. This gifted him with knowledge that was like a bottomless vault of riches.”

“How could someone like that know anyone overly valuable?” I asked. “He just cleans up trash. Nothing special.”

“On the contrary,” Thrishsh said with a gurgling aspiration, “Someone like that is not considered out of place in any environment. They go anywhere. While no one sees them, they can see everything. The refuse-man was able to be around very knowledgeable men and women who were privy to information from far beyond—beyond even the land and sky. Piteesth used his pet to spy on the thoughts of the greatest minds of this civilization. It took him long to replicate some of the work of these people. He was unique among all our people in his capabilities with this new technology.”

“Is that what this is all about?” I asked, pointing at the metal bits on the statue. Thrishsh nodded slowly.

“Sadly, after decades, Piteesth felt a white-hot burning in his brain and all minds he had touched fell silent. No one is sure what happened, but Piteesth taught others that were smaller and more devious the ways of technology. There were many wonders he never fully understood, but there were also developments he added that Blackmoor never had or understood.”

“So, he was found worthy to breed with Kahrysshalis,” I said more than asked. Thrishsh confirmed as he turned to move to the final statue. I couldn’t help but smile to myself. Thrishsh had made a mistake. Possibly a fatal one for his people, and he was none the wiser for it. I followed quickly behind him so as not to not let on I had such information now.

“This last one is Manwara and in some ways the greatest. It is Manwara that crafted the kopru in his great image...” Thrishsh trailed off as he looked at the statue.

I looked at the statue and it was an *ancient*-looking creature. Like something that was kept alive by sheer force of will more than its body functioning as it should. This one was clearly male in every order, almost like the idea of crafting a feminine aspect would be blasphemous. It was draped in dripping strands of fresh kelp and algae which must be some sort of religious devotional. This statue shared an aspect with that of Glissh; if you observed it from one side, it looked calm, serene, even wise; if observed from the other side, it looked angry, volatile, and violent. It was the angry side that gripped a trident tightly in its appendage, looking as though it might strike any moment even though it was stone.

“Manwara crafted all races of the sea, but made the kopru first in his image.” I grimaced. No wonder these things were so



### *Undersea temple*

arrogant, they thought the gods themselves were just like them. Thrissh continued, “As the other races were crafted, the kopru were given dominion over them and ruled as Manwara dictated. As a sign of his divine favor, he gifted us the ability to dominate and control.” Thrissh got very close to me and I shuddered in disgust.

“You see, Ryessa? Even the oldest Immortals know you are to kneel before us and obey. It is good you learn this divine lesson.” He said this as a whisper as though it was a secret. The way his tone went down, it was as though cold water ran down my spine, and I shivered.

Thrissh pulled back, looking pleased with himself. “Manwara is perhaps the original Immortal. From Him our Empires stem and grow strong. He breeds with all and all are bred from him.”

Thrissh pulled himself up high on his hind fluke, towering over me. I felt very small but I was not about to cower. After a few

moments of standoff, Thrissh lowered himself.

“Come, Ryessa, you have learned enough of why the kopru ruled and will again by divine right. It is time to visit each brood in the Empires.” Thrissh turned and slid into the darkness. After a moment in thought, I followed behind.

*To be continued in Hidden Empires Part Two: A Human’s Guide to Kopru Broods*

## GLISSH

### LORD OF FIRE, ICE, AND EARTH, THE MANY-FACED ONE

**Level, Alignment, Sphere**

18 (Celestial), Neutral, Matter

**Symbol**

A three-fluked tail tattooed with the three elements of Water, Fire, and Earth

**Portfolio**

Elements, Balance

**Worshipped In**

The Hidden Empires

**Appearance**

Glissh is a three-meter-long kopru a deep shade of hunter green. His skin glistens with an oily sheen and to a kopru is an unparalleled male specimen that would make any female kopru positively drop eggs with eagerness to breed. The eyes of Glissh are a rarity for kopru—a honey gold that feels as though it burns your very soul when gazed upon for too long. There are multiple tattoos and runes on Glissh's body, with the most prominent ones being on his three-fluked tails.

**Personality**

Glissh is as volatile as the elements that he controls. Icy cold and callous one moment, fiery explosive with anger the next, while other times behaving stable, agreeable, and gregarious. The truth is that Glissh is psychologically unstable and shifts personalities randomly. These shifts are linked to the elements and their respective planes of existence. The "Ice" personality is calculating and emotionless. "Ice" enjoys

working with Piteesth and her followers to create dangerous magitech super weapons. The "Lava" personality is pure emotion, energy and motion for motion's sake. "Lava" enjoys seeing the effects of magic and elements as though it were a show entertaining a child. "Stone" is happy, sociable and charming. "Stone" seeks to keep the kopru race working well together, and even encourages slaves of the kopru to be obedient while encouraging the kopru overlords to have a measure of mercy on lesser races.

**Patron**

Kahrysshalis

**Allies**

Kahrysshalis, Piteesth, Fire Elemaster

**Enemies**

Air Elemaster

**Followers' Alignment**

Followers may be any alignment, but clerics are generally as chaotic as Glissh's nature.

**Favored Weapon**

Two-handed polearms, any stone weapon.

**Cleric Skills and Powers**

Cleric's granted abilities can shift unexpectedly and without warning when Glissh shifts personality traits. When "Ice" is in control, spells which manipulate the mind or emotion of a victim will save at a -2 penalty. When "Lava" is in control, damage spells will have +1D. When "Stone" is in control Charisma is raised by +1.



## PITEESTH

### LORD OF FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE AND SECRETS, IMMORTAL OF MAGITECH

#### Level, Alignment, Sphere

25 (Eternal), Chaotic, Thought

#### Symbol

A circle of pitch black with a single tiny point of white at the center

#### Portfolio

Technology, Rogues, Plots, Espionage

#### Worshiped In

The Hidden Empires

#### Appearance

Small for a kopru at two meters long and almost emaciated in build. Skin that is patchy as well as a sicklier mustard yellow pallor with vile mossy rotten brown. Piteesth moves in an extremely agile and dexterous manner and is able to contort and flex better than the most flexible kopru. Piteesth will bob his head up and down and back and forth as he moves, and speaks with even the face tentacles and tail flukes twitching nervously. Piteesth carries a dagger with a tool belt that contains multiple tools of various unknown uses. There is a variety of Blackmoorian-style technologies that are carried as well.

#### Personality

Piteesth's nervous actions, while an affectation, is rooted in his nature. Used to looking over his shoulder to avoid stronger kopru, and moving in shadows to keep his plots clandestine. Piteesth is sneaky and an overt liar.

One of his deepest friendships is with Loki, where they play high-stakes versions of the game "Three Truths and a Lie" in an exchange of hidden secrets and knowledge. Piteesth is technical-minded and always thinking in terms of "how" and "why." Having existed at the ascension of Blackmoor, spends a great deal of time tinkering with machines and working in conjunction with the Magics of Glissh to guide the kopru in building gradually more devastating technology to use against enemies.

#### History

Piteesth was once a fairly overlooked and disrespected member of kopru society.

#### Patron

Unknown

#### Allies

Glissh, Kahrysshalis, Loki

#### Enemies

Fugit

#### Followers' Alignment

Piteesth's followers that lean into magitech tend towards Neutral and even (rarely) Lawful. Those of a more secretive nature tend towards Chaotic.

#### Favored Weapon

Magitech weapons or Dagger.

#### Cleric Skills and Powers

Clerics gain a +4 to the skill Fantasy Physics or Machine Building (but not both) Clerics *must* take both skills.

## KAHRYSSHALIS

### LORD of Martial Combat, Mistress of Order

#### Level, Alignment, Sphere

25 (Eternal), Lawful Neutral, Matter

#### Symbol

The head of a trident with the fluke tail behind each prong

#### Portfolio

Kopru, Strategy, Tactics, Structure and Order.

#### Worshiped In

The Hidden Empires

#### Appearance

Kahrysshalis is 5 meters long and is an overly large kopru with muscles that are enormous in proportion to the norm, even more so for a female. Her body is oozing and dripping with an oily black secretion that makes her move and slide with amazing speed as well as grace. She carries a trident made of the first smelted alloys of Mystara. The claws of her hands and tails are likewise coated in metallic alloys from Mystara's forgotten past. Kahrysshalis forever appears (at least for a kopru) stoic and dispassionate, with a blank stare and dead eyes that stare in constant judgment.

#### Personality

Kahrysshalis has a personality that is a rarity in kopru culture. Quiet, reserved, but when she speaks does so forcefully and bluntly. The only time Kahrysshalis seems to have the wall of calm around her crumble is bringing up the history of the ungrateful surface

rages stealing the secrets of metal from her people. During those times, she will enter a murderous and uncontrolled rage that when ended is as abrupt and sudden as its beginning. Kahrysshalis is more likely to quietly physically intimidate using her large size and encroaching on others' personal space to get compliance.

#### Patron

Unknown

#### Allies

Glissh, Piteesth, Eternal General

#### Enemies

Slizzark the Lurker, Ka

#### Followers' Alignment

Clerics must be Lawful, others Lawful or Neutral.

#### Favored Weapon

Trident, spears and dagger allowed.

#### Cleric Skills and Powers

Clerics are able to move at the same speed as a land creature on land rather than the lumbering speed normally used.

#### Paladin Skills and Powers

Paladins have thicker hide granting an improvement of Armor Class of 2.

# Gnomish Submarine

by Karl David Brown



FROM  
The Vaults  
of Pandius

This article proposes a gnome-built submarine, seaplane, and diving suit. There is also a new gnomish sub-race. All of these are given game statistics for 5<sup>th</sup> Edition D&D.

Submarines have a long history in Mystara. There are rumours of an air-filled dome from the days of Blackmoor at the bottom of the ocean but to date no one has found it and returned. Submarines of some kind must have enabled the construction of this dome, if it really exists. Ancient writings do describe Orchanna's Fabulous Machine, a fully developed submersible possibly of Blackmoorian origin.

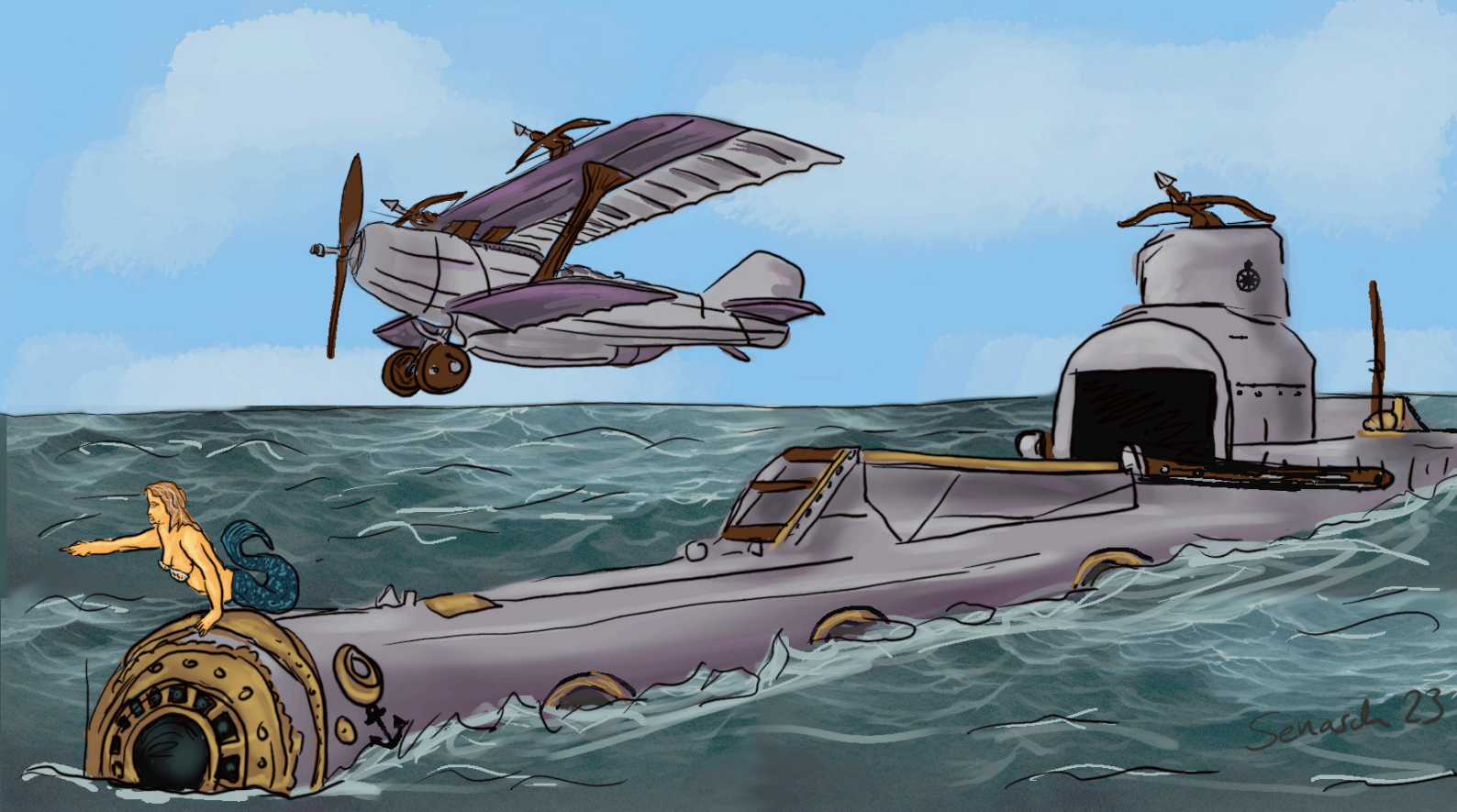
In the modern era there has been at least one submersible built in New New Mistraven<sup>1</sup> in Alphatia. This vessel intended to emulate the capabilities of Orchanna's Fabulous Machine but perhaps relied too heavily on existing magical items rather than developing mechanical solutions and

<sup>1</sup>In AC 11: ["The Book of Wondrous Inventions"](#) (available from [drivethrurpg.com](#)), New Mistraven blew up 'some time ago' and so a new one was built; see also ["Official details about Metropolitan Alphatia"](#) by LoZompatore and this author's original ["Gnomish Submarine"](#) article (both in the Vaults of Pandius).

the vessel fell well short of its stated goal. The undersea boats of Aquas in Alphatia are more successful. The Alphatian vessels are steel with crystal windows and use magic to supply air and movement.

This latest version is a collaboration between the gnomes that in previous generations helped build the Ierendi navy and the flying gnomish city of Serraine. The idea was to provide a portable aeroplane launch platform to enable greater trade and tourism between Ierendi and Serraine. It was made into a submersible as a defence against pirates and to offer tourists views of the beautiful reefs off Ierendi's islands. The submarine itself was constructed in the docks of Filtot on Honor Island by gnomes of The Citadel. The Serraine skygnomes are very secretive about aeroplane technology so building of the seaplane was undertaken at Serraine. The seaplane is stored on the flying island and rendezvouses with the submarine in the inlet of Filtot when the flying city is above. Cruise in the submarine with a mixed crew of sky and sea gnomes then ventures forth.





Gnomish submarine and plane, hand-drawn by Senarch

## THE 'ISLAND PRINCESS' SUPREME-SKYRATCHET FRIENDSHIP SUBMARINE

A cooperative effort by the gnomes of Ser-raine and Filtot has produced a passenger and cargo submarine that can also carry and launch a specially designed biplane. The submarine is a long steel tube with a thick layer of water- and barnacle-repellent paint to prevent rust. At the front is a large thick glass dome for the helm just below the brightly painted wooden figurehead of a gnome-mermaid. Smaller portholes dot the sides of the tube to give passengers a view of the sea. Four adjustable fins allow the helm to steer the ship. A rear poop deck is a hanger for a seaplane which is launched off a rail by an oversized crossbow. Above this is a turret with a ballista and another large porthole to allow the gunner to aim. At the rear of the ship is a large propeller. This is rotated via gears and belts by a crankshaft turned by a stone golem. The crankshaft

also powers fans that waft air from a small portal to the Elemental Plane of Air bounded by a 1-ft-diameter brass ring etched with arcane glyphs. This air is also piped to bladders in the buoyancy tanks used to rise or sink the vessel.

Entry to the submarine is by an antechamber sealed at both ends with heavy doors set in rubber gaskets. Air can be pumped in or let out to enable personnel or rubbish to be ejected while submerged. The same principle on a smaller scale is used for the submarine's two latrines, one for crew and the other for passengers. The interior of the submarine is brightly lit by heat-free *continual flames*. The fully equipped galley also has a small bar, though on duty crew are not served alcohol. Comfortable leather-upholstered hardwood furniture is found throughout passenger areas. Passengers and the captain have individual cabins with comfortable beds big enough to sleep a human. The rest of the crew 'hot bunk' in gnome-sized hammocks in the cargo hold.

The helm instrument panel includes a clock, compass, fuel gauge, speed gauge, depth gauge, spirit level, plumb bob, and checklists.

The crew is assumed to be all gnomes and crew areas are scaled accordingly. There are three watches each with a helm, golem wrangler, steward, and gunner. The day watch helm is the captain. Additionally, when Ser-raine is near enough to send the seaplane there is one gnomish seaplane pilot.

There are cabins for 20 medium-sized passengers and a spacious cargo hold that has on occasion housed not only the off-duty crew but also an additional 20 'cattle-class' passengers. Usually though, the hold contains the ship's provisions of food and fresh water and the passengers' luggage.

## Submarine Statistics

**Size:** Gargantuan (290 ft long and has a beam of 25 ft)

**Speed:** Swim only 15 ft. (1.5 mph).

**Range:** Like most ships with a full crew of three watches the vessel can operate continuously until the food and fresh-water stores are exhausted. How long that is depends on exactly what is packed in the cargo hold and how many passengers are aboard.

**AC:** 15

**Hit Dice:** 14d20

**Hit Points:** 175

**Special Defences:** Immune to psychic and poison damage.

**Golem:** The golem wrangler can eject the golem, a process taking 2 rounds. At the end of the wrangler's second turn the stone golem exits the craft and promptly sinks to the bottom where it can perform tasks or fight bottom-dwelling denizens of the deep. This prevents horizontal movement of the submarine until the golem is retrieved or a creature with strength 22 or higher takes on the exhausting work of turning the crank. The vessel can still use its buoyancy tanks to sink or rise and may still drift in strong currents.

## Attacks

### Gunner Attack

Ballista with mechanical reload all on a swivel. Hit Dmg 2d10 piercing damage; Reload is automatic after 1 round due to a clockwork mechanism. A ballista's ammunition hopper holds 10 bolts. Refilling the hopper and rewinding the loading mechanism takes one hour but can be part of a short rest. Range 120/480. See also underwater combat in the *Player's Handbook*. As a giant cross-bow this weapon does not suffer disadvantages underwater.

### Ram

The submarine is not designed to ram but if you insist... adjust attack roll by -2. Hit 5d8 bludgeoning damage to the target *and* the submarine. If the target is Large or smaller they are knocked prone.

**Maintenance Proficiencies:** gnomish 'skyhooks', tinker's tools, alchemist's supplies, brewer's supplies, calligrapher's supplies, carpenter's tools, cook's utensils, glassblower's tools, herbalism kit for casting rubber, jeweller's tools for fine mechanisms,

leather worker's tools, mason's tools to repair the stone golem, navigator's tools to calibrate navigational aid as well as aiming mechanisms for the ballista, painter's supplies, smith's tools, and woodcarver's tools.

**Purchase Price:** Valued at 80,122 gp but as state secret of Ierendi is not for sale.

**Power:** Very Rare.

## SMURFRI-LODESTAR F3G ISLAND CLIPPER

An enclosed-cabin twin-propeller biplane, the Island Clipper is a modified version of the F3F Cloud Clipper. Large floats were added above the landing wheels enabling this aeroplane to set down on the water. The fuselage is reinforced with a steel rod in the floor that ends in a hook. This enables the craft to withstand the forces of being fired into the air by the Island Princess's rapid launch system, a massive ballista. The wings can also fold back to enable the aeroplane to fit in the hanger under the submarine's poop deck. This eleven-seater aircraft typically holds the pilot and ten passengers. Alternatively, 8 VIP passengers can be carried and a tour guide and steward serving prepared food and drink. The Island Clipper is simply painted bright orange for visibility. The cabin is enclosed to ensure passenger comfort. The aeroplane is powered by a magic fuel tank delivering power to a pair of wooden propellers. Other features include leather safety harnesses on hard-wearing leather upholstered seats. The instrument panel includes a compass, fuel gauge, airspeed gauge, spirit level, and plumb bob for the pilot.

The Island Clipper was created by the Smurfri and Lodestar clans under contract to the Serraine City Council as part of a trade agreement with the Kingdom of Ierendi. The clans receive a percentage of all tariffs generated by the City Council's operation of the aeroplane.

### Clipper Statistics

**Size:** Huge (31 ft. long).

**Speed:** 50 ft (5 mph) on flat level ground. Swim speed on water surface 40 ft. Flight speed 100 ft (10 mph) with 5 or less people aboard, 90 ft (9 mph) with 6 or more people aboard.

