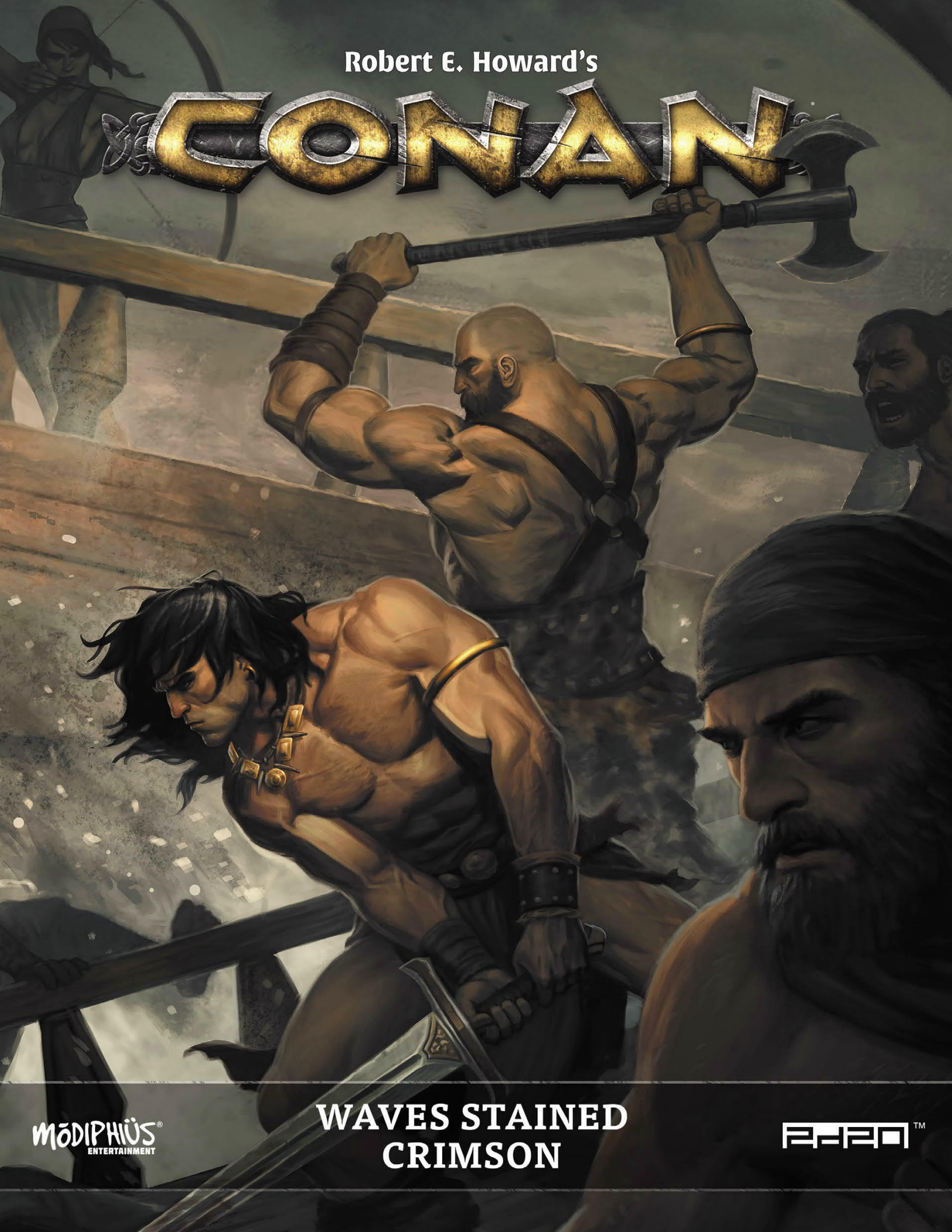


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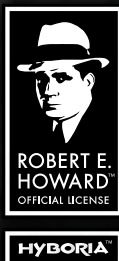
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INTRODUCTION



WAVES STAINED CRIMSON



"This keel will stain the blue waves crimson wherever it plows."

— "Iron Shadows in the Moon"

Waves Stained Crimson is a campaign adventure for the **Conan: Adventures in an Age Undreamed Of** roleplaying game. In these scenarios the player characters begin as passengers aboard a merchant ship seized by pirates. The tales that follow find them becoming pirates themselves as they hunt down the men who tried to kill them — the pirate captain Herge Daimos and his companion sorcerer, Maledict Mer. Seeking not only revenge, but to rescue their crewmate and friend, Emeraina, the player characters encounter demons, horrors of the sea, pirates of many different ports of call, and conniving merchants and noblemen in the courts of Argos. They'll raid a wizard's remote island hideout, before taking part in a massive raid on a rich slave port on the Black Coast. There, the player characters find dark sorcery, treachery, and might just be able to take their bloody revenge before the tale is through. But only by facing a horror from beneath the sea and beyond time and sanity. If they win at all...

THE ADVENTURES

This book features five lengthy adventures and includes all the information you need to build the campaign for your players. The gamemaster may, however, find the **Conan the Pirate** and **Book of Skelos** sourcebooks useful for finer details and fleshing out characters, ships, and spells featured in this text. The final chapter of this book offers ideas for further adventures once this campaign is finished.

CHAPTER 1: THE ROSE AND THE SHADOW

The player characters begin the campaign as passengers aboard a merchant ship bound from Argos to Shem. When the ship is captured by pirates, they find themselves as

intended sacrifices for a wizard's evil sea-god. Escaping that fate, shipwreck leaves them on an island inhabited by an ancient demon hungry for sacrifices of its own.

CHAPTER 2: A TRAIL OF BASTARDS

Still trapped on the deserted island, unlikely rescuers arrive — more pirates! The player characters have a chance to seize control of the pirates' ship and become pirates themselves, as they begin their pursuit of the pirate captain who kidnapped Emeraina from their ship, and the sorcerer who left them to die. Their path leads them to pirate haunts and the courts of Argos to seek the girl's father; but not all in Argos want the girl returned safely...

CHAPTER 3: THE TEMPLE OF ARZHNA

Rumors of the sorcerer's whereabouts lead the player characters to a remote island off the coast of Shem, where an ancient temple is rumored to be found. The island's residents seem mundane, but the temple is said to be occupied by reclusive inhabitants, one of whom was recently driven out. The adventurers find themselves caught in a fierce rivalry between two acolytes of their sorcerous enemy, Maledict Mer.

CHAPTER 4: THE NIGHT OF THE YELLOW SASHES

The player characters finally discover the whereabouts of the elusive Captain Herge Daimos: he is about to take part in a massive raid by pirates and black corsairs on a slave port on the Black Coast. If the player characters hope to find him they'll have to join the raid, helping to invade the

PIRACY, REVENGE, AND COSMIC TERROR

A Report on the Daimos Manuscript

By Prof. John Kirowan, (PhD, FRS, FRAI, FRGS)

Guest Lecturer, Department of Anthropology

Miskatonic University

Arkham, Massachusetts

I have written previously about the history of piracy in the Hyborian Age, and how in many ways it mirrored the Golden Ages of Piracy in the late 17th and early 18th centuries: there were stout sailing ships, bold captains, and greedy, bellicose men who wrested the wealth from honest merchants (and dishonest ones as well). Names such as Tranicos, Belit, Amra, Strom, Zaparavo, and countless others have been referenced in these accounts, some of which were more specific than others in their tales of derring-do; of treasures sought, taken, and lost; of sea-rovers clashing with men and strange beasts; of the clash of steel, and ship-decks and city streets awash with the blood of the innocent and the damned alike.

The following account is one of the more picaresque of these legends — that of the infamous pirate captain Herge Daimos, a Zingaran rogue renowned as much for his *liaisons dangereux* as his swordplay. This tale recounts his final voyage, of his taking of a beautiful woman who became his captive and lover. In doing so, Daimos — and his companion wizard, Maledict Mer, a Shemite sorcerer whose machinations ultimately led to the deaths of both men — drew the wrath of several brave adventurers who tracked him along the coasts of the Western Ocean, becoming pirates in order to pursue him. Theirs is a tale of shipwreck and survival, of bizarre creatures, and intrigue among the courts of Argos. This is a remarkable story

of perseverance as these men and women pursued Daimos down the southern coast of the Black. There they joined in a massive pirate raid on a southern slave port, which in some ways reads like one of Henry Morgan's forays against the rich Spanish ports during the age of buccaneers. There these heroes finally confronted their nemesis, Captain Daimos. But even this climactic confrontation — with its backdrop of a slave revolt, a city in flames, and dark sorcery swirling around them — would not be the final reckoning. For there would still be the rescue of the missing woman, taken captive by the sorcerer Maledict Mer, who by this point in the narrative had become not only less human, but the true villain of the tale.

The wizard's insane plan involved one of the more obscure of the so-called "black gods of R'lyeh", a reference which will be familiar to those who have read my earlier works concerning Friedrich Wilhelm von Junzt and his book *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*. Maledict Mer's intent was to free his god, the octopoidal Th'sylla, who seems to have been a "brother" or otherwise kin to the infamous Cthulhu of obscure but horrible legend and the foremost of those "black gods of R'lyeh". One wonders whether or not this many-limbed sea monster was the inspiration for the later Greek Scylla; the similarities are quite clear, down to the proximity of a deadly maelstrom — Th'sylla's version of Charybdis, no doubt.

city, free its slaves, and loot the mountains of wealth said to be waiting there. But the night of the raid is filled with unparalleled bloodshed, surprising treachery, and a great dark magic-working that could lead to the end of the world. The adventurers may take their revenge, but their quest is not yet over, for Emeraina is still missing — taken by the sorcerer Maledict Mer.

CHAPTER 5: THE BLACK ISLANDS RISE

Maledict Mer's machinations have raised the dreaded black islands from beneath the sea. Within one of them sleeps his god, Th'sylla, waiting the ritual which could awaken him. The player characters follow the wizard into the mist-drenched

islands, where horrors and madness await. Can they hope to stop the wizard and his marine allies before they awaken the nightmare from beyond time? Can they save Emeraina from a dread fate?

CHAPTER 6: AFTERWORD

This final chapter includes rewards and consequences that await the player characters for their success or failure at the conclusion of this campaign. It also discusses possible spin-off scenarios — do the heroes return to the lives and adventures they lived before they became pirates? Or do they continue to stain the blue waves crimson, as pirates of the Hyborian Age?

CHAPTER 1



THE ROSE AND THE SHADOW



*It was just at sunrise when the lookout shouted a warning.
Around the long point of an island off the starboard bow
glided a long lethal shape, a slender serpentine galley,
with a raised deck that ran from stem to stern.*

— “Queen of the Black Coast”

The campaign opens with the player characters aboard a ship, sailing from Argos to Shem. Their vessel is attacked by Zingaran pirates under the command of Captain Herge Daimos. Daimos and his men swarm the player characters' vessel, and though the heroes may put up a brave defense, the merchant ship's captain decides to surrender rather than risk the lives of his passengers and crew. The player characters and the ship's crew are quickly hauled below decks and locked in the hold. Daimos, meanwhile, takes the vessel's young passenger, Emeraina, as his hostage. The ship is thoroughly looted, and as the pirates prepare to leave, Maledict Mer has them set fire to it, intending to burn the trapped crew as a sacrifice to his bloodthirsty sea-god. Forced to escape their sinking vessel, the player characters, and any other survivors, are left at the mercy of the waves, with little food or drink.

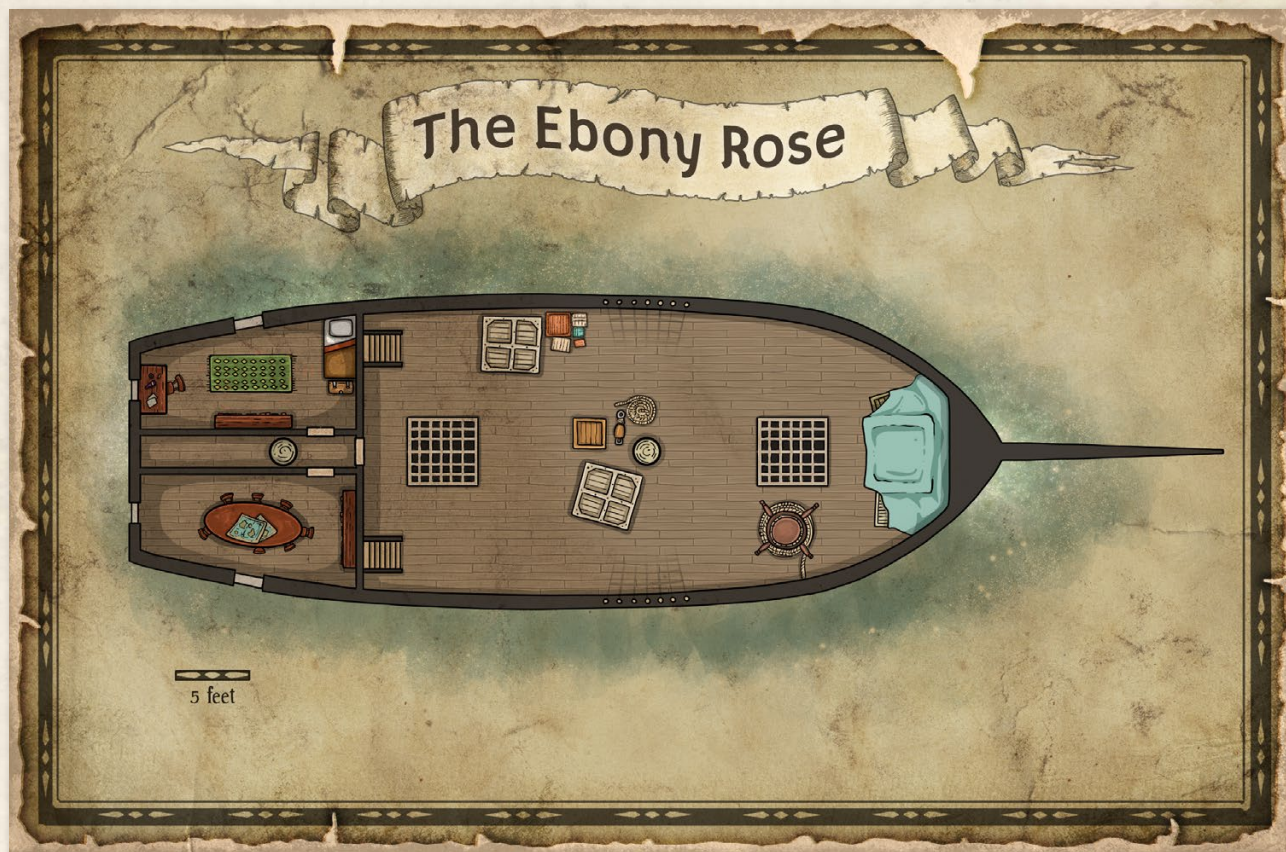
The castaways suffer many days of thirst, hunger, and exposure, adrift at the whims of the stormy seas. The gamemaster should decide how much he wants the player characters and their companions to suffer before they make landfall. Perhaps one or more of the non-player characters may die or pass out, or even one of the heroes may seriously weaken before their “deliverance” is at hand... For finally, after several days lost at sea, the survivors' feeble crafts come in sight of an island, far to the south of the Thurian continent.

The survivors from the scuttled ship eventually reach an uncharted island, apparently deserted except for various wild animals. Further exploration discovers several ancient stone quays in the island's central lagoon, and a

long-disused pathway leading up one of the overgrown hillsides. There, standing at the bottom of a deep pit-like depression in the earth, is a large black monolith. The black stone is carved with ancient hieroglyphs, and a crude passage winds around it into the depths of the earth. If the monolith is touched, its “keeper” is alerted, and comes to investigate. The “keeper” is a half-invisible, half-material, cloudy demon-thing. Eons ago this creature was worshipped by primitive humans, who sailed to this island to make human sacrifices to the thing at the monolith. Now the demon expects its flesh and blood offerings, but since none are forthcoming, it is reduced to gathering its own. To this end it absorbs whatever life forms it can (likely pigs and monkeys, but maybe a hapless human or two) and transforms them into its servants: hideous hybrids it sends forth to kill the human intruders and bring them to its subterranean lair so it can feed — and create more servants, if necessary. The thing has a near-endless supply of animals to create and send, and is impervious to most attack forms.

The player characters must find a way to deal with the deadly blur-demon and its hybrid creations before it consumes them all. Shortly after the party has dealt with the monster, a ship is sighted approaching the island...





THE JOURNEY SO FAR

The estate of the prominent merchant Lord Emarius of Argos is located on the Khorotas River, a few miles from Messantia. A few days ago the *Ebony Rose* departed from the estate with the passengers and a small crew, bound for Shem. Lord Emarius was sending his daughter Emeraina to meet her intended husband, a Shemite prince named Halech; part of the *Rose's* cargo is Emeraina's dowry. Also aboard were Emeraina's personal servants, including her devoted maid (and surrogate mother), Katrina. The player characters may have been hired or employed — perhaps as bodyguards — by the estate's agents anywhere along the river. The *Rose* docks in Messantia to pick up the remaining cargo. Any remaining player characters should come on-board at this time.

Unknown to anyone aboard the ship, in Messantia Maledict Mer gave one of the *Rose's* crewmen a magical amulet that allows the sorcerer to track the movements of the device — and thus the ship it is on.

For several days, the *Rose* moves east along the coast of Argos at a very slow pace. The captain is in no hurry.

Each night the ship makes it way into a coastal city or village, allowing the two passengers and some crew to go ashore. As the ship sails along the coast, it encounters ships of differing nationalities but the pervasive presence of the Argossean navy keeps the sea lanes relatively safe. The gamemaster can have a suspicious looking ship swing close to the *Rose* only to have an Argossean navy vessel appear on the horizon, causing the other ship to turn away.

The day before the adventure begins, the *Rose* finds itself becalmed and unable to make port that night. Captain Zouhar and the crew show no concern about such an event. Later that night a slight wind starts to blow again but the Captain keeps sails reefed to avoid the dangers of sailing at night.

It is suggested that the gamemaster not play out these events but start the adventure as the *Devil's Shadow* approaches to attack. Maledict Mer has employed some sorcery keep the *Shadow* moving while the *Rose* was becalmed.



WHEN THE ROSE MET THE SHADOW

For the player characters, the tale begins aboard a merchant ship, a caravel called the *Ebony Rose*, shortly before dawn. They are awakened by shouts from the deck above them: “To arms!” “Pirates!” “Ware! Boarders!” What the characters choose to do at this point is up to them; most of the player characters are, after all, newly awake. One or two might be on watch duty, but the others are asleep. They can immediately scramble for weapons and armor, charging for the deck above. Or they can sneak up the stairs, cautiously, seeking to gain an advantage on the attackers. The choice is theirs!.

THE SHADOW OF THE MOON

A large ship comes looming out of the darkness, aimed directly for the *Ebony Rose*. An Average (D1) Observation check reveals several crossbowmen secured by harnesses to her upper masts. Other men line the rail of the ship, preparing to cast hooks at the *Rose*. They are surprisingly undemonstrative, making no attempt to induce fear by yelling and gesturing. The moonlight is barely enough to make out their forms.

THE ROSE AND THE SHADOW

The Ebony Rose

Small merchant ship (caravel style: 65 feet long, 20 feet wide, 18 crew, 2 masts, square-rigged main-mast and lateen-rigged mizzen-mast, 125 tons, carries 2 longboats). A single deck covers the main hold. The aft deck cabin contains two small staterooms, the captain's quarters and a small mess area. The crew sleep in the main hold on hammocks slung throughout, although a couple of canvas partitions located forward provide some privacy for the ship's officers and other passengers. The ship's galley is located in the aft part of the main hold. A single gangway runs from the aft area to the main deck. There is a second hold located below the main hold. Access from the main deck to hold is through two large wooden grates, one fore and one aft. A single similar grate gives access to the lower hold. The grates are made of thick, hard wood that cannot be easily broken or cut. The ship has fancy fittings and accommodations as befitting a well-to-do merchant. The *Rose* is primarily used to transport Emarius and his family, along with important courtiers.

He rarely uses it as a pure cargo ship. Cargo for this trip consists of wedding gifts, Emeraina's dowry, and other luxuries and sundries as determined by the gamemaster.

The Devil's Shadow

Merchant ship (large caravel): 80 feet long, 25 feet wide, 25 crew (+70 men), 3 masts, square-rigged fore- and main-masts and lateen-rigged mizzen-mast, 200 tons. The *Shadow* carries a larger crew than a merchant ship this size would normally carry. The ship is set up to allow crossbowmen to hang in the rigging and the deck is lined with grapples and boarding ladders. The deck rails have mostly been removed, allowing the crew to more easily jump from ship to ship when boarding. The crew is large for a ship this size, so it is not capable of carrying as much cargo as it could. After a successful attack, Daimos usually takes only expensive and luxury items from his prey so storage is rarely an issue. For this attack, Daimos has crowded in more pirates than normal, making the crew about 90-100 men.

Allow the characters to prepare for an attack. To get any information about what is happening outside, they must climb up to the upper deck. The pirate ship is still a few minutes away from being able to grapple the *Rose*. Players may question how a ship was able to close to this point without warning by a lookout or someone else on deck. A Challenging (D2) Sailing check (for non-sailors) leads to the conclusion that it should not have happened. As the ship approaches, an Average (D1) Observation check notices that the pirate ship is unnaturally quiet. A Daunting (D3) Lore check can give the players the name of the ship and its captain: the *Devil's Shadow*, and the infamous Herge Daimos.

A flamboyantly dressed figure carrying a drawn cutlass steps forward on the poop deck, into a light held by another pirate. This is Herge Daimos, captain of the *Devil's Shadow*. He calls out to Balka Zouhar, the *Ebony Rose's* Captain, ordering him to surrender. The other pirates aim their crossbows as he speaks. Captain Zouhar answers him, pointing out that since Daimos already knows who he is, he should know better than to interfere with a ship owned by Lord Emarius of Messantia, and that he and his crew are not going to be intimidated. Zouhar's crew start to move into position to repel the pirates. Any characters on deck should choose what they want to do. Emeraina is not on deck, having locked herself in the captain's cabin.

Another figure steps up beside Daimos and calls out in a strange language; a Challenging (D2) Linguistics check reveal it is Shemitish, and a Average (D1) Sorcery test recognizes it as low-level magic. The sorcerer makes a complicated gesture with his hands, and ugly green light bursts from between them, rapidly expanding in a circle surrounding both ships. Daimos makes a slight chopping motion with his empty hand and a dozen crossbow bolts slam into the *Rose*. Captain Zouhar takes a bolt in his left shoulder; other crew members near him may also be hit. The gamemaster may decide to target a character at a cost of 2 Doom per shot. Daimos laughs and says "Too bad Balka, I can't protect you from yourself!"

THE EBONY ROSE AND ZONES

Should the characters decide to fight the boarders, the deck of each ship should be considered three zones, fore deck, aft deck and poop deck. Any character fighting across the side of the ship onto the other, should consider it one zone away for the purposes of effects on rolls and for distance. This reflects the challenge caused by differences in deck height, equipment, and the low quality of the green light.



Various members of the crew on the *Rose* start to mutter about strange powers, black magic and sorcerers, moving away from the *Devil's Shadow* and dropping their weapons. Captain Zouhar picks up on this and orders the crew to remain where they are. The player characters again have to decide how they want to act. A Challenging (D2) Observation check reveals several dozen pirates ready to swarm the ship, easier to determine in the strange green light; they outnumber the *Rose's* crew — including the player characters — by more than two to one. Assume the light lasts as long as needed to resolve the takeover of the *Rose*. Once any fighting is over, torches and lamps are used to illuminate the decks. The pirates start throwing grapples and rope ladders at the rigging and deck of the *Rose*. Daimos and Maledict Mer (the sorcerer) have pirates standing next to them wielding wooden shields, making it unlikely that either can be hit with a ranged attack.

The GM determines the severity of the attack upon the *Rose*. Most of the crew fall to their knees to surrender. Player characters may try a Daunting (D3) Persuade check to keep members of the *Rose's* crew in the fight. A success results in a single Mob of crewmen picking up their weapons and resisting. Each Momentum point spent by the characters adds one additional Mob of crewmen, to a maximum of three total Mobs. The GM should feed enough pirates over the rail to make the fight interesting. The crossbowmen can easily sway the fight as needed with use of Doom points (again, spending 2 Doom for each shot taken at a player-character). An Average (D1) Observation check reveals that the pirates are doing their best to keep as many of the *Rose's* crew alive as possible. Anyone trying to get into the aft cabin should be targeted by at least 2 crossbowmen. At some point in the fight, the wounded Captain Zouhar makes his way up on the poop deck and offers his surrender. Any crew in the fight surrender at this point.

AFTER THE SURRENDER

The player characters and the surviving crew find themselves herded to the center of the main deck, surrounded by the crossbow-wielding pirates as Daimos and several more of his men board the *Ebony Rose*. Anyone wounded is ignored by the pirates. Daimos stands before the group and sends one of the pirates into the aft cabins with instructions to bring anyone found there out to the deck. Captain Zouhar

is brought in front of him by one of the pirate crew. If the crew or the player characters offered little resistance to the pirates, and surrendered along with Captain Zouhar, Daimos merely punches the Captain in the face. If the player characters and any crew continued to fight after Zouhar offered his surrender, Daimos runs him through with his cutlass, killing him instantly while declaring that a captain unable to control his crew is unworthy of the title of captain. He orders the crew of the *Ebony Rose* to help move the cargo from the *Rose* to his ship. The crew grumbles and shuffles their feet, apparently upset at this suggestion. Daimos offers them the choice of helping or swimming back to shore.

The door to the rear cabins opens up and his sailor comes out, dragging Emeraina behind him. The scalawag pushes her down at the feet of Daimos. She looks ruffled but otherwise unharmed. Katrina staggers out of the same door shortly after.