**Range:** 3 hours' flight time using a fire-spell-powered type B magical 'fuel tank'.

**AC:** 14 when flying (Dexterity 12). If not flying AC 13.

**Hit Dice:** 24d12

**Hit Points:** 192

**Special Defences:** Immune to psychic and poison damage. However the crew and passengers probably are not.

**Rapid launch:** In two rounds the Sea Princess's hangar door can be opened by a member of the ship's crew, then the aeroplane is launched 120 feet into the air by a gunner operating the enormous crossbow. Finally, the spring-loaded wings sweep forward into their flight position. Passengers and crew not seated during this procedure sustain 5d6 'falling' damage as they are flung backwards by inertia to the back of the cabin.



## Attacks

### Pilot attacks

Two synchronised spike guns (see below) granting a multiattack. Missile weapon attack for 1d8 piercing damage. The ammunition is iron spikes of the kind commonly used by adventurers. The hopper holds 20 of these and a mechanism loads the next spike a round after the weapon shoots. Therefore the weapon has the load property. The hopper filled with ammunition weighs 10 lbs. Range 130/520. Ammunition costs 6 sp for 20 spikes. Refilling the hopper and resetting the loading system takes one hour but can be part of a short rest.

### Passengers

A locked cabinet stores 16 hand-held light crossbows each with a case of bolts that passengers can shoot out of the windows in the event of an attack.

### Ramming

Adjust attack roll by -2. Hit causes 6d4 bludgeoning and receives equal damage itself. A target huge-sized or bigger reduces the aeroplane's flight speed to zero and it falls. Flight speed stays zero until all damage to the aeroplane is repaired. If the ram reduces the aeroplane's hit points to zero then the fuel tank explodes as described in 'Crash and Burn'.

**Maintenance Proficiencies:** skyhooks, tinker's tools, smith's tools, carpenter's tools, weaver's tools, woodcarver's tools, alchemist's supplies, painter's supplies, leather worker's tools, navigator's tools, and glassblower's tools.

**Purchase Price:** 7,277 gp, but never for sale.

**Power:** Very Rare.

## Magic Fuel Tanks

A secret of Serraine and not manufactured anywhere else. These vessels not only hold magical energy, they turn a shaft that protrudes from one end. This shaft is then attached to belts and gears to power the aeroplane. If they are fuel tanks what is the fuel? When turned off the tanks absorb potent fire magic before the magical fire manifests. They cannot absorb this energy while running and require the spellcaster to be touching the engine. Any spell of spell level 3 or above that normally does fire damage can be used. Each point of damage restores 2 minutes of flight time, therefore 30 points will fill an empty Model A tank and 90 points will fill an empty Model B tank. Roll the damage, do not use an average. If a tank is overfilled the remaining damage explodes in a ball of fire with a 20-foot radius centred on the front of the aeroplane. The excess damage is inflicted to the aeroplane and to all within that radius. Creatures can make a DC15 Dexterity save to receive half this amount of fire damage.

## Crash and Burn

If a crash or collision reduces an aircraft to zero hit points then the forces involved rupture the magical engine. For every 2 minutes of fuel left in the tank (round up) 1 point of fire damage is done to all within a 20-ft. radius sphere on a failed save and half as much damage on a successful one. The save DC is 15.

## Landing and Take-off

Unless launched by the Island Princess's gigantic crossbow, take-off requires 2,500 feet of flat level ground or calm water. Landing requires the same distance. Less

than that and a crash occurs. Treat this as 'Crashing Damage' below half of the aeroplane's airspeed if the runway is less than 1,250 ft or at the vehicle's land speed (usually 50) if the runway is more than 1,250 ft. As with all crashes if the impact reduces hit points to zero then see 'Crash and Burn'. Full rules for aeroplane movement and combat are part of the 5E edition conversion of *Top Ballista*<sup>2</sup>.

## MARK II IERENDI DIVING SUIT

Designed as a budget alternative to magical breathing and swimming aids. No magic is used in the design. The Mark II is a sealed waterproof suit of rubberised canvas with a bronze mask with glass goggles that enables clear underwater vision. Additional bronze pieces counter buoyancy. A pair of 'duck shoes' can be worn to enable fast swimming. Breathing is by a 30-foot hose connected to a submarine or a buoy at the surface. Where a buoy is used pulling on the buoy closes valves within and pressure aids in forcing fresh air into the breathing mask. An rarely used alternate system has a bladder of air attached to the diver's back. Only three Mark II Diving suits were made by the eccentric gnome Cutterpin Ballast and all are aboard the Island Princess.

<sup>2</sup>This author's "[Top Ballista, 5E Player's Guide](#)" can be downloaded for free from the Vaults of Pandius



Gnome in diving suit, hand-drawn by Senarch

## Diving Suit Statistics

**Size:** Small (to fit a gnome, halfling, or similar species).

**Speed:** Swim speed 25 when wearing the 'duck shoes'. Land speed in flippers is halved (round up to nearest 5 ft).

**Range:** If attached to the submarine or if at 30 ft or less depth so the buoy can reach the surface then breathing time is indefinite. Using the air bladder, or the air in the hose after pulling down the buoy, you can breathe for 4 minutes before feeling the air getting 'stuffy'. Trained gnomish divers head for the submarine or the surface at this point. After 5 minutes nausea and dizziness begin, giving you disadvantage on all checks and attacks. After 6 minutes

breathing from the bladder you are immediately reduced to zero hit points. Death saves usually follow.

**AC:** 9. The suit is clumsy making your AC *worse* and you cannot apply a positive dexterity modifier to AC while wearing the suit.

**Hit Dice:** 3d6

**Hit Points:** 17. If the hose is targeted it is AC9 and accounts for 4 hit points of the suit's 17. A cut hose negates breathing but not the swim speed. On a hit you can take the damage yourself or from the suit's hit points. This is often a good way to avoid poison damage from venomous fangs, poisoned blades, etc. However, psychic damage always affects the wearer, never the suit. If the suit reaches zero hit points you cannot breathe underwater and lose the swim speed.

**Special Defenses:** Immune to psychic and poison damage. The wearer gains no special protection from psychic damage.

### Attacks

#### Usual attacks of the wearer

Using the underwater combat rules in the *Player's Handbook*.

#### Ramming

Melee attack: On a charge and body slam with the attack roll adjusted by -2. Hit: you do 1d4 bludgeoning and receive equal damage to the suit or the wearer. If the target is smaller than the wearer on a hit the target is knocked prone.

**Maintenance Proficiencies:** tinker's tools, cobbler's tools, weaver's tools, smith's tools. **Requires daily maintenance.**

**Purchase Price:** 2 gp 4 sp. The typical price people are willing to pay make this a losing proposition. The suits for the submarine were heavily subsidised by the Kingdom. All three of the Mark II suits manufactured are aboard the *Island Princess*. Five Mark I suits were manufactured and these were theoretically destroyed. However, some might be found on the black market. Mark I suits are identical to Mark II's except they only have 5 hit points (and 2 hit point hose). A single human-sized Mark Ia demonstration suit was manufactured for the King of Ierendi. This suit is stored unused in the Royal Armory in the Citadel on Honor Island (valued at 19 gp, 4d8 hit dice, 7 hit points with a 3 hit point hose otherwise as above). If players track down Cutterpin Ballast in the Citadel on Honor Island and convince her to make a suit she will demand 4 gp for a Small Mark II suit or 19 gp for a Mark I Medium suit. She does not have a design for a Medium Mark II suit prepared.

**Power:** Uncommon.

Inspiration from the drawings of Leonardo Da Vinci, the Moken people of Thailand, and the Royal Navy's HMS M2 (1918) submarine – see [wikipedia entry](#).



## Repairing and Maintaining Machines

Machines don't heal but can be repaired as part of a long rest by spending one hit die per maintaining gnome up to the maximum hit dice of the machine. A machine can also be repaired during a short rest but only one hit die may be spent regardless of the number of gnomes working. Each member of the repair team must have the *mending* cantrip OR one of the listed maintenance proficiencies (with appropriate tools).

Hit dice are restored by maintaining as part of a long rest but without rolling any hit die and spending 1% of the machine's purchase price on spare parts. In some instances, the DM may rule that spare parts can be scavenged, e.g. wood for a beached ship on a jungle island. On long expeditions spare parts might be brought along. Each lot of spare parts is two sizes smaller than the machine they repair (minimum tiny) and weighs as much as twice their gp value.

If a machine ever reaches zero hit points it is destroyed and cannot be repaired.

Some machines are labelled 'Requires Daily Maintenance' and these require someone proficient in one of the maintenance tool proficiencies listed for the machine and who has the Tinker trait to maintain the machine as part of that person's long rest. A person can only maintain one such item at a time. Failure to maintain makes the contraption stop working until it is maintained again. This maintenance cannot occur during a long rest when repairs are being made.

## Skyhooks Tool Proficiency

A collection of tools for assembling machines. Treated as a type of artisan's tools proficiency here. For cultural reasons only gnomes have access to these at the start of the campaign. Through roleplay a character of another species might be able to arrange to learn to use these tools during play.

## Skyhook Set

See rules supplement PC2: "*Top Ballista*" page 39: 200 gp, 10 lbs

I like to think that among the assorted tools are three actual 'skyhooks' which look something like gaff hooks but when placed levitate in the air until moved by a creature or the hook's weight limit is exceeded. The weight limit is 10 lbs per hook. The skyhooks are Common magic items worth 50 gp each.

### Sources:

PC2: "*Top Ballista*",  
 AC11: "*Book of Wondrous Inventions*",  
 GAZ4: "*The Kingdom of Ierendi*",  
 "*Dawn of the Empires: Thyatis and Alphatia*" boxed set,  
 and speculations in the "[Any known coastal or seafaring gnomes?](#)" topic at The Piazza forum.

## SEA GNOMES

Most gnomes live inland in gentle hilly regions or among dwarves. However, along the coasts of Ierendi and Alphatia gnomes live by the sea. A small proportion of these that spend most of their time out on the water are sea gnomes. Like the sky gnomes of Serraine they are descended from ground gnomes that in a few generations have adapted to a new environment. It is suspected that rapid evolution to new environments is a weakly magical trait bestowed by Garal Glitterlode, the Immortal creator of the gnomes. Among the sea gnomes some of the adaptations include pupils that contract underwater to provide clear vision, an instinctive smooth swimming motion, larger hands and feet, and the ability to hold their breath. Furthermore, generations on the sea have given sea gnomes a deep cultural knowledge of the sea in all its moods.

However, they remain gnomes with their curiosity and love of mechanisms. Sea gnomes were among those in Alphatia, and later Ierendi, who designed, constructed, and crewed submarines.

Being a curious folk at home on the water, sea gnomes often take to sailing to far off places and getting into all kinds of adventures.

## Sea GNOME traits

You gain all the core traits of gnomes in the PHB then instead of one of the two 'subraces' in the PHB you have the following traits:

**Artificer's Lore.** As per the PHB rock gnome.

**Tinker.** As per the PHB rock gnome.

**Swim Speed.** You have a swimming speed of 20 feet and therefore also see and act underwater like a native.

**Hold Breath.** You can hold your breath for 15 minutes.

**Seaborn.** You have advantage on saves to avoid damage from liquid water-based phenomena and magic including waves, tsunamis, etc.

You also have resistance to damage from water-based attacks but not cold.

**Improved Darkvision.** Your darkvision range is 90 feet.

**Sea Sense.** Advantage on nature checks when underwater or on the surface of the sea to determine depth, direction, and distance travelled, and if waves, whirlpools, currents, and weather are natural phenomena. You can predict weather while at sea or within 1 mile of the seacoast.

# A Mystaran Survey of the Mists

by Doc Necrotic

*29th Day of Early-Autumn,  
in the year 760 of the Barovian Calendar,*

This Meredoth, he rivals me in power... Ridiculous! I can't even write that in jest! But, he is still quite capable in the arcane arts. He may weaken himself by having a mortal shell, but thwarting him still requires tactical thought and brute force alike. I have the legions, knowledge and sprawling resources to topple his insignificant island, if I really desired. It wouldn't be hard to even silence his vapid threats. He masks his contempt and jealousy for my superiority through his callous demeanor. But, through his organizations of undead puppets and mortal spies, he has still obtained something most valuable. My accursed weaknesses are my own secrets, none shall know the limits placed on my spellcasting and knowledge, especially not him! He does not unnerve me, but the recent trends regarding his home world does. In more recent ages, there have been many domains emerging before my vast networks. All hail from Meredoth's home realm, Mystara. But, why do so many show themselves to the Dark Powers? And why do so many materialize in such a short amount of time? Perhaps his world is more destined for doom than Oerth, a blessing in my favor. Perhaps I shall muse on this further. It would certainly help to have an extra set of eyes into such a world. Fortunately for me, I have just the agent in mind...

—An excerpt from the journals of  
Azalin Rex<sup>1</sup>, the Darklord of Darkon

<sup>1</sup> See the entry for "[Azalin Rex](#)" at Mistipedia



And from the mists, this project becomes a trilogy. With the help of a courageous chronicler, let us travel back to small realms lifted from the world of Mystara. At this point, is this little project still Mystara? Well, sort of. Would this have been suited for Fraternity of Shadows and their yearly journal of Quoth the Raven? Possibly. Nonetheless, *THRESHOLD Magazine* has been happy to hold my journeys from Mystara into the Mists and I'm happy to provide. As for this article, it shall be a means of filling in holes and fleshing out content. And with any luck, I don't create new holes. There are a lot of ideas, corrections and details I felt like I had to cut to ensure time. No sense in letting them go to waste, so here they are. Another thing I think my ideas could use is the "player side" perspective on these domains. How do natives live? How would outsiders interact with them?

And with this entry, I hope you enjoy these dark slices of Mystara within the "Dimension of Dread" once again. As one final aside, enjoy the many references to both campaign settings... right down to Azalin channeling the annotations of his other minion, "S."<sup>2</sup> Though, there's perhaps a little irony of shifting the perspective over to him. But, when you have a powerful item that allows you to know the thoughts of hired subordinates, sometimes you need to interrupt. Also, one final note, both Mystaran and Ravenloft calendars are taken into consideration. Unless a footnote is utilized to distinguish, presume that Mystaran calendar takes priority through Before or After Crowning.

<sup>2</sup> The narrator of the *Ravenloft Gazetteer* series of books

## Mystara Has Left Me

I am Marcos Feirerra, a man of many trades: sellsword, explorer, chronicler, trader, former pirate, purveyor of the mighty smokepowder at times too. Who I am is not important, but my mission is. My many jobs took me first from the Savage Baronies and eastward, through deserts and jungles, towards settlements and into cities, to wastelands and beyond even kingdoms. All offered not just glorious material goods to trade in, but much in the way of lore and information. Tales of adventure to trade spoke of a sunken spire leading to a city of the mad, a necropolis overseen by an ancient king seeking to restore an old empire, an island filled with beasts that should be long gone, a forbidden city shrouded by veils and deadly radiance and much more. In another life, another time, I would explore these. But, my curiosity called me to a dark tale from Norwold, the semi-coastal island of Todstein.



Marcos Feirerra

Attempts to find Todstein caused me to land in a place that is certainly not Mystaran. How could it come to this? Magical teleportation? Some whim of the Immortals? Meredoth dragging me into his grim dominion? It's worth asking around. But, perhaps it's best to think about how I got here. The mighty sailing ship *El Erudito del Mar*, she was one of the finest ships commissioned in Guadalante and set to sail beyond Cimarron via the seas of the Savage Baronies. The voyage brought us to Darokin, as the waters proved calm and tranquil. As priests were intentionally kept from the journey, a checkpoint was just off of Athenos. Several Glantrian agents greeted us soon after Darokinian inspecting officials took to their jobs. The trade of gaining information on an Alphatian colony is enticing though, allowing for much in return upon succeeding. No matter, there was little time for other trades or enjoyment, onwards! Few stops carried on from there. Vorloi, the city of Thyatis, and Jaboor. The last one struck me as interesting, as a tavern tale of a lost thieves' city was curious. Another thing I would soon learn more about. A final rest stop was by Tromso, a community that had seen slowly raising troubles with Ethengar. May nothing come of that. And so through Heldann, we sailed. But not too close, as word spread of ongoing troubles that didn't warrant our involvement.

Likewise, avoiding the Altar of Vanya was said to be wise, as we neared Landfall; a wretched hive home to our next contact. Said contact proved to be an unhinged old man of a mage. Few of the thieves and brigands trifled with him, but he was well aware of us. In fact, as our ship drew near, he had completed a ritual to send us well north into Norwold via a teleportation spell. The destination? The true Kingdom of Norwold, where any details of Alphatians were best kept sparse. Or that should have been the case, had the strange old man not been playing our patron for a fool. A trap! Guards of King Ericall demanded information, as the mad old man giggled from his shrinking portal. Upon explanation, they called us daft and were aghast at the idea of traveling to that cursed island. But, our mission was still set for completion. Needless to say, surprise vicious storms were the least of our worries, as our maps were suddenly wrong and we were no longer in Norwold.

Blankets of sinister fog smothered all sight, as whipping winds and slicing ice rained down from all directions. Todstein was indeed a cursed land. From beyond the misty cover, there were lands not unlike Norwold, but the violent weather just beyond proved too much. And so travel continued else-

where for now, hailing a new stop. The meager survivors of the blizzard onslaught were soon besieged by something new: upon making land and surveying damages, a new threat emerged in the form of the undead. How ghastly, improbable even! The corpse creatures assaulted our meager defenses in defiance against the living. Those more ready for battle fended the horde off before both combatant sides seemingly annihilated each other. The lack of a priest proved only further damning. The long trek to civilization caused all other survivors to drop, each begging me to carry on and demand answers.

My first answer came as I traveled through wilderness and encountered lone passersby, who welcomed me to Darkon. Through their vague guidance, civilization proved near. Upon hailing the people of an emerging village, I learned much in a short time. The Darkonians told of a Nocturnal Sea, that which I had been magically sucked into. It certainly wasn't part of that mad wizard's trap, or was it? Upon deeper thought, the strange old man matched descriptions of the lost ruler of Todstein. Impossible. Regardless, I lost this island of the mad old mage, now part of a greater region called "Nebligtode." The rulership of this Darkon was indeed interested in meeting me. My attempts to garner information involving Mystara from locals has made me a "valuable visitor" in his eyes. Strange. And Darkon? Was this supposed to be a different world's Darokin? Perhaps it's one where Glantri took over. Have I been sent back so far? While my maps on land and sea were different, the star charts... They lined up! Curious, perhaps this was Mystara, just not the one I know.

Even stranger proved this "Wizard-King," a miserly man of incredible age who clung to his throne. Despite his crusty appearance, he was no doubt of incredible power. With a few spells, he scanned me for all he could uncover before his own introduction. Through pomp and pretense, he unraveled a speech about how "he is the mighty Wizard-King and how Darkon is the mightiest land of the Core dominions"... whatever that meant. Upon my introduction, he interjected by stating that I was another victim of the "Mad Mage Meredoth," as if aware of my voyage. Before I could ask how he knew, he simply stated that I was not the first. He then offered a proposition, to survey other lands that have come under his watch in exchange for assistance from the Wizard-King to help end the wrath of Nebligtode. While I was not one for revenge, my journey went from a fantastically paying survey to a quest of heroism. My mighty vessel, *El Erudito del Mar*, was to be retired for now. A ship built from "superior Darkonian engineering" was to replace it, complete with a new crew. But first, I required much rest and recuperation. Azalin Rex the Wizard-King was a shrewd negotiator. His own contract felt eerily magical and ensnaring. What had I gotten myself into?



And now we are caught up to my frightening present. Going forward, all travel and logs are to be noted through a proper Mystaran calendar, to track how long I am in this strange world. Granted, the information-storing pearl that he gave me shall probably replace the need for lengthy tomes... it just reads thoughts. Eerie.\*

\*  
Note from Azalin:  
Thoughts that are  
collected by me!

### 14th, FLAURMONT AC<sup>3</sup> 1004 —THEOCRACY OF TYORAAM<sup>4</sup>

My first destination is explained to me by one of the Wizard-King's agents, known as "Kargatane." Such a word is lost on me, for now. Their instruction is simple: to examine a decrepit and broken society inspired by sunken Taymora. A relic of that forsaken land, impossible! But, considering I have been taken into another world in an instant, what is? Onward, to Taymora.

Legend states that those who know the path of "The Death Queens" will sail to safe harbor. And those who don't? The terrors that haunt sunken ruins will emerge to claim them. The key is following a faint glow in the water. This is a kind of enchanted algae, said to be useful in magics and rituals capable of warding off the undead and other unholy creatures. The vile things that swim around the ruins seem equally repelled from the plant. Oddly enough, the algae was once useful for the undead of Tyoraam, until acolytes of sun cults utilized it too. Beyond this glowing trail is the true destination, an impoverished and decrepit land known as Tyoraam. Ancient glory has cracked and faltered, with much of the island seemingly abandoned...

<sup>3</sup> All instances of AC in this article refer to After Crowning from the Thyatian Calendar.

<sup>4</sup> Described and mapped in [THRESHOLD Magazine issue #30](#) (available at the Vaults of Pandius)

at least by the living. The further one lives from the temple of Tanit though, the more pull rival Immortals of Idu, Mahes, and Protius gain among undead hunters, fed-up peasants, and more. The instability of the land is mostly ignored by those who continue their vampiric Blood Tributes, as conditions for the living and unliving mutually worsen. Despite this, all endure these trials and traumas. Quiet resistance and complacency has widened the gap just as much as decadent undead and the struggling mortals. Priests and philosophers fear civil war, if the micronation doesn't sink first. For now, a gentleman huddled underneath what was once a luxurious fountain offers much information in exchange for coin.

The public is well aware of how clothing has brought public change. Women wore gown-like cloth that did not hide their chests, and men often wore nothing waist up in the past. These forms of garb have become less common, still embraced by more conservative populations who staunchly support the rule of the High Priestess. These garbs are not unlike ones recorded in the history of Thyatis or the older Milenians. But, for the people of Tyoraam, this is considered progress. The aristocratic divine caste that serves under the High Priestess stays the truest and most decadent. Vibrant jewelry is added on top of their strange archaic garb. Many willingly flaunt this disparity in a misguided attempt to lure people back to more



Painting of Tyoraam women

classical garb in their eyes. One attempted altercation between Lawos<sup>5</sup> and “improperly dressed civilians” resulted in a brawl interrupting a street corner within Tayma. The once lavish statues collectively called, “The Fair Offering,” suffered greatly. The monument dedicated to the Blood Tithe saw men and women holding up a bowl of blood in triumph. The bowl has since been stolen, the hands holding it destroyed or taken with it. The faces have become disfigured from violent strikes and use of tools.

Despite the association of traditionalism, several vampiric elite have become enraptured by the new developing aesthetics. Argelsias, a nosferatu priestess of the mighty Tanit Temple, has become quite fond of new green silks and exotic perfumes brought in through the port of Ichthy in particular. This horrifies Jahei’irias, who remains traditionalist in the face of these changes. The interest in changing fashion strikes me as strange, due to the rampant squalor seen throughout. People may make these vibrant new clothes, but many still live in cobbled shanty towns built from scraps. It also strikes as odd that little is done about the

<sup>5</sup>Agents of the Law under Jahei’irias’s rule

often ghastly, pallid and pale complexions of the sickly residents. Some have been called for so many Blood Tributes that they risk dying from the most seemingly innocuous causes. While one can try to ignore seemingly vapid fashion, the social unrest and recent happenings cannot be ignored by Tyoraam.

The tides of rebellion swell worse than any waves. Quite ironic, considering waves devoured the rest of their empire. Perhaps this is something I shouldn’t bring up with the locals. No matter. A campaign to paint a remote settlement as traitors has drawn mixed reactions. Like Illios, this seemingly nameless territory along the western coastline attempted to become a beacon of light and progress. While Illios has taken some action, this other territory attempted a major coup and failed dramatically. This unveiled their position and exposed several weaknesses to the rulership. Shortly after, it was smothered by an all-out war to purge the land of these heretics. Following their demise, the clergy under Jahei’irias hired scribes and public speakers to denounce them as unhinged and have their name removed due to being so blasphemous. According to the conspiracy, these people plotted to sink Tyoraam in tribute to a grim Immortal called Dóntia Lepidas alias “the Devil Shark.” In actuality, the actions of the Tyoraami nobility have led to this cult becoming a reality. The followers believe themselves to be a force of true progress reacting against the stagnant lands above. In truth, this new cult desires to bring the last of Taymora to a watery grave. It is possible that the former light worshippers turned to the sea out of spite\*. One can

\*  
Note from A:  
Or the Dark Powers have  
created new torments for  
Jahei’irias

find the temple to their vile sea demon due well west of Illios, facing on the other side of the island. The strange devotees to these depths are rarely seen, as they quickly disappear within the watery shrines and the temple grounds that have emerged from the mists. Pinpointing any of these places is a challenge, as they seem to move with the flow of water. Shrines spotted briefly by Imlekiug have been to blame for the sudden arrival of lukka, abominations and other prisoners upon the mainland. Cultists are likely shuttling them over to stir unrest.

Another instance comes from Illios itself, at least according to the disgruntled nobility so loose with their words. Explorative warriors set out to obtain much of the miraculous algae in the seas beyond. With the aid of priests, they created a radiant substance that repels the living dead. Attempts to create an underground trade to other parts of the island remained successful for a few months. This ended after a caravan was uncovered by a warband assembled by Jahei'irias's clergy after tales of her blood minions fleeing roadways in terror. Trade has been quelled for now, as embargos and manufactured barricades have further boxed Illios in. The inability to wipe out the growing rival power has been a further blight on the image and morale of the Taymoran nosferatu. However, a former mercenary general named "Vigilans Oculis" has emerged to enforce this barrier. A slowly amassing fortification around Illios has successfully blocked them in for now. Even nosferatu-clergy-aligned sailors have aided in the barricade. However, Jahei'irias is not content with the break from tradition. In supposed "normal times" an outsider man would not be given such a rank in an important operation. This further adds to her fears about the collapse of her traditions and values, leading to the end of her

blood rule. Likewise, her biases against men in leadership has led her to consider sabotaging the general's efforts. Such rumors have surfaced from nosferatu discontent with their highest leadership, so that too could be biased. Let me ponder more on this tomorrow.

### 19th, FLAURMONT AC 1004 — THEOCRACY OF TYORAAM

Even the high priestess herself has been a cause to question the judgements and competence of the ruling class. Whether through her rituals, public displays, or decrees, Jahei'irias has shown herself in less of a dignified manner and more so unhinged or sickly. Her rambles have sounded unhinged, her proclamations stressed and her incantations chaotic. This has filled her with immense dread, fearing the worst. Only a few have witnessed the worst of this including a nosferatu noblewoman and occult scholar, Lady Corali. While she has done anything to cloud Jahei'irias's visions and feign friendship, she seeks to depose the mad High Priestess and take her place. Other nobles seek to exploit the less lucid moments of the High Priestess to enforce their own agendas instead. Few mortals have survived the madness of Jahei'irias to tell their tales. Many now vagrant madmen once rejected the high priestess, before being brought before her. They all describe a piercing gaze snaking its way through their minds before they succumb to insanity.<sup>6</sup> Should this be true, it is best to keep a low profile. Some fears go well beyond just strange behavior though.

<sup>6</sup> This functions like her ability to close the domain of Tyoraam, except concentrated on one victim. Prolonged exposure can provoke indefinite insanity.



Legends speak of a dreadful possibility<sup>7</sup> that the high priestess is descended from the Great Unliving Mother of Taymora. And should she vanquish and consume her sisters, she shall become an all-powerful eldritch being. While it is known that the leadership of Taymora exists beyond death, to suggest that their supreme authority can ascend to a kind of Immortality through cannibalism?\* Sickening and horrifying.

\*

Note from A:  
Diablerie, a practice considered forbidden by vampires, mostly because it shouldn't work. But, sometimes it does! And the power boons, mighty.



Vampires

But what of other undead who endure her leadership? Many too chaff under her rule. They too silently decry her as inept, delusional or insane. What holds them back from staging an uprising are the sheer amount of divisions between various noble groups. Even as Jahei'irias allegedly came to power, great schisms formed between those who initially supported her and those who remained skeptical. This has overtime fractured into those who want her as a pawn, replace her with a double, create a violent uprising, slowly phase her out in favor of the march toward progress and dilute her power among a push for shared council

<sup>7</sup> Quite literally a *Ravenloft Dread Possibility* or plot hook for a grim reality or future.

control. While there is a private consortium arranged by Jahei'iria, they exist solely to advise her and little more. Out of the broken factions vying for dominance, they have the greatest odds. Nearing next are those who seek to be her direct allies, suppressing the efforts of other groups actively "in service" to their High Priestess. The series of bluffs will hopefully loosen her guard around them, giving ample opportunity to either make gains or snuff her out entirely.

My stay here has been long enough. Typically hot and humid temperatures have proved oppressive at the height of the day. Beyond locales close to seaside passages, few locals stay out beyond their daily duties. Markets try to gain an economic foundation through pottery, fishing and weaving. None of this interested me, despite seeing the destitute and struggling state of the vendors. As I readied for my final trek to Ichthy, I noticed guards surrounding the frail and desperate man by the fountain. He gazed beyond an emerging crowd, locking eyes with me. He struggled to no avail as he was brought on a long journey to the palace of the High Priestess. Rather than point me to the crowd, his glare changed to resignation and defeat as he shook his head one final time. There was no time to ponder the man who risked

damnation for a few coins. The entourage was halted by the approach of the High Priestess, escorted in a shrouded lectica chair<sup>8</sup>. The chair was set down as the scraggly man was brought into the folds. His piercing screams will haunt me, as both of us are well aware of his fate. But, I was called to a port. Another agent is here to gather me as my miserable travels continue. Beyond them? Ominous blankets of cloudy fog.<sup>9</sup> It seems to move with them somehow. Curious.

## 21st, FLAIRMONT AC 1004 —Ylar the Bandit Kingdom

The kargatane are not exactly masters of words or diplomacy, just rough force to ensure that the will of Azalin the Wizard-King is done. How they ferry me through these incomprehensible foggy depths between lands, I shall never understand\*. Before long, dirt gave way to sand. In time, the vapors that clouded my sight stung, as blowing sands began to obscure vision. Men in flowing garments emerged from the impairing desert winds within a few hours, with the escort of several camels. Agents of the Kargat hailed them, discussing some matter in a foreign tongue before joining them on a well-walked path that followed the rising sun from the east. The heat of the day would soon be upon us. The sugar plantation of Alsukar provided a brief rest, a miniature oasis along our trail. Expensive teas were offered at a surprisingly reasonable price, as the hospitality seemed almost

uncanny for a stop so openly operated by slavery. Our host, Karim Alhayim, provided especially comforting and kind words for his guests. Under his assurance and calm was surely a crooked man just as cruel as my captors. After our group was given directions and took part in some goods trade, a winding road trailed north into a looming eyesoar. The city that slowly peaked from the grainy earth was an impossible one, a series of buildings stacked and molded around each other; turning into something of a fortress. The overall design was nonsensical and chaotic, with shapes jutting from the greater structure. The rest of the city seemed compacted into four seemingly connected walls. Aesthetics wildly varied, a mixture of Ylari and Pharazian ideas all playing secondary to practical engineering. Though, one could debate the practical, as multiple buildings were jammed consistently together just to create stability. For now, I stayed within a cramped boarding house wedged between four other buildings and connected by scaffolding.

\*  
Note from A:  
Navigation through the Lands of the Mists is a skill, one my operatives are well trained on. Serve me well and you too may understand.

<sup>8</sup> A sedan chair or covered chair. It is held up by two poles carried by two people.

<sup>9</sup> These are misty domain of dread borders. More than likely, the Kargatane have found "mistway" passages between the domains to speed up travel.



People in Ylar

## 23RD, FLAURMONT AC 1004 —Ylar the BANDIT KINGDOM

I started the day right. And by that I mean didn't fall from several stories and damage a leg. Walking with a limp for hours makes one a ripe target for this den of thievery and sins. But, there was much to see here beyond this. The key feature of note in this land is the so-called Ylari City or "The Misted Eye," as called by many locals. Truly a wretched place. Outcasts, reprobates, criminals and other such gather in this seemingly lawless place. Were it not in the middle of a lonely desert, it would be an ideal den of pirates and other such brigands. Law here is simple: display complete loyalty to the King of Thieves and you too shall prosper. Betrayal is the most heinous of crimes here, as is spying. Once you enter the city, you mind your own business. Likewise, cause no serious harm to your city dweller. Ironically, scams are quite common among residents, as the common consensus is that one should remain vigilant and wise during their stay here. Any such protections are not available to outsiders, whom residents often use loopholes to take aggression out on. And while not a law, religious preaching is distinctly frowned upon. While the ban was stricter in the past, there is a loss of protection for anyone who indulges too much in their respective view or scripture. Overtime, this Bandit King has suc-

cessfully swayed much of the masses to either give up religion or dislike it, following the attacks of Pharazian zealots from the west and south. However, one of the stacked hovels of the city did have a priest willing to treat prior injuries, in exchange for helping a friend out of addiction. He simply whispered the term "spice sampling" and left me to my Kargat duties, left to secrecy lest he be attacked. Another enforced rule of note is that anyone consorting with Clan Kalzafred is deemed a traitor. In regards to these traitors, they are only safe within lands that the Clan has successfully dominated in some regard. Those who try to attack them on their controlled turf suffer dearly. The Bandit King fumes at their continued success, if rumors are to be believed. But, do not talk too much about the supreme leader of these mostly free and fair lands. Beyond all of that, corruption is normalized here and all are encouraged to just go about their otherwise tough days.

Our travels take us through the main roadway into the bazaar through The Windswept Street, at first. Numerous thugs provide checkpoints, but offer expedited services at the cost of coins. Likewise, mercenaries often linger to the sides of the large passage in hopes travelers buy their protection as well. As an alternative, the streets are not just upon the ground. Many catwalks and passages extend and overlap with the hodgepodge of interwoven buildings. The bazaar, despite this chaotic melding of architecture, is the most open part of the city... and perhaps the most consistent source of sunlight. While much of the items within the stalls look fair, even good quality, much of it must be foreign and likely pilfered from some far less fortunate passerby. The Ransom Circle is our main way to the palace, but the guards and henchmen make it clear that Ahmed has no



interest in speaking with us for the time being and thus our chances are best taken elsewhere. As we pass by a circle of rumor-mongers, we overhear of The Cutpurse Trail, a heavily residential stretch where a failed robbery resulted in the gutting of the perpetrator by the victim's family. Moving through these homes, the stacked shantytown does little to provide comforting greetings. However, our priority lies right past the merchant square in The Sinner's Stretch.



*Bazaar in Ylar*

Many alleyways, streets and hidden passages connect, weave and intertwine to unveil all sorts of secrets and sightings. Given how much of the city is cut off from consistent sunlight, many undead are said to linger and blend in with the living. Likewise, other fell creatures of the night may hide behind the seemingly endless sources of shadow found underneath the artificial canopies and built-up fronds. Few prove the existence of these wicked things, espe-

cially due to the distaste for religion that's commonplace here. One back alley, called the Sinner's Stretch, is an especially vile place. It is reached from northeastern corners of the bazaar and nearby small winding back roads. While halls for all sorts of risky games of chance exist throughout the city, the ones here prove far more dangerous, with much greater rewards. One need not put themselves up for bet either, other bodies are just as well accepted. Other goods refused or hidden from the main bazaar are peddled here, often for obscene prices. One can seek out cursed trinkets dug up from lost tombs, dangerous narcotic spices, unholy weapons and much more for just the right price or sacrifice. Likewise the somewhat subtly titled "Houses of Escorts" does much business around here, with the "employers" being heartless in their practices and the employed sadly varying greatly in age. The majority of such places are ill-fitting for information. As there is little in the way of taverns, other communal places of indulgence are sought out.

I feel no comfort in a "spice sampling" emporium, let alone one controlled by the rival family of Kalzafred\*. Beneath a flight of stairs, one is greeted by an intoxicating aroma emanating from small fireplaces dug into the ground. The strange herb and seasoning blend burned by the fire creates a lulling smoke that dulls the senses and alters the mind. However, it is here where I

\*

Note from A:  
They seem far smarter and enterprising than this mockery king. In no time, they shall prevail.

find myself most able to extract information, assuming visitors are lucid enough. One such group proved easily to pry from, their minds so loosened by the drug spice mixture. This so-called Bandit King is a very flawed man, made anxious by his own fabrications even. He trusts no one, while still leaving them to their devices, all while everything is surveyed either by him or those he can manipulate. One thing he can't subtly control is the outsider clans that constantly spite him. However, there are some secrets that the so-called King of Thieves holds very dearly, that this group only discovered by pure accident. In their words, this spice will help them forget. And perhaps more over, help them forget what they told me. His dearest secret is something that goes against core tenants and values of the city. It is a respected tradition that long-term male residents have unshaved but well-kept facial hair. The Bandit King is allegedly cursed to no longer grow anything upon his head at all, he is completely bald from chin to dome. For this reason, he shrouds much of his face behind loose cloth when dealing with others in day-to-day affairs. And furthermore, his clan name of Al'Bashar is fake, as he was once known from a clan called "Malefdeshar." In fact, beyond his delusions of grandeur, Ahmed Malefdeshar was once a nobody.. When I ask how they came upon this information, any lucid moments lapse away. The lazy and nodding men, deeply affected by their spices, begin to sway as they lose coherence. It is perhaps time to leave... But first, rest.

## **26th, FLAURMONT AC 1004 —Ylar the Bandit Kingdom**

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The morning hours are still young as I come to. I have been carried to some resting chamber, likely for use with prostitutes. Booming calls of excitement and anger prevent me from further sleep, as I rush to the window. Within the city square, many personal henchmen of the Bandit King surround the bodies of the men I talked to the day before... the lowly spice addicts, the kindly priest... Their bodies lie limp upon chopping blocks, their severed heads upon the bloodstained sands. The executioner brutes rally the crowd, decrying the men as colluders with spies and traitors who hate the protection of this fair city. The mob joins in, celebrating the murders of these former friends. Fortunately, my escort to the new realm of terror resides by the entrance to this den of sins. May I doom potential allies no more. Onwards into the eerie fog that blankets these lands... Or in this case, sandstorms that transition back to fog.

## **28th, FLAURMONT AC 1004 —Jagged Cliffs of the Scarred Crag**

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A realm where much of the natural beauty has been disturbed by strange curses and the mad workings of invaders. According to an olden legend, the Opossum tribe were outcasts who blasphemed greatly against their Elk Clan relatives long ago. They were cast out from the lands as mists grabbed them. A tribe from the Tiger Clan discovered them after they desired conquest in the name of the Immortal, Danel. A high priest came out victorious, but not before a medicine woman cursed him for his trans-



gressions. This is the tale of woe told around blazing fire pits to prepare the next generation for their torments ahead. But, surely there is more to this land than a fallen people brought down further through the oppression of ruthless conquerors. Hints of Darokinian settlers can be found, all of which have met their own dooms through unrelated ways. This remote forest land abruptly cuts into mists, with waters stretching beyond. The lake in the distance seems to trail off. None who flee to it are seen again. The Jaguar Tribe even fears something beyond, something distant yet familiar to them.

Much like Tyoraam, a proper revolt is brewing; one that the rulers cannot defeat in the end. Both share a similar creeping dread over this eventuality, as an uncrushed sense of determination, an appreciation for life and the desire for something better is eternal. Both rulers disrespect the opposite sex however possible, usually stifling their potential. However, Tlaocoyaliztli lacks the strange divination of the undead high priestess. Moreover, his insecurities and paranoia is enhanced by lingering bestial instincts that make him feel like a cornered animal. Tlaocoyaliztli lashes out more and more, feeling confined and trapped... even in his own palace. His trust in his own people decays, as he suspects his reign of decadence will meet its day. Unlike High Priestess Jahei'irias, Tlaocoyaliztli cannot fall back on delusions of insanity. Despite sharing his mind with a feral presence, he knows that retribution will come and hunt him down. This path towards a painful



*Jaguar Tribe human sacrifice*

death haunts him, terrifies him, and makes him feel like a failure in the eyes of Danel, whom he views as a master of both brutality and struggle. Fear grabs them all. It is for that reason that their numbers were shrouded from previous attempts to count them. Previous records of the Opossum Tribe showed meager numbers, due to distrust of outsiders for fear of giving their occupiers more information to work with. As for the land itself? There too are differences. Tyoraam is in the midst of social strife and cultural war, while cultural warfare here is more likely to take a violent turn. This is not some political intrigue campaign or battle of wits and trends. No, this is survival, eyes fixed for the right moment to strike back. So, what of those who fight back against their conquerors?

The Opossum Tribe are indeed still numerous, more so than the Jaguar Tribe members who squat upon their land. Division and fear have been used for years to enforce a lack of organization, especially following the thorough execution of the Great Mothers, matriarchs of the tribe. This hasn't stopped the influence of these wise



women. One healer, of the Thick Marsh Village, has proven to be a force for good... at least discreetly. This village, located closer towards the southwestern misty border, is overseen by Grandmother Washbear. The wise woman was fascinated by me, as I sought her counsel. Her life's mission is to send allies in the dead of night to secretly supply food to other villages. Through shamani tricks and charms, they evade perils of the cursed woods and deadly patrols. Likewise, these abilities of Grandmother

Washbear have helped to conceal a bountiful garden that drives these efforts. This leader is likewise aided by the last surviving Great Mother, Jayfeather. While far less open-minded and optimistic, Jayfeather shares

the same ambitions. However, her xenophobia towards outlanders leads to her driving away outside help, especially if they resemble Darokinians. And due to a lack of worldly knowledge, most outsiders resemble Darokinians to her. Jayfeather has even called upon warbands to assault outlanders, should they not heed immediate calls. Ironically, this has earned some reluctant admiration from the Jaguar Tribe. It is only through Grandmother Washbear that outside help is condoned. Due to her advanced age, such a passing will be a devastating reality soon enough.