Daimos pulls her to her feet, cupping her chin in his hand. "One should never hide such beauty behind a closed door," he says. Scowling fiercely, she makes a move to claw at his face, but the pirate captain slaps her down and has her hands bound. Any player character or crew member, including Katrina, moving to assist her, is beaten to the deck by several pirates.

About this time Maledict Mer crosses over to the *Rose*. He joins Daimos with a look of satisfaction on his face as he scans the group, his eyes finally resting on Emeraina. He asks Daimos if she meets his expectations. Daimos grins and orders a couple of men to take her back to his ship. The servant woman Katrina struggles to go with Emeraina, but is again slapped down.

The sorcerer looks over the assembled crew of the *Rose* and gestures at one who is standing at the rear. The man timidly comes forward. "*I believe you have something of mine,*" he purrs. Maledict Mer reaches his hand out and the man reluctantly pulls an amulet from under his shirt and hands it to the wizard. A Simple (D0) Observation check reveals it to be a strangely shaped piece of coral studded with tiny jewels; if the roll met at least Average (D1) Difficulty, the witness sees the sorcerer place the amulet around his neck — where an apparently identical trinket hangs. The wizard dramatically thanks the sailor, Jachol, by name, for his assistance in leading him to the *Rose*, and then dismisses him back into the group. The remaining crew of the *Rose* glare at Jachol with anger and hatred.






BALKA ZOHAR, ARGOSSEAN MERCHANT CAPTAIN (TOUGHENED)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	9	9	9
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
10	10	9	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	—	Movement	—
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	1	Social	1

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 11, Resolve 10	
■ Soak: Armor 2 (Leather), Courage 2	

ATTACKS	
■ Cutlass (M): Reach 2, 6  , Unbalanced, Fearsome, Vicious 1	
■ Knife (M): Reach 1, 5  1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1	

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
■ Strength from the Sea: The sea captain is used to combat aboard ship and only suffer penalties in the fiercest of weather.	
■ My Ship is My Castle: On his own vessel, the captain always has Light Cover, with 2  Cover Soak against ranged weapons.	

THE CREW OF THE EBONY ROSE (MINIONS)





ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	8	7	7
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
9	9	8	

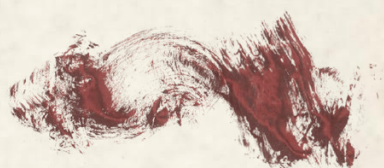
FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	—	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 5, Resolve 4
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage —

ATTACKS

- **Cutlass (M):** Reach 2, 5 , Unbalanced, Fearsome, Vicious 1
- **Knife (M):** Reach 1, 4  1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1
- **Improvised Strike (M):** Reach 1, 3  1H, Improvised, Stun
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 2  mental, Stun





EMERAINA, ARGOSSEAN BRIDE-TO-BE (TOUGHENED)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	9	11	10
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
9	8	9	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	—	Movement	—
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	1	Social	1

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 9, Resolve 11	
■ Soak: Armor —, Courage 2	

ATTACKS	
■ Dagger (M): Reach 1, 3  1H, Hidden 1, Unforgiving 1	
■ Disarming Beauty (T): Range C, 4  mental, Stun, Intense 1	

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
■ Wealthy Merchant's Daughter: Once per crowd she is trying to impress, Emeraina can name herself and her father and add 2  to her Disarming Beauty mental damage.	

KATRINA, OPHIREAN SLAVE (TOUGHENED)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	9	9	9
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
9	8	9	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	—	Movement	—
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	1

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 9, Resolve 10	
■ Soak: Armor —, Courage 2	

ATTACKS	
■ Knife (M): Reach 1, 3 1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1	
■ Improvised Strike (M): Reach 1, 2 , 1H, Improvised, Stun	
■ Steely Glare (T): Range C, 3 mental, Stun	

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
■ Undying Loyalty: Once per scene, Katrina can re-roll any 1D20 for any test while in the company of Emeraina.	

HERGE DAIMOS, ZINGARAN PIRATE CAPTAIN (NEMESIS)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	9	11	10
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
9	10	10	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	1	Movement	—
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	1

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 11, Resolve 11	
■ Soak: Armor 3 (Heavy Hauberk), Courage 2	

ATTACKS

- **Cutlass (M):** Reach 2, 5 Unbalanced, Fearsome, Vicious 1
- **Knife (M):** Reach 1, 4 1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 4 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Strength from the Sea:** Pirates are used to combat aboard ship and only suffer penalties in the fiercest of weather.
- **Boarding Action:** Pirates are experts at boarding unfriendly craft and know all the best places to seek cover. When boarding, pirates gain 3 Cover against missile weapons.
- **My Ship is My Castle:** On his own vessel, a pirate captain always has Light Cover, with 2 Cover Soak against ranged weapons.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Fearsome Reputation:** At any point in an encounter the pirate captain can spend one Doom (Repeatable) to add 1 to the mental damage of a Steely Glare attack



MALEDICT MER, SHEMITE SORCERER (NEMESIS)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
11	13 (1)	12	16
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
7	9	9	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	—	Movement	—
Fortitude	1	Senses	2
Knowledge	4	Social	2

STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 10, Resolve 17
- **Soak:** Armor 2 (Brigandine jacket), Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **Strange Coral Knife (M):** Reach 1, 4 Hidden 1, Piercing 2
- **Sorcerous Might (T):** Range M, 8 mental, Area, Intense
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 5 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Petty Enchantments:**
 - **Choking Sand Pots/Bombs:** (D3), 5 Area, Fearsome, Nonlethal, Stun
 - **Bloodthirst Smoke:** (D2), 3 Area, Fearsome 2, Intense, Nonlethal
- **Sorcerer:** Spells include The Shroud of the Sea, Dismember, Enslave, Summon a Horror (Deep-Wraith), Awaken Th'Sylla (see page 92).

DOOM SPENDS

- **The Croaking Tide:** For 3 Doom, Maledict Mer can either summon one Mob of five Dweller-Human Hybrids (Minions), or one (Toughened) Dweller of the Deep. The summoning takes one Standard Action, and must be performed on or adjacent to the ocean. The dweller or dwellers will emerge from the surf at extreme range on the following round.



PIRATES (MINIONS)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	7	7	7
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
9	9	8	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	1	Movement	—
Fortitude	—	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 5, Resolve 4
- **Soak:** Armor 1 (clothing), Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Cutlass (M):** Reach 2, 5 Unbalanced, Fearsome, Vicious 1
- **Hatchet (M):** Reach 2, 5 1H, Vicious 1
- **Knife (M):** Reach 1, 4 1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 2 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Strength from the Sea:** Pirates are used to combat aboard ship and only suffer penalties in the fiercest of weather.
- **Boarding Action:** Pirates are experts at boarding unfriendly craft and know all the best places to seek cover. When boarding, pirates gain 3 Cover against missile weapons.

TRAPPED IN THE HOLD

The player characters and the ship's remaining crew find themselves locked in the hold. There are no lights. The main part of the hold has been cleared of most crates and boxes. Any remaining cargo is lesser value items, intended for Emaraina's wedding. Most of the ship's stores remain.

Several of the crew now move to confront the apparent traitor, Jachol. Jachol cowers and begs the men to forgive him. He claims that prior to shipping out, a strange man asked him to wear the amulet, describing it as a good luck charm to protect the wearer and his ship. An Average (D1) Insight check reveals that Jachol actually believes the story,



while a Challenging (D2) Insight check gives that his mind was possibly affected by sorcery. A Challenging (D2) Sorcery check guesses that Maledict Mer was able to find the ship on the open sea by tracking this amulet's location (perhaps using the similar one he wears, if the player characters saw it). Several crew members take it on themselves to punish Jachol, and the player characters may decide to assist them or defend him. Jachol submits to a beating from the crew but fights to protect himself from any player character.

There are two grates located in the ceiling opening onto the main deck. These are barred from above and the outline of pirates can be seen standing on them. The galley and crew quarters, such as they are, can be found aft. These rooms were ransacked by the pirates, and any obvious weapons taken away. Use of Momentum by any character searching the area reveals an overlooked weapon, probably a dagger or small axe. Should anyone in the hold attempt to reach through or force the grates, they are kicked or otherwise menaced by the men standing on the grates. The captives are unable to escape in this direction.

Through the deck grate the characters can hear Daimos and Maledict Mer conferring. Daimos wants to offer the captives a place in his crew, hoping to replace any dead or crippled pirates. He also suggests they try to ransom the ship back to Lord Emarius. Maledict Mer counters, *"No. Their lives are spoken for. My Lord demands payment for the aid he renders. Leave them where they are and I will see to them."* He calls for buckets of sea water as he and Daimos walk away from the grate.

A few minutes later, seawater splashes through the grates, as it is poured around the circumference of each opening. Maledict Mer's voice can be heard chanting on the deck. Another Daunting (D3) Linguistics check reveal it to be in Shemitish. An Average (D1) Sorcery check realizes a spell is being worked.

During this entire time, the player characters may try to break through the hull or otherwise create an opening to escape. The timing of such work will be such that it can't be completed before Maledict Mer performs his ritual. The gamemaster can expend Doom to hamper or delay the characters as necessary. As long as Captain Zouhar made an attempt to surrender, the crewmen do not expect to be put to death. They are not enthusiastic participants in any escape attempt before Maledict Mer completes his ritual. The captives have access to everything in the main and lower hold. Anything located in the aft cabin on the main deck is unavailable. Most food and water is located in the lower hold.

The chant ceases. The water-soaked edges of the grates glow with the same eerie greenish glow as the earlier light that enveloped the two ships. At this point any blows against the grates rebound as if hitting solid rock. Above them, the sorcerer directs the pirates to light the oil and get back to the *Devil's Shadow*. Maledict Mer then stands over the grate and tells the captives how honored they should be to give up their lives to "the six-headed lord of the deep".

A minute or two after the deck above has gone quiet, everyone in the hold can smell burning wood, canvas,

PLAYING THE CAPTIVES

The surviving members of the *Ebony Rose's* crew are experienced seamen, able to provide valuable assistance to the player characters. Use the statistics given above for the crew of the *Ebony Rose*. After the boarding, they present no threat to anyone unless directly attacked. Once aware their vessel is burning, they snap out of their stupor and are willing to aid the player characters, as long as progress is made towards escape or rescue. They have no loyalty to the player characters until it's earned. Maledict Mer's powers have them completely unsettled.

Emeraina and Katrina are completely devoted to each other. Emeraina, in practice if not in words, treats Katrina as the mother figure she's been missing for most of her life. Katrina is the only person, other than her father, who can convince Emeraina to do things she doesn't want to do. Both women attempt to stay with the other at all times. If separated Emeraina becomes depressed for some time, though regains her composure after six hours; Katrina, on the other hand, dedicates herself to arranging the girl's rescue, regardless of the odds, whatever it takes to accomplish it.

Emeraina is the sharp-witted daughter of a man of means. Her mother died of a fever when she was 8 years old, and her father tried to fill the void by allowing Emeraina to become more involved in his day-to-day work. As she became a teenager, her merchant and social skills honed. Over the years, Katrina became her surrogate mother. She isn't happy being traded away as a financial asset for her father but believes that the man she is marrying might be more susceptible to manipulation than her father; Emeraina planned for her future carefully.


During her captivity with Herge Daimos, however, Emeraina has grown to appreciate her position: she is

free of her father's influence, and of familial obligation. In addition, the wily pirate captain woos her — as he has done other women — with charm and gifts, and his swashbuckling air. Emeraina is too clever to fall for this completely, of course, but she also sees a route to power for herself, and Daimos is much more attractive than most of the men she might be married to. For his part, Daimos considers Emeraina his "wife" of the moment, lavishing her with affection and gifts. For Emeraina, her captivity becomes an adventure, becoming the mistress of a pirate king, exploring the world, pillaging the seas and shores — and gaining a surprisingly keen understanding of piratical raiding tactics at the same time.

The servant woman Katrina survives the ship burning. Any time captives are mentioned throughout the campaign, assume Katrina is part of that group unless she is specifically eliminated by one of the player characters. In subsequent sections, she can be sidelined by events as they unfold. Katrina explains that Emeraina's father, Lord Emarius of the prominent Argossean merchant house of Khaunt, will be willing to pay a large reward for Emeraina's safe return. As long as Katrina remains alive during upcoming events, she constantly reminds the player characters of their duty to rescue Emeraina.

Katrina is a long-serving member of Lord Emarius's household, and completely loyal to him and his children. Her favorite has always been Emeraina. She is not skilled in combat but can be tenacious when threatened. She is mature and not very robust. If called upon to perform anything physically demanding or to fight, she resists unless Emeraina's welfare is used as an incentive.

and oil, as the fumes waft into the lower deck: the *Ebony Rose* is on fire!

Spars and pieces of the rigging crash to the deck, covering one of the grates. The heat and smoke start seeping into the hold. This hampers any work on creating or expanding openings through the ship's sides. Panic ensues among the remaining crew. They start to scramble about, pulling at the grate or ripping at portholes in the deck. Play through this, making the player characters take leadership in the attempts to find a way out. The gamemaster may impose occasional Average (D1) Resistance checks to determine if a character suffers from smoke inhalation or burns, incurring 1  damage. Further searching, and a Challenging (D2) Observation check, results in locating a small overlooked hand axe that can be used.

The characters find it possible to punch a hole wide enough to fit a person through into the water next to the *Rose*. They may attempt to enlarge it to allow crates or other objects to be pushed through but the delay renews the panic in the ship's crew. Should any player characters suffer from claustrophobia, an Average (D1) Discipline check would be required for them to keep control of themselves during such a delay.



OUT OF THE HOLD

Once a suitable hole has been cut, the captives can make their way into the water outside the *Ebony Rose*. The majority of the main deck and aft cabin are ablaze. No sails remain and only a couple yardarms remain attached to the burning masts: the ship cannot be saved. Once the upper deck burns to the water line, the *Rose* will fill with seawater and sink. At that point parts of the ship will break free, most of which will stop burning. Large pieces that do not submerge may continue burning above water.


Characters may remember, with a Simple (Do) Observation or Sailing check, that there were longboats lashed to the upper deck. These boats were not affected by the fight and may remain seaworthy. An Average (D1) Observation check is necessary to find a safe place to climb over the rail that isn't burning. Climbing onto the deck requires a further Challenging (D2) Athletics check.

Only the flotsam bobbing around the ship is available for use in improvising a raft, if no one attempts to get on deck. Most pieces are barely able to float a single person. The captives may have pushed objects out of the hold. If the gamemaster determines that such objects float, they can also be attached to other flotsam, at least until they become waterlogged or develop a leak. Enough small pieces of flotsam can be found to hold the remaining captives. Momentum can be used to help find bigger pieces. The gamemaster is encouraged to limit the number of pieces available, so the characters must be selective about any hold objects they try to save. Characters are going to find it extremely difficult to recover or retain any of their possessions from the ship: the pirates probably took most of it, and there simply isn't any room to carry much.

If a player character makes it onto the burning deck, he or she finds one of the deck grates covered with flaming debris but the other is clear. The grate's bolt cannot be withdrawn until a Challenging (D2) Sorcery check determines that the spell holding the bolt has cleared. Once open, any remaining captives can be pulled out, including anyone injured too badly to go out the hole in the ship's side (Captain


Zouhar, for instance, is too badly wounded to exit via the hole in the hull). Some material may also be carried out of the hold, keeping in mind the captives have no access to winches or lifts. The aft deck is afire and nothing can be salvaged from it.

Both longboats remain. It is the gamemaster's discretion whether either one is on fire, has holes in it, or both. This is a point where the player characters may need a break to allow them to survive the attack — the GM should use their judgement. Killing everyone off now isn't much fun! It takes 3 or more people to move or lift a longboat into position to push it over the rail. In any case, only 3 oars can be found between the two boats.

If the boat is on fire as it is pushed over the rail, make an Average (D1) Acrobatics check to avoid a 1  burn injury. Once the boat hits the water, it is relatively easy to extinguish the flames. The hull integrity may be compromised in the long term but should be seaworthy — for now.

The captives find themselves adrift on makeshift rafts or in one or two longboats of questionable seaworthiness. Forced to quickly escape their sinking vessel the survivors may not have had the chance to secure many provisions, leaving them at the mercy of the waves, with little food or drink.

SURVIVAL AT SEA

Once the player characters and the crew of the *Ebony Rose* have escaped the hold, they begin their struggle to survive adrift in the Western Ocean. If they secured and/or repaired the ship's longboats, they are at least safe from drowning. If they failed to salvage the boats, they can cobble together makeshift rafts from the sunken *Rose*'s debris. Constructing such a raft at sea requires a Challenging (D2) Craft roll and some materials; each successful test creates a relatively stable raft with enough room for  +1 people; each point of Momentum adds room for an additional person.

Having created or obtained rafts or boats, the survivors' next efforts will be acquiring food and water, and perhaps sailing their vessels. If the player characters and the *Rose*'s crew salvaged food and water stores from the lost ship, they should have little to worry about (though they won't know this). If they didn't save any supplies from the ship, they'll need to catch their food and whatever rainwater or condensation they can in order to survive. Each day each character may make a Challenging (D2) Survival or appropriate Craft test to catch enough fish, birds, turtles, or rainwater to sustain one person; each Momentum gained adds another person's ration. Each day without food or water requires a Challenging (D2) Survival or Resistance roll or lose 1 point of Vigor. Normal Healing is done at Daunting (D3) Difficulty until food or water is found.

LONGBOATS

20 feet long, 5 feet wide, 6-8 oarsmen, 12 total capacity, no mast, 2 ton weight limit. Each boat is designed to be rowed by 3 or 4 pairs of oarsman, with room for additional passengers or small loads of cargo. After the captives get out of the hold, both longboats remain on deck. One is on fire. The other has holes in the bottom and may also be on fire. There are only three oars between them.



Rigging a sail to use in a boat requires an Average (D1) Sailing test, or a Daunting (D3) test to rig one for a raft. The characters are 6 days from the island, and each day a successful Average (D1) Sailing roll is needed to get closer to land (the island is described below). The difficulty is Daunting (D3) if the party is using a raft instead of a boat. Failing or rolling a Complication means the party only makes half a day's progress, each Momentum spent shortens the trip by half a day. Alternately, if at least one person has died, and at least one player character is within a day of losing the last of their Vigor, the survivors reach the island. If Captain Zouhar somehow survives the sinking of the *Ebony Rose*, he dies from the effects of his wound during the ordeal at sea.

LANDING ON THE ISLAND: WATER, SHELTER, FOOD, AND WEAPONS

After several days adrift at sea, the player characters and their companions finally come within sight of land: a lonely desert island looms as a speck in the distance. If none of the castaways are awake or in control of their boats or rafts, they wash ashore at the site marked **A** on The Island of the Black Monolith map. Otherwise the characters can sail their small craft(s) around the island to land wherever they see

fit (see "Exploring the Island" for the layout and details of the island's geography and sites of interest).

The player characters and the other survivors from the *Ebony Rose* should be weak and dehydrated, at least, from their ordeal at sea. Because of this the party should not be allowed to make Healing or Counseling tests until they have spent one full day on the island, drinking fresh water and resting out of the sun. The gamemaster should apply a further Average (D1) penalty to all skill tests made until the castaways have rehydrated and rested. Once they have rested for a day, allow each injured party to receive one successful Healing or Counseling roll per day.

Potable water is easily found: a small stream filters down from the hillsides into the central lagoon. Waders should take care though, as there are a handful of crocodiles lurking in the waters of the lagoon and along the shallow shores of the stream (see page 325 of the *Conan* rulebook).

Building a fire is similarly easy. There is plenty of wood, grass, and other flammable material on the island, and stone and wood to spark up a fire. Actually building a fire requires a Challenging (D2) Survival test. Barring any subsequent rain, all that's needed afterward is to keep adding firewood.

The castaways also need shelter of some kind, whether it's palm fronds, long grasses, lengths of bamboo, mangrove, or tree limbs. A full day's work and an Average (D1) Craft

or Survival test creates a primitive hut, lean-to, or canopy providing enough shelter for ☹+1 people; each point of Momentum spent adds enough space for another person. Any Complications rolled indicate that something invades or attacks the shelter that night: this may be a curious monkey, a hungry snake, a wandering spider, or a belligerent boar. In any of these cases make a Challenging (D2) Survival roll, and if any further Complications are rolled one or more occupants of the shelter might lose an item to a howler-monkey, or be bitten or clawed by any of the other beasts for 3 ☹ damage. These calamities befall anyone who sleeps without shelter on the island.

Another likely activity for the player characters is coming up with weapons to defend themselves: they were disarmed and left with no more than a hatchet, knife, or belaying pin when they escaped the sinking of the *Ebony Rose*. Finding a suitable club requires an Average (D1) Observation test and a couple hours' search to find a sturdy branch or a length of bamboo. If a player character wants to fashion a more elaborate weapon, a half day's work and a successful Craft or Survival test are needed to create one. The difficulty levels are: Average (D1) for a simple stone knife, Challenging (D2) for a crude "axe" with a wooden haft and a stone blade/head, or Daunting (D3) for a spear with a point made of sharpened stone. Note that any Complication rolled for creating these crude weapons (or finding/choosing a club) indicates that specimen has the Fragile condition.

Finding food is relatively easy on the island: there are edible fish, molluscs, and crustaceans in the surrounding waters and in the central lagoon, obtainable with an Average (D1) Survival test (each success gathers enough food for ☹+1 people). Complications may mean the fisherman is stung by an anemone, bitten by a fish, etc. for 1 point of damage, or, if multiple Complications are rolled, crocodiles or sharks may attack. A party-member might bring down a small bird by hurling a rock at it and succeeding with a Dauntless (D3) Ranged Weapons roll. Numerous howler-monkeys and bush-pigs inhabit the island; the castaways can either track and hunt them with Observation or Survival rolls, or build primitive traps to catch them. A full day's work and a Craft test is required to fashion an improvised trap of some kind: difficulty levels are Daunting (D3) for monkeys or pigs, or Challenging (D2) for fish or other sea-life. Monkey-meat might feed a single person for two days, while the average pig would provide sustenance for one person for at least 2 ☹+2 days.

For most groups, surviving on the island shouldn't be very difficult. Unfortunately for them, there's more to this island than jungles, monkeys, and wild pigs.



EXPLORING THE ISLAND

The map on page 15 shows the island on which the castaways land. The island is a little over 2 miles long and just under 2 miles across at its widest point. Most of the shores are sandy beaches, though mangrove-like plants clog the shores in a few places. A wide central lagoon divides the island into two near-equal halves; a stream flows from the central hillside and empties into the head of the lagoon. Most of the northern two-thirds of the island are covered with thick jungle growth: palms, mangroves, vines, lianas, ferns, and other tropical plant life. The southern "arms" of the island feature similar patches of jungle but also open stretches of grasses growing anywhere from two to five feet high. There are a few low hills in the island's "arms", but two higher peaks rise in the northern reaches; the peak of the western hill features a deep pit-like depression in which a mysterious black monolith stands...

WILDLIFE

The island is home to a number of lesser insects (flies, spiders, gnats, beetles, etc.) and birds (a few gulls, many small forest and jungle birds, and so forth). There are also bats, mice and similar small ground-mammals, and snakes, the latter generally non-poisonous and only a few feet long. As stated earlier, the surrounding waters are home to fish and other sea-life, and there may be small crabs and other shore-life present as well. A handful of wary crocodiles inhabit the sandbars at the head of the central lagoon.

The most numerous inhabitants of the island are bush pigs and howler monkeys. There are several dozen bush pigs scattered across the island in packs of 10-20 specimens; these beasts stand about 2-3 feet high at the shoulder, and are normally skittish; in some cases, however, larger or more aggressive boars may be encountered by the unwary castaways. The pigs are an excellent source of food for hungry castaways.

The island also teems with hundreds of howler monkeys, with bodies ranging from 1 to 2 feet long, and a tail at least that long. These creatures are initially fearful of intruders in their habitat, shrieking and fleeing through the treetops until the entire island seems alive with the cacophony of their shrill cries. Later, when they have calmed down, the howlers gradually return to their regular haunts, even creeping into the castaways' camp as their curiosity grows about their new neighbors. The monkeys may grow to be a nuisance, stealing small items or food from the survivors, or pelting the intruders with their feces if attacked or otherwise angered. Howler monkeys might also provide a source of food, if one doesn't mind the stringy, gamey meat.

Finally, the island is home to a few varieties of edible plants, from mango- or kiwi-like fruits to wild onions.

THE QUIET ZONE

The gamemaster should note that the species listed above thrive throughout the island, giving the jungle life with cries, snorts, buzzings, whirrings, and rustlings in the treetops and undergrowth.

There is a notable exception to these everyday noises, however. When someone passes onto the upper elevation levels of the northwestern hill (see the Monolith marker on the map), the animal noises stop almost entirely: no monkey shrieks, bird cries, or pigs tramping through the undergrowth. Insects may still buzz, snakes slither, and so forth, but no warm-blooded animals — other than perhaps the castaways — venture onto the highest areas of the western hill. This is, of course, due to the presence of the monolith and its inhuman “guardian”, described below....

SIGNS OF PREVIOUS VISITORS

As the player characters and their companions explore the island it becomes apparent that it is currently uninhabited by anything other than beasts and birds: no one lives here now, nor does it appear that anyone has visited for many many years — decades or longer, perhaps. Nor do there seem to be any buildings of any kind on the island.

There are signs, however, that someone used to visit this place, long ago, and on a regular basis. The most obvious indications of this are the stone quays standing in the central lagoon. These stone docks enabled passengers to disembark without wading in the shallow surf. There are several such constructions, each made of crumbling stones slimed with algae, all unused for countless years. Each of the stone landings are about 12 feet long, 3 feet wide, and 3 feet high. The fact that there are at least three such landings suggests more than one small vessel was present here at the same time. But for what purpose?