This tribe as a whole proves strange and uncanny to me. It isn't for their spirituality, organization or claimed history... but their lack of presence within Mystara itself. Their dialect is remarkably similar to the greater Elk Clan. Considering the Elks' admiration of their plateau home, the current living spaces of this new Opossum Tribe feels quite ironic. If this is another world, are they part of an alternate Elk Clan? Are there other tribes that exist as a parallel? These questions are unlikely to be answered here.

They aren't exactly alone, whether from secret support or otherwise. Some Jaguar Tribe members have even defected in favor of aiding their prior victims. However, these defectors keep their distance from these villages, when not feigning contin-



*Opossum Tribe village*

ued loyalty through patrols and vassal tithing. When isolated for long enough periods of time, these renegade warriors, scouts and officials will trade information or grant supplies as they're able to. It was to my own boon that it was a band of renegades who came across me. Never breaking character, I was originally taken to some outpost for questioning. However, the rogue agents ultimately took me into the forests to "test my mettle." Upon leaving those truly loyal to the ruling High Priest of Danel, the facade was dropped. Many lamented at the atrocities they were forced to commit, with one in particular. The Plains of Vacant Murmurs is one such atro-

city near Jaguar Tribe outposts. The entranced slaves work themselves to death. It is unknown how future generations are born given the zombified mental state of the victims. To my shock beyond this woeful tale, these apostate guards even inquired if I had plans to stop their mad leader. Plans? Perhaps some twisted diplomacy could work? Barring that, a trusted blade treated with arcane enchantments could do as well.

### **1st, Yarthmont AC 1004 —Jagged Cliffs of the Scarred Crag**

Through the escort of secret defectors, passages up the plateau were revealed to me. Even with my equipment retained, a small squad surrounded me to ensure compliance on “sacred grounds.” The squalor of the Jaguar Tribesmen nearly matched the sickly states of the Opossum Tribe. Neglect and rigid survivalism tug at the suffering colonists. A mighty ziggurat grants them hope that Danel shall reward them. And reward he shall, as Jaguar warriors ready a sacrifice of several Opossum tribal denizens. By proclamation of a priest in fine regalia, these supposed spies and subverters were trying to illicitly shuttle food to other villagers; likely as part of Grandmother Washbear’s secret society. More political bloodshed, for once not by my hands. I have found myself in an audience with the High Priest of Danel, Tlaocoyaliztli, deep within the glorious pyramid structure. As if ill-prepared for a meeting, he tried to shake off a lazy and almost feline resting position upon his holy throne. Thanks to a honey-tinged and submissive presentation, he is convinced that I am a Darokinian interested in trading goods to help them finally crush his problematic subjects. He is aware that many of them are openly xeno-

phobic towards anything Darokinian, something he seeks to harvest to his gain. And if lucky, I could gain prominence in using my techniques and tools to help him break past the cursed lands and conquer other tribes. Likewise, the fact I have not been turned into an offering and have even gained an audience with him is a privilege; one he gloats in my face. The promise of fighting stagnation entices him, as he consorts with his assembly. However, before he agrees, something about me triggers his inner beast. Claws emerge from his hands as he lunges forth. His men hold him back, but this cannot last. This is the time to flee, perhaps ironically to the very Darokinian ruins that he fears to enter. The ruins are a sad relic of a failed colony, dilapidated wooden and stone structures that have begun to rot. Those who squat here seem frayed, dirty and strange, before revealing themselves as werepossums. The attacks of the beastly creatures are bluffs, as they prove ultimately cowardly. My own swash-buckling moves with blade and stance frighten them off, even if my cuts do little to damage them. Towards a misty border, the familiar sight of a Kargat awaits me. And beyond them? Misty barriers that they know too well.

### **3rd, Yarthmont AC 1004 —The Blackmoorian Colony of Darkheath**

I have been told of such a land, one of wonders and advancements unlike anything I could imagine. Such a place is an inheritor to Blackmoor itself. The truth of that ancient land is largely unknown, until now. As for what can be said of this former colonial territory? Turbulent. Waters are tested by both uneasy weather and aggressive rival ships. A battle had just finished prior to



*Blackmoorian ship firing cannons*

arrival, with wreckage still strewn throughout the murky waters and gunpowder-clouded air. The seas otherwise carried a grim calm to them, the shrouding silence of death. Arrival towards these lands saw me hailed by several well-armed soldiers in a familiar scenario. They arrested me, taking me to some barracks for questioning. What sort of ancient Thonian empire enemy could I be? Though in fairness, how could I come across such knowledge of Blackmoor\*? Please, enough of this capture and interrogation! I get the same responses every time... Even mages were brought in to see if I had any tainted essence of the

\*

*Note from A:  
That was my payment to you and solely you, pitiful whelp! Don't tell the masses what I give you as payment! I should vaporize you for that alone!*

beastmen. Upon clearance, I was still watched. As to what could spawn such scrutiny and fear? It is hard to say. But, it stays true to ancient stories of Blackmoor: a land with enemies on all sides.

The people of this land, while spoiled with inventions and magical ideas, are rarely the braggart type. Many prefer to be more refined than that, at least so they say. In reality, they attempt to go about their lives while contending with decline amidst seemingly endless outside violence. They are secluded with little in the way of trade, as most is stolen or destroyed in the ongoing conflicts. This is somewhat present by the leadership of Royal Governor Higgins III. He is, for the most part, respected as a fair ruler under the pressures of war. Domestic life for the public has not been too noteworthy under his tenure, something that is thankfully quite assuring. But, like much of the public, the governor's eyes are on the military in this time of crisis. There are tales of glory in the Beastmen Crusade to mask the sheer brutality of the battlefields to the east. Propaganda also instructs enlistment in the honorable fight against a naval foe. In reality, the seas are treacherous and tactics have proven heinous at times, including old pirate boarding and execution techniques if it was called for. In truth, the military has been known to recruit prisoners and former pirates into their service.

Propaganda has extended into the workings of society, at least to outside sources. The population given to untrusted sources has been listed as far lower than it actually is. This demographic skew has been shaped from encounters with spies, information leaks and general bouts of paranoia. In reality, Darkheath likely has a population of 20,000 altogether. The masses have done well to try to hide themselves through use



of magic or technology. This has thrown off foreigners and enemy forces alike. Despite this, the colony has begun to fail. Surveys among Archilis and New Blackmoor do not have sustainable populations due to famine, war, unsafe water, unstable trade and other forms of external violence... or at least what has been gleaned from partially declassified reports. The Royal Governor and leaders across the Blackmoorian military are among those doing their part to help keep stability throughout the region, salvaging anything they can. Unorthodox and new tactics have been employed to catch their foes off guard. Domestically, morale has been boosted through celebrations over victories. Beyond the Head of the Blackmoor Royal Guard, Fleet Admiral Holden is a massive proponent of these events. And yet, many yearn for simpler days, before this great war where the Beastman Crusade marched by their doors. There is no glory, as the Fleet Admiral proclaims, but merely wasting away in unsure times. According to the lore of the land, cultists of some entropic chaos staged a dark ritual to a demon called The Egg of Coot, causing dangerous mists to arise. The evil cultists declared eternal woe upon the colony seeking to rebuild from their attacks. Residents of somewhat nearby lands proclaim this is a false history\*, but have little to counteract it. They aren't even that aware of some faraway Blackmoor, let alone what Thonia is.

Life still tries to cling to its olden vestiges. Blackmoorian technomancy has gone from a day-to-day fact of life to something generations are starting to view with slight scrutiny. As automation clashes with the rising

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Note from A:  
It is absolutely False History! Someone within the high ranks doomed them all, I suspect the Governor or the Fleet Admiral.

need for employment, many Blackmoorians become bitter over their perceived replacement. Likewise, the use of bioweaponry has made it harder for farming to become a viable means of producing sustenance. Artificial moisture farms and synthesized foods have become more normalized, despite a populace made disgruntled by them. Rumors spill into the public that much of the public budget goes towards new forms of weaponry rather than investment in the struggling infrastructure or public means, seen in the literally crumbling districts of cities. There is assurance that such measures are temporary and a means of fighting back those who would destroy such cities anyway. Sadly, such things are probably right. Petty crime has become the thorn on the chair of society, with many of these ills never addressed. Illicit goods have been shuttled to and from seedier ports towards the south of the peninsula, towards underground networks leading into Zherisia and other neighbors. This has allowed for criminals and radicals to arm themselves with their own powerful weaponry, much to the fear of the governing powers. Likewise, cartels have allowed for strange narcotics and dangerous compounds to be up for grabs. The Royal Navy is said to not be above engaging with these traders. But, the military has become well aware that I've helped to spread "negative propaganda" about them. And with that, it would be "just service" if I sought them out for mutual aid.... Whatever that should mean.

To prove myself to their cause, the Blackmoorian Royal Guard recruited me in the ongoing Beastman Crusade. The campaign is thus: breaking through No Man's Land and recovering sacred artifacts of a fallen temple taken into enemy territory<sup>10</sup>. From

<sup>10</sup> See [THRESHOLD Magazine issue #30](#) for the Chantry of Khoronus.



Beastman

there, unleash enough men and warmachines to splinter the beastman lines and decimate them until they retreat. Scouts ordered for initial entry took me with them, as I surveyed countless Blackmoorian ruins. Ultimately, the beastmen proved more cunning than expected and led to the slaying of two scouts and my capture. Surely these loathsome brutes will just sacrifice and/or consume me. But no. They know I am not a Blackmoorian somehow, but something and someone else. I am still a “lowly meat thing” to them, but they think I can aid in their derangement. Shacked and dragged, they sought me to serve in removing some sort of plague somehow. These beastmen of old have been changed by the war, much like Blackmoor. Something destabilizes them with a disease they call “Dementation.” Many have confused memories of creatures, even humans, that they never met. Sometimes they suffer delusions based on those memories. Those in power denounce that this madness is real, citing those afflicted as “turning sympathizer” with their Blackmoorian foes. Many of

these mad beastmen are executed or sacrificed if they can’t hide their condition. Those who escape without trying to help their affliction often cannibalize Blackmoorian culture poorly. Some especially mad even seek out the haunted chantry, usually meeting their ends by the wrathful dead. The deeply afflicted also lose senses of preservation and forget that Blackmoorians and beastmen usually slay each other on sight. Fortunately for me, my captors were failing their own Dementation. Each of them begin to call me different names, seeking to bring me to the chantry for healing. Some spout madness about being reincarnated from lost souls\*.

\*

Note from A:  
Pure False Lore that lesser mages like Meredoth would fall for. The Powers likely recreated memories from those dead souls and grafted them onto newly created Beastmen.

### 5th, Yarthmont AC 1004 —The Blackmoorian Colony of Darkheath

As a warrior, these endless defeats and captures are humiliating. From my understanding of the humanoids, it shouldn’t be that hard to trick these beastmen... even if they operate with strange efficiency. During one of my forced attempts at understanding this Dementation plague, I feigned a similar madness as they removed me from their quarantine chambers. Being dragged past a holding cell, I broke free their loose grasp to secure some of their weapons. Escape came down to guile and some added firepower. The enhanced smokepowder weapons along-

side some confiscated blades sent ill-prepared attendants sprawling in confusion. A few loaded shots and hacking slashes disarmed or injured any armed resistance seeking to subdue me. My panache with a blade has not faded me, either warding off or slicing down those who tried to oppose me. As for these Blackmoorian firearms, far more power than any man deserves, as I can blast sizable holes in my foes. Away from the shoddily guarded makeshift infirmary, there were renewed sounds of combat, accompanied by booming explosions. Strange cannons operated by beastmen are laid to waste by a return fire of some rivaling explosives, as another guard leaps from a compound doorway. A gaping slash into my chest followed by a brutal impalement, enough to knock me down. Soon after, more rocketing explosives collide with the lands. The pummeling of these weapons proved more dire for my assailant, leaving me to wheeze. The secret facility for treating Dementation was laid to ruins, including the many beastmen who simply sought a cure. While I had no cure, perhaps someone else could have changed that. No use dwelling on this further.

Machines of war roll along the newly created battlefield wreckage, with the lid popping off the mechanized monstrosity. A man in Blackmoorian garb greeted me, surprised to see me alive. Without deeper thought, I relayed what I had seen. He picks up some communication device, relaying my words. He cheers me for granting insight into the colony's victory. A small craft whips around to pick me up, piloted by a soldier in rather noble-looking regalia, taking me back as the larger machines continue to ravage enemy lands. He laments that all battle chaplains are serving active soldiers at bases, perhaps I could hold out till making it there. The would-be breakthrough to save the Beastmen and perhaps end the war is likely destroyed in the heat of

battle. Joining the officer and me in the escort cart is a familiar and ghoulish sight, those marked under the service of Azalin Rex. The two operatives narrow glances in irritation, exclaiming I am taking away time for cataloging other lands. Likewise, the pain I feel over my wounds is nothing but a grievance to them. The rough ride removed an attempt at easing my nerves, especially as the haunted chantry emerged in the distance. A chilling sense of macabre approval filled my senses when my eyes met with the crumbling walls. Approval in what? More endless carnage and endless death? I shouldn't think too deeply on this, for my own sanity. Upon extraction from the hostile environment, my party departs via a hidden docking site underneath Archilis. Fortunately, a chaplain willingly broke away to attend to my wounds. It's enough to get me on my legs without help. Eschewing obvious Blackmoorian technology, the agents elect for a more humble vessel worthy of three people... nothing more than a simple dinghy. No matter, away from these endless battles over a dead empire. For now, the grim masters see me fit to row. At least the strange misty links between lands are less foreign by now.

### **sth, Yarthmont AC 1004 —The Northern Jarldom of Vasfar**

At first glance, it seems much akin to the Northern Reaches I had passed in my travels. This Jarldom of Vasfar, overseen by Jarl Ravennebb, shall help piece together remaining details. For the most part, there doesn't seem to be much external conflict in this land. Much of it comes from the result of sanctioned raids against new neighboring lands of Vorostokov and Sanguinia. Beyond that, the land itself provides many frights and fears for locals. There are tall tales, dan-



gerous mountains and paths best left avoided. The locals are mostly quiet, with even their mighty warriors not making much of a boisterous presence. The summers here are short and the winters are especially punishing. Against all odds, some crops still succeed and some livestock stay sturdy enough. The breeding of reindeer has proved a potential alternative to traditional farming animals. Attempts to tame them as livestock have failed, with sturdy cattle taking up the reins for now. Reindeer meat has become more prominent than beef for now, due to latter use for work animals. Beyond the marauders who bring supplies and glory to Vasfar, much day-to-day activity is far more humble and reserved. In areas with less extreme ice, fishing is the staple. The careless have been lost to frigid waters after falling through the ice. Stable enough waters allow docking at a shipyard and village of Aavekaupunki, seemingly more used to travelers than the rest of the land. Their prices for work cattle and wagon are oddly generous. Something about their demeanor seems uncanny, supernatural. There is little time to ponder on these things, especially when more important places must be sought for my generous employers.

The people of this land seem to live in conditions not unlike the most remote lands of the Heldann Freeholds. As for the culture? It is a truly strange mixture of the three sibling states of the Northern Reaches; Ostland, Vestland and Soderfjord. Customs and methods seem like a blender, as some locals demand to reach out to the lands beyond in more honest trade while others prefer their methods now. There is a heightened desire for expanded trade, like Vestland. The brutality of Ostland has been overseen through the marauders and raiding warriors. And like



*Vasfar warriors*

Soderfjord, a noble Jarl oversees the land. Even the linguistic dialect is a curiosity. Nordligt is the tongue of the land, reflecting a blend of dialects from its similar Mystaran homes. But not everyone is unified. Some villagers are more rehearsed in those old Mystaran ways, not wanting to give them up for this hybrid culture. An old woodsman and lumber seller, Jorgen Einstakur, stays a cantankerous thorn in the side of the Jarl for that very reason. Others have congregated around these aging personalities for wisdom and knowledge of the “divided days.” But, these are just tales of humans. Demihumans exist here too. As a minority population moving beyond 500, the dwarves of Vasfar have little voice. The majority of them, living in Mondenhardt, are not fully seen as citizens but rather respected outside guests. Many fled from the mountains by the Oldgard River, fearing the wrath of giants. Such a subject is

traumatic for them and best avoided. The icy elves of Elvmork fare better. While both are respected, the elves are given free passage to come and go. Their numbers have not been counted as higher than 300. Among them is an elder simply known as “The Passing Frost,” an ancient elf who rarely stays in one place for more than a brief moment, true to his name. While they trade in their arts from lands south of the settlements, they are shy and skittish around large human crowds. Though, some share tales of ghostly beasts that have forced them into a nomadic way of life.

Fears of giants and ghostly creatures only start the tall tales and lore of this land. The wicked ogress called Gryla is known for arriving during festive times. Rumors say that she involves herself with the twisted dealings and hidden politics of the giants. Giant raids decrease during Gryla’s juletide time of terror, giving more free reign to the ogress and her equally twisted family. Olden storytellers give no reason to this, save for that they feel there’s an agreement between the two sides. The woes of Vasfar go beyond just these tales. Marauders of Vorostokov have struck back in vengeance. They proclaim that the viking raids upon their lands have been a major source of troubles for them. This has inspired a legion of warriors called the Berserkers, who don the pelts of beasts and fling themselves at the marauders in savage rage. It is said that they can channel the strength and might of the respective beast. Many warriors who undergo the rituals to become these feral vessels of rage never remain the same, even vanishing upon some nights for some unknown and sinister new purpose. The Kargat have pushed me onwards in hopes of capturing one of these warriors who have been “lost” to their rage. Thanks to the Heroics Guild of Elvmork, I am not alone in

this search. They are said to survive just south of where giants tread. These possessed wild men were ultimately nowhere to be found, but the evil weather of the mountains greeted us all the same. And with the weather, silhouettes of massive grim figures seem to run in tune with the rushing winter blasts. All visibility was lost, as the struggles of my Guild companions were heard in grunts of anguish and screams of agony. Meanwhile, slicing gusts and icy breath mostly drowned them out. Neither Blackmoorian weaponry nor my own prowess can defeat the alien giant. And before the biting cold claims my consciousness, a massive humanoid face gazes down upon me in judgment. Its mouth does not open, but a guttural and inhuman bellow emanates from its still face. I cannot bear it, as my strength fails me.

### 10th, YARTH MONT AC 1004 —The Northern Jaridom of Vasfar

Waking up, all of my possessions are gone and I lay beside others in bare rags. The meek and starving people quiver in terror, as a new victim joins them. Few know what these dread giants want with them, save for that they collaborate with “Tainted Dwarves.”<sup>11</sup> The giants themselves do not emote, they just listlessly move through the winds to carry forth tasks. Many wonder if they think much at all or are just slaves to these evil dwarves. Or perhaps their minds are too alien for us to gather and these fell dwarves are the only minds twisted enough to comprehend them. Regardless of the truth, their lair is one as confusing as them. Tunnels sprawl in a multitude of directions,

<sup>11</sup> A distortion of the Modrigswerg or “Rot Dwarves” from GAZ7: “The Northern Reaches”



Giant

as only the chilling moan of the giant echoes through all. They experiment on any slave that cannot do proper work for the giants, whose expectations are well beyond most mortal hands. Days seemingly pass as I carve rock, unload ore, polish gems and slay cave pests to better suit the giant "masters." Several falter and fall, before being captured and taken to visit the Rot Dwarves of the Mists. Gut-wrenching screams sometimes give way to disgusting gurgling, sucking or other noises coupled with results I dare not think about. In the days to follow, I hear the unlikely... combat. As I race to see my saviors, I see more agents of the Wizard-King. As they recover my gear and ready me for more, I inquire about the others. The Kargat do not care, as they only see use in me. Out of one set of shackles and into another. Before we can leave, we learn the fate of failed slaves, as fleshcrafted things are set upon slave and

agent alike; disdainful mockeries of the flesh twisted into new forms of weaponry for the giants to play with. I have heard of such forbidden art, known to some Rot Dwarves. Perhaps Dread Giants are just the result of their experiments... that or real giants were among their victims. They call this twisting "Vicissitude." But, not all is lost amidst the tunnels of monsters; a mage among the agents from Darkon helps us find a path away, into a misty barrier at the edge of the mountains. Somehow we emerge not far off of Elvmork, despite us traveling east rather than far southwest. Very odd.

In my travels through this brutal and bitter tundra, I have come to a realization of sorts... Few people of worth or note in these lands hail from Vasfar. It is remote and mostly humble. Only the marauding of the viking warriors is worth note. And even then, their reach is often limited. Though, many of these raiders have returned with incredible stories of lands not always shrouded in snow. In fact, one raid took the pillagers to a scorching land of sands and stretching beige buildings. This could in fact be either Ylaruam or this alternative reality of "Ylar." Regardless, some denizens are worthy of notice. One of them was an explorer who desired to map more than the dismal and frigid wastes immediately beyond the blanket of civilization. This sailor was Lars Viggensen\* of Clan Viggensen. While the majority of this clan was content living in Elvmork, this ambitious adventurer dared to see far

\*

Note from A:  
Record of this man predominantly resides in the domain of Nebligtode, gathered by a far more recent explorer and member of the Fraternity of Shadows (Nocturnal Sea Gazetteer page 202).





more. His specialty was in sailing, as he eventually rose to a captain of his own crew well beyond his home. Letters slowly became less frequent over the years until stopping. Record of his life and likely death is vague, as none can be found on when he was born. It's possible that these tales are truly old. Ultimately, he was doomed in another land... one that can be reached through a secret watery channel beyond the Ljust Fält. It is once again time to make my journey alongside wretched Darkonian agents of the Wizard-King.

I have been hailed via a letter, telling me to enter the village of Fiskeklokke post haste. All the while, calamity has stirred in wake of my own activities. This search of wild berserkers, the wrath of the giants, all of this has ultimately awakened another evil to haunt this land... the draugr! The stench of death flares up nostrils dulled by the cold chill. Angry fighting corpses muster armies from the north, slowly marching unabated by the perilous eternal winter. Decay clings to their bodies as rage clings to what's left of their souls. The Jarl is quick to call for support and evacuation, a perfect time to leave this land. The minor settlement of Fiskeklokke feels unremarkable, just a community of huddled and shivering fishermen under normal circumstances. This village, due well west of Elvmork, contains its own secrets. A watery passageway leads not to my salvation, but a deeply hated foe of my employer. Or at least, that is all the Kargatane will disclose.

### 13th, YARTH MONT AC 1004 —Lost Islands of Nebligtode

The Kargatane prevented me from leaving the boat immediately, addressing me with a serious matter. In their flat but unnerving tones, I was to follow on one last trek. This one would prove far more dangerous, the pursuit of "The Ice Wizard," a rogue mage who evidently has roots within Alphatia. From the Ljust Fält, the Fiskeklokke Strait and Nocturnal Sea; the Steinfelder Plain is unveiled to me and my Kargat captors. Passages and tomes found within the mainland of Graben Island are written in script not too unlike the Nordligt language of Vasfar. Could there be a common ancestor? It's hard to tell without far more time. We all gather within the village of Graben. The locals seem simple enough, but a tad lifeless... much like my observers.

Upon closer examination, Nebligtode is not just two wayward neighbors, but an archipelago. Most of the islets are uninhabitable for the most part, but much of the region hosts all sorts of fascinating locals. The Grabenites have begun to express fear towards the insular and coastal village of Meerdorf on the island of Knammen. The residents of said village live up to a lack of hospitality, as well as many having grotesque deformities, likely from generations of inbreeding. Some say that they've made a pact with something unfathomable from the deep Nocturnal Sea's depths. One scribe for a nearby temple shared one insight, that they may have relatives along the Ichthyan Sea, not too far from the techno-magical colony of Darkheath. This will be a matter to investigate later. When I ask about Todstein, the scribe's enthusiasm dries rapidly. She sneers that it's a wretched place that brings mockery to her faith. She signals to three others who return to the temple, after

completing daily duties. As night fell upon the village, I came upon a small inn that seemed cozy enough. The innkeeper had a vile grimace-like face, remarking that customers slept like interred bodies upon caskets. During the night, I was awoken by the sounds of a gathering mob. The frenzied force pummeled against my locked door, eventually splintering wood to reveal their deformed faces. The armed assembly began to use other weapons and tools to try to burst through, as I moved a dresser to impede them. Dagger and Blackmoorian pistol in tow, I fended some of them off briefly before leaping from the window, barely grabbing the ledge of another rooftop. Fortunately, both of these properties overlooked the mostly calm, albeit frigid, waters. And what luck, another rowboat...

### **16th, Yarthmont AC 1004—Lost Islands of Nebligtode**

Nearly a night of rowing and I collapsed near Graben Village once more. My creepy Darkonese stalkers greet me upon The Black Sheep Inn. After regaining consciousness hours later, they probe me to recall all I've seen and are intrigued by tales of Meerdorf, and expect another voyage there for further study. Three more have joined since my initial departure from the village, making five Darkon oppressors to see the job done. They inquire about what I've uncovered about the island of Todstein. Save for those islanders decrying it as a foul and unholy place, not much else was recovered. Those overhearing us become uncomfortable, preferring to avoid us entirely. As day continued to pass, the shrouded Kargat accompanied me to

another small island of Kirchenheim. The flophouse provided little of interest, but the strange obsidian-colored temple did! Little could be found here that added to our search, save for some workings that were written in High Alphatian. Perhaps a clue at last! The shunned relic was likely not itself Alphatian, but carved marks and desecrations were. Evidently, this cursed place might have led to the doom of those who attempted to colonize the island just years prior, though I believe the forces of Todstein at fault<sup>12</sup>. The owner of the flophouse certainly doesn't want to talk about it. Inquiring about Todstein confirmed this! The poor owner's face lit up in horror, beginning to prattle about retribution, evil powers, and the Ice Wizard. This colloquialism arises again. Returning to Graben Island, we inquired with local authorities, all of whom turned us back and warned us not to continue. The island's namesake, the Graben family, seems to be the best source of information. Josiah, the grandson of the previous patriarch, relates to us of the follies and struggles of the islands. Some years back, a dreadful storm almost destroyed the family and much of the nearby islands. However, they have since recovered and prospered as once before. He seems to wince at the mention of the dreadful wizard. He recommends seeking out the so-called "floating outpost" north of the village. Once again, we row on hostile shores, only to uncover a chunk of land ominously hovering above the sloshing waves. A man in strange garb accosts us, proclaiming to be one of the "Lost Alphatians"—how odd. No one brought up Lost Alphatians during previous travels. Upon mentioning the Ice Wizard, he scoffs and

<sup>12</sup> The Great Storm and its aftermath is detailed on page 174 of the ["Nocturnal Sea Gazetteer"](#) (which can be downloaded at the *Fraternity of Shadows* Ravenloft website).



Ship

proclaims such a thing was a ghost story and that the Grabenites are a superstitious lot. However, he knows that Todstein is still a dangerous place with plenty of arcane relics. He would arrange transportation and magical protection in exchange for the relics divided among the Kargatane prison wardens and the greedy Alphatians. Wizards, truly unworthy of trust.

A magical ship is conjured with strange ethereal-looking crewmen, serviceable for now. The hovering Alphatian gives a smug grin, assuring that he'll know if we succeed or not. After an hour of preparations, we set sail for Todstein, far more ruthless than even the icy chill of the giants of Vasfar. Winds batter the sides of the mystical vessel, as thrashing waters try to knock it over. Jutting rocks prevent easy safe passage forward. However, we are not deterred and continue. Like a throbbing migraine, each of us are assaulted by some means of

magical attack. A booming message bounces around our minds, it must be the Ice Wizard! He exclaims to turn back, as he'll remove the meddling invader mages another day. Perhaps he fears what they know of his past or want to know. Regardless, we fear no Ice Wizard. After an hour of battling improbable conditions, landfall beaches the magical ship. Not long after departing, the ship itself departs and seemingly sails away. Was this a trap? Now we have just ourselves, fighting an abrasive climate as we ascend snowy slopes and forested passages. Based upon the rising igneous rock, this island is likely a dead volcano, with the wizard likely within the opening below. Pines and snow slowly give way to trails and a mausoleum, the mage's lair? As we draw close, the rattling of bones can be heard all around. Skeletons arise from the snow in ambush. All of them clatter with the Wizard's words ringing from each of them. Despite this warning, they



attack. The strange pistol from Darkheath proves useless, but my magical blades remain impressive even against the living dead. The Kargat seem far more skillful in their dispatching of these skeletal minions. As the last is put down, one last set of words fills our heads. It is simply "I have warned you. I am the Wizard of Ice and Bone."

Deep within we go, as our combined might proves successful in warding off all matters of undead seeking to stop us. Eventually, deep below the earth, we uncover a study. All means of maps, manuscripts and items hastily line the walls, podiums, tables and more. Atop a lectern is a small journal. The first entry details a group of Alphatians lost to mists, emerging in Nebligtode. They seem to have been sent by Prince Zandor to look into rumors of the return of Meredoth, the Fell Wizard of Todstein! So, the wizard has a name after all. This Meredoth was said to have been instigating trouble while researching in the profane. But, many scholars debunked this, as the mage disappeared so long ago.\* They emerged onto this same island to hunt down Meredoth, only to be cornered. The writing changes, as a new narrator explains how the mages have become "lebendtod" puppets, especially for leading more Mystarans over for experiments. I see. The Kargatane agents scramble to other documents, scouring the

\*

Note from A:  
Indeed! A fellow prisoner of the mists cannot escape that easily! It was likely the Dark Powers looking for a new victim.

area for wards and other spells first. What intrigues me is the wizard's story. One such tome holds this. It would seem he was indeed of Noble Alphatian blood as well, giving him an almost "cold" tone to his skin. As a youth, he possessed dark hair and a brooding stare upon his eyes. However, the disaffectionate coldness of his parents left him emotionally stunted and solely focused on study. Constructs and other forms of magic acted as overseers to ensure he was healthy and learning. In time, he excelled and surpassed peers, often by stealing their work and slaying them. Constructs and undead creation intrigued him, given that is what he had long since known. As his parents withered away from their own indulgences, death intrigued him all the more. As an archmage of much power, the Council of Mages grew to fear him. Rather than fight him or cause issues, they decided to award him with a noble title and allow him to continue his studies in Norwold. While the prospect of isolation grabbed him, he discovered colonists would soon be at his mercy. His neglect and callousness led to the first wave dying painfully. In punishment, more were sent to Norwold with strict order of tending to them. This time, he conspired and poisoned their food while he continued his studies. As the colonists choked upon toxins and their own gurgling blood, mists took him.<sup>13</sup> If his name still frightens Alphatians, that is truly a testament to a vile archmage. As I placed down the hefty tome, a rumble filled the chamber. The agents grab what they can, informing me that I'm on my own. All of them turn invisible and flee the study. The rumbling begins to channel a raging growl, massive amalgams of flesh proceed to stomp into the area to heighten the noise. A shockwave emits from somewhere in the cavernous

<sup>13</sup> "Nocturnal Sea Gazetteer" (via *The Fraternity of Shadows*, see above) and "Ship of Horrors"

room, knocking me over. The flesh creatures take to restraining me as my body gives out. In my fading state, I see the image of the old man angered, who chastises me one more time. "Foolish boy. I know your purpose, as I knew those mages of my homeland. But, you're different... You're potentially useful."

Eventually, my eyes reopen with great reluctance as my body returns to consciousness. My jackets, my gear, my pouches; torn open and belongings strewn about. The terrible old man of legend rifles through various letters, documents and records. His mumbling remains incoherent, save for "Savage Baronies," "Norwold," "Glantri," and "Alphatia." The black-cowled old man turns to me, while I remain still shackled deep within some mausoleum. His wrinkled brow curls, as his lips twist and suck inward. It seems clear he deliberates on what to say to me, but I doubt he seeks to spend the effort. The dusty old robes dance along the floor as his sleeves sway about. The ancient man conducts some means of profane ritual, before grasping a grimoire. The crooked stringbean-like fingers flip through equally ancient pages, as he emits a displeased grumble. At last, the robed man unveils himself.

His lips peel back, like a wolf baring fangs. "Insolent boy, know that you hold a privilege. As an undead, you'd ironically be less worthy to me. Your arcane puppet master knows enough of my abilities. So, I banish your hex not for your boon, but for his pain. Your talents are pathetic and you prove worthless. You are no threat." He proceeds to turn away, shuffling slowly to a chest to pull out a treated oak wand and a white birch staff. The wand glows with a bright blue light. As it gets closer, I feel a crackling in my mind; my visions begin to



*Meredoth*

blur, and a sharp pinging emits from my ears. The magical conduit taps my forehead and it all crescendos violently. As consciousness slips, all I can hear from those fading moments is "Stupid boy, why did you visit my original home, force my hand into using the hated school of enchantment? May you remember only Mystara... Azalin would kill you soon enough." He raises his birch staff, as my drifting mind begins to forget... Todstein, Nebligtode, Meredoth, Lost Baron of Norwold... All of it. However, from the darkness, I think the shores of Norwold are slowly becoming visible to me.

## A Short Letter from Meredoth and a Darkonian Addendum

*To the Wizard-King of Darkon,*

*Your attempts to toy with me are childish, demeaning of your status and title. While your acknowledgement of my power flatters me, please cease throwing whatever motley assembles in your clutches at me. Your Kargatane was already worthless. Now you steal other Mystarans? Let this letter be a reminder to use your time for better projects, as I do. While I care not for my subjects, save for tests and the pursuit of knowledge, I do know that you have some degree of admiration for yours. Your subjects are your weakness, while mine define obedience and surveillance. Now, leave me to my devices, lest I finally raise my hand in defiance. The choice is yours, whether you choose to fail like other deluded mages or succeed within your own mediocrity and monotony.*

*—Meredoth*

***12th Day of Mid-Autumn,  
in the year 760 of the Barovian Calendar,***

*Insolence! Audacity! Sheer maledictive spite! Accusations of mediocrity and monotony! And worse, did he know of my geas cast upon the traveler? Perhaps the mental link that allowed information to travel to my Kargatane? That shriveled prune of a necromancer would enjoy my rage; I shall deny him the privilege even with the loss of my little spy from Mystara. It doesn't matter, I shan't fear him, nor shall I lose composure. I could have warned that spy not to trifle with Nebligtode, though, but the chance was there and with it so much potential for power. Finally, an insider who could help unravel a rival! But, this small explorer, his naivety! If he wasn't so predictable, I wouldn't have tried my hand at deciphering and expanding on his notes myself! The wayward warrior is no great mage, by any means. In fact, he is far from my Kargatane, far from the worthiness of being embraced by undeath. But, there will be more chances. After all, the Mists beckon for Mystara more and more. It is only a matter of time till more of their world faces damnation. More pawns to undo the Ice Wizard of Todstein. Perhaps I could extend these plots to Jaibul, tricking the broken and weary Black Rajah\* to my goals as well.*

*—An excerpt from the journals of Azalin Rex*

\* See also: "Lost Jaibul & Other Dark Secrets"  
in [THRESHOLD Magazine #30](#) at the Vaults





(above) The investiture of a knight

(below) The calculation of his fief



FROM  
The Vaults  
of Pandius

# FIEFDOM GENERATOR

A domain management  
tool developed  
by Fabrizio Nuzzaci

Adaptation for  
the Mystara setting  
of D&D BECMI

I started developing my 'Fiefdom Generator' (or *FG*) on Excel in July 1999, maybe before, after years of game settings made with 'paper and pencil'; I continued until 2007 and resumed it in 2018.

The following is an adaptation (v7.5) of the *FG* to the rules for managing domains described in *D&D BECMI*—later *Rules Cyclopedia* (or *RC*)—with a single hint taken from the 3.0 edition of *D&D* (the 'gp limit').



Wanting to create a more realistic system, I also considered some other aspects, normally ignored in RPGs, and for which I carried out specific research (you will find the references indicated in appropriate notes).

Although I haven't integrated them into these rules, I still have to mention the *Champions of Mystara* Boxed Set for *D&D*, as well as the article 'more economics' and Bruce Heard's further work on these issues<sup>1</sup>.

However, my intent remained to adapt the *FG* to the *BECMI* rules because: 1) it is a very complex system and already known to all of us players; 2) it was my desire to find a way to apply the *BECMI* economic system to the descriptions of the nations of Mystara made in the various Atlases; 3) anyone wishing to limit the amount of gold in circulation would just have to 'pretend' that the reference currency is silver. A note on considering the Standard Income (S.I. from now on): a problem of low profitability of mines compared to other resources remains.

Finally, I point out that the following rules were born as my 'notes', written to remind me of the reasoning made, not for disclosure to any third party; you will excuse me, therefore, if they are not perfectly clear to the reader. **The following rules assume a good knowledge of economic rules for *D&D BECMI*.**

<sup>1</sup> Several resources by Bruce Heard are available in the Vaults of Pandius: "[The Known World Grimoire](#)", "[Dominion Economics 101](#)"; [zip package](#) or [xls file](#) version of the "Dominion Economics Guideline" are also available at the Vaults.

**The Fiefdom Generator Excel spreadsheet file can be found in the Vaults of Pandius at:**

(In English)

<http://pandius.com/GeneratoreDiFeudi.xls>

(In Italian)

<http://pandius.com/GeneratoreDiFeudiIta.xls>

**Also available on the author's Patreon page:**

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/82744933>

The file must be downloaded from one of the above links in order to be used.

## o) HOW TO USE THE FILE, WITHOUT READING FURTHER THAN THIS PAGE

### A) Premise

The cells **highlighted in yellow** and the drop-down menus are for information important for the operation of the FG; cells in **light blue** are for optional information. **The sheet can be printed horizontally on 4 A4 sides.**

### B) Domain Sheet description

#### PART 1 (lines 1 to 25): general information

- Line 1: domain's type and name, name of the leader, number of game's months of play considered;
- Lines 3–11: description of the population based on races and cults, followed by a list of main settlements (for each one: name, territory type where it is located, inhabitants, housing surface in acres and gp limit);

- Line 12: total number of inhabitants, percentage of nomadic population (not controlled, nor taxable), diameter of the hexes on the map (in miles);
- Lines 13–24: description of the territories (grouped by homogeneous types and resources<sup>2</sup>) and related number of hexes, density, inhabitants of rural areas and housing surface (in acres), inhabitants of urban areas and housing surface (in acres) (note: data for the urban areas must correspond to those in lines 3–11), number of families available for production (excluding the nomads and the employable inhabitants), number of acres available for economic activities, and number of residual acres for pasture/breeding only;
- Line 25: percentage and number of employable inhabitants, followed by a calculator used to determine the housing surfaces of the rural or urban population.

<sup>2</sup> If the domain spans multiple hexes, I recommend grouping them in identical terrain types (e.g. all coastal plains) with identical resources (e.g. corn, iron); this is likely for small- to medium-sized domains.

Fig 1: Fiefdom Generator screen part 1 (lines 1–25)

1	---	Leader:	game's months considered			12
2	<i>NOTE: 1) data must be written in fields highlighted yellow or using the curtains; fields in blue are optional. 2) Settlement's population must be rewritten under "Settlements: T. residents &amp; area" (see territories).</i>					
3	<b>POPULATION:</b>	1) RACES (put percentage):	2) FAITHS AND CULTS (put percentage):	3) SETTLEMENTS:	located in (territory type) # inhabitants	area (acres) gp limit
4	0	Humans 1	0	Cult 1		0
5	0	Humans 2	0	Cult 2		0
6	0	Humans 3	0	Cult 3		0
7	0	Elves/Halvelves	0	Elven		0
8	0	Gnomes	0	Gnomish		0
9	0	Dwarves	0	Dwarven		0
10	0	Halflings	0	Halfling		0
11	0	Other Races 100,00%	0	Chaotic Cults 100,00%		0
12	0	<b>TOTAL INHABITANTS</b> (of wich	0,00%	are wandering <b>nomads</b> : no taxes)	<b>FIEFDOM GENERATOR 7.5</b>	Hexagon diameter (miles) 8 miles
13	<b>TERRITORIES</b> (same type & resource)	# hexes:	Density:	Territories: residents & area (acres)	Settlements: total residents & area (acres)	# Families usable acres pasture acres
14	---		NO HEX			0 0 0
15	---		NO HEX			0 0 0
16	---		NO HEX			0 0 0
17	---		NO HEX			0 0 0
18	---		NO HEX			0 0 0
19	---		NO HEX			0 0 0
20	---		NO HEX			0 0 0
21	---		NO HEX			0 0 0
22	---		NO HEX			0 0 0
23	---		NO HEX			0 0 0
24	---		NO HEX			0 0 0
25	Employable inhabitants (percentage):	5,00%	0	Inhabited Areas Calculator: 1) set	rural areas	2) put # inhabitants = area (acres) 0,00



PART 2 (lines 27 to 99): production

- Line 27: the rightmost section indicates the levels of Taxes and Standard Income (in gp);
- Lines 29–50: number of families employed on vegetable resources distinguished according to the types of the domain’s territories (see lines 13–24) (each type of territory has two lines for its vegetable resources), followed by the number of still available families in each territory after having assigned those dedicated to cultivation (they can be assigned to animals, minerals or wood resources; the FG automatically calculates the wealthy families, and allocates those unallocated as artisans or merchants), the collected gp (for Resource Income, Taxes and Standard income), any bonus/malus to the food production (type and percentage), number of acres used by each family (max 50) and the food units produced;
- Lines 51–55: the number of families employed for breeding distinguished according to the type of animals<sup>3</sup>, product’s type obtained (meat, honey, or silk), the collected gp (for Resource Income, Taxes and Standard Income), any bonus/malus to the food production (type and percentage), number of acres used by each family (max 100), and the food units produced;
- Lines 56–58: the number of families employed for fishing distinguished according to the place of activity (river, lake, or sea)<sup>4</sup>, the number of hexes exploited, the collected gp (for Resource

- Income, Taxes and Standard Income), any bonus/malus to the food production (type and percentage), the acres used by each family (max 10), and the food units produced;
- Lines 59–70 (7 columns on the left): the number of families employed on mineral or wood resources, or artisans, merchants, and wealthy families, without considering in which territory they live<sup>5</sup>, and the collected gp (for Resource Income, Taxes and Standard Income);
- Line 71 (7 columns on the left): the totals of the employed families and of the various incomes received (in gp);
- Lines 72–99 (6 columns on the left): the Salt Taxes received by the vassals (reported in the Financial Balance; see below), relative inhabitants, and any notes;
- Lines 62–73 (right side sections): Thyatian Intelligence information (see TM2), local currencies and exchange rate, domain’s Sustenance; percentage of families employed on vegetable or animal resources;
- Lines 74–99 (right side sections): Financial Balance, XP obtained by the Leader, State of War (if any), Consensus Index, Militia (if formed), Malus for too many miners (if too many), Domain Notes.