Another man-made construction on the island may be found by anyone exploring the western bank of the

stream that empties into the lagoon. With an Average (D1) Observation roll, anyone walking along that side of the bank notices an occasional flat stone partially buried in the soil, and a further such roll notes these stones forming a path following the stream to the northwest. If the path is followed to the west, a Challenging (D2) Observation roll discovers the spot where the stones turn into jungle and climb the hillside to the northwest. Here the stones become obscured with soil, leaves, plants, and other jungle growth and detritus, but the pathway remains clear, ascending the western hill. Near the hill's summit the flagstone path turns south and west, following the edge of a deep pit-like depression; through the intervening jungle a massive black stone rises from the bottom of the pit. (The top of this hill marks “The Quiet Zone” described in the nearby sidebar.)

At the southernmost end of the pit the jungle clears to reveal the depression below, its walls climbing with vines and leaves, water dripping into the depths, otherwise deathly silent. The path now leads counter-clockwise down a narrow ledge to the floor of the pit below, where a 20-foot tall monolith of volcanic black stone stands ominously in the eerie gloom.

THE PIT

The pit is about 50 feet deep and 30 feet across, silent save for the dripping of water. The stony ground on the pit floor is slippery with pools and rivulets, some of which trickle into the tunnel encircling the monolith as it descends into the earth.

THE MONOLITH

The black monolith is about 4 feet thick and rises about 20 feet above the ground. It is a twisted mass of obsidian-like stone, pitted and scarred and with some edges as sharp as knife-blades. It's impossible to determine whether the stone was carved or whether its shape is natural, but there are weird hieroglyphs carved here and there across its surface. A Daunting (D3) Lore test deciphers one of the symbols: “sacrifice”. Any Momentum achieved recognizes one additional



word from the following list (only one additional word is deciphered regardless of how many Momentum are gained for a single test, so multiple Lore successes may be required to glean all the information from the monolith); other words discernible on the black stone are “cloud”, “demon”, “eye”, and “maker/creator/shaper”.

On one side of the monolith a tunnel leads into the earth, apparently spiraling — again, counter-clockwise — around the monolith as it descends.

DESCENT INTO THE DEPTHS

The tunnel in the earth beside the monolith is about 6 feet high and 4 feet wide, and it circles the black stone as it winds ever downward. The black stone is the inside wall, and the floor is slippery with water and lichen, so an Average (D1) Acrobatics test is required to keep from slipping and sliding down to the chamber below; any Complication means the unlucky delver has inadvertently

touched the black stone at some point in his tumble, triggering the visions described earlier. Anyone below the tumbler must roll a Challenging (D1) Acrobatics test to get out of the way; with Momentum they can stop their companion's fall; any Complication rolled means he or she has also touched the monolith, possibly triggering the awful visions. Damage incurred from the fall is 2☹ per foot.

The passage opens into a chamber about 20 feet below the surface. The chamber is about 15 feet across, with the black stone at its center — still extending into the earth below. The rough-hewn cavern is littered with a few bones, and the passage again continues downward beside the monolith. Now the passage is steeper and slicker, however, and a Challenging (D2) Acrobatics test is required to avoid the effects described above; the Acrobatics test needed to get out of the way is also raised to Challenging (D2). Damage from the fall is, again, 2☹ per foot.

The passage winds ever deeper and steeper downward, finally opening into a second chamber 30 feet below the first. This cave is similar to the first, but there are more bones here, and the passage continues even more steeply downward. A

DON'T TOUCH IT!

Anyone who touches the monolith is in for a shock — literally and figuratively. The victim must make a Daunting (D3) Discipline check, suffering 1 point of damage to Resolve even if the test is successful, or 5☹ if not as horrific visions of the monolith's ancient bloodstained past burn across their psyche (see below). If any Complication is rolled, or any Effect is rolled on the ☹, the victim becomes obsessed with the monolith. If a Trauma is indicated (i.e. if 5 or more Resolve points are lost to the shock) the victim develops a phobia, fearing darkness and shadows; all his or her tests made in darkness are made one step more difficult, though a player character can reduce this by adding to the gamemaster's Doom stores.

The visions manifest as follows: Initially, there is only darkness, then a powerful feeling that *something* is coiled in the dark bowels of the earth, where the black stone has its roots. Strange hunched hairy men find and touch the monolith, falling back shrieking and fearful. They soon carry forth one of their number to the stone's base, slashing his throat and tumbling the body into the tunnel beside it. This is repeated countless times, and gradually the hunched men grow upright, more sophisticated, fur garments changing to spun clothing, jewelry, and other signs of “civilization” — but always the bloody sacrifices made at the foot of the black stone. There are priests resplendent in magnificent robes and jewelry, slaves naked but for loincloths, kings and queens, bedecked

in magnificent finery. Then there is nothing, and the shadows grow around the monolith as the jungle closes overhead. Then, just before the vision ends, something large and blurry begins to seep out from the passage beside the monolith....

Anyone who suffers these visions falls into a twitching, babbling fit for a number of hours equal to the Resolve points lost. No Counseling roll is possible until the victim has suffered through these visions, and attempting to Counsel a stricken individual after dark automatically fails due to the victim's phobic sensitivity to darkness. Normal recovery of Resolve cannot occur the first night, and can only begin after a successful Counseling test has been made during daylight hours.

If the sufferer of these visions develops an obsession with the black stone, he or she must make a Daunting (D3) Discipline roll each night until he successfully completes the test. Failure indicates the victim attempts to return to the monolith. This person resists any attempts to stop him, though not to the point of violence: they merely feel they must return to the monolith, that there is an *answer* to be found within its presence. Unless the victim is stopped, they return to the monolith and descend into the passage beside it — sacrificing himself to the cloud-demon and becoming fodder for the creature's Transformation power. This obsession continues until the vision-sufferer makes a successful nightly Daunting (D3) Discipline test.

Challenging (D2) Observation roll hears strange furtive sounds issuing from the passage below: rustlings, hissings, perhaps a low titter — there is *something* down there...Hearing these ominous rustlings calls for a Challenging (D2) Discipline test to avoid taking 2 ☹ damage to Resolve.

The passage downward now becomes almost vertical, even slipperier than before. The difficulty of descent now necessitates a Daunting (D3) Acrobatics test, and anyone who fails tumbles downward into the grasp of the blur-demon waiting in the dark below, incurring 6 ☹ damage from the fall. If someone does plunge into the grip of the horror below, the echoing screams emanating from the pitch-black tunnel cause a Challenging (D2) Discipline test, with failure causing a loss of 3 ☹ points of Resolve. Any Complications, Trauma, or Effects rolled on the ☹ cause the phobia and obsession effects described in the “Don’t Touch It!” sidebar nearby.

Anyone foolish enough to continue down the passage encounter the demon, as described below.

THE DEMON

The ancient cultists who made sacrifices at the black monolith gave their bloody offerings to an elder being. Its lair was made at the base of the stone, somewhere impossibly deep within the earth. This is the blur-demon, a powerful, inscrutable, hungry creature that takes the shape of an ever-shifting blurry translucent cloud about 30 feet long, 10 feet wide, and 10 feet high; a shifting orb of light about a yard in diameter serves as the thing’s eye, brain, and heart. This “eye” roams throughout the beast’s “body”, changing color according to its moods: the normal coloration is black or purple; yellow indicates curiosity; it glows red when the demon is afraid (e.g. when faced with flame); the eye flashes blue when it is angered; and the light flickers green when the demon is altering and creating new life within itself (see below). When agitated the entity emits a high-pitched chattering sound, while under normal conditions it makes a choked-breath sound, like a death rattle.

The blur-demon only exists partially on this plane, hence its near-invisibility and its invulnerability to most physical attacks: only the luckiest of blows, or those specifically aimed at its roving eye, harm the demon. The creature’s very presence causes fear to those who see it, and it can direct its terrible gaze at a single target to cause greater terror. Its physical attack consists of engulfing its targets and rending or crushing them within its alien cloud-coils; up to two man-sized targets within reach can be attacked at the same time in this way, and targets slain by the demon can then be transformed into its mutant-servants (see below).

The demon is timeless, semi-intelligent, and extremely patient: thousands of years have passed since it was last given a sacrifice, but it still responds to anyone touching the monolith. If no sacrifice is offered, the demon eventually



seeps forth to seek one on its own. The events surrounding the demon’s venturing forth across the island are discussed in the “Running the Adventure” section below.




The most horrifying trait of the blur-demon is its ability to absorb lifeforms and transform them into horrible mutations under its control. This process costs the demon nothing, since it is using the victimized creatures’ own lifeforces to make the transformation. It does, however, require 2 ☹+1 rounds to create smaller creatures, or 3 ☹+1 rounds to fashion human-sized creatures. These “abominations” are initially extruded from the beast’s cloudy form as slimy greenish pods of varying sizes which “hatch” within 6 rounds, or immediately if touched or Doom is spent. The demon’s first mutant creations consists of bush pigs, then pigs and monkeys, perhaps with a snake-like feature or two. Later on its transformations may include human subjects, drawn from among the player characters and the other castaways on the island. The resulting abominations are under the telepathic control of the demon, and used to attack enemies and/or secure captives or corpses which it can then transform into more of its mutant-slaves. The cloud-demon can control a number of abominations equal to its Willpower. If it creates more mutants than it has Willpower, a randomly-determined specimen dies, collapsing and melting into a pile of liquescent flesh; all abominations suffer the same fate if they are reduced to 0 Vigor (the abominations created by the Blur-Demon are discussed later in the adventure.)

THE BLUR-DEMON (NEMESIS)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
12	10	7	13
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
13	12	6	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	3	Movement	3
Fortitude	2	Senses	2
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 12, Resolve 13	
■ Soak: *Armor 3 (Incorporeal 3), Courage	
*Attacking the creature with a D3 Difficulty allows a character to target its eye/core and inflict damage normally; fire attacks ignore Soak/Incorporeal and D3 Difficulty to hit.	



ATTACKS	
■ Engulf (M): Reach 1, 6  , Piercing 2	
■ Gaze of Terror (T): Range M, 8  , mental, Stun, Vicious 1	
■ Horrifying Presence (T): Range C, 6  , mental, Area	

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
■ Fast Recovery (Vigor 3)	
■ Fear 2	
■ Feed Upon Fear	
■ Incorporeal 3	
■ Inured to Cold, Disease, Fear, Pain, Poison	
■ Night Vision	
■ Mother of Abomination: Can create Abominations (process detailed in the text above, statistics in the sidebar on the next page).	

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

The initial scenes of this adventure should run fairly easily, with the fight with the pirates and the subsequent sinking of the ship. Likewise the survivors' struggle to build a raft and survive at sea should be easy to run. When the weary castaways reach the deserted island, their initial activities involve resting, finding food, water, and shelter, and perhaps creating weapons as well.

The castaways should eventually get around to exploring the island, encountering its flora and fauna, and discovering the ancient structures which suggest long-ago visits by some civilized culture. Soon enough the heroes and their companions should discover the monolith, and draw the attention of the demon which waits below.

The gamemaster may wish to keep the blur-demon, or "mother of abominations", under wraps, at least at first. One or more of the castaways may alert the creature by coming into contact with the monolith, at which time the demon waits until nightfall before seeping out of its lair to explore the island and seek out those who have inadvertently "summoned" it. The sounds of the creature's death-rattle "breathing" out in the pitch-black jungle should call for a Challenging (D2) Discipline check with failure causing a loss of 2  Resolve. The thing keeps its distance, since the player characters' camp is lit by torches — and the hated fire. The thing slinks away, perhaps feeding on stray beasts in the jungle and creating a handful of abominations which it then sends to meddle with these intruders before morning, or sometime the next day. If this does occur, then the night will be split by the terrified screams of animals being hunted and warped by the cloud-demon. Again, these horrific cries in the night call for a Challenging (D2) Discipline test, causing a loss of 2  points of Resolve if the test fails. These transformed creatures may also have attributes of snakes, birds, or insects, in addition to the main body forms of bushpigs and monkeys.

If the player characters defeat the abominations (minion) too easily, the gamemaster should introduce abominations (toughened), larger mutant things with the features of boars, alligators, and snakes. If possible, a human victim should be taken by the abominations, for use in creating human-like mutant creatures. Seeing a toughened humanoid abomination with the features of someone recognized by the player characters triggers a *Dreadful Recognition* attack (see opposite).

Once the player characters defeat several waves of the abominations, the creature surge forth to try and slay the intruders in person. It will try to avoid characters who wield fire against it, and Daunting (D3) Observation tests might be allowed to recognize some or all of the colors that make up the entity's moods (as described above). If the demon takes 2 Harm it attempts to flee back to its lair to heal. Clever heroes might try to drive the thing back to its lair and build a fire in the tunnels, keeping the fire fed to pen the beast underground. This will keep the monster penned in — until the fire goes out, at which time it will come raging forth to destroy its tormentors.

Hopefully the player characters can overcome the blur-demon. If not, they might soon have help in their struggle against the bizarre entity: several days after their arrival on the island a sail is sighted in the distance...

ABOMINATIONS

These are the creatures combined and transformed by the blur-demon from their natural forms into horrible mutants under the demon's control. Two different sizes of Abomination are described here, those the size of monkeys (Minions) and larger ones the size of a man (Toughened). Small abominations may be derived from monkeys and smaller bushpigs, along with features of snakes or birds; the larger varieties begin with human or larger pigs as their "raw material", and may include features, limbs, or heads from any type of animal encounter on the island — including men. More fearsome abominations might also be derived from alligators culled from the lagoon.

A small abomination might resemble a monkey with the head of a snake or bird, or the tusked snout of a boar. Larger abominations may have alien heads such as these, or, if they include human stock, a combination of human and pig-like features, standing upright like a man, but with the snout and tusks of a boar. An abomination derived from a consumed alligator might possess a boar's or man's body with the gator's head, or a heavy tail, or a thick scaly hide, or some combination of all of these.



Small / Large Abominations (Minions / Toughened)

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
12	10	7	13
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
13	12	6	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	— / 2	Movement	3 / —
Fortitude	— / 2	Senses	2 / —
Knowledge	— / —	Social	— / —

STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 4/9, Resolve 4/7
- **Soak:** Armor — /1, Courage — /1

ATTACKS

- **Two Claws (M):** Reach 1, Minion 3 / Toughened 4 Vicious 1
- **Bite (M):** Reach 1, 2 Vicious 2
- **(Toughened only) Dreadful Recognition (T):** Range C, 4 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Brachiating:** Abominations are capable of moving through the trees with remarkable agility, swinging from branch to branch. An abomination may ignore all challenging terrain when moving through zones that include trees, and may re-roll any d20 that does not generate a success when making a movement-related test when climbing or moving through trees.
- **Fear 1**

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Each player character that survives this adventure should receive 200 Experience Points. Any character that scored a kill in the fight with Herge Daimos's pirates should receive an extra 20 points, and particularly valorous acts in the pirate fight or the subsequent struggle for survival at sea should receive 10 points. A character who figured out the mood-colors of the blur-demon and used it to the group's

advantage might also receive 10 bonus points, and if the mother of abominations is defeated those who helped in its destruction gain an additional 30 Experience Points each. There are no treasures or other valuables to be found on the island, and in fact the poor player characters may be armed only with primitive weapons for their next adventure...



A TRAIL OF BASTARDS

Battle and raid had thinned their crew; only some eighty spearmen remained, scarcely enough to work the long galley. But Bêlit would not take the time to make the long cruise southward to the island kingdoms where she recruited her buccaneers.

— “Queen of the Black Coast”

Shortly after the player characters deal with the demonic mother of abominations, a ship lands on the island: it is the *Windblade*, another pirate ship, blown off-course here by the same storms that swept the castaways to this godforsaken place. The pirates are battered and bedraggled, suffering from starvation and thirst, and their ship is in dire need of repairs. The pirates are surly and mutinous as a result of their recent misfortunes; their captain, the belligerent Morein, is barely in control of his crew. The pirates attempt to seize hostages or otherwise force the castaways to help repair their ship, but it won't take much encouragement to spark a mutiny among them...

Once the *Windblade* is repaired and resupplied, the pirates are eager to return to the sea lanes, hungry for carnage and loot. If the player characters are aboard, are they there as willing participants in the piratical endeavors, perhaps even the new officers in command of the ship? Or are they enslaved, forced into service? In any event, if the players wish to stay with the ship, they must take part in the pirates' trade, at least for a while. The salty dogs know they are sorely undermanned as a crew, and their ship badly needs repairs, so they suggest returning to the pirate haven of Tortage, in the Barachan Isles, to regroup and refit. There the player characters can learn more about their enemies Captain Daimos and Maledict Mer, and the surly pirates and their lusty trade, among many other misadventures in the pirate stronghold.

Hopefully the player characters can find a way to turn their pirate crew toward the goal of finding and revenging themselves on their nemeses.

Later, the adventurers return to Messantia to meet with Emeraina's father, the merchant Lord Emarius. Emarius gives the player characters the task of rescuing his daughter, threatening them with imprisonment, or worse, if they fail. After meeting with Lord Emarius, the agent of a rival merchant house approaches the player characters with a counter-offer: see to it that Emeraina never returns to Argos (and never marries her wealthy Shemitish prince), and he will pay even more. Regardless of whether or not they accept this dastardly deal, the rival's agent slips aboard their ship and insinuates himself into the crew...

THE PIRATES ARRIVE

The pirates arrive at the site marked B on The Island of the Black Monolith map, though it is up to the gamesmaster to decide exactly when this happens. They may show up while the player characters are still dealing with the blur-demon, if the gamemaster wants to either pit the heroes against two foes or have the pirates help out against the creature. Alternatively, Morein and his men may appear suddenly, while the castaways are engaged in everyday chores in camp or elsewhere, capturing a hostage and dragging them to the player characters' camp, threatening to kill their captive unless the castaways help them repair their ship. If the player characters are armed only with improvised weapons, the gamemaster may wish them to see the *Windblade* approaching the island, giving them time to signal and prepare for the arrival of their “rescuers”.




The pirates are a desperate band of about 20 men, led by a wiry, shaggy-headed weasel of a man named Morein. He's an ill-tempered Argossean who's even more ill-tempered now: the hapless *Windblade* has been tossed on the Western Ocean by storms and lost at sea for nearly two weeks. The crew — what's left of it — is haggard, bitter, and itching for a fight. Most of them blame Morein for getting them lost after running from a heavily armed Zingaran warship. Tempers are running hot, and even the burly mate, Grim Vitario, wants to see Morein deposed. Unfortunately, the crew have no better choices for captain than Morein, even though everyone hates him.

When Morein and the pirates arrive on the island they are in bad shape, half-starved, and worn out from heat and thirst. Their clothes are dirty, their hair and beards ragged, their skin sunburned and emaciated.

■ **Note:** The attacks and abilities in the statistic blocks below marked with a single asterisk (*) are reduced by 1 level, while the abilities marked with two asterisks (**) are not usable at all until the pirates have eaten, drunk, and rested for a full day.

Captain Morein's first inclination is to take control of the island. The pirates may try to take a hostage, as suggested above, or surround the camp brandishing their weapons. The pirates demand food and water, and in return offer to take the castaways off the island if they'll help repair the ship. If the castaways refuse, Morein may attack and try to subdue them forcing them to help with the ship, or, if the castaways and pirates are about equal in numbers,

he may just send his men to forage the island with an eye toward resting and fixing the ship themselves and leaving the castaways here when they leave.

Obviously the player characters need to find some way to work with the pirates if they want to leave the island soon. They may try to work with the pirates while fomenting mutiny, or they may simply try to overpower the brutes. At some point, however, enmity should arise between Morein and one or more of the player characters, leading to armed conflict between Morein and his few supporters and the player characters. Grim Vitario, for his part, stays out of this fight, hoping Morein will fall; he doesn't necessarily want to take command, but he blames Morein for their current bad luck streak, and wants him deposed. One player character should fight Morein one-on-one, while each of the other players faces off against a Mob of +1 pirate Minions. The rest of the castaways and the remaining pirates — including Grim Vitario — sit out of the fight, hoping to either slay the winners or gain themselves a new captain.

If the player characters fail to overcome Morein and his faithful few, they'll be enslaved by the pirates and forced to repair the ship — and probably left behind when the scallwags depart. If the player characters prevail, they may use this victory to their advantage, hoping to assume command of the pirates and the ship. Any hero that defeated a pirate may attempt a Daunting (D3) Command test to assume captaincy of the *Windblade*; the hero who slew Morein needs only a Challenging (D2) Command test. The player with the highest number of successes can, if desired, take command of the ship.

CAPTAIN MOREIN (NEMESIS)

Captain Morein is a desperate man. In attempting to flee from a Zingaran patrol ship he led his men south, into fearful storms which, when they abated, left the ship becalmed and the crew desperately low on food and water. Now, weeks later, his damaged ship and weary men have landed on a desert island where he hopes to replenish supplies and make repairs. His temper is short, as he knows his men are a hair's-breadth from rising up against him.

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	8	9	8
Agility		Brawn	Coordination
9		9	9

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	1	Movement	1
Fortitude	2	Senses	—
Knowledge	1	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK

- ***Stress:** Vigor 11, Resolve 10
- **Soak:** Armor 2 (Brigandine jacket), Courage 2

ATTACKS

- ***Cutlass (M):** Reach 2, 5 Unbalanced, Fearsome, Vicious 1
- **Knife (M):** Reach 1, 4 1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1
- ****Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 3 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Strength from the Sea:** Pirates are used to combat aboard ship and only suffer penalties in the fiercest of weather.
- **Boarding Action:** Pirates are experts at boarding unfriendly craft and know all the best places to seek cover. When boarding, pirates gain 3 Cover against missile weapons.
- ***My Ship is My Castle:** On his own vessel, a pirate captain always has Light Cover, with 2 Cover Soak against ranged weapons.

DOOM SPENDS

- ****Fearsome Reputation:** At any point in an encounter the pirate captain can spend 1 Doom (Repeatable) to add 1 to the mental damage of a Steely Glare attack.

GRIM VITARIO (TOUGHENED)

Vitario is quiet and brooding, and while he'd take command if it came down to it, he's not in any hurry to do so: the *Windblade* and its crew are still in too precarious a situation, and any failure could easily cost him his life. Vitario is content to let Morein or his successor fail, or let the latter succeed at least long enough to take the ship back into the sea lanes. Maybe once the ship returns to Tortage they can find a better captain than the bumbling Morein, or these landlubbing newcomers...

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	7	8	8
Agility		Brawn	Coordination
10		10	9

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	2	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK

- ***Stress:** Vigor 11, Resolve 9
- **Soak:** Armor 2 (Brigandine vest), Courage 2

ATTACKS

- ***Cutlass (M):** Reach 2, 6 Unbalanced, Fearsome, Vicious 1
- ***Hatchet (M):** Reach 2, 6 1H, Vicious 1
- **Knife (M):** Reach 1, 5 1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Strength from the Sea:** Pirates are used to combat aboard ship and only suffer penalties in the fiercest of weather.
- **Boarding Action:** Pirates are experts at boarding unfriendly craft and know all the best places to seek cover. When boarding, pirates gain 3 Cover against missile weapons.
- ***My Ship is My Castle:** On his own vessel, a pirate captain always has Light Cover, with 2 Cover Soak against ranged weapons.



PIRATE CREW (MINIONS)

The pirates are a dirty foul-mouthed lot, but good in battle — when they're healthy, which they're not at the moment. While a mere handful are loyal to Morein, and another few to Vitario, most are fed up with the slim pickings and ill fortunes suffered by the *Windblade*. A bold or savvy player character could sway the crew to follow him and his companions, but they'd better be prepared to take up the pirate life. These are wolves of the sea, not spineless milksops, and they won't long follow someone who can't lead them to rich rewards.

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	7	7	7
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
9	8	8	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	1	Movement	1
Fortitude	—	Senses	—
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK	
■ *Stress: Vigor 4, Resolve 4	
■ Soak: Armor 1 (clothing), Courage 1	

ATTACKS	
■ *Cutlass (M): Reach 2, 4 ☹️ Unbalanced, Fearsome, Vicious 1	
■ *Hatchet (M): Reach 2, 4 ☹️ 1H, Vicious 1	
■ Knife (M): Reach 1, 3 ☹️ 1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1	
■ **Steely Glare (T): Range C, 2 ☹️ mental, Stun	

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
■ Strength from the Sea: Pirates are used to combat aboard ship and only suffer penalties in the fiercest of weather.	
■ Boarding Action: Pirates are experts at boarding unfriendly craft and know all the best places to seek cover. When boarding, pirates gain 3 ☹️ Cover against missile weapons.	

The pirates' vessel is a smallish 2-masted carrack, currently anchored a few hundred yards east of the island. A tiny crew of 2-3 men have been left upon her — men too sick or hurt to help out ashore. There are a few supplies aboard the ship, including several bows and hundreds of arrows, used to attack the pirates' prey. There are several



THE WINDBLADE (CARRACK)

ATTRIBUTES	
Sailing Range	Crew (+ Passengers)
10 days	30 (+30)
Impact Damage	Maneuver
3 ☹️	—

STRESS AND SOAK		
Soak	Structure	Breaks
2	8 (10)	4

QUALITIES AND NOTES	
■ Qualities: Deep Draft, Ponderous, Ship	
■ Stowage: —	

other weapons as well, mostly knives and daggers of various sorts, many hatchets, and a few swords and larger axes. The pirates' minimal loot is divided among the crew's sea-chests, handfuls of gold and silver coins worth no more than ☹️+1 gold in each. The captain's share is stored in a locked chest in his cabin: 4 ☹️+4 gold worth of coins and jewels, and

ON PLAYER CHARACTER MOTIVATIONS

It's assumed that the players want to proceed through the adventures of this campaign, based on the spirit of the game, the unspoken contract between gamemaster and players, and the conventions of the pulp fiction of Robert E. Howard himself. *Waves Stained Crimson* is written for characters similar to Conan himself: it's easy to imagine the Cimmerian reacting to the events of this campaign, whether it's helping to save his fellow castaways, fighting to free slaves (and fill his own purse, naturally), or seeking revenge on the pirate captain and sorcerer who left him to die.