<sup>3</sup> In practice, the breeders of the various territories are added together according to the type of breeding.

<sup>4</sup> In practice, the fishermen of the various territories are added together according to the place of fishing.

<sup>5</sup> In practice, all these are added together according to the type of activity, or social condition.

Fig 2: Fiefdom Generator screen part 2 (lines 27-99)

27	PRODUCTION:	NB set families number and choose resources; for crops only, each territory type has 2 reserved lines.				Gold Piece for: 1) tax	1	2) st. income	10
28	Families number	Resource (yield)	Available Families	Resource Income	Tax Income	Standard Income	Food production modifiers: type & %	Acres/family Food's units	
29	---	hexes group 1	0	0	0	0		0,00	
30	---	remaining	0	0	0	0		(as above) 0	
31	---	hexes group 2	0	0	0	0		0,00	
32	---	remaining	0	0	0	0		(as above) 0	
33	---	hexes group 3	0	0	0	0		0,00	
34	---	remaining	0	0	0	0		(as above) 0	
35	---	hexes group 4	0	0	0	0		0,00	
36	---	remaining	0	0	0	0		(as above) 0	
37	---	hexes group 5	0	0	0	0		0,00	
38	---	remaining	0	0	0	0		(as above) 0	
39	---	hexes group 6	0	0	0	0		0,00	
40	---	remaining	0	0	0	0		(as above) 0	
41	---	hexes group 7	0	0	0	0		0,00	
42	---	remaining	0	0	0	0		(as above) 0	
43	---	hexes group 8	0	0	0	0		0,00	
44	---	remaining	0	0	0	0		(as above) 0	
45	---	hexes group 9	0	0	0	0		0,00	
46	---	remaining	0	0	0	0		(as above) 0	
47	---	hexes group 10	0	0	0	0		0,00	
48	---	remaining	0	0	0	0		(as above) 0	
49	---	hexes group 11	0	0	0	0		0,00	
50	---	remaining	0	0	0	0		(as above) 0	
51	---	add families & choose	0	0	0	0		Acres/family	
52	---	add families & choose	0	0	0	0		- for breeding	
53	---	add families & choose	0	0	0	0		and hunting:	
54	---	add families & choose	0	0	0	0		0,00	
55	Hunting & Poultry 6,30	add families	0	0	0	0		- for fishing: 0	
56	Fishing, river 4,70	# of hex:	0	0	0	0		0,00	
57	Fishing, lake, coastal 4	# of hex:	0	0	0	0		0,00	
58	Fishing, sea, coastal 3	# of hex:	0	0	0	0		0,00	
59	---	NB amount of Standard Income of these activities can be used to produce	0	0	0	0		NB inscribe above the bonus/malus to each production (+/-10%) and sum them. B/M LIST: 1 land+; 2 land-; 3 climate+; 4 climate-; 5 technology+; 6 techn-; 7 magic+; 8 magic-; 9 event+; 10 event-	
60	---	weapons and/or equipment without paying merchants.	0	0	0	0		Intelligence Thyatis: 1) SUSTENANCE: ACTIVE	
61	---	NB merchants and artisans can give an item, value not more than 'S.I.'	0	0	0	0		Attitude: Poor Class Families 0	
62	---	wealthy families them pay just taxes	0	0	0	0		Politics: Middle Class Families 0	
63	wood		0	0	0	0		Law: Wealthy Class Families 0	
64	wood, precious		0	0	0	0		Philosophy: Specialist, troop, armorer 0	
65	0 Artisans, precious		0	0	0	0		Country Coinage: Other employable people 0	
66	0 Artisans, precious		0	0	0	0		pp: Total food units requested 0	
67	0 Merchants		0	0	0	0		gp: Total food units produced 0	
68	0 Merchants, precious		0	0	0	0		ep: NO food by deputychaplain 0	
69	0 Merchants, precious		0	0	0	0		sp: Food units to/from Vassals	
70	0 Wealthy families		0	0	0	0		cp: FALSE 0	
71	0 TOT. FAMILIES OK	TOTAL Income:	0	0	0	0		Exchange rate: If food is requested, select: 0	
72	SALT TAXES:	Domain's name	Symbol	People	Other Notes	Families working on V or A resources		2) FINANCIAL BALANCE:	
73	0	0	0	This domain		NONE		Overall income & tax: 0,00	
74								Received tributes: 0,00	
75								Salt tax: 0,00	
76								Tithe (Church): 0,00	
77								Food/event expenses: 0,00	
78								Domain expenses: 0,00	
79								Final Balance: 0,00	
80								3) CONSENSUS INDEX: ----> starting level: 270 current level: 270	
81								Status of the domain: Stable formed militia NO	
82								Malus for miners? 0 NO malus to consensus	
83								4) DOMAIN NOTES:	
84									
85									
86									
87									
88									
89									
90									
91									
92									
93									
94									
95									
96									
97									
98									
99	0,00	<-tributes TOTAL population->	0					This work has been made by Fabrizio Nuzzaci (1999-2007 and 2018-2023); if you wish offer a coffe, click on PayPal.Me	





PART 3 (lines 101 to 182): expenses

- Lines 101–137: inhabitants employed and still employable (line 101); expenses for festivities<sup>6</sup> (type, number, cost per family, number of families, total cost) and specialists (type, number, monthly cost, description and notes, total cost); in the rightmost section are noted information obtained from the game's books;
- Lines 138–182: expenses for military, both armies and fleets (location and identification of each army/fleet, number and type of the troops, number of weeks of training, class, race, equipment and extras, total cost, BFR, BR and speed), and for equipment production [type, number of armorers<sup>7</sup> (hired even in fraction) quantity and quality of produced equipment, cost and type of resources needed, expenses for any merchants according to their origin and total cost].

<sup>6</sup> Festivities expenses are deducted from the amount paid for Salt Tax and Tithe.

<sup>7</sup> For each indicated armorer (or fraction), the FG also automatically adds 2 blacksmiths and 4 assistants (or fraction); fractions are rounded up to the 2nd decimal.





# 1) AREA OF MAP HEXAGONS AND POPULATION DENSITY

## A) Map Hex Size

The *FG* allows you to choose from the following options:

Table 1A: Map Hex Size

Reference measurements:	1 square km = 10,000 acres;	1 mile = 1,609.33 m				
Sine (60°) =	1 square km = 100 hectares;	1 acre = 4,046 m				
0.866025404;						
<b>Calculating Hexagons:</b>	size	size	size	size	size	size
<b>diameter side to side</b>	<b>1 mile</b>	<b>2 miles</b>	<b>4 miles</b>	<b>8 miles</b>	<b>24 miles</b>	<b>72 miles</b>
diam. side to side (m)	1,609.330	3,218.660	6,437.320	12,874.640	38,623.920	115,871.760
diam. side to side (km)	1.609	3.219	6.437	12.875	38.624	115.872
height of triangles (km)	0.805	1.609	3.219	6.437	19.312	57.936
side of the hexagon (km)	0.929	1.858	3.717	7.433	22.300	66.899
<b>area of the hex (sq m)</b>	<b>0.866</b>	<b>3.464</b>	<b>13.856</b>	<b>55.426</b>	<b>498.831</b>	<b>4,489.476</b>
area of the hex (sq km)	2.243	8.972	35.887	143.549	1,291.943	11,627.486
area of the hex (hectares)	224.296	897.183	3,588.730	14,354.921	129,194.293	1,162,748.636
<b>area of the hex (acres)</b>	<b>554.364</b>	<b>2,217.456</b>	<b>8,869.823</b>	<b>35,479.292</b>	<b>319,313.626</b>	<b>2,873,822.631</b>

## B) Density per map hex

(population/square mile), should vary as shown in the following table:

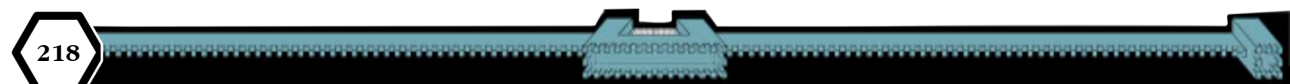
Table 1B: Hex Density

Terrain type	Civilized Lands	Border Lands	Wild Lands
Volcanic	(5.01–13 only suitable races)	(1.01–5 only suitable races)	(0.1–1 only suitable races)
Frozen Land	(5.01–13 “ “ “ )	(1.01–5 “ “ “ )	(0.1–1 “ “ “ )
Barren Land	(5.01–13 “ “ “ )	(1.01–5 “ “ “ )	(0.1–1 “ “ “ )
Sea/Lake	(5.01–13 “ “ “ )	(1.01–5 “ “ “ )	(0.1–1 “ “ “ )
Swamp/Tundra	(5.01–13 “ “ “ )	1.01–5 N	0.1–1
Mountain	(5.01–13 “ “ “ ) N	1.01–5 G	0.1–1 N
Desert (Oasis)	(5.01–13 “ “ ) (5.01–80 Y)	1.01–5	0.1–1 Y
Forest/Jungle	5.01–13+ G/N	1.01–5 A	0.1–1 A
Highland	5.01–13+ Y	1.01–5 Y	0.1–1 Y
Steppe (camp)	5.01–13+ Y (5.01–50 E)	1.01–5	0.1–1 E
Hill/Hill+Woods	5.01–25+	1.01–5	0.1–1 N
Woods	5.01–50+	1.01–5	0.1–1
Plain/River/Coast	5.01–120* G/Y	1.01–5 (1.01–12 G)	0.1–1

(\*) Source: [‘Medieval Demographics Made Easy’](#)<sup>8</sup> by S. John Ross (it confirms and indicates a maximum of 120 inhabitants/sq mi).

**Note:** in *RC* we read that a 24-mile hexagon must be considered: ‘wild’ if from 10 to 100 families live there (density 0.1–1 inhabitants/sq mi); ‘borderland’ if it has from 200 to 1,200 families (density 2–12 inhabitants/sq mi); ‘civilized’ if it has from 500 to 5,000 families (density 5–50 inhabitants/sq mi).

<sup>8</sup>Downloadable from [gamingballistic.com](http://gamingballistic.com) website



For some terrain types I set the minimum/maximum population density as indicated in Ylaruam (Y), Northern Reaches (N), Khanate of Ethengar (E), Alfheim (A), and Principalities of Glantri (G) Gazetteers; for some others, however, I entered the densities (*they are highlighted in italics and underlined*) according to the rules of the game.

For some terrains a human 'civilization' is never possible, but instead it is possible that other 'suitable peoples' (elves, goblins, mermen, etc.) or monsters reach high densities: the indicated density (in **bold** and in brackets) allows you to determine the total HD, but the actual number of creatures depends on their HD.

Also for all the other types of terrain it is possible to find settlements of demihumans or monsters instead of human beings: and here too the density allows us to determine the total number of HD of creatures present, but their actual number depends on their HD. (e.g.: in a 24-mile mountain hex 'civilized by humanoids' there may be as many as 6,485 orcs, 1,621 ogres, or other composition of creatures).

**Note:** any settlements/strongholds of monsters/demihumans can greatly exceed these limits.

## 2) PEOPLE DISTRIBUTION

### A) How many settlements are there in a domain? What size? How many people live there?

Generally in the 11th–13th century the inhabitants of urban centers were no more than 20% of those present in the surrounding areas; however, often the descriptions given in the Atlases do not take these limits into account (e.g.: the city of Ylaruam has 13,000 inhabitants and, with the suburbs, reaches 20,000; it should be supported by a population of 65–100,000 in the surroundings, but the entire Emirate has only 78,000!).

If you have no indications about the settlements of a domain, you may want to apply the criteria indicated in '*Medieval Demographics Made Easy*' (by S. John Ross):

---

'the largest city ... will have  $P \cdot M$  inhabitants (where  $P$  is equal to the square root of the inhabitants of the kingdom and  $M$  is equal to a roll of  $2d4+10$ ; average result 15); the second city will be 20% to 80% smaller than the first (to determine at random, roll  $2d4 \times 10\%$ ; average result 50%); each successive city is from 10% to 40% smaller than the previous one (to determine it at random, roll  $2d4 \cdot 5\%$ ; average result 25%); keep doing this until you get results above 5,000 (for *D&D BECMI*) inhabitants.'

---

To determine the population of the towns and then of the villages

---

'continue the 10%-40% city reduction process'; note that 'the number of towns' should still not be greater than 'the number of cities multiplied by  $2d8$  (average result 9).'

---



## B) Size of the settlements

The *FG* may calculate (a generic average of) the area occupied by the population (rural or urban); the result must then be noted so that the file subtracts it from the 'useful' acres for the relative type of land.

To elaborate this calculation, I based myself on these premises:

'In the Middle Ages, a city or town of 38,850 inhabitants occupied on average an area of 1 square mile\*; this means a density of about 61 inhabitants per acre (or 150 per hectare) and, therefore, that the area enclosed within the walls of a typical city of 10,000 inhabitants would be about 165 acres (difficult for a modern city, in terms of population or by size). Some extraordinarily populated supercities could reach 4 times higher density (but note that historians who suggest such densities also assume higher populations for the same cities; there is no consensus on this) and some isolated cities almost certainly had lower densities to 40 inhabitants per acre; generally an average of 61 inhabitants per acre can be a good starting point, subject to the necessary exceptions' \*\*.

(\* ) Note: 1 square mile is equal to 639.99 acres, or 258.94 hectares.

(\*\*) Source: '*Medieval Demographics Made Easy*' by S. John Ross.



**Surface and population of the main cities of medieval Europe**

Table 2B.1: Medieval European City Populations

City (century)	Surface [1]	Population
Florence (13th)	about 1,186.11 acres	about 95,000 [4] (80.09/acres)
Bologna (13th)	about 988.42 acres	about 50,000 [2] (50.59/acres)
Bruges (13th) ( <u>harbor</u> )	about 889.58 acres	about 35,000 [4] (38.90/acres)
Lübeck (13th)	about 444.79 acres	about 25,000 [3] (56.21/acres)
Paris (14th)	about 1,087.26 acres	about 200,000 [4] (183.95/acres)
Ghent (14th)	about 1,408.50 acres	about 50,000 [2] (35.50/acres)
Barcelona (14th) ( <u>harbor</u> )	about 494.21 acres	about 35,000 [3] (70.82/acres)
Bruxelles (14th)	about 1,050.20 acres	about 30,000 [3] (28.57/acres)
London (medieval roman walls) ( <u>harbor</u> )	about 395.37 acres	about 30,000 [3] (75.88/acres)
Venice (and contiguous islands) ( <u>harbor</u> )	about 1,483.62 acres	about 150,000 [1] (101.17/acres)

Sources: [1] Leonardo Benevolo, [2] Roberto Lopez, [3] Edith Ennen, [4] Carlo Cipolla.

**From the box it appears that:** in the 13th century the average density of some cities varied from 38.90 (Bruges) to 80.09 (Florence) inhabitants/acre; in the 14th century the density of other cities ranged from 28.57 (Brussels) to 183.95 (Paris); many of them extended over a square mile, up to about 1,400 acres in Ghent (14th).

**Settlements table**

To calculate the surface area of a settlement, I applied the following table \* modified on the above data:

Table 2B.2: Settlement Type/Population Density

settlement (inhabitants)	inhabitants/acre	settlement (inhabitants)	inhabitants/acre
Countryside & Villages (50–999)	<b>25</b>	City, little (up to 49,999)	<b>70</b>
Town, little (up to 4,999)	<b>35</b>	City, big (up to 99,999)	<b>100</b>
Town, big (up to 14,999)	<b>50</b>	Metropolis (above 100,000)	<b>150</b>

(\*) Source: [http://www.dandwiki.com/wiki/A\\_Magical\\_Medieval\\_City\\_Guide\\_%28DnD\\_Other%29/Generating](http://www.dandwiki.com/wiki/A_Magical_Medieval_City_Guide_%28DnD_Other%29/Generating)

The *FG* allows you to calculate the area of a city by dividing the number of inhabitants by the density/acre (the number in table above) and multiplying by the following coefficient (select the largest that applies):

- inhabitants residing in the countryside or in villages: 1.00;
- settlements with more than 1,000 inhabitants: 1.05;
- if there is also a land market ('trade route'): 1.10;
- if there is also a military area: 1.15;
- if there is also a port (commercial maritime route): 1.25;
- if the settlement is also the seat of government: 1.30.

The area thus obtained is subtracted from that available for the production of food.

### 3) RESOURCES & SUSTENANCE

(the *FG* allows both a monthly and a more realistic annual calculation)

#### A) RESOURCES

The *FG* considers the following (some are mixed to simulate the 'three fields rotation'):

Table 3A: Resources

Vegetables (gross yield)	1d100	Animals	1d100	Minerals	1d100
Oat/Millet (2.4:1) *		Apiculture		Adamantium/Uranium ♥	
Paper/Papyrus		Silkworm breeding ♥		Alabaster/Marble	
Cotton/Linen (or similar)		Cattle breeding		Silver	
Fruit		Camel breeding ♥		Clay	
Wheat (4:1) *		Horse breeding ♥		Coal/Gas/Sulfur	
Wood		Sheep breeding		Tar/Mineral oils	
Wood, precious ♥		Pig breeding		Cynnabril/Red Steel ♥	
Legumes (3.4:1) *		Humanoid breeding		Iron	
Maize (6.0:1) **		Ivory anim. breeding ♥		Gems ♥	
Olive trees (or similar)		Fur animal breeding		Granite/Building Stone	
Barley/Sorghum (3.6:1) *		Rare fur anim. breeding ♥		Mithril ♥	
Potatoes		Hunting and poultry		Gold ♥	
Rice (6,0:1) **		Fishing, river		Lead/Nickel	
Rye (3.4:1) *		Fishing, lake (coast)		Platinum ♥	
Spices ♥		Fishing, sea (coast)		Copper	
Tea/Coffee/Tobacco		Fishing, sea+Pearls ♥		Salt	
Grapes/Hops				Tin	
Vegetables		<b>DERIVATIVES</b>		<b>DERIVATIVES</b>	
<b>DERIVATIVES</b>		Leather armor ♥		Weapons/Armors ♥/Tools	
Weapons/Tools		Ivory ♥		Crafts (various)	
Aromas/Essences		Sausages		Bronze (iron+tin)	
Wood crafts		Dairy products		Electrum (gold+silver)	
Paper/Rare books ♥		Honey/Wax		Treated mineral oils	
Vegetable oils/Fodder		Animal oils		Porcelain/Finished porcelain ♥	
Textiles/Precious textiles ♥		Hides/Rare hides ♥		Dyes/Pigments	
Wine/Beer/Spirit		Slaves ♥		Glassware	

(\*) Gross Yield, source: <http://rm.univr.it/didattica/strumenti/cberubini/saggi/sez1/cap4.btm>

(\*\*) Gross Yield (reduced to 6:1; see sub. D), source: *The Human Web* by J. R. McNeill and William H. McNeill.

(♥) Precious resources according to Gazetters 9 and 11.

(1d100) Each DM is free to generate and write here below his percentages.



## B) INCOME

In *D&D BECMI* each family pays to its lord:

**Taxes** for 1 gp;

**Taxes on resources** (variable):

1 gp if Vegetables;

2 gp if Animals;

3 gp if Minerals;

**Standard Income** (goods in kind) for 10 gp.

At least 20% of families must be employed on each resource; while, if more than 50% of the families are put to work in the mines, the domain will suffer penalties for consent (see *RC*, p. 140).

The *FG* will offer you the following changes and additions to the rules of the game regarding the families' employment:

- the 'precious' vegetable/animal/mineral resources yield a higher tax (+1 gp/household);
- the number of productive families is equal to 1/5 of the inhabitants, minus the percentage of those you will reserve for enrollment and any nomads;
- domains with at least 200 households have 0.5 % of wealthy, and pay only taxes (see *GAZ1: "The Grand Duchy of of Karameikos"*, p. 34);
- the remaining families are automatically assigned half to commerce and half to craftsmanship (see § 7); for both of these categories, the *FG* calculates that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of them pay a tax of 2 gp/month, while the remaining pay a tax of 3 gp/month (these activities were not considered by the creators of the game, but I thought them appropriate to introduce for a more realistic simulation).

## (C) Useful surface

The useful surface ('usable acres' in *FG*) of the map hexes, based on terrain type is determined taking the following factors into consideration:

- a medieval peasant family owned a property ('mansus') with very variable dimensions<sup>9</sup>: Saint-Germain-des-Prés from 5 to 10 hectares (12.3–24.7 acres); Lobbes 15 to 38 ha (37–93 acres); Poperigne 17 to 30 ha (42–74 acres);
- the iugero<sup>10</sup> was the Roman measure to indicate the arable land in 1 day by 1 man with a couple of oxen, equal to about 2,520 sq m. In the Middle Ages, this measure rose to 7,900 square meters (or 1/12 of a 'mansus') and lost the previous reference to arable land in a day;
- in Roman times<sup>11</sup>, the smallest properties ranged from 18 to 108 (Roman) iugera, or from 11 to 67 acres (1 'Roman' iugera = 2,520 sq m);
- in the Middle Ages a 'mansus'<sup>12</sup> ranged from 12 to 40 iugera (12 in Italy in the 11th century), or from 23.4 to 78.1 acres (1 'medieval' iugera = 7,900 sq m);

As a result, on average, in the *FG* a peasant family will be able to cultivate a 'mansus' of up to 50 acres; this respects the rules of the game, according to which when a PC receives a territory (a 24-miles hex) he can have up to 5,000 families (25,000 inhabitants), which will need **up to 250,000**

<sup>9</sup> See <http://rm.univr.it/didattica/strumenti/cherubini/saggi/sez3/cap1.htm>

<sup>10</sup> See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jugerum>

<sup>11</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agriculture\\_in\\_ancient\\_Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agriculture_in_ancient_Rome)

<sup>12</sup> See [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/manso\\_\(Enciclopedia-Italiana\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/manso_(Enciclopedia-Italiana)/)

‘useful’ acres (almost 80% of its surface). Similarly, terrain hexes that can never be civilized (e.g. deserts) will have no more than 499 households (2,495 farmers), which will need **no more than** 24,950 ‘useful’ acres (about 8% of its surface).

Having identified the maximum limits of the useful surface (in acres), I have drawn up the following table:

Terrain Type:	useful acres	woods	useless
Plain or Highland	80 %	10 %	10 %
Woods	45 %	45 %	10 %
Hill	45 %	10 %	45 %
Hill with Woods	40 %	30 %	30 %
Desert or Broken Land	8 %	0 %	92 %
Oasis (Desert)	30 %	10 %	60 %
Forest or Jungle	20 %	70 %	10 %
Mountain	20 %	10 %	70 %
Tundra or Steppes	40 %	0 %	60 %
Swamp	8 %	70%	22 %
Frozen or Volcanic	8 %	0 %	92%

**NOTE:** for each type of land the *FG*: first subtracts automatically the acres occupied by the settlements (columns F14–24 and H14–24) and calculates the ‘usable acres’ for crops and livestock (column J14–24); then automatically subtracts those used by the families assigned to the crops (column A29–50) and calculates the residuals acres for pastures (‘pasture acres’, column K14–K24).  
In practice, as families are assigned to cultivate a certain type of land, the remaining area for livestock will automatically be calculated.

For the following rules, please note that *D&D BECMI* rules assume that a domain has 1–4 resources; this means representing a very little varied economy; therefore we could imagine that productions with better ‘yields’ are only an indication of better ‘development’ (in practice, if a fiefdom has only a ‘pig breeding’ resource this does not mean that that is the only food available).

## D) Crops Yield

(see 'net yield calculation table, based on Kcal' below)

To define the 'gross' yields per acre of crops I based my work on the article by Lorenzo Cherubini (see link sub 3/A), according to which in the XIII century the 'gross' yield of cereals and legumes varied from a minimum of 2 to a maximum of 4; in the table sub 3/A you will find the yields of: wheat (4:1), barley and sorghum (3.6:1), legumes and rye (3.4:1), oats and millet (2.4:1), corn and rice (6:1) (*The Human Web* by J. R. McNeill and William H. McNeill fixed the rice yield as double that of the wheat, but I had to reduce it to avoid excesses).

From the article *Calculations with Dominions* by Mike Harvey we know that, to sow 1 acre, 2 units of seeds are required; then the FG calculates the 'net' yield per acre of crops by multiplying their 'gross' yield by 2, subtracting 2 units of seeds from the total (subsequent sowing) and dividing the result by 2.

For vegetables, I calculated a 'net' yield of 1.75, dividing the average Kcal of cooked vegetables (34.17 Kcal) by the result of dividing the Kcal of cooked cereals (116 Kcal/100 g.) and their 'net' yield (6:1) rounded to the nearest 0.05; for potatoes (78 Kcal) of 2.30, dividing by 34.17 (average cooked vegetables).

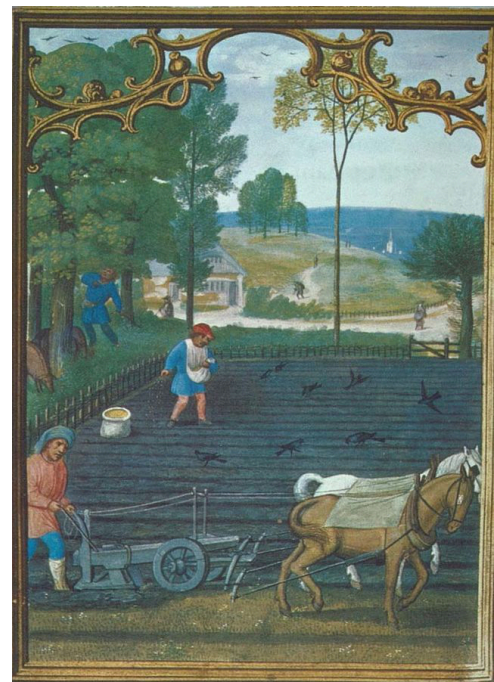
I calculated the 'net' yields of grapes/hops (69 Kcal) as 1.90 and fruit (average 62 Kcal) as 1.70, dividing by 36.58 Kcal (average raw vegetables) rounded to the nearest 0.05; for olive trees a fictitious net yield of 1.75.

The crop yield also depends on the cultivated area: 1/2 of the area for monocultures (biennial rotation); 2/3 for two crops (three-year rotation); 100% for vegetables and plantations.

In short, the units of plant food are calculated according to whether they are:

- two-year rotation (monocultures): n. fam. \*([(gross yield \*2-2)\*1/2]\*modifiers)\*n. acres (max 50);
- three-year rotation (two cultures): n. fam. ([([(gross yield A\*2-2)+(gross yield B\*2-2)]/2)\*2/3]\*modif.)\*n. acres (max 50);
- plantations (fruit, olive trees, grapes) and vegetables: n. fam.\*(net yield\*modifiers)\*n. acres (max 50).

Modifiers: the FG allows you to apply the following bonuses/penalties that affect production (normally +/- 10% each): 1-2) land; 3-4) climate; 5-6) technology; 7-8) magical effects; 9-10) events (e.g. raids).





## E) Livestock, Hunting and Poultry Yield

(see 'net yield calculation table, based on Kcal' below)

To assimilate the yield of the farms to a cultivated mansus, I have divided the Kcal of the various types of cooked meat with that of cooked vegetables (34.17 Kcal) rounded to the nearest 0.05: Pigs 7.30 (250 Kcal), Cattle 7.15 (245 Kcal), Sheep 6.05 (207 Kcal), Hunting and Poultry 6.30 (215 Kcal), Horses 5.10 (175 Kcal), Camels 4.70 (160 Kcal); for humans and 'humanoids' I established a value of 4.05 (139 Kcal, for skin, muscles and fat<sup>13</sup>); while, for 'animals for fur' and 'for ivory' I established a value of 3.85 (equal to 2/3 of the average value of the others).

Mike Bourke's article "*The Impact Of Urban Migration On Fantasy Games*"<sup>14</sup> states that

*'animals and fruit require more surface area to produce a given amount of food, sometimes much more'* and

*'let's assume that the average is an efficiency equal to half'* (of the crops);

to simulate a 'livestock mansus' of similar capacity per acre, I established an average area of 100 acres and divided the yield by 4.

<sup>13</sup> Sources for this determination are:

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-4386588/Stone-Age-cannibals-Hunting-not-worth-hassle.html> and  
<https://beppeleonardis.blogspot.com/2017/04/il-valore-nutritivo-della-carne-umana.html>

<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.campaignmastery.com/blog/the-impact-of-urban-migration/>

The 'bred' food units are calculated as follows:  $n. families * ((yield * modifiers) / 4) * n. acres (max 100)$ .

It is possible to apply the bonus/malus modifiers (+/- 10%) of the case (see § 3/D).

The value of S.I. also allows you to calculate the number of bred animals and/or food rations available to the feudal lord: divide the S.I. families obtained (120 gp/year per family) for the specific cost of the animals (and/or the desired food rations) resulting from the game manuals.

## F) Fishing Yield

(see 'net yield calculation table, based on Kcal' below)

To assimilate the yield of fishing to that of a cultivated mansus, I divided the Kcal of the various types of cooked fish by that of cooked vegetables (34.17 Kcal) rounded to the nearest 0.05: Freshwater Fishing 4.70 (160 Kcal), Saltwater Fishing 3.85 (132 Kcal).

Mike Bourke's article "*The Impact Of Urban Migration On Fantasy*"<sup>15</sup> Games" states that

*'20 square miles of fishing ground with a usable depth of 30 feet is 6 times the surface area of 20 square miles with only the top being used, even conceding that fish are not as densely packed as vegetables may be';*

to make it easy I reduced the multiplier to 5 times; to simulate a 'fishing area' of similar capacity per acre, I established an average area of 10 acres and multiplied the yield by 5.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*

The 'fished' food units are calculated as follows: n. families \* ((yield \* modifiers) \* 5) \* n. acres (max 10).

It is possible to apply the bonus/malus modifiers (+/- 10%) of the case (see § 3/D).

**NET YIELD CALCULATION TABLE BASED ON KCAL**

Vegetables	Kcal raw*	Kcal cooked*	Meats 1: various	Kcal cooked *
Beet	19	20	Horse	175 (5.12)
Broccoli	34	35	Camel	160 (4.68)
Artichoke	47	53	Pork	250 (7.31)
Cabbage	27	24	Beef	245 (7.17)
Cauliflower	25	23	<b>Meats 2: sheep</b>	<b>Kcal cooked*</b>
Onion	40	44	Goat	143
Green bean	31	35	Mutton (lamb)	271
Lettuce	17	15	<b>Average Kcal</b>	<b>207 (6.06)</b>
<b>Potato</b>	77	<b>78 (2.30)</b>	<b>Meats 3: hunting/poultry</b>	<b>Kcal cooked*</b>
Peas	81	42	Wildboar	160
Tomato	18	18	Deer	158
Spinach	23	23	Rabbit	197
<b>Average Kcal</b>	<b>36.58</b>	<b>34.17</b>	Pheasant	239
<b>Cereals</b>	<b>sowing</b>	<b>Kcal cooked*</b>	Chicken	296
Oats	winter	-	Goose	238
Couscous	-	112	Quail	227
Sorghum	spring	-	Turkey	208
Wheat (grain) °	spring/wint.	126	<b>Average Kcal</b>	<b>215 (6.29)</b>
Maizes (com) °	spring	90	<b>Fishing 1: fresh water</b>	<b>Kcal cooked*</b>
Millet	spring	119	Carp	162
Barley °	winter	123	Mullet	150
Rice	spring	130	Catfish	144
Rye	winter	-	Salmon	178
(°) <i>exploitative</i>	<b>Average Kcal</b>	<b>116 (3.39)</b>	Trout	168
<b>Fruit</b>	<b>Kcal raw*</b>		<b>Average Kcal</b>	<b>160 (4.68)</b>
Apricot	48		<b>Fishing 2: salt water</b>	<b>Kcal cooked*</b>
Pineapple	50		Sea bass	114
Orange	47		Grouper	118
Banana	89		Cod	85
Khaki	70		Swordfish	172
Cherry	63		Turbot	122
Prickly pear	74		Tuna	184
Blueberry	57		<b>Average Kcal</b>	<b>132 (3.86)</b>
Pear	58		<b>Legumes °°</b>	<b>Kcal cooked*</b>
<b>Average Kcal</b>	<b>62 (1.69)</b>		Chickpeas	164
<b>Grapes</b>	<b>69 (1.88)</b>		Bean	143
<b>Olive</b>	<b>Kcal raw*</b>	Equated to	Lentil	116
Black	145 ---->	vegetables:	Lupine	119
Green	235 ---->	these cannot	<b>Average Kcal</b>	<b>135 (3.95)</b>
<b>Average Kcal</b>	<b>190 (5.19)*</b>	sustain like	(°°) <i>Kcal for legumes based on Cherubini article.</i>	
		meat!!		

(\* Source: <http://www.valori-alimenti.com/nutrizionali/categoria-1100.php>

## G) CONSUMPTION AND FOOD SHORTAGE

The calculations of the *FG* are inspired by *Calculations with Dominions* by **Mike Harvey** (2 units of seeds are necessary to sow an acre; they are equivalent to 2 units of food and are sufficient to feed a man for 28 days, while old people or children consume half); therefore **a family made up of 4 workers and 1 old person or child needs 9 food units/month (or 108 food units/year)**.

As in the D&D BECMI rules a family is made up of 5 elements (however in *RC* is specified that it is made up of 5 'productive' people, creating the problem of determining how many children/old people there are); however, it is clear that the game refers to the 'nuclear' family of the early Middle Ages (4–5 individuals).

Basing ourselves on the 'services table' shown in the *Dawn of the Emperors Boxed Set*, we can hypothesize that a middle-class family (artisans and traders) consumes food 2.5 times compared to a poor one ('average meal' = 1 gp), while a rich consumes equivalent to 25 times ('superior meal' = 10 gp).

If the fief does not produce enough food, it can be bought; since the *GAZ11 Player's Book* (page 23) states that feeding a worker costs 1 gp/week, we could agree that 1 unit of food costs 2 gp (for 2 weeks). Alternatively, it is possible to 'obtain' food from other domains, or have it created by clerics if powerful enough; the *FG* allows various options and calculates the expense. But you are also free to... **turn off the food balance** and employ all the inhabitants in rich gold mines!!

## 4) FINANCIAL BALANCE OF A DOMAIN

The *D&D BECMI* rules does not require you to calculate every minimum management fee; with the *FG* it is possible to calculate the expenses for Festivities, Salt Tax, Tithe (below), as well as for Events, Sustenance, Specialists, Military, and Production of Weapons and/or Equipment (in the following paragraphs).



Religious procession

- **Festivities:** can be declared by the Rulers (usually 1/year) or by the Church (usually 2/year) and are extended to all the estates of their subordinates (e.g. those declared by the King extend to all his vassals); the *FG* automatically deducts them from the percentage of revenue due to who declared them (from the ecclesiastical tithe, or from the salt tax); festivities declared by a Count or lower-ranking noble costs 1 gp per peasant (5 gp per household); those declared by a Marquis or a higher-ranking noble costs the double;
- **Salt tax:** if the domain is a vassal, it is equal to 20% of the income (minus the relative festivity expenses);



- **Tithe:** it is equal to 10% of the income (minus the relative festivity expenses), but it should not be applied when the ruler is also the head of the ecclesiastical community (e.g. Patriarchate);
- **Expenses for Sustenance and other Events:** if food is missing, the FG allows some options to obtain it and calculates the cost; moreover, a percentage of expenditure (at least 5%) can be entered to consider the effects of sudden Events on the economy (e.g. some disaster, strong corruption or raid by bandits);
- **Other Expenses of the domain:** we mean those for Festivities, Specialists and Military personnel, and Production of Weapons and/or Equipment (the latter can be calculated in the last lines of the file; see § 9).



## 5) EXPENSES FOR SPECIALISTS AND FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL ('SPECIALISTS' AND 'TROOPS')

For the description and costs of personnel ('specialists' and 'military') I referred to the indications contained in the *D&D Expert, Companion, Master, Rules Cyclopedia, Dawn of Emperors* books, as well as the CM2 modules, and the Gazetteers GAZ10 and GAZ11; in the FG I also applied the following rules.

### A) SPECIALIST automatically assigned

At domain level:

- Free territories, villages, towns, cities and metropolises: chaplain (only with 2,000 or more inhabitants);
- Lesser Domains (from Barony to County): herald, chamberlain, chaplain, and accountant;
- Higher Domains (from Marquisate upwards): animal trainer, engineer, and chief butler;
- Independent Domains: alchemist, and sage (only if Resource I. + Taxes I. + S. I. more than 250,000/year).

**Numerical assumptions:**

- armorers (1 per 50 troops and graduates);
- blacksmiths and smiths (1 per 50 knights and graduates);
- deputy-chaplains (1 per 250 inhabitants);
- chaplains (1 per 25 deputy-chaplains) (there can be 1 patriarch per cult/nation);
- provost (1 per 2,500 inhabitants);
- first magistrate (if at least 2 magistrates) (NB: the Governor is considered administering justice for 1 week/month for the first 5,000 inhabitants).

Specialists not mentioned above are assigned by the player at fiefdom creation.

**B) basic MONTHLY cost of the SPECIALIST (and their HD)**

Magician (or 'magist') (9+ HD) = 3,000 (+250 gp/additional HD); herald = 300 to 500 gp; minister = 400 gp; diplomats of Class 1, 2 and lawyer = 400, 200 and 85 gp (see GAZ10); employees 10 gp (10 x number of ministers + diplomats + lawyers); patriarch (9+ HD) and chaplain (5-8 HD) = 100 gp \* HD; deputy-chaplain, provost and chamberlain = 20 gp; seneschal and guard commander (9+ HD) = 4,000 gp (+400 gp/additional HD); castellan (5-9 HD) = 1,200 gp 5 HD (+200 gp/additional HD); artillerist (1-2 HD) and chief artillerist (3-5 HD) = 250 gp \* HD; warden (3-5 HD), marshal (5-8 HD) and sheriff (5-8 HD) = 20 gp \* HD.

**C) Basic MONTHLY cost of the MILITARY**

(doubles if the domain is in a state of war):

- troops (1 HD) (see *Expert Set* or *RC*) but I added: 'medium' infantry (mail armor; 3 gp), distinct from 'heavy' infantry (plate armor; 4 gp); humanoid troops (up to 3+1 HD) cost half of the corresponding humans/demihumans (elves, rakasta), while troops with 1/2 HD cost 1/4 (kobolds) and dwarves cost 1.5 times;
- troops (2 or 3 HD): the cost indicated in the rules is increased by 10 gp for each HD beyond the first;
- marines (1-3 HD): the cost is equal to the corresponding land troop type;
- sergeants (2-4 HD) and lieutenants (3-6 HD): 20 gp/month \* HD;
- captains (6+ HD) and heroes (6+ HD): 200 gp/month (+50 gp/additional HD);
- casters of arcane/divine spells (both troopers and officers): they cost double.

For all military personnel, up to 20 weeks of training can be added.

Military for which you select 'SLAVES', 'FOLLOWERS' or 'ONLY in war' are not paid.