These adventures proceed from the basic assumption that revenge or chivalry will be enough motivation for the player characters to continue their pursuit of Herge Daimos and his sorcerous accomplice throughout these adventures, even if it means joining a pirate crew and becoming pirates themselves.


Some players may be wary of falling into such clichéd behavior. Some may need a different motivation to keep following Captain Daimos and Maledict Mer into morally-questionable and increasingly dangerous situations. For those types of characters we offer the following additional motivational "hooks":

One obvious "hook" is for one of the heroes to become infatuated with Emeraina; just a look or something she did that made them fall in love, even if it wasn't reciprocated her. Saving her from the clutches of a cruel sorcerer might be enough to earn at least a passing glance.

Another possibility might be that one of the younger player characters finds Katrina reminiscent of their mother. Or, alternately, a player character may fall in love with the devoted servant-woman, and find themselves willing to aid her in her quest to rescue her lost "daughter".

Perhaps the player characters have reason to hate Zingarans, or pirates, or a specific hatred for Herge Daimos or Maledict Mer: maybe the pirate captain slew a friend or relative of theirs, or someone's ship was lost in the vicinity of Arzhna Island and believed to have fallen afoul of the Shemite wizard.

Finally, there's always the mercenary angle: whether it's joining the pirates to earn some fast money hunting for fat merchant ships, or agreeing to find the missing girl Emeraina for a price, or assaulting a slave city filled with rich loot, there are plenty of opportunities to find adventure while seeking gold and treasure.

charts and maps worth another  +1 gold. The rest of the minimal loot the *Windblade's* crew stored in the hold was lost in the storm.

The craft is in dire needs of repairs, thanks to the weather damage. Her sails and rigging are ragged and in need of replacement or mending. Her hull is leaking and needs patching, and she needs careening (basically hauling the ship up on her side to scrape the barnacles and seaweed from her hull before coating it with pitch or caulk of some kind).

The pirates have some of the materials needed for restoration, but not all — much of the work needs to be done in port. What work can be done on the island involves mending sails, unfouling rigging, repairing and caulking hull leaks. Making the *Windblade* seaworthy requires the use of the Craft skill. Each day spent at work on repairs allows each player character to make an Average (D1) Craft test; each Momentum gained adds to the total number of successes for that day's work, while each Complication reduces that day's total successes by 2. When the work has reached 20 successes the ship is ready to sail — a process that could take many days to achieve. Note that the castaways and crew still need to acquire enough food to sustain them each day while repairs are underway.

Once the *Windblade's* repairs are complete, the pirates prepare to leave the island. They'll spend a few more days gathering supplies of food and water before departing. If the player characters haven't made a bid to seize command of the ship, now would be a good time, otherwise the pirates may leave them to their fate on the island. Then again, the pirate crew is already undermanned, so perhaps they'll force some of the castaways into service.

A-ROVING WE WILL GO!

Leaving the lonely island of the Mother of Abominations behind, the player characters and their newfound "allies" finally make their way back to the sea lanes. Presumably the adventurers seek revenge on Herge Daimos and Maledict Mer for the horrible death they almost suffered at their hands. The crew of the *Windblade* have no love for the dandyish Daimos, though they're reluctant to cross the infamous sorcerer. If the player characters are in command, they can put forward their desire to find Daimos and the *Devil's Shadow*. Some of the pirates suggest sailing to Tortage to make repairs in port, recruit badly-needed new members for the crew, and seek information on Daimos's whereabouts. Others among the sea-wolves call for an immediate return to piracy, even with the much-reduced crew.

Let the player characters decide what they want to do and where they want to go. If they ask the advice of the

pirates, the crew insist on recruiting new crew to ensure success in any piratical endeavors. Tortage is the best place to find such men. On the other hand, others in the crew say the pirates can choose smaller craft in hopes of finding loot and perhaps pressing a few of the target ship's sailors into service as pirates. Grim Vitaro, for his part, sees wisdom in both courses of action. If the player characters are in control of the ship and their Captain makes a Daunting (D3) Command roll, the crew reluctantly agrees to sail to Messantia so they can search for Daimos and negotiate with Emeraina's father, if necessary. If the roll fails the pirates insist they visit Tortage first; any Complications result in a vote or fight over Captaincy of the ship (in such a case, the pirates' candidate should be a Toughened version of the Pirate Crew detailed earlier). If the *Windblade* heads for Messantia instead of Tortage, look to the section entitled "Setting Forth for Argos", later in this chapter, to see what transpires.

It takes 8 days' sailing to reach the infamous pirate lair of Tortage, in the Barachan Islands off the coast of Zingara. Each day spent sailing toward Tortage, either Grim Vitaro (skill level 11, Focus 1) or a player character should make an Average (D1) Sailing test. If the roll succeeds the *Windblade* makes normal progress for that day; any Momentum earned indicates a merchant vessel has been sighted, presenting an opportunity for a raid. If any Complications are indicated by the Sailing roll, a storm or ill wind blows the *Windblade* off course, costing her a day's progress.

THE BARACHAN ISLES

The Barachan Isles are a cluster of dozens of small jungle-covered islands at the southwestern tip of Zingara, the closest lying less than 100 miles from the mainland. Soon after the *Windblade* passes the first of these islets a few long canoes and small boats are seen scudding out to sea in pursuit. The *Windblade's* crew are not concerned, and eventually fetch signal flags to show the pursuers they are pirates, not invaders. Later the ship passes very close by a series of green-choked islands, where a Challenging (D2) Observation rolls note furtive movement within the foliage. The pirates say these are hunters or natives, neither of whom would allow a non-buccaneer ship to enter without feathering it with arrows and signaling those on neighboring islands that intruders were coming: many fleets have tried to infiltrate and raid the Barachans, but none have succeeded, instead finding themselves peppered by fire arrows before running into pirate ships long warned of their coming.

As the pirates boast of the safety of Tortage, a further Challenging (D2) Observation roll spots the crew's eyes turning skyward, just as an arrow thumps into the deck of the ship. Roll 2D20, and only if a Complication is indicated does the missile strike an unwary player character (the rest of the crew see it coming and step aside). The crew laughs,

and when the arrow is examined a note is found tied to it with a rude jest crudely scrawled upon it in Argossean. The crew laughs off the incident, and the *Windblade* continues navigating the bewildering maze of islands and streams. Hereafter, Grim Vitaro guides the ship.

Finally, shortly after sunset the crew see land ahead, an island whose unseen far shore is brightly lit by fires. Sounds of music, voices, and laughter echo from the distance, and a wash of smells waft toward the *Windblade*: smoke, sweat, sewage, roasting meat, unwashed bodies, and more. As they round the island, they see the beaches crowded with small boats, and at least a dozen ships out in the harbor. Hundreds of figures cavort around a fires amid tents and lean-tos. Beyond this a dozen or so ramshackle buildings make up the main part of the settlement.

This is Tortage.

WELCOME TO TORTAGE

The crew draw lots as they approach the harbor, to see who stays aboard the ship for the night. The player characters shouldn't draw a short straw, of course. Where would be the fun in that?

Stepping foot ashore, the player characters and other crew are swarmed by pirates eager for news. They are filthy, stinking of sweat and alcohol, with chunks of meat and fruit stuck in their scraggly beards. They offer bottles and toasts, point toward food and women. They are shocked to hear of Morein's death, and the new captaincy aboard the *Windblade*, and before long dozens more pirates swarm to hear the newcomers' stories.

There are taverns (with names like *The Bucket o' Guts*, the *Shark's Tooth*, and *The Mermaid*), brothels (*the Boars' Nest* is one), cheap lodgings (*the Bunks*), a merchant (*Master Farmiger's*), several warehouses, and even a shipwright's yard (*Old Three-Fingers'*), among other sites. (See page 227 of the **Conan** rulebook for more details about Tortage).

The player characters are free to raise all manner of hell along with the crew of the *Windblade* and the rest of the pirates. Characters need not pay upkeep during this impromptu bit of Carousing, but if they spend 2 or more gold they can try to cultivate their Renown (see page 294 of the **Conan** rulebook); this is allowed because the player characters are (presumably) new to the world of piracy and have many tales to tell! This is allowed only once during this visit to Tortage, on this initial night of revelry.

The first night in port is uproarious, with drinking and feasting, and perhaps a bit of fighting, gambling, and fornicating (there are several dozen persons of negotiable virtue in the many brothels of Tortage). If the *Windblade* failed to



take any merchant ships during the voyage here, the gamemaster should call for an Average (D1) Intelligence checks to have the characters realize they have little or no money (perhaps only what was found in Captain Morein's cabin), and they need to pay for repairs to their ship, at the very least, and perhaps entice new crewmen as well. If the rolls fail, the player characters may spend what little they have on frivolous expenses and be strapped for cash afterward.

Furthermore, each player character should make a Challenging (D2) Society check to see how they fit in with the pirate brotherhood of Tortage. If the Society check succeeds, there is no further effect, but any Momentum gained can be used in future dealings with the pirates in the coming days. If the roll fails, the individual has offended one of the pirates and gets in a brawl. This brawl is strictly unarmed combat unless more than one Complication was rolled in which case it might be knives, cutlasses, or improvised weapons; alternately the gamemaster can spend 2 Doom to have the "brawl" be a duel to the death. Most brawls take place in the establishment where they break out, but in the case of duels the combatants are led to The Hill section of Tortage so all the pirates can watch and wager.

If the player characters indulge in any of the following activities the first night, consult the appropriate section below for details of how the encounter might transpire: Carousing, Gambling, Gathering Information, or Recruiting New Men.

DEALINGS IN TORTAGE

There are a number of activities the player characters can attend to in Tortage. Some have been mentioned earlier, but in any case these and other actions are described in more detail here. Note again that money is probably a scarce commodity for the player characters at this point: they were robbed by Daimos and left with few belongings as a result, and their subsequent adventures on the island of the mother of abominations, and with the pirates of the *Windblade* have probably profited them little or nothing, unless they engaged in piracy with their newfound ship and crew.

As a result of this penury the group may not be able to afford some of the activities and services described below. In this case the player characters may have to bargain with Master Farmiger, Old Three-Fingers (the carpenter), or one of the other businessmen of Tortage (see "Getting a Loan" below).



CAROUSING

The gamemaster might also allow the player characters to roll on the Carousing Events Tables from either the core rulebook or the *Conan the Pirate* sourcebook. As stated earlier, no Upkeep expenditure is required in this special limited case, but other monetary effects called for by specific event results should be kept. Many event results need tailoring toward the special environment of Tortage (for instance, there are no local law enforcement or other authorities for the adventurers to tangle with here).

GAMBLING

Characters can gamble using the system on pages 293-294 of the *Conan* rulebook. Again, the player characters may have very little money with which to gamble, and that money would be better spent buying repairs for their ship or hiring men for the crew.

GATHERING INFORMATION

One of the main goals of the player characters should be learning more about their new enemies, Captain Herge Daimos and the Shemite sorcerer Maledict Mer. In the course of their time spent at Tortage, the player characters will have many opportunities to gather rumors and tales from the pirates. Each day, an adventurer can make a Simple (Do) Society roll to gather information, with results as shown below. If they press for further stories about the people in question, allow another Society roll, at Average (D1), to see if there is more to learn. Certain levels of information can be gleaned through Momentum spends, enabling player characters to learn even juicier rumors. In addition, the player characters learn more about Captain Morein, whose ship they may now command — and whose influence they may not be rid of just yet...

- **Do:** Captain Morein was an Argossean with many friends among the Red Brotherhood, though few would probably take offense at the manner of his passing, since his crew doesn't seem to miss him much.
- **D1:** Captain Morein and several other pirates once took part in a frenzied battle at a Pictish settlement on the shores of Pictland, where he impressed many with his bravery.
- **D2:** While Morein may not have been popular with his own crew in the end, he still has friends among the Red Brotherhood, so whoever killed him and took his ship had better keep looking over their shoulder for vengeful pirates.

GETTING A LOAN

The player characters probably have little money to spend, and yet several important expenses loom in their future if they are to succeed, both as pirates and in their quest for revenge against Captain Daimos. What little money they have should be used to repair the ship, but even then they may not have enough to cover the cost. They can try to bargain with Old Three-Fingers, or sell extra weapons or equipment. Or they can turn to their crew for help, basically asking for a loan against future prizes.

Alternately the adventurers can go to Master Farmiger for financial aid. His price is high: he wants three-quarters — off the top — of whatever loot they find aboard Herge Daimos's ship. If he finds out about the ransom for Emeraina, he'll demand half of that too. In return he'll cover the repairs on the *Windblade* and help hire a crew for her. He warns that if the player characters try to skip out on him without paying he'll have every pirate in Tortage on the lookout for them. (Just in case, one of the men Farmiger recommends for the crew is his agent, paid to keep an eye on the player characters and report to Farmiger if they try to cheat him.)

- **Do:** Captain Herge Daimos is an infamous Zingaran freebooter. He is an excellent swordsman, and has a reputation as a ladies' man.
- **D1:** Maledict Mer is a Shemite sorcerer whose recent appearance in Zingara is awash in rumors that he worships strange bloodthirsty sea-gods.
- **D2:** Other stories claim his birth is a mystery, that as an infant he was found washed ashore near the border of Argos and Shem, that he was raised by temple priests who soon threw him out for his blasphemous questions and beliefs. Where he learned his wizardry no one knows.
- **D3:** Maledict Mer supposedly resides in a tower on a remote island somewhere off the coast of Shem, where he traffics with demons and spirits of the dead.

RECRUITING NEW MEN

The *Windblade* is running with a skeleton crew, barely enough to sail her, but sadly lacking enough experienced men to make or withstand an attack. There are probably about 30 or 40 men, but several of them are merchant crewmen rather than seasoned pirates. Ideally, another 25 hardened crewmen are needed to make the *Windblade* a piratical threat.

GETTING ALONG WITH THE RED BROTHERHOOD...OR NOT

In addition to their other activities, each day each player character should make an Average (D1) Society check to see whether they attract the attentions of the Red Brotherhood of Tortage. If the Society check succeeds normally, there is no further effect though any Momentum gained can be used in future dealings with the pirates in the coming days. If the roll fails, the individual has done something to irritate one of the pirates and gets in a brawl with them. If the roll was a normal failure the pirate is a Minion; if a Complication was rolled the opponent is Toughened (see the statistics below for each). This brawl is strictly unarmed combat unless more than one Complication was rolled in which case knives, cutlasses, or improvised weapons might be improvised; alternately the gamemaster can spend 2 Doom to have the "brawl" be a duel to the death. Most brawls take place in the establishment where they break out, but in the case of duels the combatants are ushered outside, so all the pirates can watch and wager.

Pirates Of Tortage (Minions or Toughened)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	7	7	7
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
9	9	8	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	Movement	1
Fortitude	—	Senses	—
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 5 (9 Toughened), Resolve 4 (7 Toughened)
- **Soak:** Armor 1 (clothing), Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Cutlass (M):** Reach 2, 4 Unbalanced, Fearsome, Vicious 1
- **Knife (M):** Reach 1, 3 1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 2 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Strength from the Sea:** Pirates are used to combat aboard ship and only suffer penalties in the fiercest of weather.
- **Boarding Action:** Pirates are experts at boarding unfriendly craft and know all the best places to seek cover. When boarding, pirates gain 3 Cover against missile weapons.

If the player characters attempt to raise a crew without spending any money for recruitment, they must make a Daunting (D3) Society or Persuade test to hire the first Mob of men (at least four Mobs are necessary to fill out the crew). Subsequent recruitment attempts made without bribery or financial enticement are at Dire (D4) difficulty. Only one bribe-less recruitment attempt is allowed per day (these attempts indicate the player characters are trying to win over the pirate crewmen with tales of their previous exploits and promises of future payoffs, without buying drinks or meals).

On the other hand, if gold is spent to entice potential crewmen (via food and drink and perhaps companionship), the difficulty of the Society/Persuade test is only Challenging (D2) per Mob if 1 gold is spent, or Average (D1) if 2 gold are spent. In these cases two such recruitment attempts are allowed per day.

Again, at least four or five Mobs of men are needed to fill out the crew, and six or seven Mobs would be ideal.

ARRANGING REPAIRS

Tortage has its own resident shipwright; gnarled and pertinacious, Old Three-Fingers earned his name from an injury that cost him the pinkie and ring finger of his right hand. Three-Fingers has a team of apprentices working for him, and they do everything from careening to caulking, replacing masts and spars, and installing new sails and rigging. They can even cut down bulkheads and decks to make larger vessels faster and sleeker.

Three-Fingers says it'll take a week or so to make all the needed repairs to the *Windblade*, and if the player characters can't meet his price of 15 gold he'll add another few days to the total as he has to give precedence to his paying customers. At best he can be bargained down to 12 gold. Alternately, destitute adventurers may offer him some other deal, perhaps a share in the profits of their next voyage. Or a player character with a Craft of 12 or better might offer to work off part of the debt (say, 2 gold per skilled Craftsman character) over the next week.

NEW ARRIVALS

Pirate ships come and go regularly while the player characters are in Tortage, and there are many opportunities to meet new captains and crews during their stay here. As the repairs to the *Windblade* near completion, breathless excitement sweeps through the settlement like wildfire: Red Ortho's ship the *Blood-Axe* is on its way into port!

Red Ortho is a legend among the pirates of the Red Brotherhood, a long-ranging sea-rover from the far northern shores of Vanaheim. The majority of the *Blood-Axe*'s crew are Ortho's Vanir brethren, tough brutal raiders who left behind the cold northern shores to plunder the ships and cities of the Western Ocean. A few Zingarans, Argosseans, and even a couple of Picts round out Red Ortho's crew.

When the longship *Blood-Axe* arrives in Tortage the northmen pour out into the village. They are big burly bearded men, hungry for meat and thirsty for drink, to say nothing of other lusts. The other pirates greet them with joy, and a delirious celebration breaks out. Each player character in Tortage must make a Challenging (D2) Society test to keep from running afoul of a riotous Vanirman or other member of Ortho's crew; this test is Simple (D0) if the character speaks the Nordheimer tongue. Again, there is no effect if the roll succeeds (though Momentum might be used in future dealings with the Vanir in Tortage), but if the roll fails a fight breaks out between the player character and one of the northmen. This fight is unarmed, and goes on until one combatant is unconscious or the player character gives up. Once the fight is over an Average (D1) Society test allows the player character to make amends with the Vanirman, all enmity forgotten, quaffing several drinks to show there's no hard feelings. If a player character bests one of Ortho's crew, reduce the difficulty of all tests involving the Vanir by 1. The *Blood-Axe* crew engage in many such brawls with other pirates during their stay in Tortage, and they are usually forgotten as soon as they're over.

VANIR SEA-ROVER (TOUGHENED)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	7	7	7
Agility		Brawn	Coordination
9		10	9
FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	2	Movement	1
Fortitude	2	Senses	2
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 10, Resolve 7
- **Soak:** Armor 1 (Clothing), Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **Broadsword (M):** Reach 2, 7 Unbalanced, Parrying
- **Knife (M):** Reach 1, 5 1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 4 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Strength from the Sea:** Pirates are used to combat aboard ship and only suffer penalties in the fiercest of weather.
- **Boarding Action:** Pirates are experts at boarding unfriendly craft and know all the best places to seek cover. When boarding, pirates gain 3 Cover against missile weapons.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Fearsome Reputation:** At any point in an encounter the Vanir crewman can spend 1 Doom (Repeatable) to add 1 to the mental damage of a Steely Glare attack.

If for whatever reason the player characters wish to speak with Ortho (or another member of his crew), they might gain some additional information. Red Ortho spends most of his time in the brothels or chasing after serving maids in the taverns, but he's always willing to talk (or rather boast of his own deeds). Ortho, for instance, saw Herge Daimos's ship off the coast of Argos some weeks back, sailing east, god knows where. A Daunting (D3) Society test elicits further information from the garrulous raider; this test is Average (D1) if the player character speaks Nordheimer. Red Ortho suggests that Daimos might be headed south to meet up with a group of Black Corsair captains who are supposedly planning some huge raid in the Southern Kingdoms. Ortho himself plans to head south in a day or two to look into these rumors; he and his men were in need of a debauch before making their way down the insufferably hot southern coast.



SETTING FORTH FOR ARGOS

Once the *Windblade's* repairs are complete, the player characters can head out on the trail of Herge Daimos. Their crew — many of them new — are anxious to start earning the loot they've dreamed of. Finally, after several weeks of struggle, the adventurers can resume pursuit of Daimos and the sorcerer, and their quest for vengeance against them. The player characters and crew are rested, probably fully healed, and ready to go.

There is also the rescue of Emeraina to be plotted. Emeraina's lady in waiting and surrogate mother, Katrina, should still be with the adventurers; if not in person, then her words should hang in the player characters' memory: Emeraina's father will pay handsomely for her return, and her husband-to-be might also contribute to such a reward. Katrina also warned that Emarius will move heaven and earth to find his only daughter, and Mitra save whomever might stand in the way.

With this in mind, and perhaps on the advice of other crewmen from the lost *Ebony Rose*, the player characters should at least consider a trip to Messantia, to consult with the merchant house of Emarius: at the very least find out what he's offering for his daughter's return, and let him know they had nothing to do with her kidnapping.



BACK TO ARGOS: LORD EMARIUS

The pirate crew of the *Windblade* are wary of making port in Messantia, the opulent capital of Argos. This is especially true if the *Windblade* has taken any Argosese prizes recently, or run afoul of any of its warships. If this is the case they recommend putting the player characters ashore outside the city, avoiding capture. If the adventurers insist on putting into port, an Average (D1) Society roll is needed to make entry without being recognized as a pirate vessel. If the roll fails at least one warship is sent to apprehend the *Windblade* and its renegade crew.

Assuming the player characters enter Messantia, they set out for the estate of Emeraina's father, Lord Emarius of the ancient house of Khaunt, located northeast of

the great city, along the banks of the Khorotas River. If Katrina is with the player characters, she insists on accompanying them to the Khaunt estate, to inform her master of what has befallen his daughter and entreat him to aid, or at least allow the player characters to seek, Emeraina's safe return.

The estate consists of great fields of crops and orchards, dozens of servants, and a small force of men at arms. When the party reaches the estate, several armed and armored men escort them to an audience with Lord Emarius himself.

Emarius is a burly, dour, man in his mid-fifties. He becomes sterner still when he learns his only daughter has been stolen by a Zingaran pirate. He paces, swears, and rants. A Challenging (D2) Counsel or Persuade check is needed to calm him down and assure him the player characters had nothing to do with Emeraina's abduction; if Katrina is present this test is lowered to Average (D1). If the roll fails Emarius may try to have the player characters disarmed and handed over to the authorities in Messantia; this happens if more than one Complication is rolled. A further Daunting (D3) Counsel or Persuade roll avoids this drastic action (the test is Challenging (D2) if Katrina is present, or Average (D1) if any of the *Ebony Rose's* crew were brought to corroborate the story).

Assuming incarceration is avoided, Lord Emarius wants to know what the player characters intend to do. He insists that time is of the essence, that petty piracy and robbery is a waste of time, that they must find Emeraina and bring her back without delay. He is willing to pay as much as 1-2 gold per crewman up front to ensure the *Windblade* focuses its efforts on bringing back Emeraina, and an additional 3 gold for each officer or person who has come to consult him. The reward for bringing her back alive, and in a timely fashion, is considerable: 5 gold per crewman, and 10 for each officer. Katrina, if present, insists on accompanying those who wish to rescue her surrogate daughter.

Emarius looks unkindly on attempts to extort more money from him: he declares that if the men aboard the *Ebony Rose* — including the player characters — had fought instead of surrendering like cowards, there would be no need for negotiation. Emarius is just glad Captain Zouhar didn't survive, or he would have had him keel-hauled, personally.

Finally, Emarius dispatches a small mercenary company to accompany the player characters. Their chief is the wiry mercenary captain Kronecte, with twenty unswervingly faithful fighting men at his command. Kronecte is tall and wiry, with close-cropped blonde hair. He and his men are armed with Swords, Knives, Heavy Hauberks, and Shields; aboard ship they shun armor and shield, but in any land-based conflict they don full armor and shield.



LORD EMARIUS, HOUSE OF KHAUNT (TOUGHENED)

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	10	10	9
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
8	9	7	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	—	Movement	—
Fortitude	—	Senses	1
Knowledge	1	Social	2

STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 9, Resolve 9
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Improvised Weapons (M):** Reach 1, 2 ♀
Improvised, Stun
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 4 ♀ mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Loyal Servants:** At any given time there will be at least one Squad/Mob of Guardsmen/servants accompanying Lord Emarius, at a cost of 1 or 2 Doom, respectively; each additional Doom spent by the gamemaster adds another Squad of guardsmen
- **A Hard Man's Reputation:** The gamemaster can expend up to 2 additional Doom to add an additional 1-2 Momentum to Lord Emarius's Steely Glare attack.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Connections in Low Places:** Lord Valdeus can expend 3 Doom to have one of his agents — equivalent to Orenthes (below) — appear in any location to act in his favor in any situation





CAPTAIN KRONECTE, MERCENARY (TOUGHENED)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	8	10	9
Agility		Brawn	Coordination
9		10	9

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	2	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	—
Knowledge	1	Social	1

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 11, Resolve 10	
■ Soak: Armor 3 (Heavy Hauberk), Courage 2	

ATTACKS	
■ Sword (M): Reach 2, 5  1H, Parrying	
■ Knife (M): Reach 1, 4  1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1	
■ Shield (M): Reach 2, 2  1H, Knockdown, Shield 2	
■ Steely Glare (T): Range C, 4  mental, Stun	

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
■ Leadership: Kronecte may spend 1 Doom to grant two bonus D20s to a single Mob or Squad within Close Range. Usual dice maximums apply. These bonus dice may be used on any skill test attempted by the group before the end of the next turn.	