Mercenaries Table					
<i>(All 1st level; they come with the minimum equipment indicated below; prices quoted are in gp/month; double pay rates for wartime.)</i>					
Type of Mercenary	Man	Dwarf	Elf	Orc	Goblin
Archer (leather, short bow, sword) .....	5	—	10	3	2
Bowman, Mounted (light horse, short bow) .....	15	—	30	—	—
Crossbowman (chain, heavy crossbow) .....	4	6	—	2	—
Crossbowman, Mounted (mule, crossbow) .....	—	15	—	—	—
Footman, Light (leather, shield, sword) .....	2	—	4	1	1/2
Footman, Heavy (chain, shield, sword) .....	3	5	6	1 1/2	—
Horseman, Light (leather, lance) .....	10	—	20	—	—
Horseman, Medium (chain, lance) .....	15	—	—	—	—
Horseman, Heavy (plate, sword, lance) .....	20	—	—	—	—
Longbowman (chain, longbow, sword) .....	10	—	20	—	—
Normal Man (peasant, spear) .....	1	—	—	—	—
Wolf-Rider (leather, spear, wolf) .....	—	—	—	—	5

Archer 1HD	1	Fighter	Human	5.00
Archer 1HD	1	Fighter & M.U.	Elf, common	10.00
Archer 1HD	1	Fighter	Orc (1 HD)	2.50
Archer 1HD	1	Fighter	Goblin (1-1 HD)	2.50
Bowman, mount 1HD	1	Fighter	Human	15.00
Bowman, mount 1HD	1	Fighter & M.U.	Elf, common	30.00
Crossbowman 1HD	1	Fighter	Human	4.00
Crossbowman 1HD	1	Fighter	Dwarf	6.00
Crossbowman 1HD	1	Fighter	Orc (1 HD)	2.00
Crossb., mount 1HD	1	Fighter	Dwarf	15.00
Footman, light 1HD	1	Fighter	Human	2.00
Footman, light 1HD	1	Fighter & M.U.	Elf, common	4.00
Footman, light 1HD	1	Fighter	Orc (1 HD)	1.00
Footman, light 1HD	1	Fighter	Goblin (1-1 HD)	1.00
Footm., medium 1HD	1	Fighter	Human	3.00
Footm., medium 1HD	1	Fighter	Dwarf	4.50
Footm., medium 1HD	1	Fighter & M.U.	Elf, common	6.00
Footm., medium 1HD	1	Fighter	Orc (1 HD)	1.50
Horseman, light 1HD	1	Fighter	Human	10.00
Horseman, light 1HD	1	Fighter & M.U.	Elf, common	20.00
Horseman, medium 1HD	1	Fighter	Human	15.00
Horseman, heavy 1HD	1	Fighter	Human	20.00
Longbowman 1HD	1	Fighter	Human	10.00
Longbowman 1HD	1	Fighter & M.U.	Elf, common	20.00
militia 1HD	1	Normal Man	Human	1.00
Horseman, light 1HD	1	Fighter	Goblin (1-1 HD)	5.00

MERCENARY table from Rules Cyclopedia (above) compared to Fiefdom Generator (left)

In the comparison, the four values in red are the only ones I changed

**D) MONTHLY COST OF SPECIALIST AND MILITARY with over 9 HD (the so-called 'NAME level')**

If not indicated, refer to the base cost for 9 HD and, for each additional level, increase it by 10%.

**E) CONTROL OF PUBLIC ORDER IN URBAN CENTERS**

In *Medieval Demographics Made Easy* by S. J. Ross an average of 1 soldier for every 150 inhabitants is indicated. For simplicity, assuming 12-hour shifts and also assigning city defense tasks, I have established an average of 2 for every 100 inhabitants.

Thus, a city of 10,000 inhabitants requires a garrison of 200 men for these functions.

**F) CONTROL OF THE TERRITORY (patrols)**

the *RC* (p. 139) underlines that, to avoid the resettlement of enemies, it is necessary to patrol the territory; the patrols go up to 24 miles from the fortress for almost all terrains (except jungles, swamps, and mountains, in which the patrols operate up to 8 miles).

**A wise ruler should therefore organize part of his forces to oversee his lands.**





**USING STANDARD INCOME (S.I.)**

**6) COINAGE AND/OR EXTRACTING GEMS (RESOURCES: MINERALS)**

**A) COINAGE**

The S.I. receipt from families employed in metal mining indicates the *value* of the metals extracted and delivered to the ruler.

The 'number' of coins produced depends on the type of metal used to mint the coins.

Note that minting is, as a rule, the prerogative of the governing prince, not of his vassals.

**B) EXTRACTING GEMS**

The S.I. receipt from families employed in gem mining indicates the *value* of the gems extracted and delivered to the ruler.

**7) ARTISANS AND TRADERS (RESOURCES: VEGETABLES, ANIMALS, MINERALS)**

**A) The S.I. received by the ARTISANS**

This allows the ruler to obtain any item with a value equal or lesser than the amount received for such S.I. (you will have to deduct this expense from the budget yourself); the item will be delivered after the months necessary to obtain the relative value of S.I.

**B) The S.I. received by the TRADERS**

This has the following peculiarities:

- it is delivered in cash, immediately available and spendable (unlike the other S.I.);
- it allows the ruler to obtain any item with a value equal or lesser than the amount received for such S.I. (you will have to deduct this expense from the budget yourself); the item will be delivered after the months necessary to obtain the relative value of S.I.

## 8) PRODUCING GOODS (RESOURCES: WOOD, ANIMALS, MINERALS)

The S.I. received by families employed on resources Wood, Animals and Minerals indicates the *value* of the materials delivered; these materials will be sold for cash the following month.

Also note that, sometimes, a nation may be devoid of goods that are normally considered *common* (e.g. Ylaruam is almost woodless); thus, if a fiefdom does not produce the required materials, it could obtain them elsewhere: by merchants, paying additional costs based on the type of good (common or precious) and the place where it is found (see § 10); by war; magically; etc.

These materials can also be used to produce weapons and equipment (see § 9).



*Tools and armor production in a forge*

## 9) PRODUCING WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT (RESOURCES: WOOD, ANIMALS, MINERALS)

**Premise:** no wise ruler allows his vassals to manufacture or trade weapons and equipment as they please; whoever would allow it, will do it as long as necessary to maintain his power and not so that someone can turn against him!

Anyone wishing to produce such items without the express consent of the regent can do so, but at his own risk.

In the game there aren't weapons supermarkets; those purchased by adventurers for their first raids are always *average quality* equipment and, certainly, the local stores do not sell hundreds.

The S.I. received by families employed on resources that can be used to craft weapons and equipments indicates the value of the materials available, **but not processed**, in the domain:

- if you have wood resources, you can craft wooden equipment;
- if you have animal resources, you can craft leather equipment;
- if you have metal resources, you can craft equipment made with the related metal;
- for weapons made of different materials (e.g. crossbows), reference the prevailing material.

To produce weapons and equipment, the ruler must hire armorers; the rules of the game state that, in a year, 1 armorer (1,200 gp / year) + 2 blacksmiths (600 gp / year) + 4 assistants (240 gp / year) can produce 48 armors, or 144 shields, or 240 various weapons (also bows / crossbows + 20 arrows / 30 darts), or 144 saddle bags, saddle and bridle (total cost = 2,040 gp); this is an *average quality* production (indicated 'Eq=1' in the FG). For a *good quality*, the production is reduced by 1/3 ('Eq=2'); for an *excellent quality*, it is reduced by 2/3 ('Eq=3').

Since it is evident that the *selling price* indicated in the manuals (e.g. expert rule-book) for most of the items (e.g. 48 leather armor = 960 gp) would not even cover the production cost (2,040 gp), we must assume that: 1) the *selling price* on the manuals must be considered as the *cost of the materials* required to produce; 2) the *production cost* (shortly, the armorers) must be added to that price.

Finally, to know how many items of a certain type can be produced by a domain, we have to see if it produces a sufficient amount of S.I. of that material (e.g. to produce 240 swords, is needed a S.I. in iron of 2,400 gp).

If not, the ruler will have to find elsewhere the needed resources; one way is doing trade.

If you must to contact the merchants to purchase the resources necessary for the production of weapons and equipment (not siege weapons), the FG allows you to calculate the cost by referring to the *Goods Value* and the *Gross Revenue* indicated for *common* goods (see § 10 letter 'b'), selecting the distance of the place where they are found.

## 10) TRADING (EVERY ITEM)

### A) Costs AND Profits

**Premise:** I preferred to develop the GAZ2: "*The Emirates of Ylaruam*" rules because they are simpler than those described in GAZ9: "*The Minrothbad Guilds*" and GAZ11: "*The Republic of Darokin*".

**1st argument:** in GAZ2 (p. 30) a merchant advises: '*buy coffee, spices, textiles, and expensive household crafts in Darokin, Karamaikos, or Thyatis. Sell high in Tameronikas, or better yet, ship across the caravan routes and sell at twice the price in Ylaruam, or three times the price in a rural market. Buy the best horses from the nomads, the best rugs and pottery from rural craftsmen and weapons, glass, and jewelry from urban craftsmen, and export them;*' GAZ9 (Player's Book, p. 31) confirms that '*a standard retail price ... can be 100% or more of the wholesale price.*'

Basically, GAZ2 allows us to establish the profitability of a trade (the *Gross Revenue*) basing it on the distance, as well as on the type of goods traded (*precious* or *common*), without too many complications.

So, we can state that the *Gross Revenue*:

- a) for *precious* good is: 1) 50% of the *Good Value*, if sold in a nearby city (same nation); 2) 100% of the *Good Value*, if sold in a nearby village (same nation) or in a distant city (other nation); 3) 200% of the *Good Value*, if sold in a distant village (other nation);
- b) for *common* good is: 1) 25% of the *Good Value*, if sold in a nearby city (same nation); 2) 50% of the *Good Value*, if sold in a nearby village (same



nation) or in a distant city (other nation); 3) 100% of the *Good Value*, if sold in a distant village (other nation).

**2nd argument:** in GAZ1: “*The Grand Duchy of Karamaikos*” it is stated (p. 34) that the ruler receives a tax equal to 5% of the value of each transaction from families engaged in trade.

**3rd argument:** in GAZ9: “*The Minrothbad Guilds*” (GM’s Book, p. 28) it is stated that, if no more detailed rules apply, the *Management Cost* is equal to 50% of the *Gross Revenue*; moreover, if an item comes from another country, an additional 2d10% for customs duties must be paid (*on average*); and, finally, both GAZ9 and GAZ11 list *pre-*

*ciuous* and *common* goods, with a lot of useful informations.

In the following table, the *Good Value* would be the cost of the material and the expense to produce an item.

Therefore, knowing the *Good Value* and distinguishing only the *Type of Good* and the *Distance* at which it will be sold, it is possible to calculate all the other percentages (*Tax, Gross Revenue, Management Cost and Net Revenue*) and determine the purchase cost of an item (***Final Price + Customs Duty***):

Table 10A: Prices

Type of Good	Distance	Good Value *	Tax (local)	Gross Revenue	= Final Price	+ Customs Duty **	Management Cost	Net Revenue ***
<u>precious</u>	1	64.00%	5%	31.00%	= 100%	0%	16.50%	16.50%
	2	47.50%	5%	47.50%	= 100%	0% (+11%)	23.75%	23.75%
	3	31.00%	5%	64.00%	= 100%	+11%	32.00%	32.00%
<u>common</u>	1	71.00%	5%	24.00%	= 100%	0%	12.00%	12.00%
	2	64.00%	5%	31.00%	= 100%	0% (+11%)	16.50%	16.50%
	3	47.50%	5%	47.50%	= 100%	+11%	23.75%	23.75%

(\*) The *Good Value* for weapons or other equipment (crafted by an armorer) listed on the game books is equal to their stated price **plus** the proportion of 2,040 gp (1 armorer + 2 blacksmiths + 4 assistants) as production expenses (see § 9).

(\*\*) The *Customs Duty* is an additional cost that, on average, I set at 11% ((2d10%)/2); thus, when a trade is directed to ‘... (***other nation***)’ (at distances ‘2’ and ‘3’), you **should** add an additional 11%. The customs duty could also be higher, depending on politics and... GM wish.

(\*\*\*) The *Net Revenue* is the actual gain of the merchant, equal to 50% of the *Gross Revenue*; the other part (the *Management Cost*) is to pay supplies, workers and some warriors, etc.

**Example 1:** the *Final Price* for a ***common*** good (*Good Value* 60 gp) in a nearby city (*Distance* 1) is **84.51** gp, of which: 60 gp (71%) is *Good Value*, 4.23 gp (5%) is *Tax* and 20.28 gp (24%) is *Gross Revenue*.



**Example 2:** the *Final Price* for the same **common** good (*Good Value* 60 gp) in a remote village in another country (*Distance* 3) is **140.21** gp, of which: 60 gp (47.5%) is *Good Value*, 6.32 gp (5%) is *Tax*, 60 gp (47.5%) is *Gross Revenue* and an extra of 13.89 gp (= 11%) is *Customs Duty*.

**Example 3:** the *Final Price* for a *average quality* plate armor (note: it's a **precious** good) [*Good Value* 68.50 gp of which: 60 gp is material (see § 9) and 8.50 gp is producing cost] in a remote village in another country (*Distance* 3) is **245.28** gp, of which: 68.50 gp (31%) is *Good Value*, 11.05

gp (5%) is *Tax*, 141.42 gp (7.5%) is *Gross Revenue* and an extra of 24.31 gp (= 11%) is *Customs Duty*.

This system is compatible with that outlined in Gazetteers 9 and 11: in practice the *Final Price* of an object, determined on the basis of the table above, corresponds to the **Modified Price** described in those manuals; thus, to determine the *Final Price* according to those rules, you must just apply the valuation and negotiation rules as indicated in **Step 5** of GAZ9 (GM's Book, p. 33) or GAZ11 (Player's Book, p. 27).

**B) CREATING AND MAINTAINING a trade route (land or sea)\***

In order to obtain taxes from trade, a trade route and a market (or port) must exist. If it does not exist, it is possible to create it *'but only from a city and with an investment'* of:

Investment Type °	Cost (gp)	Time of realization
Trade Route (land) °°	10,000	5 months
Trade Route (sea) °°°	3,000	2 months
Market °°°°	5,000	3 months
Harbor (river) °°°°°	10,000	8 months
Harbor (sea) °°°°°	20,000	12 months

- ° You can only invest in one development at a time.
- °° Caravan Route (land): more than one can be launched for the same hex; each time another city with 20,000 inhabitants or more will have to be connected; they can only extend over land.
- °°° Trade Route (sea): can only be started from cities with 20,000 inhabitants or more and in which there is a port; for every 5 routes you have to pay the cost of another port.
- °°°° Market: can only be built after establishing at least one commercial route; for every 5 commercial routes a new market will need to be built.
- °°°°° Harbor (river) and Harbor (sea): they can only be built on river or sea respectively.

(\*) Based on *'Reami e Nobiltà'* by Ominbius V. 1.0 del 17<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

At least 1 trip per month is required to maintain the trade route (or route), organized by the ruler or whoever manages that trade; if it doesn't, you have no income for that month; if trade is interrupted for six months, the trade route (or route) is irretrievably lost and it takes 1d12 months to re-establish it.



### C) DETERMINATION OF THE ACTIVITIES PRESENT IN AN URBAN CENTER \*

*‘The following table indicates a Support Value (SV) for each type of activity: it indicates the number of people necessary to support a single activity of that type (e.g. the SV for shoemakers is 150; this means that there will be one cobbler for every 150 people in a certain area).*

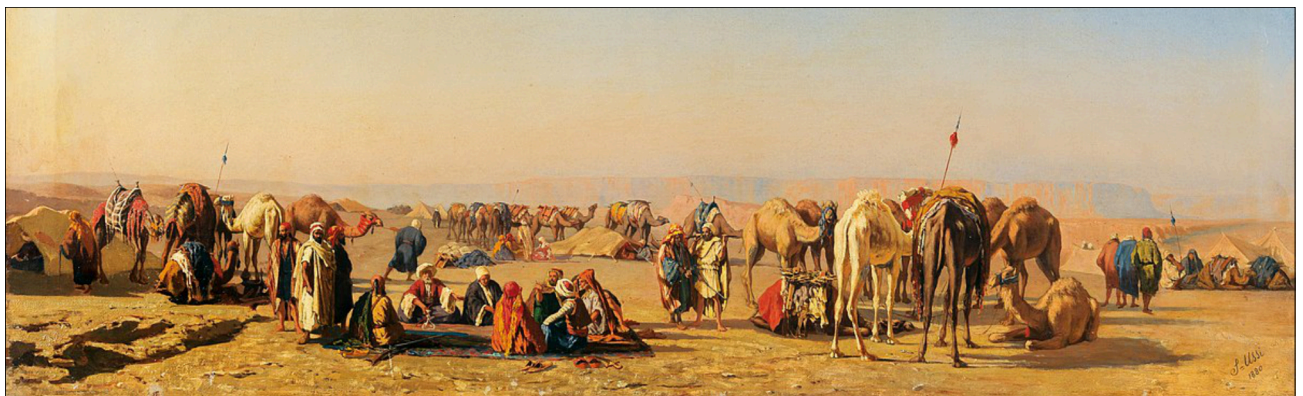
*These numbers can vary up to 60% in either direction, but provide a useful starting point for GMs; think about the nature of the town or city to decide if the numbers need to be changed (e.g. a city with a port will have more fishermen than indicated).*

*To find the number of inns in a city, divide the city’s population by the SV of the inns (2,000); with a village of 400 people we will have only a 20% chance of finding them.*

<b>Business</b>	<b>SV</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>SV</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>SV</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>SV</b>
Shoemakers	150	Butchers	1,200	Mercers	700	Inns	2,000
Furriers	250	Fishmongers	1,200	Coopers	700	Tanners	2,000
Maidservants	250	Beer-Sellers	1,400	Bakers	800	Copyists	2,000
Tailors	250	Buckle Makers	1,400	Watercarriers	850	Sculptors	2,000
Barbers	350	Plasterers	1,400	Scabbardmakers	850	Rugmakers	2,000
Jewelers	400	<u>Spice Merchants</u>	1,400	Wine-Sellers	900	Harness-Makers	2,000
Taverns/Restaurants	400	Blacksmiths	1,500	Hatmakers	950	Bleachers	2,100
Old-Clothes	400	Painters	1,500	Saddlers	1,000	<u>Hay Merchants</u>	2,300
Pastrycooks	500	Doctors	1,700	Chicken Butchers	1,000	Cutlers	2,300
Masons	500	Roofers	1,800	Pursemakers	1,100	Glovemakers	2,400
Carpenters	550	Locksmiths	1,900	Woodsellers	2,400	Woodcarvers	2,400
Weavers	600	Bathers	1,900	Magic-Shops	2,800	Booksellers	6,300
Chandlers	700	Ropemakers	1,900	Bookbinders	3,000	Illuminators	3,900

*Furthermore, there should be a nobleman for every 200 inhabitants, a priest for every 40 and a chaplain for every 25 priests, a well-maintained medieval city has a representative of the law for every 150 citizens (some poorly maintained cities have up to half, while rare they have more).*

(\*). Source: ‘Medieval Demographics Made Easy’ by S. John Ross (data in bold has been considered in FG).







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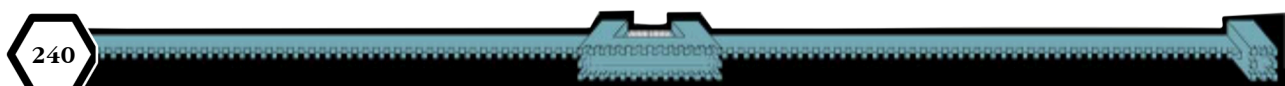
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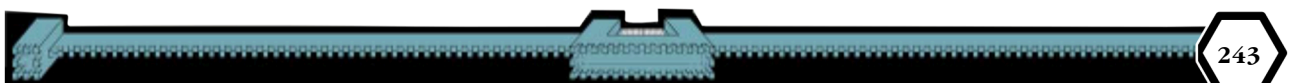


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## Submission Guidelines

### Proposals

All proposal submissions can be sent by mail to the editors at the following address: [Threshold.Mystara@gmail.com](mailto:Threshold.Mystara@gmail.com), and must be received by the proposal deadline<sup>†</sup>. The *THRESHOLD* editorial team will contact you within 7 days of the proposal deadline regarding the status of your proposal.

Submission proposals should be sent inline in the mail, using the following subject format:

[ISSUE#][Proposal]<title of your article>

The mail content should include the following:

- Proposed article title
- The type of article being proposed (short story, adventure, geographical location, organization, etc...)
- A one paragraph description of what the article is about
- An estimated word count of the article (articles should range anywhere from 1000 to 7000 words, depending on the type of article submitted)

### Manuscripts

Manuscripts should only be submitted after you proposal has been accepted by the *THRESHOLD* editorial staff, and must be received by the manuscript deadline<sup>†</sup>. When submitting a manuscript file, please use the following naming convention:

threshold\_#\_your\_title.<extension>

(extension: see below for recommended file formats) and the following subject format:

[ISSUE#][Manuscript]<title of your article>

The mail content should include the following:

- The article title.
- An attached document containing the article contents.
- The final word count of the article.

Other types of contributions: the editorial team will consider on a case by case basis other types of contributions. Please contact us to inquire if and how we can accommodate unusual contribution formats.

The following guidelines apply to different types of submissions:

*Illustrations:* Please submit art and maps in lossless format (e.g., PNG).

*Articles:* Manuscript submissions can be sent by mail as plain text, doc(x) or odt, or shared as Google Doc. The issue editor will create a shared document (for each article) to allow the author and editorial team to work on it. Articles can be as short as a single page, or as long as 6 pages, depending on the specific content. The editorial team will do its best to accommodate the contributions, but especially long works may be split over several issues.

*Tables:* Tables should be numbered (Table X: Name of Table), and any references in the article should refer to that table number (and not to “the table below,” for example).

*Author Bios:* Please include a short blurb (one or two sentences) biography/blurb about yourself for our “contributing authors” section. It can be serious or silly, but don't get too carried away with it, please.

*Other types of contributions:* The editorial team will consider on a case by case basis other types of contributions. Please contact us to inquire if and how we can accommodate unusual contribution formats.

<sup>†</sup>Refer to “*Call for Contributions*” (page 9) for next issue deadline dates.

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