EMARIUS'S MERCENARIES (MINIONS)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	7	8	7
Agility		Brawn	Coordination
9		9	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	1	Movement	—
Fortitude	—	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 5, Resolve 4	
■ Soak: Armor 3 (Heavy Hauberk), Courage 1	

ATTACKS

- **Sword (M):** Reach 2, 5  1H, Parrying
- **Knife (M):** Reach 1, 4  1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1
- **Shield (M):** Reach 2, 2  1H, Knockdown, Shield 2
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 3  mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Training:** Kronecte's mercenaries can reroll any dice that fails to score a success when making a Melee attack, but must accept the new result.
- **Fierce Warriors:** If one of Kronecte's mercenary squads is defeated in combat, each of the remaining Squads gets a bonus D20 to its next Melee combat test.



"CIVILIZED COMPANY" IN MESSANTIA

At some point during their activities in Messantia, after visiting with Lord Emarius, the player characters notice they are being followed. This requires an Average (D1) Observation test, and a further Challenging (D2) Insight test realizes their "shadow" isn't trying very hard to conceal his presence. If this person is confronted, he freely admits he is following the player character, and claims to be in the service of someone who wishes to talk, regarding the abduction of Emeraina. The man is timid, but refuses to divulge the name of his employer, claiming that he merely wants a word with them, about something mutually beneficial.

If the player characters refuse to meet with the mysterious "benefactor", their contact may resort to publicly decrying them as thieves or pirates to effect his own escape. If the adventurers agree to meet, an out-of-the-way tavern is specified as the meeting place. At the agreed-upon time, a sleazy-looking, greasy-haired and bearded individual approaches them and states he represents one of the prominent merchant families of Argos; this is the agent Orenthes (see below), though he does not identify himself. Orenthes doesn't show himself if Katrina or any of Emarius's followers are present. He has an offer for the player characters to counter that made by Lord Emarius. If they make sure that Emeraina never returns to Argos, or more importantly that she never weds Prince Halech of Shem, then the man's

employer will pay them 10 gold each: 5 up front, and 5 more if the player characters somehow ensure that Emeraina is never seen again. The man claims his employer would benefit if Emeraina were not to wed the Shemite prince.

If the adventurers refuse the offer, or demand to speak directly with the man's employer, a Dire (D4) Persuade or Society roll is necessary to get the man to agree. Otherwise, he merely makes the offer and takes his leave. If the man is then followed, presumably surreptitiously, a Daunting (D3) Stealth roll is needed to use the crowds and shadows of the city to avoid detection. The man travels to another finely-groomed estate, and questioning passersby or servants about the owner reveals its owner is Lord Valdeus, a prominent merchant. A little research and a successful Challenging (D2) Society check reveals Lord Valdeus is a bitter rival of Lord Emarius.

In this case, Lord Valdeus wants to take advantage of the abduction of Lord Emarius's daughter Emeraina, hoping to make sure she doesn't wed the Shemite prince, which would enhance Emarius's mercantile connections with Shem. After Orenthes meets with the player characters and delivers his master's proposal, the slippery character shaves his beard, cuts his hair, makes his way to the docks to seek out their ship. There he sneaks aboard the vessel and, with his skills in disguise and fast-talking embeds himself with the crew. If the opportunity presents itself, he does whatever it takes to foil their mission.

LORD VALDEUS, RIVAL MERCHANT OF MESSANTIA, HOUSE OF PATHIAS (TOUGHENED)

Lord Valdeus is the head of another of Messantia's great merchant houses, that of Pathias. In many ways he is very similar to his hated rival, Lord Emarius, but for one difference: Valdeus has no children (each of his three sons were killed in shipping or hunting mishaps). He and Emarius were once friendly rivals, but now he seethes with the thought that if not for his lost sons his would be the most prominent of Messantia's merchant families.

Valdeus is tall, gaunt, and dour-looking, with a dark beard and eyes. He rarely smiles, and when he does it's usually at someone else's misfortune.

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	9	10	9
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
7	8	7	



FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	—	Movement	—
Fortitude	—	Senses	1
Knowledge	1	Social	1

STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 8, Resolve 9
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage —

ATTACKS

- **Improvised Weapons (M):** Reach 1, 2  Improvised, Stun
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 4  mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Loyal Servants:** At any given time there will be at least one Squad/Mob of Guardsmen/servants accompanying Lord Valdeus, at a cost of 1 or 2 Doom, respectively; each additional Doom spent by the gamemaster adds another Squad of guardsmen.
- **Deviousness:** Lord Valdeus may expend 1 Doom to add an additional point of Momentum to any Intelligence, Personality, or Willpower test, to a maximum of 3 additional points gained this way.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Connections in Low Places:** Lord Valdeus can expend 3 Doom to have one of his agents — equivalent to Orenthes (below) — appear in any location to act in his favor in any situation.



ORENTES, SPY, ASSASSIN, PROVOCATEUR, AGENT OF LORD VALDEUS (TOUGHENED)

Lord Valdeus's closest aide, and a jack-of-all-nefarious-trades, Orenthes is a spy and spy-master, a smuggler, a fence, and on occasion, an assassin. His initial appearance to the player characters is as a seedy-looking criminal — bearded and somewhat shabby. After he has met with them he cuts his hair and shaves his beard, and insinuates himself amongst the men aboard the *Windblade*. There he conceals himself within the crew, watching the player characters' movements and judging how best to spoil their plans.

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	9	9	9
Agility		Brawn	Coordination
8		8	9

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	—	Movement	1
Fortitude	—	Senses	2
Knowledge	1	Social	1

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress:	Vigor 8, Resolve 9
■ Soak:	Armor 1 (clothing), Courage 2

ATTACKS	
■ Knife (M):	Reach 1, 3  1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Thrown, Unforgiving 1
■ Steely Glare (T):	Range C, 4  mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
■ Ruthless Agent:	at a cost of 1 Doom, any Momentum gained in any skill test can be increased by 1 Momentum (once per test).



GATHERING INFORMATION

The player characters may wish to make purchases or gather supplies or information while in the teeming capital of Argos. Purchases can be made with whatever money or goods the player characters offer, especially if they are given advances from one (or both) of the merchant lords.

The adventurers can seek information on their enemies, Captain Daimos and the dark sorcerer Maledict Mer, or their employer, his family, and his apparent deadly rival. Information about Daimos and the merchant families is easily discovered in any tavern, eating establishment, market, or merchant shop or stall. The following items may be found out about each, with the Difficulty listed as part of a Society check.

- **Do:** Captain Herge Daimos is an infamous Zingaran freebooter. He is an excellent swordsman, and has a reputation as a ladies' man.
- **D1:** Daimos has apparently secured the services of a dark wizard, using magic to aid their plundering: calling or stilling winds, incapacitating crews, and so forth.

- **D2:** A privateer crewman hints that Daimos is headed south to join up with the Black Corsairs as part of a series of coastal raids. Woe be to whatever cities lie in their paths! Any Momentum above the Challenging (D2) Difficulty gleans that the infamous Red Ortho is also headed south to join up.
- **Do:** Lord Emarius's daughter was to wed the Shemite Prince Halech, son of Lord Hahrin, one of the largest exporters of goods in Shem. But something has happened to the girl and the ship she was on: apparently the ship was attacked by pirates and burned. Half of these accounts say that all hands were lost, while others state that the girl and her dowry were taken and then the ship was burned with all hands lost.
- **D1:** Lord Valdeus is the head of the Pathias merchant house. Struck with ill favor by the gods, he has lost three sons, yet still remains a powerful importer of foreign goods.
- **D2:** Lord Valdeus sometimes uses "unconventional" or illegal means to further his business: he smuggles extensively, and is even said to have dealings with pirates.

- **Complication:** if a Complication is rolled while seeking information about Lord Valdeus, someone states that it was he who hired Captain Daimos to prevent the wedding of Lord Emarius's daughter to a prince of Shem to enhance his standing among the merchants of Argos. This rumor is false, however plausible.

While information about Daimos and the merchant houses is easily accessible, learning about Maledict Mer requires a more specialized search. The player characters need to consult temples, alchemists, or perhaps seek out darker informants: clandestine sorcerers or practitioners of some dark, dreadful faith. If the player characters make such a specialized search, they can find the following information by making a successful Society, Sorcery, or Lore check, and earning the appropriate number of successes.

- **Do:** Maledict Mer is a Shemite sorcerer; there are rumors he worships strange bloodthirsty sea-gods.
- **D1:** As an infant he was found washed ashore near the border of Argos and Shem, raised by temple priests who soon threw him out for his blasphemous questions and beliefs. Where he learned his wizardry no one knows.
- **D2:** Maledict Mer supposedly resides in a tower on a remote island somewhere off the coast of Shem, where he traffics with demons and spirits of the dead.

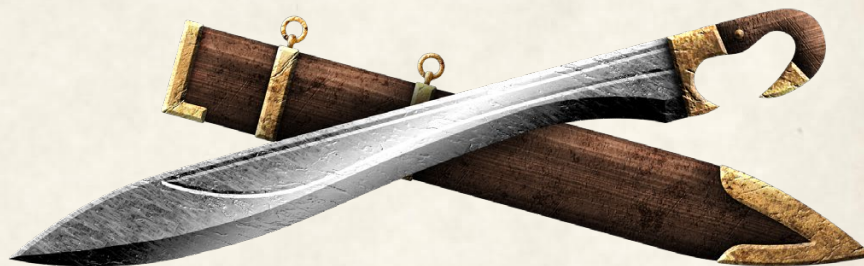
- **D3:** The island is called Arzhna, and houses the remains of a temple devoted to ancient gods lost to time.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Each player character surviving this far receives 200 Experience Points. The character who defeated Captain Morein gains an additional 20 Experience Points. If the pirates of the *Windblade* engaged in any acts of piracy on the way to Tortage (including any warship encounters), award each player 10 Experience Points per encounter. Any player character forced to fight in Tortage receives an additional 10 Experience (20 if it was a duel to the death). If the adventurers managed to pay for repairs to their ship without surrendering shares of their future plunder to the likes of Master Farmiger, award each another 10 Experience Points. If they successfully met and dealt with Lord Emarius they each gain another 10 points. They also gain 10 points if they accepted Lord Valdeus's offer — regardless of whether or not they intend to fulfill their part of the deal. Finally, if during their parleys in Tortage or Messantia, the player characters learn of either Daimos's plan to join the Black Corsairs in the south, or of Maledict Mer's lair on the island of Arzhna, award an additional 10 Experience Points for each such piece of information.

Turning on his heel, the Cimmerian strode down the rotting wharfs and stepped aboard the galley. A few strokes of his sword cut her adrift, and he went to the sweep-head. The Tigress rocked slowly in the sullen water, sliding out sluggishly toward the middle of the river, until the broad current caught her. Conan leaned on the sweep, his somber gaze fixed on the cloak-wrapped shape that lay in state on the pyre the richness of which was equal to the ransom of an empress.

— “Queen of the Black Coast”



CHAPTER 3

THE TEMPLE OF ARZHNA

*They found only smoking ruins on the shore of a bay,
littered with naked black bodies. Tito swore.*

"I had good trade here, aforetime. This is the work of pirates."

— "Queen of the Black Coast"

With little more than rumors and hearsay to go on, the player characters must begin their pursuit of Herge Daimos. The best information they possess has him headed south, possibly to join a group of several pirates and corsairs in a series of raids on the richest coastal cities of the Black Kingdoms. The adventurers may have heard other tales, rumors of the Shemite wizard Maledict Mer's lair on an island off the coast.

As the player characters sail in pursuit, they gather additional information about their foes. They'll also have other opportunities to sail the road of plunder, seizing merchant ships and cargoes during their journey southward.

Working their way east and south to Shem, the player characters pick up clues to a little known island called Arzhna, located far off the coast, southwest of Asgalun. Their sources describe a small island, inhabited by a small population of strange, fiercely independent people. The name Khelden comes up as a possible contact in the town.

Sailing to the southwest, several days later the *Windblade* finds itself off the coast of a rocky island, near a cove filled with small houses and fishing vessels. They find the townsfolk helpful, if aloof, willing to share what they know about the temple in a remote and nearly inaccessible part of the island.

The adventurers learn the temple is or was occupied by Maledict Mer and his acolytes, serving as a place of worship and study. The location of the sorcerer is unknown, but one of the acolytes recently moved into an abandoned house not far from the village. Through her, the player characters may find the temple and use its occupants to locate Maledict Mer. But the situation is complicated, and, ultimately the adventurers find themselves used as tools in a deadly contest of egomaniacal would-be sorcerers.

After surviving the horrors of the temple, both human and supernatural, the characters should have some idea of Maledict Mer's plans and his whereabouts.

THE ROAD OF PLUNDER, ONCE AGAIN

As the player characters sail south in search of Herge Daimos, they — or at least their crew — are doubtless eager to ply their larcenous trade on the seaways.

Every few days of travel, have one of the player characters attempt an Average (D1) Sailing test. If the roll succeeds the *Windblade* makes normal progress for that day; if any Momentum is generated, a merchant vessel is sighted, presenting an opportunity for a raid. Conversely, if any Complications are indicated by the Sailing roll it is instead an enemy warship encountered. If both Momentum and a Complication are indicated on the same test, a merchant ship and warship are sighted at the same time — the latter an armed escort for the former.

The gamemaster can randomly determine which ships are encountered from the list below, or choose a likely one according to where the player characters meet them (e.g. a Shemite ship met along the shores of Shem). Run the battle using the Naval Combat rules contained on page 110 of the *Conan the Pirate* book, or see the streamlined version of naval combat on page 100 of this book.

SEEKING THE ENEMY

The player characters need to question other ships, sailors, and captains about Captain Daimos and Maledict Mer. They can do this when they capture merchant ships, but they also need to make port occasionally to buy supplies, and this would be an opportune time to ask if the infamous pirate has been seen recently. Have each player character specify whether they are seeking information on Captain Daimos or Maledict Mer, and test their Society skill, with the results listed below. Note that in Shem and Stygia, Maledict Mer's notoriety is such that he is even spoken of outside the more esoteric sources previously required to glean information about him.

- **Do:** Captain Herge Daimos is an infamous Zingaran freebooter. He is an excellent swordsman, and has a reputation as a ladies' man.
- **D1:** Daimos has recently secured the services of the sorcerer Maledict Mer, who uses magic to aid their plundering: calling or stilling winds, incapacitating crews, and so forth.
- **D2:** Daimos is headed south to join up with the Black Corsairs to take part in a series of coastal raids. Woe be to whatever cities lie in their paths! Any Momentum above the D2 Difficulty level learns that other pirates are headed south to join the pirate armada, supposedly meeting up at a notorious pirate village called Tambaru.
- **Do:** Maledict Mer is a Shemite sorcerer; there are rumors that he worships strange bloodthirsty sea-gods. Other stories claim his birth is a mystery, that as an infant he was found washed ashore near the border of Argos and Shem, that he was raised by temple priests who soon expelled him for his blasphemous questions and beliefs. Where he learned his wizardry no one knows.
- **D1:** Maledict Mer supposedly resides on a remote island somewhere off the coast of Shem, where he traffics with demons and spirits of the dead.
- **D2 (Sorcery or Lore):** This island houses the remains of an ancient temple to forgotten sea-gods, and either the island or the temple are called Arzhna. The island is not on any known chart, and the surrounding seas are said to be haunted by sea monsters.
- **D2 Society:** Some coastal merchants claim to have done business with a sea trader named Khelden, who



claims to represent “the people of Arzhna”, trading for tools and supplies not available on the island.

- **D3 Lore:** Whatever it is, “Arzhna” is supposedly several days’ sail southwest of the Shemite city of Asgalun, closer to the coast of Shem than any other nation. **Note:** This is a *KEY clue*, and if the player characters do not learn of it through successful skill use or spending Momentum, the gamemaster should add 3 to his Doom pool and give them the information anyway, so that they can proceed with this chapter of the campaign.

EIGHT FEET OF CHAIN

At some point during the player characters’ travels southward in search of Captain Daimos, they find themselves in a crowded seaside tavern, eating, drinking, and seeking news as to the movements of their quarry. Suddenly the revels quieten — somewhat — and a scarred, scowling buccaneer of dark features and disposition strides toward the adventurers, a handful of dour crewmen at his back. He demands to know who the dog was that slew Captain Morein of the *Windblade*. When the killer is revealed he tosses a jack of ale in the perpetrator’s face and growls “After the battle of Karakan, Captain Morein was my sworn blood-brother. Now, thanks to you, he watches from Hell. Put up your blade and prepare to join him, pig!” Now several sea-dogs and pirates begin chanting “Shackles! Shackles! Eight feet of chain!” over and over again.

A Challenging (D2) Lore test recalls that Karakan is a trading post on the Pictish coast where pirates sometimes dealt with the Picts, and that Morein and other pirates once fought a bloody battle there against angry natives. A further Challenging (D2) Lore or Society check identifies the pirates’ chant as a pirate duel where the two combatants are shackled at their left ankles and given knives to fight to the death; the only way to get free of the shackles is to kill the other man and cut off his foot, earning the key to release your own ankle. As the chant continues the chain and shackles are passed to the front of the crowd. If the player character agrees to the duel, their boots are removed, shackles are clapped on and the duellists stripped to the waist before being handed knives. The duel to the death begins...

The opponent in the fight is the former Zingaran slave Armand Petaja, an infamous coastal raider who holds no love for his country of origin — or for anything else, for that matter. He is notorious for burning Zingaran ships, freeing slaves, and robbing everyone, occasionally even other pirates. His hair is long and dark, his moustache droops below his chin, and his face and torso are criss-crossed with scars from countless fights. He is much feared by all the mariners of the Western Sea.

This duel follows normal combat rules and Momentum and Doom expenditures, and both duellists have the Hindered condition. Either combatant can attempt a Challenging (D2) Athletics test as his Standard Action, attempting to jerk the other man off his feet; this counts as a Struggle, meaning both combatants roll their skill to see who succeeds. A character yanked off his feet is Prone, giving the opponent +2 Momentum next turn.

Armand Petaja, for his part, begins the fight with a Steely Glare, spending 1 Doom to gain an extra D20. The next turn, he attempts to yank his foe off his feet. From there the fight goes on as the gamemaster desires. This is a fight to the death, and since its conclusion involves cutting off the foot of the defeated, it could mean the end for a player character. Expending Doom and Momentum, perhaps even Fortune, may be required to kill this deadly foe. If the player character prevails, they receive 1 point of Renown for besting this infamous pirate.

If Armand Petaja wins the duel, he and his crew glare menacingly at the other members of the *Windblade*’s crew, including any other player characters. If they don’t leave there may be a full-fledged brawl. In that case, a new captain may be required for the *Windblade*, and if a player character is elected, or retains his captaincy, all his Command rolls are made at an extra level of difficulty until he spends at least 3 Momentum to regain the trust of his men.

CAPTAIN ARMAND PETAJA (NEMESIS)

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	8	9	8
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
9	10	9	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	—
Knowledge	—	Social	—



STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 11, Resolve 10
- **Soak:** Armor 2 (Brigandine jacket), Courage 2


ATTACKS

- **Cutlass (M):** Reach 2, 6 Unbalanced, Fearsome, Vicious 1
- **Knife (M):** Reach 1, 5 1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 3 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Strength from the Sea:** Pirates are used to combat aboard ship and only suffer penalties in the fiercest of weather.
- **Boarding Action:** Pirates are experts at boarding unfriendly craft and know all the best places to seek cover. When boarding, pirates gain 3  Cover against missile weapons.
- **My Ship is My Castle:** On his own vessel, a pirate captain always has Light Cover, with 2  Cover Soak against ranged weapons.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Fearsome Reputation:** At any point in an encounter the pirate captain can spend 1 Doom (Repeatable) to add 1  to the mental damage of a Steely Glare attack.

SEARCHING FOR ARZHNA

One way or another, the player characters should have learned of Maledict Mer's lair on the island of Arzhna. They should also learn its location, and with this information in mind they may want to sail there to see if they can find the sorcerer and his piratical companion, or discover if the island holds further clues as to their plans or whereabouts.

With the meager directions they have, the player characters need to roll a Challenging (D2) Sailing or Lore check each day until they have made three successful checks; any failed roll indicates a day of bad sailing or faulty navigation, and adds 1 to the gamemaster's Doom pool (to a maximum of 3 Doom). The day after they have made their third successful Sailing roll, the lookout spies land ahead...



ARZHNA ISLAND

Arzhna Island is the top of an underwater mountain range, approximately 8 miles long and 6 miles wide, consisting largely of layers of sedimentary rock. The island is almost completely split by a cliff-lined inlet that runs southwest to northeast. The inlet is very deep and its tides are extreme. North of the inlet are sheer mountains and canyons, except for some white sand beaches facing the open sea. The center part of the northwest section is a grass-covered plateau.

Along the seacoast in the northeast corner are two natural coves about a mile apart. The town of Arzh lies inside the northernmost cove; an abandoned estate is located in the eastern one.

Above the town to the south is a plateau containing fields of grain and some subsistence gardens. Several small herds of goats graze in the fallow areas. The island has no large predators. A couple of passes leading off the plateau exist but both are difficult to follow without a guide.

The northern coast of the island has a long white sand beach facing the open sea. The water off the beach is a shallow, rock-filled shelf. Approaching the beach in a sea-going vessel is risky without a guide or proper soundings to find a way through. A group of crude shacks lies at the western end of the beach. A well-traveled path runs from the shacks up into the mountains.

The island is nearly bisected by a miles-long fissure in the central mountains. The entrance to the fissure is in the southwest part of the island. Its walls are almost vertical and virtually impossible to climb. The sea in the inlet is extremely deep. This canyon continues out to deep water several miles away from the island. At the northern end of the fissure, on a promontory several hundred feet above the water, the ruins of an ancient temple can be seen. The canyon walls near the ruins are covered with carvings and abstract artwork, cut into the living rock. Due to the shape of the fissure and the depth of the water, the tides in the canyon are extreme and dangerous.

THE TOWN OF ARZH

The island's sole population center is a small town of about 300 people. The residents fish in the waters off the coast or work in the fields above the town. Typical services are available, including a carpenter, healer, a merchant, a boatwright, etc. There is also a blacksmith of sorts, able to smelt iron dug from the mountain sides. He is quite skilled but resources are limited. Since the inhabitants have limited contact with the mainland, their tools and fixtures are carved of wood or made of iron. Steel items are unusual and highly treasured. Player characters may be able to trade such items for information or favors. The town functions on a barter system; cash has little value here.

At any time when the characters are dealing with townsfolk, make a Challenging (D2) Observation check. On a success, the character notices something unusual about the individual's facial characteristics. A small portion of the population of the town has throwback characteristics to the original inhabitants of the island. The townsfolk are not aware of the connection. Any character making a successful check who has seen Maledict Mer, should attempt a Daunting (D3) Insight check. A success reveals

RUMORS AND NEWS SHARED BY THE VILLAGERS

- The temple is an outpost of Atlantis that has been there more than a thousand years.
- An exiled rich noble and his children moved into temple a couple years ago.
- The rich noble is actually an evil sorcerer who consorts with demons and spirits.
- Arthenia the healer is caring for "crazy ol' Dirklo". He supposedly keeps babbling about the temple.
- These silly rumors about the temple are actually cover for a den of pirates hiding from the Argossean Navy.
- Khelden the merchant has dealings with the temple.
- A large hideous sea monster lives in the inlet and destroys any craft going there, eating the crew in the process. The inlet is avoided by the islanders.
- A witch from the temple now lives in the old estate down the coast from the village, with her demon familiars.
- Other residents say the "witch" is a beautiful woman who escaped the clutches of the sorcerers of the temple, and wishes to leave the island. (Could it be Emeraina?)

this person and the sorcerer share this characteristic (usually large eyes and wide mouths, but sometimes also webbed fingers).

All of the townsfolk believe something strange is going on in the abandoned temple. The most common belief is that the new master of the site is a noble of some sort, hiding from a powerful mainland ruler. The townsmen want little to do with temple. Most have an inexplicable feeling of dread when asked directly about the temple. A Challenging (D2) Persuade or Society check can unearth one of the facts or rumors from the accompanying list.



KHELDEN, THE MERCHANT

Townsmen Khelden functions as Arzh's general merchant. He owns two fishing ships (resembling very small dhows, or sloops) suitable for travel to the mainland. He sends one of his ships to the mainland every 3 months to trade island goods for things not available on the island. Khelden also has an arrangement with the temple inhabitants to get them foodstuffs and other supplies. He is not willing to discuss his business with the temple folk, but a Challenging (D2) Persuade check gets him to reveal he was recently contracted by one of the temple inhabitants, "the pretty one," to do some restoration on the old manor house located down the coast from the town. That work is almost complete. Khelden's son is going to the estate with a delivery, and could take a message from the player characters. If accepted, the boy takes the message and departs. Khelden estimates his return within an hour.

THE HEALER AND THE MADMAN

Arthenia the healer's house is located near the fields above the town; many townsman can give directions. Most know that the prospector and lumberman Dirklo is currently under her care. Arthenia is just leaving home as the characters arrive. She has a previous commitment and asks they return in a couple hours. She bluntly states the price for information is a "donation" of mainland items or materials (money is useless to her). She apologizes for sounding mercenary but she has no choice.

Upon their return, she invites them into her home but it is small and only three persons can come in. With a suitable "donation", Arthenia shares the following: Dirklo is one of the many islanders who dig ore and cut lumber. He frequently explores the island for stands of valuable hardwood or veins of ore. One night several months ago, he came wandering out of the hills, naked and suffering from exposure. He was ranting about a large dark shape appearing above the temple area. He screamed about giant squid climbing up the cliffs and hordes of humanoid-shaped fish swarming in the inlet below. She does not have the skills to cure him.

Arthenia is sure that something suspicious is going on at the temple. She was summoned to the temple place a few weeks ago to render aid after an accident: one of the inhabitants fell and had a head injury. Arthenia saw no one resembling Maledict Mer. Instead, she informs the player characters of a young man and young woman who seemed to be in charge. She left with the feeling that something evil and horrendous is going on there. She can't explain it other than "I feel it in my soul."



A Challenging (D2) Persuade check can get Arthenia to take the characters to see Dirklo. A Challenging (D2) Counsel check confirms the workman is insane. If questioned, Dirklo mumbles about dark shapes, sea monsters, and the color green. Finally, he falls to the floor, shaking and spitting. Arthenia covers him with a blanket, asking the adventurers to return to her house. If they persist in attempting to question Dirklo, Arthenia physically places herself between the questioners and Dirklo, demanding that they leave.

When Arthenia rejoins the group, she explains the female temple inhabitant, Zabihi, has moved into an abandoned estate about a mile down the coast. She does not know why she left the temple. Although Zabihi could be a source of information, Arthenia believes her dangerous, cautioning the player characters not to trust her.

THE EXILE

Any townsman can direct the characters to the estate, explaining that they can follow the beach or take their ship into the cove. Zabihi's presence at the estate is not a secret, though opinions vary as to her personality and motives.

About a mile down the coast from Arzh is the dilapidated estate of the former lord of the island, abandoned decades ago. The manor is in a small cove, deep enough to harbor a

sea-going vessel. A stub of stone wharf remains. The grounds are overgrown and useless. The manor house is the only remaining building. It is a multi-story structure made of island stone. The roof has collapsed in places, rendering the upper story uninhabitable. The first floor appears solid but lacks windows. Zabihi and her hybrid servants have cleaned out several rooms to live in. A Simple (D0) Observation check notes the front door is made of fresh lumber.

When the characters reach the estate, they are greeted by a strange-looking man. His features have a slight fish-like appearance. He greets the group gruffly and in a weird accent, giving his name as Bractus. He asks who they are and what their business is here. Should they have a message from her, he invites them in as below. When asked about Zabihi, he asks that they remain outside while he checks with her. He shortly returns to explain that she is indisposed but very interested in speaking with them. She asks that they return later for the evening meal.

Upon their return, they are again greeted by Bractus, who asks them to leave their weapons in the foyer and follow him to the dining area. If they comply, he leads them into the dining room. If they resist the request, he politely asks them to leave and closes the door. A minute later, a beautiful woman with dark auburn hair re-opens the door and begs their pardon. "I am Zabihi, Please come inside."

ZABIHI, SHEMITE ACOLYTE (NEMESIS)

Zabihi joined with Maledict Mer about three years ago, shortly before he moved to Arzhna. She is highly intelligent, exceptionally beautiful, and manipulative. She inveigled her way into Maledict Mer's bed in addition to learning his sorcerous powers. Maledict Mer was aware of her manipulations and allowed it for his own reasons. Zabihi is much more capable in the mystical arts than her rival Aram — the current master of the temple — and has become nearly his equal in ability and skill in a much shorter time; Aram of course resents this. Zabihi had constantly mocked Aram, pointing out how she has learned faster than he. She is upset at being left on the island, as she "knows" Maledict Mer wants her with him. Something must have gone wrong to have kept him from returning for her. Shortly after Maledict Mer left, Zabihi moved into his rooms in the temple's master building, before Aram ran her out of the temple complex.

Zabihi uses her wit, will, and beauty to attempt bring others under her influence. She chooses her target(s) based on her perception of each character's relative strengths according to the following priorities: sorcerous skill, group influence, personal power, charisma, and physical prowess. Once chosen, she tries to isolate her target. Her ultimate goal is to leave the island and reunite with Maledict Mer. She claims to know a magical means of finding him (the "Seeker's Amulet") and promises to reveal it once she is at sea. She is not afraid to use sex to advance her cause. She has a genuine affection for Maledict Mer but feels if it becomes necessary, she can find another teacher.

Zabihi, Shemite Acolyte (Nemesis)

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	12 (1)	11	14
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
7	7	8	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	—	Movement	—
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	2	Social	2

STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 7, Resolve 14
- **Soak:** Armor 2 (Brigandine jacket), Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **Knife (M):** Reach 1, 3 ☹ Hidden 1, Piercing 2
- **Sorcerous Might (T):** Range M, 7 ☹ mental, Area, Intense
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 4 ☹ mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Sorcerer:** Spells include The Shroud of the Sea, Enslave, Summon a Horror (Deep-Wraith)
- **Entice:** Zabihi's charm and beauty couple to lure and inspire men and women alike. When making a seduction test using her Social Field of Expertise Zabihi can re-roll any dice that do not score a success when initially rolled.

DOOM SPENDS

- **The Croaking Tide:** For 3 Doom, Zabihi can either summon one Mob of five Dweller-Human Hybrids (Minions), or one (Toughened) Dweller of the Deep. The summoning takes one Standard Action, and must be performed on or adjacent to the ocean. The dweller or dwellers will emerge from the surf at extreme range on the following round.
- **Dark Inspiration:** When ordering her entourage to attack, Zabihi can spend 2 Doom to grant all Minions an additional d20 to their attacks (to a maximum of 4d20).



DINING WITH THE WITCH

Zabihi leads the group to a large dining room off the foyer, where she and the player characters are served by two non-descript servants, while Bractus stands by, ready to protect his mistress if necessary. As they dine, Zabihi attempts to gauge the intent of the player characters. As the conversation progresses, an Average (D1) Insight check reveals she is wary of the group and may be holding something back. At no time does she admit to having sorcerous abilities. A Daunting (D3) Observation roll notices she wears a coral amulet around her neck, similar to the one worn by the hapless sailor and reclaimed by Maledict Mer (see Chapter One of this campaign); she claims it was a trinket given to her by her mentor, but says no more about it. Any mention of Maledict Mer increases her wariness. If she believes they intend to harm her sorcerous mentor, Zabihi becomes hostile. If this occurs, a Daunting (D3) Persuade check puts the character back in her favor, otherwise she demands that all of her guests leave. If this happens, the adventurers may have to leave the estate and return later without the offending character. If she believes the characters intend to harm Maledict Mer, she considers them enemies, though she may still attempt to seduce or otherwise use them to escape the island and reunite with her master.

As long as the characters do not upset her, Zabihi proves a witty conversationalist. She can also share the following facts:

- She was living at the temple with her mentor and his treacherous student Aram.
- Her mentor left several months ago and has not returned.
- Zabihi is sure her mentor is going to return for her.
- Zabihi argued with Aram and was forced to leave several weeks ago.
- Zabihi wishes to leave the island to rejoin her mentor.
- Zabihi's belongings — and several of her mentor's — remain at the temple and she needs to get them back and keep them out of Aram's hands.
- She can also relate basic information about the temple and the inhabitants.

During this conversation, the players can make checks to figure out if Zabihi is hiding anything. A Challenging (D2) Persuade check gets her to reveal the mentor she mentions is Maledict Mer. A subsequent Challenging (D2) Insight check gives the player the idea that he is more than a mentor

to her. Another such check reveals she truly believes he is coming back for her.

Sensing an opportunity to escape the island, Zabihi asks about their ship, where the characters are from and so forth. She is determining if the characters are powerful enough to take revenge on Aram, then take her to the mainland. Eventually she brings up the idea of the adventurers helping her return to the temple. She admits to trying to enlist the workmen who had helped do the renovations on the manor but they turned her down. If the player characters agree, she asks them to return in the morning. If they hesitate or refuse, her manner becomes cold, verging on anger. She bids them good night and directs Bractus to lead them out.

Assuming the characters return the next day, Zabihi wants confirmation they are going to help her. She offers a deal: if the adventurers help her reclaim her belongings from the temple and take her off the island she will help them find Maledict Mer; she claims that there are items at the temple which can lead them to the sorcerer. Zabihi intends to accompany the group to the temple, and can give detailed descriptions of the temple area and the ways in; she won't share this information if she thinks she is being left behind. Zabihi describes the beach path (see below) as the easiest but it is watched. Going through the cavern provides the best chance of surprise but warns that there is some sort of monstrous guardian in the waters of the inlet. Maledict Mer used to brag about this creature but never shared details. Finding a way across the mountains would require inquiries or guides from Arzh and would probably be the most difficult but has little danger and a good chance for surprise. Bractus and Zabihi's other two servants, Vollar and Urgall, would accompany her.

The characters may decide not to get involved with her or wish to approach the temple themselves. They are free to leave but she is openly upset about this choice. A Daunting (D3) Persuade check mollifies her somewhat, but she is still unhappy, though she grudgingly describes the temple area for them.


GETTING TO THE TEMPLE

Three different paths allow the characters to get to the temple, each described below.

OVER THE MOUNTAINS

The characters may ask around Arzh if it's possible to pass through the lower hills and mountains to reach the temple. Any of the men who cut trees or dig ore can make suggestions where one may find passes leading through the

mountains. An Average (D1) Insight check leads to Erastus, a retired miner, who gives the player a crude hand-drawn map showing a path through the mountains. This map reduces the number and severity of checks required during the trip. He also suggests they hire his teenage son Martus as a guide. The boy is a competent mountaineer. Erastus points out that money is not very useful on the island and suggests payment with useful goods.

It takes two days to reach the temple by taking the path through the mountains. A Challenging (D2) Agility or Athletics test is required each day, in order to avoid a minor mishap, such as lost or broken items, or a turned ankle causing 2  damage to the individual.



The group comes out on the east side of the temple grounds, several hundred yards from the cliff edge. A rocky slope runs about a half mile up to the retaining wall. The temple inhabitants do not consistently guard this side of the temple. Should someone use this route, they should be able to sneak onto the temple grounds.

THE BEACH PATH

The surf has created a long stretch of sandy beach along the northern edge of the island. The sand comes right up to the base of the cliffs behind it. Most of the beach is submerged at high tide with the peak marked by a long line of driftwood. Landing on the beach is easy, using shallow draft boats such as a canoe, rowboats or longboats.



Eight rough looking shacks are grouped together at the western end of the beach. They are built of loosely stacked driftwood. A Simple (D0) Observation check highlights what appear to be pieces of lumbered wood interspersed among the larger driftwood pieces. The interior of each shack is unlit; the floors are packed sand, covered with piles of reeking, rotten seaweed. The bones of fish are strewn everywhere. The shacks were the homes of the Arzhan outcasts, whose ancient heritage as hybrid spawn of the dwellers of the deep drove them into self-exile; these pathetic souls now serve Maledict Mer and his disciples, Zabihi and Aram; most now inhabit the temple.

Beyond the shacks, above the high tide line, a path leads to a pass up into the mountains. A Simple (D0) Observation check reveals signs of recent use by cart wheels and people on foot. A small two-wheeled cart and some empty wooden crates are found at the bottom of the trail. An Average (D1) Animal Handling check suggests the cart's harness is designed to fit a large biped rather than a quadruped (the temple's supplies are hauled up this path by a dweller of the deep summoned for the task).

The path is treacherous and difficult, requiring a Challenging (D2) Acrobatics check to travel safely. Failure means the character twists an ankle (the character suffers 1  damage, and any subsequent Agility, Brawn, or Coordination checks are increased by 1 level of Difficulty for the next +2 days). The path leads to the western end of the temple grounds, and is watched even at night. The



DESCENDING FROM THE TEMPLE

In the central part of the temple grounds, there is a large stone courtyard surrounded by two ruined buildings and a pool. A ragged hole has been punched through the patio stone, and covered by scraps of lumber. Here a rough-walled tunnel leads down into the darkness, and a slight saltwater-tinged breeze wafts up from below. It is possible to safely descend down the tunnel at a slow walking pace, though a light source is definitely required. Descending to the cavern requires a Challenging (D2) Acrobatic check to avoid slipping (2  damage to the character failing the roll) or dislodging pieces of the tunnel wall or ceiling (3  +1 damage to all characters in the tunnel). Moving faster than a slow walk adds one level of difficulty; travelling without a light adds two levels (cumulative with the above penalty).

temple inhabitants cannot be surprised from this direction. Traversing the path in the dark adds one difficulty to any checks.

THE HIDDEN CAVE IN THE INLET

About a half mile inside the mouth of the inlet, an Average (D1) Observation check spots the submerged remains of a ship, largely hidden by a rock outcropping on the south side of the inlet. A Daunting (D3) success notes that the ship's hull has been staved in. Whether the wreck is noticed or not, as the adventurers's vessel(s) pass the outcropping, the guardian of the inlet attacks. This creature is a jellyfish-like monstrosity called a Deep-Wraith (see page 54), summoned by Maledict Mer to keep ships from sailing up the inlet. The Deep-Wraith fights until near death and then submerges itself.

THE CAVERN

Deep inside the cliff below the temple, a natural fissure forms a large cavern. There are two ways into the cavern. A dry tunnel runs from the temple grounds to the back side of the cavern. The tunnel was carved by sorcerous forces and is of varying width and incline. It ends above a long narrow ledge about 30 feet over the water. Another tunnel leads from the cavern into the north wall of the inlet. This tunnel opening is covered by several feet of water except during low tide. The cavern is wider at the top, the walls sloping into the water to form a V. The water depth inside the cavern and tunnel is more than 100 feet. The water level rises and falls with the tides.




ASCENDING FROM THE SEA CAVE

The underwater entrance to the cavern is located at the far end of inlet, on the north side. During low tide, the upper edge of this tunnel is exposed. Any of the local fisherman can provide an accurate tide schedule; other inhabitants can provide a reasonable estimate, or player characters can make an Average (D1) Sailing check to figure it out themselves. Anyone swimming in the water during low tide can see open spots between the rough, uneven rocks and the water surface, as waves lap against the tunnel roof. An Average (D1) Survival check leads the character to think there may be air pockets along the entire tunnel, though it's impossible to determine its actual length.

A swimmer can make it into the cavern by swimming from air pocket to air pocket, even as the tide comes in. Three successful Challenging (D2) Swim checks are required to reach the other end of the tunnel. A failed check means the character missed an air pocket and must attempt a Dire (D4) Swim check to return to either back-track or continue to the next air pocket. Failure results in drowning damage. If the Dire (D4) check succeeds, the swimmer reaches a new air cavity, but is unsure of which direction is which; a Challenging (D2) Survival or Daunting (D3) Observation roll is needed to proceed in the desired direction. Once the adventurers reach the cavern a Daunting (D3) Observation roll spots handholds carved in the stone wall that allow them to climb up to the ledge.

Anyone on the ledge who passes an Average (D1) Observation check can see a path leading around a stone wall corner. This path leads to what appears to be a long, carved block of strange green rock. Strange figures and markings are carved into the block and the floor. They are similar to the ones carved into the walls of the inlet, provided someone has seen both. A Daunting (D3) Lore or Sorcery test reveals they are R'lyehian, describing some sort of ancient sea monster/creature. The block faces the main part of the cavern. If the player characters touch the altar or try to read the inscriptions aloud (e.g. if they pass the aforementioned Lore or Sorcery test...), the gamemaster can expend 3 Doom to bring forth another Deep-Wraith to attack the intruders. The water in the cavern starts to surge upward as the Wraith comes to the surface. The Wraith can reach its target once the water level is a few feet below the ledge. Characters in the cavern must flee up the tunnel or drown. When the Wraith ascends through the surface tunnel, water rises up the tunnel ahead of it until

exploding fountain-like out of the covered fissure in the temple complex above. The Wraith follows close behind.

Several flat stones are arranged into a crude set of steps leading up to an opening about 5 feet above the ledge. Any characters moving through the tunnel should show extreme care. Attempts to move faster than a normal walking pace require a Challenging (D2) Acrobatics check. The length of the tunnel requires 2 such checks. A failed roll indicates either a twisted ankle (2  damage to this individual, and subsequent Agility, Brawn, or Coordination checks add 1 level of Difficulty for the next  +2 days), or a minor ceiling collapse ( +2 damage to all characters present). Any Complication rolled can either be used to double these effects or simply add to the gamemaster's Doom supply.

Characters coming up the tunnel can surprise the temple inhabitants unless they are chased by a Wraith. The temple inhabitants are certain no outsider knows about the cavern so no guards are placed on the surface entrance. If discovered, any outsider who's been in the cavern is captured, questioned, and probably sacrificed to one of the Deep-Wraiths.



THE BLACK TEMPLE OF ARZHNA

Located at the top of a sheer cliff wall is the Black Temple of Arzhna. Built more than a thousand years ago by an unremembered cult devoted to the "black gods of R'lyeh", it now lies in ruins. The temple has been deserted for several centuries, after the decline of the cult and their slumbering gods. The sea cavern below had been enlarged by the priests, allowing them to summon deep sea monsters within the cliff. The temple was also a place where slaves from the mainland used to interbreed with the dwellers of the deep. Vague remnants of this breeding can be noticed in a few of the townsfolk, though they have lost any memory of their inhuman origin. The most inhuman of the island's inhabitants retreated to the shacks on the northern beach, and now most have relocated to the temple to serve Maledict Mer and his acolytes. When Maledict Mer discovered he was born here, he returned hoping to restore the island and its temple to its former purpose, only to discover it a lost cause. He moved into the temple, using the dwellers

of the deep to assist with the restoration of the facility. For years he studied these ruins and learned from the dwellers of the darker secrets of lost R'lyeh and its sunken denizens.

The shells of several buildings are all that remain of the original temple complex. Some buildings have roofs of wood, making them habitable again. The area is surrounded by 4-foot high stone retaining walls, which are not defensive in nature. Strange carvings and symbols and a few unearthly statues are the only clues to the nature of the vanished builders. Once per building/location, any character examining the carvings or symbols can attempt a Dire (D4) Lore check; if successful they learn the temple is dedicated to the gods of R'lyeh, ancient alien demons who once ruled the world; if more than one success is made, or Momentum is spent, names such as "Cthulhu", "Dagon", "Hydra", and "Th'sylla" are gleaned as well. Any Momentum spent also learns that these gods and their followers warred against other ancient alien visitors to Earth who used the magic of the "Elder Sign" to repel and defeat them.

TEMPLE LOCATIONS

A. Maledict Mer's Residence

This large oval shaped two-story building is largely intact, including its stone roof, repaired with a few bits of wood. The exterior consists of unusual lines and curves, and with an Average (D1) Observation check a character discerns no chisel or other tool-marks in the stone; any Momentum gained suggests that the stones were formed by some unnatural form of water erosion. The building has one entrance facing the central temple, and contains a large open room suitable for gathering groups of people. This was Maledict Mer's residence, and Aram has left it undisturbed in anticipation of the wizard's return. Some of his lesser books, notes, and belongings remain here; their exact nature is left to the gamemaster to decide based on the group's abilities: if the player characters are having a difficult time, perhaps a few spells are present, or a minor magical weapon.

Maledict Mer's notes, however, do contain valuable information. Anyone who can read Shemitish or makes a Daunting (D3) Linguistics or Lore check can learn much about the history of the temple, its gods, and Maledict Mer's motives for being here. This will take 16 minus INT weeks to fully peruse, at which time the reader will know the following:

- The temple was dedicated to the black gods of R'lyeh: Cthulhu, Th'sylla, etc.
- The island of Arzhna was once home to a marine race of humanoid creatures who mated with the islanders to produce hybrids.
- Maledict Mer realizes he himself is somehow distantly related to those undersea creatures.



- The R'lyehian gods and their servants fear something called the Elder Sign; Maledict Mer obtained one of these objects but found he too was slightly repelled by it so he had one of the servants “dispose of it”.
- The temple was served by undersea alien creatures called Deep-Wraiths.
- Maledict Mer seeks to find and release the god Th'sylla from its sunken resting place somewhere in the Western Ocean.
- Th'sylla is the herald and messenger of the black gods of R'lyeh: if it is freed it will attempt to awaken its fellow R'lyehian gods to resume their rule of the planet.
- Maledict Mer notes that his attempt to “commune with Th'sylla” was cut short when the god-thing became enraged — apparently the blood of his hybrid sacrifice offended Th'sylla and even its psychic “sending” was powerful enough to destroy the main temple.

B. Old Living Quarters

A long single-story building with no unusual features. Three doorways overlook the raised central courtyard of the main complex. The windows along all faces of the building have been covered with wooden planks. This structure is actually three conjoined buildings that served as the living quarters for Zabihi, Aram, and the deep-dweller hybrids.

C. Ruined Barn

This is a large two-story barn-like structure whose stone walls have mostly collapsed. Large wooden beams now form a crude shelter of sorts. The western side of the building is open. Inside are several stacks of crates and a few barrels containing food, water, tools, clothing, and other supplies, along with a small two-wheeled cart.

D. Pool of Sea Water

The water is murky but not stagnant. A Daunting (D2) Observation by characters at the edge of the pool spy strange web-footed tracks, and other markings as if a large quantity of ropes were dragged through the mud. There are also

fresh carvings along the top edge and sides of the pool that continue under the water surface. A Daunting (D3) Lore reveals they are R'lyehian, the same as the carvings on the cliff walls and cavern altar.

E. Ruined Buildings

These ruined buildings are located in the west-central part of the complex. Each is rubble, too damaged to be functional. One of the buildings overlooks the pool and has the same general shape as the large temple building to the west. The stones in the rubble again look as if they were carved by water.

F. Columned Ruin

A large square ruin located at the westernmost point of the temple grounds. A walkway, lined with marble columns, leads to what should be the main entry. Once perhaps several stories high, the building appears to have burst open from the inside. It is surrounded by large piles of rubble. Most of the columns are tipped over or broken off. The inlet cliff is almost directly below one corner of this building. An Average (D1) Observation check reveals no wood scraps in any of the rubble piles. This was the site's main temple, destroyed some months ago when Maledict Mer attempted to commune with Th'sylla's spirit form.

G. Graveyard

The stone markers are set flush with the ground here. The stones appear to be of the same material and age as the majority of the temple buildings and retaining walls. Whatever is carved into the stones is the same language as the strange carvings found around the temple grounds. There are no recent graves.

H. Path from the Beach

This path is wide enough for a small cart. In the temple area, the path is hard-packed earth, turning to gravel inside the retaining walls. It terminates at the foot of a set of stairs. The area between the stairs and the storage building shows signs of heavy use.

I. Enclosed Gardens

An enclosed area containing several garden plots. Depending on the time of year, there may be vegetables growing. East of the garden area is a small plot enclosed by retaining walls. There are several goats in this pen.

J. Fissure

A large fissure cuts across the temple courtyard. A rough step is cut into the west end, a few feet above the pool. The fissure is covered by loose lumber, probably for safety. Anyone standing next to the fissure can feel very slight movement of air. The direction of the air movement matches the cycle of the tides.

THE TEMPLE INHABITANTS

All interactions with temple inhabitants are affected by what the player characters reveal about their intentions for Maledict Mer. If they seem hostile, the inhabitants attempt to capture and kill the player characters.

The current occupants of the temple are the acolyte Aram, a group of human-dweller hybrids, and a few human slaves. Aram is, or was, a student of Maledict Mer. The "witch" Zabihi was another of Maledict Mer's "students", and like Zabihi, Aram wants to become as powerful as he can, even, or especially, at the expense of his rival. Their knowledge and skills are similar, basically only what Maledict Mer has allowed them to learn. Aram is the more polished sorcerer, but Zabihi is a faster and more intuitive learner (unfortunately this leaves serious gaps in her understanding and control of the powers she meddles with).

Both acolytes wish to get off the island and find Maledict Mer. Both come to the realization that the presence of the player characters may be useful. Both are aware that Maledict Mer has a grandiose scheme to restore his hideous sea god to the world but they lack any specific knowledge of his plan. Like Zabihi, Aram is stranded on the island, and may attempt to bargain with the adventurers in return for passage.

There are 8-12 dweller-hybrids in residence at the temple. They remain loyal to Maledict Mer and believe he is going to return. They follow the commands of either acolyte as long as such commands would not betray Maledict Mer. Day-to-day activities at the temple are handled by the hybrids and the dozen or so human slaves present. Any threats to the plans of Maledict Mer or against the acolytes results in hostile reaction to the player characters.

ARAM, SHEMITE ACOLYTE (NEMESIS)

Aram has been with Maledict Mer for several years. His overwhelming desire for power, and his arrogance keep Maledict Mer from trusting him. Aram feels Maledict Mer has not given him the respect and magical tutelage he deserves. Unable to see any fault in himself, he blames Zabihi's interference for his shortcomings. Aram's jealousy is exacerbated by the fact Zabihi came to Maledict Mer long after he did, yet she was able to worm her way into the sorcerer's graces — and his bed — thus usurping Aram's position. Even so, Aram remains loyal to Maledict Mer, or at least to the idea that Maledict Mer is going to return and continue his education. As the senior acolyte, he was nominally in charge of the temple in Maledict Mer's absence.

If approached peaceably, Aram only deals with characters he perceives to be in a leadership role. He is very focused on power and class when he deals with others. He offers power and money as rewards for aiding him. He makes it

clear that Zabihi should not be trusted any more than one would trust an idiot servant. He intends to leave her on Arzhna. Aram comes close to demanding assistance from the characters but stops himself before he upsets the target. In his mind, he cannot imagine the others not recognizing his gift for leadership. He is also aware that Maledict Mer is his only path to more power as it is unlikely another teacher would ever take him on as a student. He won't work with any group that is also aiding Zabihi.

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	12 (1)	10	14
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
8	9	8	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	—	Movement	—
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	2	Social	2

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 9, Resolve 14	
■ Soak: Armor 2 (Brigandine jacket), Courage 2	

ATTACKS	
■ Knife (M): Reach 1, 4 Hidden 1, Piercing 2	
■ Coral-tipped Staff: Reach 2, 5	
■ Sorcerous Might (T): Range M, 7 mental, Area, Intense	
■ Steely Glare (T): Range C, 4 mental, Stun	

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
■ Sorcerer: Spells include The Shroud of the Sea, Dismember, Enslave, Summon a Horror (Deep-Wraith)	

DOOM SPENDS	
■ The Croaking Tide: For 3 Doom, Aram can either summon one Mob of five Dweller-Human Hybrids (Minions), or one (Toughened) Dweller of the Deep. The summoning takes one Standard Action, and must be performed on or adjacent to the ocean. The dweller or dwellers will emerge from the surf at extreme range on the following round.	
■ Evil Intent: When making a Melee attack, Aram can spend one Doom to automatically generate one additional effect.	



DWELLER-HUMAN HYBRIDS (MINION, TOUGHENED)

Hybrids are humans with some of the physical characteristics of Dwellers of the Deep. These attributes can include bulging eyes, scaly growths on the skin, slightly stooped posture, strange flaps of excess skin along the neck, and an inescapable scent of fish. In more advanced cases, webbing may develop between fingers and toes, and claws developing in place of the nails. Hybrids tend to be taciturn and have difficulty communicating with other people. Hybrids typically retain the clothing and accessories of the community they come from.

When Maledict Mer arrived he quickly took them in and created a fervently loyal group of servants. They use knives and clubs in combat with some being able to use claws. If the hybrids are directed to attack an acolyte or one another, they'll attempt to subdue using non-lethal attacks. This doesn't hold for non-allied humans such as the player characters. The gamemaster is free to add one or more toughened hybrids as leaders or to provide more challenge. Bractus, one of the hybrids with Zabihi, should be considered Toughened. If fighting as a group, they operate as Squads (see the **Conan** core book p. 306).

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	7	7	8
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
8	10	8	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	1	Movement	1
Fortitude	2	Senses	—
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 5 (10), Resolve 4 (8)	
■ Soak: Armor 1 (Tough skin), Courage 1	

ATTACKS	
■ Knife (M): Reach 1, 4 Hidden 1, Piercing 2	
■ Club (M): Reach 1, 4 Stun, Knockdown	
■ Claws (M): Reach 1, 4 Grappling	
■ Unnerving Hybrid Glare (T): Range C, 3 mental, Stun, Piercing	



SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Amphibious:** The hybrids suffer no penalty to any Action when swimming, and can spend unlimited time underwater.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Dark Heritage:** A toughened hybrid may spend two doom to grant all minions the Fear 1 quality.

There are also about a dozen human slaves of various races, residents of the mainland purchased and delivered to Maledict Mer by Khelden, the merchant. They are completely cowed by the acolytes and hybrids and only fight if directly attacked. Should a fight break out among the rest of the temple population, the slaves attempt to flee, only resorting to violence if someone gets in their way.

None of the temple inhabitants know what has happened to Maledict Mer since he left the island, so their reactions depend on the players' actions and attitudes concerning Maledict Mer. Any attempt to bluff the acolytes with a fabricated relationship with Maledict Mer requires at least one Insight or Persuade check at Daunting (D3) Difficulty; the adventurers should describe their bluff, and if their story seems to conflict with Maledict Mer's nature, add one additional difficulty step to the test.

The acolytes are bitter and hostile towards each other even though Maledict Mer explicitly forbade fighting between the

two. Their hostility reached a breaking point a few weeks before the player characters arrived on Arzhna. Aram and Zabihi got into an argument, quickly escalating into a shouting match and finally a near-brawl. No one was hurt, but Zabihi was banished from the temple, accompanied by three loyal hybrids. She took over an abandoned estate near the town of Arzh, where she broods, dreaming of revenge on Aram and desperate to recover Maledict Mer's notes, hidden inside his residence. Zabihi is willing to divulge what she knows as long as it leads to her passage off the island.

AT THE TEMPLE

If Zabihi is part of the group, refer to "The Rivals Meet".

If the characters make their way to temple via the beach path without Zabihi, they are met by Aram and by several hybrids. He demands to who they are and what their business is, in a haughty manner very similar to Zabihi's. Aram is also trying to gauge their competence and whether they can help him get off the island. Keep in mind that Aram is extremely arrogant and self-serving. Refer to his description for guidance on who he speaks to. After this brief introduction, the target of Aram's subsequent interest should attempt an Average (D1) Persuade check. If the roll fails Aram asks the adventurers to leave. Success keeps the discussion going. Repeat this check as topics change, adding difficulty to the check based on what the group reveals about Zabihi or their intentions towards Maledict Mer.

Aram can share the following information:

- Maledict Mer lived at the temple for several years.
- He left several months ago and has not returned.
- Aram was assured that Maledict Mer would return and still believes he will.
- Maledict Mer had more than a teacher/student relationship with Zabihi. This led her to believe she was in charge. Aram, being the senior follower of Maledict Mer, and by far the more accomplished sorcerer, was clearly intended to supervise in their master's absence.
- Zabihi became intolerable and Aram was forced to "evict" her a couple of weeks ago.
- Aram is willing to pay for passage off the island in hopes of finding Maledict Mer.
- If the player characters seem trustworthy or susceptible to his leadership, Aram might also be willing to relate basic information about the temple and the inhabitants.

If Aram remains favorable towards the group, they are invited to spend the night camped in the grassy area on the east side of the grounds. Aram does not offer food but provides fresh water. He says he's sorry but there's no room in any of the buildings for guests. The group is warned not to wander the temple grounds and that after they talk in the morning, he expects them to depart.

If the group sneaks onto the grounds from the east or through the cavern, the gamemaster should plan events according to the previously provided descriptions.

If Aram is approached without Zabihi, and can be reasoned with, the player characters may be able to bargain with him: in exchange for passage off the island, Aram agrees to take the adventurers to Maledict Mer, as long as he believes they mean no harm to the wizard. If Aram agrees to accompany the group, he takes only a handful of hybrids with him as servants. Unless the gamemaster wants to create more conflict, the adventurers and their new "companion" can leave the island with no further complications. It's up to the gamemaster as to whether or how Zabihi reacts, otherwise the following conflicts are avoided, perhaps leaving the "witch" to regain control of the temple complex.

THE RIVALS MEET

If Zabihi accompanies the player characters, Aram considers them subservient to his enemy Zabihi, and thus beneath his contempt or interest; a Daunting (D3) Persuade check is required to break through his arrogance and gain his attention. If the roll fails Aram ignores them, agreeing to speak only with Zabihi. She agrees. Aram insists the pair

speak their piece "away from this rabble", and leads her into Maledict Mer's residence (#1). A couple of temple hybrids move to guard the entrance.

A few minutes later, Zabihi emerges from the residence. She is laughing loudly and clutches a small chest. If asked about Aram, she answers "The fool dances with his ancestors now!" She orders several hybrids to retrieve her possessions. As they move toward the building, the door flies open, and Aram staggers out, blood running down the side of his head. He points at Zabihi and screams, "This ends now! Maledict Mer is not here to save you!" He orders his hybrids to seize her. Several move toward her but stop, confusion on their faces. She pulls a large knife from her belt and points it towards Aram, shouting, "You fawning amateur! I'm in charge now! Seize him!" Some of the hybrids who approached her now move back toward Aram. A hybrid grabs Aram's sleeve and pulls. A second hybrid grabs the first and tries to pull him away from Aram. The other hybrids clamber into the area, and a brawl starts.

The player characters are faced with a choice. Do they take a side? If so, whose? A Simple (Do) Observation check reveals no lethal weapons are being used. Player characters in the fight are considered common enemies, attacked by ☞+1 hybrids, drawing weapons to fight the outsiders. Zabihi moves towards the pool (#4), calling on any player character she tried to Entice to defend her.

The fight verges on comedy, as the befuddled hybrids attempt to follow the acolytes' orders, uncertain of who is in charge, and unwilling to seriously harm their fellow hybrids. To determine which side a hybrid is fighting for, attempt an Average (D1) Observation check. Neither acolyte gets physically involved but either or both may cast spells. Zabihi has fewer hybrids on her side so it appears that her cause is lost. Doom can be used to assist their efforts to make it there. She stands near the fissure (#10), behind the three hybrids, and begins casting a spell...

A HORROR IS CALLED

Zabihi's spell takes several minutes to perform, accompanied with a series of spectacular gestures, the scent of ozone flooding the player character's nostrils, and the sudden howling of the wind. As she finishes, Aram glares at her and screams, "No! You mustn't! You mustn't! You wouldn't dare....!" Zabihi falls to her knees, exhausted by her efforts. Any adventurers near the fissure (#10) should make an Observation check:

- **Do:** Character smells an odor coming from the opening. It reeks of seawater and fish.
- **D1:** Character feels the ground shaking slightly.
- **D2:** Character hears the sound of rushing water.

DEEP-WRAITH

A Deep-Wraith is a bloated tentacled mass closely resembling an enormous luminous jellyfish. These creatures are extremely rare, and are typically found in or near areas influenced by dwellers of the deep. Some legends speak of truly monstrous individual wraiths the size of whales. To call a wraith, the caller must be within shouting distance of an ocean. A wraith spends its first action finding its caller. If an uncontrolled wraith is in danger of being brought to o Vigor, it attempts to flee the fight, slithering to the sea to heal itself. A wraith controlled by sorcerous means can be compelled to fight to the death. If the Deep-Wraith comes into contact with an Elder Sign it will attempt to flee from the symbol's holder, unless the gamemaster spends 3 Doom to prevent its retreat.

Deep-Wraith (Nemesis, Horror)

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	9	6	9
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
9	13 (2)	9	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	1
Fortitude	3	Senses	2
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 16, Resolve 9
- **Soak:** Armor 2 (Incorporeal), Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Poison Tentacle (x6) (M):** Reach 2, 6 Fearsome 1, Grappling
- **Bite (M):** Reach 1, 4 Vicious 2
- **Unholy Luminescence (T):** Range C, 3 mental, Area, Piercing 2

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Incorporeal 2**
- **Inhuman Brawn 2**
- **Dread Creature 1:** A Deep-Wraith has a personal Doom Pool of 2 points which can only be used on the Wraith's attacks and effects.
- **Fear 2:** Anyone viewing Deep-Wraith must roll a Challenging (D2) Discipline test or suffer the damage of the Unholy Luminescence attack (see above).
- **Inured to Cold, Disease, Fear, Pain, and Poison**
- **Tentacle Grapple:** The Wraith gains an additional attack D20 against any target Grappled by a tentacle.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Paralytic Poison:** At the cost of 3 Doom, any strike that inflicts damage also injects a paralytic poison into its enemy. Each injection makes all physical actions harder by one Difficulty step. A third such strike completely paralyzes the target. Momentum cannot be used to avoid this effect.

The hybrids cease fighting and step back to stare at the fissure. The wooden planks covering it rattle violently for several seconds before exploding upward as sea water blasts out of the hole. Splinters of wood and shards of rock shoot off in all directions like missiles. Anyone within the same zone as the cavern entrance must make a Challenging (D2) Acrobatics check to avoid the flying debris, suffering 2 if the roll fails. Sea water gushes out of the hole, flooding the entire area and flowing over the retaining walls. The water is foul and the same green color the characters have seen before. The hybrids break away from the entrance.

Zabihi has summoned a Deep-Wraith (see the sidebar) from the cavern. It oozes out of the opening, drops into the pool and looks for its caller. If she is incapacitated, the creature attacks the nearest moving thing. Otherwise Zabihi directs the Wraith to kill Aram.

Aram moves away from the Wraith and starts his own spell — an Average (D1) Sorcery check recognizes it as identical to Zabihi's! Several hybrids stand in front of him to keep attackers away. After a few moments Aram reaches out, grabs the nearest hybrid around the throat and plunges a dagger into his chest, killing him instantly. Aram stands jubilant, barely weakened by his summoning. Again the earth shakes and the flow of sea water surges out of the fissure. Moments later a second Deep-Wraith erupts from the opening, water and rock spraying in all directions. Aram orders the Wraith to attack the one summoned by Zabihi...

The hybrids are terrified by the sight of two of these aquatic alien horrors, and they begin trying to flee the temple complex. Each acolyte commands their Wraith to attack the other acolyte, but something is wrong. Aram's Wraith instead attacks whoever or whatever is nearest to

it, initially hybrids or player characters, but after a round or two it is engaged by Zabihi's Wraith and the two monstrosities writhe and batter at each other. As the monsters fight and take wounds, control over them weakens. A Dire (D4) Sorcery check reveals Aram's loss of control over his summoned Deep-Wraith may be attributed to the acolyte's unwise choice of a deep-dweller hybrid as his sacrifice: R'lyeh blood tainting the spell — a kernel of knowledge that may come in handy much later in the campaign...

THE END OF THE TEMPLE

As the two Wraiths battle, the entire temple area starts to violently shake. An Average (D1) Observation check realizes the fissure (#10) is growing, lengthening east and west. A Challenging (D2) Survival or Craft roll notices the entire side of the cliff is about to shear off. Every player character must make a Challenging (D2) Athletics or Acrobatics check. Success means they stay on their feet and can still react. Ask the successful players what their characters are doing. A delayed answer or a question back can be considered a failed check. The ground continues to shake and buildings start to topple. Any character who failed the first check or does not move away from the fissure makes a second Challenging (D2) Athletics or Acrobatics check. Those who failed the first check do so at two more levels of difficulty.

With a tremendous rending noise, the entire temple complex south of the fissure shears off the cliff and plunges into the inlet. (This takes out locations 2, 5B, 5C, 6, and 10, and most of location 1.) Characters who failed the second Athletics or Acrobatics check fall to their deaths unless they expend a Fortune point to save themselves (another player character can save them by expending a Fortune point, if necessary or desired). If the Wraiths are still present, they go over the cliff. Aram follows the Wraiths into oblivion as the ground collapses beneath his feet. The gamemaster should handle any remaining hybrids as he sees fit with the recommendation that most are killed in the cataclysm.

AFTER THE FALL

After the dust settles, the players can check for damage. Only the storage building and the ruin east of the pool are untouched by the catastrophe. The front half of Maledict Mer's residence also falls into the abyss, leaving a ruin in its stead; a thorough search turns up his notes and perhaps other useful knowledge or items, as discussed under location 1 above. Every other temple structure is gone. The pool is

split in half and drained. If the characters ask about the cavern, have them attempt an Average (D2) Craft check. Success informs the character the cavern is collapsed or buried and it is likely that more of the cliff will slough off. The terrified livestock struggle to get out of their enclosure. Any remaining hybrids and slaves are in a state of shock and can be easily restrained.

The player characters find Zabihi alive, sprawled in the empty pool. Blood flows from a gaping wound in the back of her head. She reaches for the nearest character, using him to pull herself upright and stagger away from the cliff edge. She asks for help, muttering that she must get to Maledict Mer. After a couple of steps, she collapses to the ground. If the player characters haven't already noticed it, they see the chest she stole from Aram lying next to her, its contents lying nearby. It's a strange amulet: a green stone suspended on a silver chain. Unless a Dire (D4) Healing test is made, Zabihi dies before she can give instructions on how it is used. Even if the adventurers do save her, she says she only knows it can be used to found Maledict Mer — she doesn't actually know how or what the amulet truly is, only that it is powerfully magical, and possibly capable of controlling or repelling ancient evil. In any case, Zabihi is not able to withstand travel and won't be able to leave the island. Perhaps Arthenia the healer can take her in. When and if Zabihi recovers, most of her memories are gone.

The group should now be concerned with removing themselves from the area and getting back to the *Windblade*. The players should have arranged to be picked up or to have left the ship in a safe place. Two ways out remain, a lengthier and more arduous route via the mountain passes to the east, or the much shorter path down to the beach.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Characters surviving this adventure receive 200 experience points each. If the adventurers sided with either of the acolytes, or deliberately pitted them against each other, award them 10 experience. Any Deep-Wraith slain by the player characters — not including those killed in the collapse of the temple — nets them another 20 points. If they find the Amulet, learn what it is and how to use it, they gain 20 experience points. Similarly, if the player characters noticed that the presence of magically tainted blood in one of the R'lyehian rituals could lead to catastrophe, they receive another 20 experience. Discovering and reading Maledict Mer's notes brings another 20 experience point award. Finally, any character who reads the notes can attempt a Daunting (D4) Lore or Sorcery test; if successful the character may increase the tested skill by 1 point.

CHAPTER 4



THE NIGHT OF YELLOW SASHES



"This was the temple of the old ones," she said.

"Look — you can see the channels for the blood along the sides of the altar, and the rains of ten thousand years have not washed the dark stains from them. The walls have all fallen away, but this stone block defies time and the elements."

— Bêlit, "Queen of the Black Coast"

The player characters have learned their murderous enemies Captain Herge Daimos and Maledict Mer are sailing to the Southern Kingdoms to take part in a possible pirate raid on one of the southern port cities.

In the southern coastal village of Tambaru, the adventurers meet the corsair captains D'rogah and Muhummok, leaders of the upcoming raid against the rich southern port city of Balbenon. D'rogah promises loot of mountains of ivory and diamonds; what he really wants, however, is to free the hundreds of slaves being held in Balbenon — including many from his home city-state — and raze the city to the ground so that it can never again be used in human trafficking (D'rogah himself was once sold as a slave in this very city). As for the pirate Herge Daimos, he has already been sent ahead into the city as part of the raiding force: masquerading as a Zingaran slave merchant, his job is to get inside Balbenon and open the city gates for the pirate forces when the raid begins. D'rogah and the other captains make every attempt to prevent the adventurers from taking their revenge until after the raid, since they need all the men they can get. If they persist in threatening Daimos, D'rogah reminds them of the several pirate crews aligned against their one, and that it might be a better idea to settle the dispute after the raid is over — when everyone is rich.

D'rogah's forces consist of pirate captains Red Ortho, Muhummok, and the infamous Herge Daimos, who tried to kill the adventurers at the beginning of the campaign. Maledict Mer, Captain Daimos, and his ship and crew are

already in the target city of Balbenon. Also aboard his vessel is his "captive" Emeraina, the woman he took as his consort. The adventurers may join the raid if they wish: it is certainly easier to enter the city, kill Daimos, and escape in the chaos of the raid rather than slip into the city quietly beforehand and wrest her away from her "captor".

During the raid the adventurers and other crewmen are given specific objectives:

- A stealthy party is needed to take out the forces of a guard/lighthouse at the edge of the harbor, which otherwise might warn the city of any invading ships;
- A stolen ship is then used as a fire-ship to create a diversion in the harbor;
- Some of D'rogah's men then free and arm the slaves to add to their forces;
- Daimos and his men open the city gates for the other raiders and freed slaves to enter; the forces then split up to attack other targets within the city:
- The town militia barracks are ambushed;
- The Prince of the city is captured or killed;
- The slaves and raiders terrorize residential/merchant areas;
- Finally an assault is led against the merchant/warehouse "district" (which have *some* loot, but not the "mountains" promised by D'rogah).

The player characters will need to fight their way through city guardsmen, residents defending their city, and other pirates, dodging flames, finding loot, and perhaps settling old scores... But Captain D'rogah's true objective is to free the city's slaves and turn them against the residents, taking over the city and ending its slave trade once and for all.

In the chaos of battle the adventurers finally get a chance to take their revenge on Daimos, but Maledict Mer has ulterior motives for joining the raid. Aided by the dwellers of the deep, the hybrid sorcerer intends to use the mass bloodshed and chaos of the port raid as an enormous human sacrifice, to raise the distant sunken island of his sea-god. Maledict Mer intends to use alchemical smoke throughout the city to enhance the brutality of the attackers on all sides, magnifying the fury of the raiders, the freed slaves, and the city's defenders alike, causing bloody slaughter beyond imagining. Before the player characters can find the sorcerer in the carnage, however, he completes the ritual, steals a ship and sails away — with Emeraina still trapped.

Can the adventurers overcome or escape the defenders of Balbenon? Do they help or hinder D'rogah's plans for the city? Can they make off with enough loot to satisfy their greed before the whole place is burned to the ground?

In the aftermath of the battle the player characters may learn more of Maledict Mer's plans from some of Daimos's wounded crewmen. Local residents, priests, or wise slaves may also have some inkling of what has happened — if they survive the slaughter.

SAILING FOR TAMBARU

The player characters hear Daimos was headed for a secluded village on the coast of Kush called Tambaru, where some corsair crew are said to gather to gather and refit their ships, somewhat like Tortage in the Barachan Isles. Red Ortho was also planning to visit the outlaw port, hoping to join whatever massive raid was being planned. The name "D'rogah" featured prominently in the rumors the adventurers hear, and he is reputed to be one of the fiercest and most successful of the Black Corsairs.

Sailing along the Black Coast is dangerous for all mariners. Every day the adventurers spend in these waters they must make an Average (D1) Sailing roll, if more than 2 successes are made on any of the daily Sailing tests, the player characters' ship discovers the hidden inlet which leads to the harbor of Tambaru.

Tambaru is a secluded cove hiding a tiny Kushite village of only a couple hundred residents, yet it offers a harbor deep enough to house a handful of corsair galleys: when the player characters arrive there are two such galleys in

the harbor, alongside Red Ortho's longship the *Blood-Axe*. These vessels are surrounded by a dozen canoes and other boats of various sizes. As the player characters' ship enters the harbor, dozens of stern-faced men line the shores and docks. These men are armed with spears, javelins, and bows, and seek to prevent anyone from coming ashore. If the intruders mention the name of D'rogah, or Ortho, a runner is sent into the village, returning several minutes later with nearly a hundred dangerous looking pirates, led by a gaunt-faced scarred man. Red Ortho and a few of his hairy northmen also accompany the horde of corsairs.

The scarred man demands to know the intruders' business. If they say they are looking for Herge Daimos, he claims to know nothing of the man, and suggests they leave while they still have the chance. If they ask for D'rogah or mention their wish to take part in the raid they've heard about, a Challenging (D2) Society or Persuade check is needed to convince him of their sincerity. If the player characters succeed, he agrees to allow the ship's officers to land and discuss the matter; the rest of the crew must stay with the ship. If the player characters attack, threaten, or refuse to leave, there are over 300 corsairs, pirates, and village men willing to defend the little port. They'll try to kill the initial landing party first, then chase down the ship with canoes and the galleys, bombarding the intruders with flaming arrows and rains of javelins.

The gaunt man returns to the village ahead of the landing party, who are surrounded and accompanied by dozens of pirates. Ortho welcomes the newcomers, but bids them take care in how they speak here. In the shade of a large pavilion, the player characters can parlay with the gaunt man. This is, indeed, D'rogah. He is dour, muscular, and speaks a little Argossean in addition to all the chief languages of the Black Kingdoms. He is a proud, decisive man in his thirties, with a shaved head, deep penetrating eyes, and a commanding presence. He has no time for fools or squabblers, so if the player characters admit they are after Daimos for revenge, D'rogah wants little to do with them. If they offer to aid in whatever raid he has in mind, the corsair "king" asks how many men they have with them. As long as the adventurers seem capable of doing the job and honest in their desire to join the raid, D'rogah allows them to take part. If he learns of their desire for revenge on Daimos, he sternly advises they either sail away and seek Daimos later, or wait until after the raid — when everyone is richer — to settle their scores. He warns the newcomers that if they interfere or in any way endanger his plans he will kill them all: he has two very large corsair crews plus Ortho's men to carry out his threat. If they try to sail off to warn their intended target, or get into the city before the raid to deal with Daimos, D'rogah will have every corsair on the Black Coast looking to flay them alive and hang their hides from their masts.



If the player characters are accepted in the raid plans, D'rogah gives them the plan, though he won't reveal the name of the targeted city yet (a Daunting (D3) Lore test suggests the large slave-dealing port-city is likely to be Balbenon). The plan is for an agent — Daimos — infiltrate the city in the guise of a Zingaran trader, open the city gates and let the pirates in before the defenders can react. Outer defenses have to be dealt with, a diversion staged, and then the slaves freed to take part in the sacking of the city. Once inside, targets such as the militia barracks and the city's ruler will be attacked, and more slaves urged to take their freedom and join against their oppressors. A Challenging (D2) Insight test notes the fervor of D'rogah's passion in describing the slave uprising; any Momentum gained surmises he was once a slave himself, and an Average (D1) Observation test at some point spots the weals of countless old scars across his back, souvenirs of who knows how many lashings...

The treasure, D'rogah explains, is an enormous hoard of diamonds and gold from the cities of the Kushite interior. His spies timed the arrivals of merchant caravans, due any day now in the city. There will be gold to buy the goods, and the goods themselves. Everyone who takes part in the raid

will earn a small fortune. As for numbers of foes, there are about 5000 residents of the city, not counting another thousand or so slaves, and a few hundred newly-arrived slaves in holding pens outside. Of the 5000 residents, only a few hundred are trained warriors, soldiers and guardsmen; of the rest perhaps another few hundred will take up arms to fight. The pirates have over 400 hardened fighters, likely to be joined by more than a hundred slaves from outside the city, plus who knows how many more once they get inside the walls and start turning the city's slaves to their cause. The odds will be roughly even, but the pirates will have the element of surprise, and with luck the removal of specific targets should leave the city in chaos, with little or no organized defense.

Over the next couple of days D'rogah questions the newcomers carefully, trying to gauge their intentions and honesty, determining how best to use them in the upcoming raid. If they seem capable of handling important tasks, he assigns them leadership of certain specific parts of the raid. Those who seem especially stealthy fighters might be chosen to take the watchtower, for instance, and a good sailor is needed to pilot the fireship into the harbor to cause the diversion triggering the main attack. Once inside the city, good fighters are needed to attack specific targets such as the militia barracks and the king's palace. Before the raid D'rogah will choose leaders for the forces to be sent on each of these missions; D'rogah, Ortho, and Muhummok lead these missions, and the player characters should split up so that they can take command of other forces, or support the leaders of others.

In the meantime, however, the adventurers — without their crew — are held as “guests” of the corsairs in the village of Tambaru. There is no social life in the tiny village, and the pirates grumble at the monotony of waiting for the raid. Over the course of the two days prior to setting out for the city of Balbenon, each player character must make a Challenging (D2) Society test while they interact with the corsairs and the people of the village; this roll is Average (D1) if the character knows any Black Kingdom language, or makes a Challenging (D2) Linguistics roll. If the roll fails there is no effect, but any Complications result in the player character doing something to generate bad blood among the corsairs, earning themselves an enemy: perhaps an insult of some kind, a gambling debt, a religious misstatement, and so on. At some point within the raid action, this enemy will seek to betray or slay the player character, costing the gamemaster 2 Doom to spring. Normally this is a single corsair Minion, but if more than one Complication was rolled it is a Toughened corsair or a Squad of Minions. It's up to the gamemaster when to spring this betrayal, ideally at some particularly dramatic point in the narrative.

The player characters learn more about their elusive quarry, Herge Daimos. If asked, the pirates or corsairs

confirm that Captain Daimos still has a woman with him, but they believe her to be Daimos's lover, from the affection she seemed to be showing him. The girl went with Daimos and his ship into Balbenon, along with the sorcerer Maledict Mer. The raiders didn't care for the mage, as he gave them the creeps. Still, his magic will give them another edge in the sack of the city, so they don't complain. No Insight roll is necessary to see that most of the northmen and corsairs at least hold the sorcerer in awe, and many actually fear him; none would dare to oppose him unless the odds were ridiculously in their favor.

Finally, after three or four days spent baking in the sun, a runner appears in the dreary little village. D'rogah says they will set sail this afternoon, reach their destination the following evening, and stage the attack in the middle of the night. They set out in their ships, later debarking on shore and sending the ships off with skeleton crews to avoid capture. On shore, hundreds of yellow sashes are distributed to the various raiders; these are to be worn to differentiate the raiders from the Balbanese, friend from foe. Most of the corsairs wear several sashes on their arms, which they will hand out to the slaves once they are freed to aid in the attack. D'rogah says: "Anyone you come upon tonight who does not wear a yellow sash is your enemy: kill them without hesitation and without regret." Most of the corsairs, northmen, and pirates set out on foot for the city, while the leader of the fire-ship mission sails forth for the city with a minimal crew aboard a "borrowed" dhow laden with combustibles. One final rendezvous will take place some distance from Balbenon to make sure all are prepared for the attack. Then the various forces separate and converge on the city.

The sack of Balbenon is about to take place. And while it will be a legendary battle indeed, what transpires afterward could change the fate of the world...

THE CITY OF BALBENON

The city of Balbenon lies on the western coast of Kush, far to the south of Shamballah. It boasts nearly 5000 free residents, in addition to nearly 1000 slaves. The city is renowned as a slave-port, where captives are brought from the Kushite interior and other inland Black Kingdoms, to be sold to Kushites, Stygians, Shemites, and even places as far away as Zingara.

Balbenon has a wide harbor, with a narrow peninsula jutting from the north, at the end of which is a watchtower used to signal the city in case of attack. This has happened only a few times, when foolhardy corsairs unsuccessfully sought to raid the city from the sea; each time the

Balbanese roused their merchant "navy" and attacked the incoming ships before they reached the harbor, driving off the intruders. The city also features a 20 foot high stone wall to protect it from an inland attack. The wall is low, but thick, and broken only by two sets of gates, guarded round the clock.

The city itself is loosely divided into districts which can best be delineated as follows: the northern two-thirds of the city are residential districts, with the northern- and eastern-most being the poorest. In the midst of this area are the barracks of the city guardsmen. Closer to the center of the city are the more prosperous homes, including the relatively modest palace compound of Balbenon's king, Wadi-Maru. The southernmost areas of the city are the merchant districts, where most of the shops and bazaars are located; nearer the waterfront are warehouses and storage facilities for goods brought into the port from the interior, or from distant northern merchants seeking. Outside the northern wall of Balbenon are a series of slave-pens, used to house the hundreds of slaves brought into the city at any given time by their captors and sellers.

The residents of Balbenon live relatively peaceful lives, so when the corsair attack comes, most will be too shocked to react, others too fearful to resist, and only a small percentage capable of taking up arms to try and defend their city.

Balbanese homes are of adobe, occasionally worked stone or wood. Some of the poorer dwellings may be mud and thatch or sticks. No building has more than a single floor, save the guardposts on the walls and the watchtower.

King Wadi-Maru is a youngish man in his 40s, flabby from years of excess (food, women, and wine), and arrogant in the belief that his city is well-protected from outside influence and attack. Wadi-Maru lives in a compound with a few dozen guards, a score of women for his harem, another score of slaves and servants, and his hand-fed pets: a small pride of leopards.

THE SACKING OF BALBENON

The following section describes the raid on Balbenon in discrete phases of action, each of which is further divided to detail the activities of each specific mission during that phase. The raid objectives and missions are described in sidebars in the text, near where the mission officially begins; the gamemaster should carefully read these briefs ahead of time, deciding which missions — if any — are best suited to be led by each of the player characters. D'rogah explains much of the information contained within the sidebar to the leader of the mission, prior to the attack.

RUNNING THE SACK OF BALBENON

"The Night of the Yellow Sashes" has a complex structure, as it isolates each of the player characters and puts them in command of a large force of pirates, corsairs, or slaves. In addition, the raid is divided into a series of "phases" to detail the events of the raid as they transpire; each phase consists of roughly 15-30 minutes of action or activity, whether it's a stealthy approach, a careful search, or a series of bloody skirmishes. Each phase is also divided into sections covering the specific missions being undertaken by the various raid forces. These sections describe who makes up the raiding force, what they encounter, what skill tests are required, and what opposition they meet during that phase. The description of each phase alternates between missions, as events unfold, sometimes setting up a cliffhanger-like situation which will be resolved during the next phase.

Thus the sack of Balbenon is related as a series of set-pieces, each starring one of the adventurers, keeping everyone interested and eager to continue. Another way to keep the other players interested during another hero's part of the narrative is to allow the others to roll for the player character's allied forces, or the enemy forces.

The raid plays out in a fairly specific structured order: the attack on the watchtower comes first, followed by the launch of the fireship into the harbor, and finally the release of the slaves from the pens outside the city. Captain Daimos's men open the city gates to admit the raiders, who divide into separate forces assigned to specific targets within the city. At this point the narrative splits into discrete parts featuring the player characters and their command groups. From this point forward the gamemaster should roll on the Raid Events Table (see page 73) for each mission to see possible modifications for each encounter that turn; this may be anything from an opportunity to gain loot to a beefed up enemy force, or any of several other events adding color to the battles raging through the city. Special Loot Tables are included in boxed text on page 75.

The skirmishes fought during the sack of Balbenon use a modified version of the mass combat rules from the *Conan the Mercenary* sourcebook. While those rules use opposed Command and Warfare checks to determine battle results and casualties, here we simplify the rolls

to have each side roll against the combat skills of each type of combatant, for each squad or mob. The leader and any player characters involved in a specific force should each roll 2D20, and 1D20 for every other mob or squad present. Only Momentum and Complications are counted from successful leaders' skill rolls (including player characters); for example, if a player character or leader scored the minimum skill level for his melee roll, no Momentum is gained, and so no extra casualties are inflicted. If, however, they score 2 Momentum then 2 additional casualties are inflicted. Successful squad results remove an opposing mob or squad, with each Momentum removing an additional enemy mob; any Complication rolled removes one of that side's own mobs or squads (losses accrued due to a Complication can be bought off by sacrificing 1 Momentum for each). Losses can also be "bought off" if one force slays the last of any opposing forces and still has Momentum left with which to negate any losses they might have taken that turn, at a rate of 1 Momentum per mob saved.

The pertinent much-shortened statistics for each of the personalities and Squad types involved in the Balbenon raid are included in boxed text nearby.

During the raid the gamemaster should emphasize the madness and chaos of the battles raging throughout the city. Pirates, corsairs, northmen, and slaves swirl all around the player characters, fighting Balbenese city-dwellers, soldiers, and a few faithful slaves. The clash of steel and wood, metal biting into flesh, frenzied battle cries drowning out or joining the screams of the dead and dying...the city resounds with such noises. Flames flicker all around, wild-eyed people rush past, dirty and bloody, making it difficult to see whose side they're on. Windows are broken, people are dragged into the streets screaming, their homes ransacked and their belongings and valuables strewn about. The dead are countless — residents, soldiers, men, women, children, corsairs, slaves, pirates, northmen. Smoke stings the eyes. The yellow and orange flames somehow reflect a wild unearthly *green* in the eyes of the combatants... Use these details to constantly remind the players of the cost in human lives of the corsairs' bloody sack of Balbenon.



THE RAIDERS AND DEFENDERS OF BALBENON

Note that unless otherwise specified, all Minions are assumed to act as Mobs, even though they may have a leader of some kind. This is to speed up mass combat during the raid.

Raid Leaders and Forces

D'ROGAH (Nemesis)

Combat 10, Field of Expertise 1, Vigor 11 (Soak —), Resolve 11 (Courage 2)

MUHUMMOK (Toughened)

Combat 11, Field of Expertise 2, Vigor 12 (Soak —), Resolve 11 (Soak —)

BLACK CORSAIRS (Minions)

Combat 10, Field of Expertise 1, Vigor 5 (Soak —), Resolve 4 (Courage 1)

RED ORTHO (Toughened)

Combat 11, Field of Expertise 2, Vigor 12 (Soak 1, Fur Vest), Resolve 11 (Courage 1)

VANIR REAVERS (Minions)

Combat 11, Field of Expertise 1, Vigor 6 (Soak 1, Leather Jacket), Resolve 4 (Courage 1)

HERGE DAIMOS (Nemesis)

Combat 11, Field of Expertise 1, Vigor 10 (Soak 3, Brigandine Coat), Resolve 11 (Courage 2)

PIRATES (Minions)

Combat 10, Field of Expertise 1, Vigor 5 (Soak 1 Clothing), Resolve 4 (Soak —)

CAPTAIN KRONECTE (Toughened)

Combat 11, Field of Expertise 2, Vigor 11 (Soak 3, Heavy Hauberk), Resolve 10 (Courage 2)

KRONECTE'S MERCENARIES (Minions)

Combat 10, Field of Expertise 1, Vigor 5 (Soak 3, Heavy Hauberk), Resolve 4 (Courage 1)

FREED SLAVES (Minions)

Combat 9, Field of Expertise 0, Vigor 5 (Soak —), Resolve 5 (Courage 1)

Balbenon Forces

REGULAR GUARDS (Minions)

Combat 9, Field of Expertise 1, Vigor 5 (Soak 1 Clothing), Resolve 4 (Soak —)

ELITE GUARDS (Minions)

Combat 10, Field of Expertise 1, Vigor 5 (Soak 1 Clothing), Resolve 4 (Courage 1)

RABBLE/CITIZENS (Minions)

Combat 7, Field of Expertise 0, Vigor 4 (Soak —), Resolve 3 (Soak —)

KING WADI-MARU (Toughened)

Combat 7, Field of Expertise 0, Vigor 10 (Soak —), Resolve 10 (Soak —)

LEOPARDS (Minions — Individuals)

Combat 14, Field of Expertise 1, Vigor 8 (Soak —), Resolve 8 (Courage 1)

Others

MALEDICT MER (Nemesis)

Combat 7, Field of Expertise 0, Vigor 9 (Soak 1 Clothing + 2 Scaly skin), Resolve 17 (Courage 2)

DWELLERS OF THE DEEP (Minions)

Combat 9, Field of Expertise 1, Vigor 5 (Soak 3 Scaly Hide), Resolve 5 (Courage 3)



THE FIRE-SHIP

The ship D'rogah chooses to use as a fire-ship in the attack on Balbenon is a small coastal trading vessel called a dhow. It is a two-master, lateen-rigged (fore and aft sails), with a fairly high poop-deck and an elongated bow. Normally she would need a crew of no more than a dozen men, but the raiders doubled that number to ensure their safety once they swim to shore.

The fire-ship mission calls for the crew to wait for the signal from the watch-tower, then sail into the harbor. They are to look for a ship with a luminous green pennant flying from the top of her mast, and aim their ship toward that vessel. At the right moment they must light the flammable materials on board and dive overboard. While the fire-ship sails toward its mark, the crew swim to shore in the harbor area, and await the arrival of the other raiders once the city gates open and the main battle is joined. While the fire-ship pirates may use stealth to investigate the dockside areas, they are told not to indulge in overt fighting, so that the later assaults will have the element of surprise.

If no player character takes this mission, it is carried out by Red Ortho and some of his northmen (the ones who can swim).

BEFORE PHASE 1

The leader or "captain" of the fire-ship crew may, with an Average (D1) Observation check, or a thorough search, discover that, in addition to dozens of jars of oil and bales of straw and other flammables, the dhow's hold is filled with pots of Maledict Mer's alchemical rage powder. An Average (D1) Alchemy test reveals it is some magical powder, and a taste of it, or any Momentum gained in the test reveals it hastens the pulse and causes excitability.

PHASE 1

The guard tower force must make an Average (D1) Stealth check (Movement for Squads); if the leader and his 5 Squads fail more than half of their rolls, the 2 Squads of Guards outside the tower can react and fight; if the Stealth check succeeds the enemy are taken out without trouble.

PHASE 2

The guard tower force must make another Average (D1) Stealth check (Agility/Movement for Squads) or the Guards inside the tower detect their approach and bar the door. If the door is barred the raiders must either force the door,

THE GUARD TOWER

The guard tower on the western shore of the Bay of Balbenon is 60 feet high and 30 feet in diameter, built of imported stone. It is normally manned by a force of 4 Squads of Guards, half of whom patrol the grounds outside, and the other half of whom are posted inside. In the event of trouble, the interior guards bar the door and climb to the roof to light a large fire to signal the city of an attack. Colored smoke-powders are used to indicate the direction of the attack: orange if landward, green if by sea.

The guard tower raid mission is key to the success of the overall assault: if the raiders cannot eliminate the watch-tower guards in time, the city might be alerted to the attack, and have a few key moments to better defend themselves. The tower raiders must attack and subdue the outside guards quickly, before the interior guards notice and can barricade the door. If the door is blocked, the raiders must work quickly to keep the remaining guards from climbing to the roof and lighting the signal flame. Once all the guards are taken out, the tower raiders are to use a single torch, with an on, off, on, off, on, off signal to the other raiders at sea and on shore.

Once the watch-tower has been dealt with, this company of raiders needs to follow the coast to the city walls, and there join the company whose duty is to assault the slave-pens.

If no player character takes this mission it is led by Muhummok, and a small portion of his crew. The remainder of the raiders, including D'rogah and his crew, the rest of Muhummok's crew, and any player characters and their crew or crews, await in the wilds some distance outside the city walls, between the watch-tower and the slave pens. When the signal goes up they move to take the slave pens...

with a Dire (D4) Brawn check, or Combat for Squads, or by climbing the tower via a Challenging (D2) Athletics check, or Movement for Squads, and then fight the remaining 2 Squads of Guards. The door may be attacked once per round, or it takes 2 rounds to climb the tower to a window. If the Guards are not slain within 4 rounds of the failed Stealth check, they light the signal fire and alert the city to the attack: "orange by land". If the Stealth roll succeeds the raiders can enter and fight the Guards before they can warn the city.

If the guard tower force fails its mission and the city is alerted, add 2 Squads of Guards any time they are called for during the city gates mission, below.



PHASE 3

If the guard tower force has overcome the Guards they can signal the fire-ship and slave-pen raiders.

PHASE 4

The fire-ship sails into the harbor.

PHASE 5

The fire-ship leader must make a Challenging (D2) Sailing check (which can be assisted, using a Squad's Movement) to guide the ship toward the target on the city docks (marked with a green-glowing pennant atop her mast). Failure means the fire-ship misses its mark, with few consequences other than slightly lessening the effect of the rage gas/powder Maledict Mer has loaded into the target ship.

PHASE 6

The fire-ship leader and crew light the vessel's combustibles and dive overboard. The leader and his 5 Squads must make an Average (D1) Athletics roll (Movement for Squads) to swim to shore at either the docks or the central residential district; a Squad that fails its roll suffers ☠ +1 casualties.

THE SLAVE-PENS

The slave-pens are located outside the northern wall of the city. They are corrals made of hardened wood and metal bars or stone walls, each holding up to 20 slaves. There are over 20 such pens. There are currently over 350 newly-arrived slaves scattered throughout these cells, mostly men, but a few women and children as well. They are half-heartedly "guarded" by a score of cruel slavers and slave-masters — 4 Mobs of Rabble.

The slave-pen raiding force must initially use stealth to approach and overcome the slavers. If they fail to eliminate their enemies with stealth, the resulting fight could warn the guards at the city gate that something is amiss. Once the slavers have been dealt with, the raiders have to find the keys and attempt to recruit the slaves they are freeing to join the fight against the slave-city of Balbenon. Those that join are handed yellow sashes to wear around their arms to identify them as allies of the raiders. The party then creeps, company by company, toward the city gates to await entry once Captain Daimos opens the gates.

Unless a player character wishes to lead this mission, it is led by D'rogah himself, since he believes he is best capable of exhorting the freed slaves to join the revolt against the slavers of Balbenon.

PHASE 7

The slave-pen force must make an Average (D1) Stealth check (Movement for Squads) for the leader and however many of their 10 Squads they decide to move in order to subdue the slavers (4 Mobs of Rabble). If more than half of the Stealth rolls fail the slavers are able to fight back, otherwise they are taken by surprise and easily captured or killed.

Note that if the slavers are able to fight back against the raiders, the city gates are alerted, adding another 2 Squads of Guards to the opposition encountered there.

PHASE 8

The fire-ship leader and crew must make an Average (D1) Stealth check (Movement for Squads); if the roll succeeds they come upon 2 Mobs of Rabble (investigating the fire) whom they must fight; if the Stealth roll failed there are 4 Mobs instead.

The leader of the slave-pen force (or one of the other leaders present) must make a Daunting (D3) Observation test (unassisted) to find the keys to the slave pens among the bodies of the captured or slain slavers.

The tower force now joins the slave-pen force.

PHASE 9

If the fire-ship crew is in the Merchant/Warehouse district, and wish to look for Captain Daimos's ship, a D2 Observation roll (Awareness/Senses for Squads) is necessary to find it (once per Phase). Once the ship is found, if a D2 Stealth check (Agility/Movement for Squads) fails the raiders are set upon by 2 Mobs of (unarmed) Dweller-Human Hybrids, left by the sorcerer Maledict Mer to guard the vessel. If they defeat the deep-dwellers they discover hoards of loot aboard Daimos's ship, but neither Daimos, the sorcerer, nor the girl Emeraina are aboard.

The slave-pen force leader or a chosen representative must succeed in a Daunting (D3) Linguistics check to gain the assistance of the freed slaves in the battles to come. This is an Average (D1) check for D'rogah, Muhummok, or anyone else who can speak one of the languages of the Black Kingdoms; anyone who can speak the language can add 1D20 to the main speaker's skill test. Success gains 30 Mobs of Slaves, and each point of Momentum gained adds another 10 Mobs. Any slaves who join the raiding parties are given a yellow sash to wear around their arm, and told to kill anyone not wearing such a device.

PHASE 10

From this point on the fire ship raiders can either hole up and wait to rendezvous with the main raid force, or set out in search of loot in the Warehouse district, or head into the

Residential district looking for trouble (the latter of which they were ordered not to do).

Inside the city gates Captain Daimos moves 5 of his initial 10 Squads into position and attempts to distract the watch commander with a Daunting (D3) Social test so his men can attack with surprise. If successful they are opposed by only 3 Squads of Guards; if the roll fails they must fight 6 Squads of Guards. Call an intermission to this fighting after 2 rounds of combat... If the guard tower force failed its mission and the city is alerted, remember to add 2 Squads of Guards to this fight; another 2 Squads of Guards might be added if the slave-pen force failed to take out the slavers quietly; in either of these cases, Daimos may allocate more of his initial reserve force to the main fighting, if the player characters wish.

The slave-pen force moves into position outside the city gates, but must wait for Daimos's men to defeat the guards and open the gates.

PHASE 11

At the city gates, Daimos's men continue their fight with the gate Guards. The Guards are now joined by 2 Mobs of Rabble, alerted to the scuffle at the gates. If the raiders defeat all the Guards and Rabble within 2 rounds of fighting, they may open the gates and admit the main raid force (the combined slave-pen and tower forces, along with other corsairs and northmen held in reserve). If Daimos's force cannot defeat the opposition within 2 rounds they are unable to open the gates this Phase.

PHASE 12

At the city gates, 4 more Mobs of Rabble arrive to try and prevent the opening of the gates. If at any point Daimos's number of Squads outnumbers the opposition he can open the gates and allow the main raid force into the city. If Daimos's force is severely outnumbered he can sacrifice 1 Squad of his men (automatically slain) to open the gates to let the other raiders in.

PHASE 13

At the city gates, 2 Squads of Guards and 4 Mobs of Rabble show up to try and repel the raiders at the gates. If the tower and/or slave-pens forces failed either of their missions, add 2 more Squads of Guards to this fight for each failed objective. D'rogah, Muhummok, Red Ortho, and their force of at least 15 Squads each of corsairs or northmen, along with any player characters and their pirates, can help put down this resistance.

Captain Daimos, meanwhile, sneaks off with at least 10 additional Squads of Pirates he held in reserve. He is heading for the Warehouse district...

THE CITY GATES

There are two main gates into the city of Balbenon on the landward side. The raiders plan to attack and enter the northernmost. The walls of the city are 20 feet high, and the gates are heavy wooden planks that are barred from the inside. Each of the gates is patrolled by up to 6 Squads of Guards.

The city gates company is already inside the city, and is led by Captain Herge Daimos, the player characters' sworn enemy from the beginning of this campaign. Daimos's job is to distract the gate guards, spring a surprise attack on them, and open the gates for the rest of the raiders to enter. Daimos, however, wants to use as few of his men as possible to achieve this task, as he intends to sneak away with most of his crew to the Warehouse district of the city to begin looting there ahead of the main force.

PHASE 14

At this point the remaining tower, slave-pen, and city gates forces, plus the freed slaves — minus Daimos and his reserves — are massed together at the city gates. D'rogah, Muhommok, Red Ortho, and their crews of corsairs and northmen, along with any player characters and their pirates, now divide into four or five distinct "companies"; one or two to pillage the residential districts, one to attack the guard barracks, one to try and seize or slay the king of Balbenon, and one to move quickly to spearhead the raid on the warehouse district. Note that unlike the other companies, the forces sent to attack the residential areas are not relying on stealth or subtlety, but on pure brute force, chaos, and terror.

Unless a player character would like the job — and has enough men to accomplish it — Ortho takes the barracks objective. Likewise, unless a player character demands it, D'rogah wishes to go after the king. If there are more than two or three player characters here, some may have to combine their companies with those of another leader, such as a fellow player character, or Ortho, or whomever. D'rogah divides the Mobs of freed slaves among the companies most likely to need them — most likely the barracks, residential, and warehouse forces.

Unknown to any but himself, and the few men he has taken as his personal bodyguards, Maledict Mer begins his ritual in a temple on the eastern fringe of the city...

From this point on, each raid objective force should roll on the raid events table at the beginning of each phase to determine what other random circumstances transpire during that phase.



PHASE 15

The leader of the barracks company should attempt a Challenging (D2) Warfare test to choose his tactics in attacking the Balbenon guard barracks. If the city is on alert due to the failure of the tower mission, the Warfare check is Daunting (D3). If the test fails all skill checks made during this mission have their Momentum reduced by 1 (or 2 if any Complication was rolled).

As they enter the compound of Balbenon's king, the leader and each Squad in the company must attempt an Average (D1) Stealth check (Movement for Squads), and if more than half the checks fail, the company is set upon by 4 Squads of Guards. If the test succeeds they must fight only 2 Squads of Guards.

Any companies sent to raid the residential districts face 5 Mobs of Rabble, a few Balbanese citizens brave enough to take to the streets to try and defend their homes from the raiders.

The forces of the warehouse company attempt to quickly traverse the residential area of the city with some degree of stealth, hoping to save their men and energy for their true objective. Nevertheless, the Leader and each Squad in his company must make an Average (D1) Stealth check (Movement for Squads) or his force has been sighted and set upon by 5 Mobs of Rabble.

PHASE 16

The fighting at the barracks begins in earnest, as 10 Squads of Guards clash against the raiders who have come to destroy them. Call an intermission to this battle after 3 rounds of fighting...

Inside the king's compound, the raiders are met by 4 Squads of Guards (or 2 Squads if they fought 4 Squads last phase). As the last of the Guards fall, the king orders the

release of his pets, 4 Leopards, into the outer compound to take on the intruders.

In the residential districts, the marauders find 5 more Mobs of Rabble have taken up what minimal arms they have to confront them.

As they near the warehouses, the leader of this force and each Squad in his company must make an Average (D1) Stealth check (Movement for Squads) or his force has been sighted and set upon by 5 Mobs of Rabble.

OTHER LOCATIONS


The Guard Barracks

The guard barracks for the protectors of Balbenon are located in a residential neighborhood in the northern half of the city. Over 200 men train and sleep here, though several smaller garrisons are posted throughout the city, particularly at the city's two gates, at the watchtower, and at the king's palace compound. The barracks consist of 6 large residences surrounding an open training field. At any given time there are over 100 men posted here, including one or two companies of Balbenon's elite guard.

The city guards of Balbenon are not exceptional fighters. They are used to quelling slave uprisings — dealing with unarmed opponents, and, as a result, are poorly trained, and decadent. They are armed with spears and small shields, and usually wear no armor. Nevertheless, there are at least 10 Squads of regular guardsmen here, and another 5 Squads of elite guards.

The barracks company attempt to attack the guards with brute force, hoping to catch them unawares and keep them off balance, hoping to rout them and leave the city undefended. If no player character wants to take this very dangerous job, it is taken by Red Ortho and his Nordheimers, or Muhummok and his crew, aided by a horde of freed slaves, the latter eager to exact revenge on their captors.

Once the guards are dealt with, the barracks force is to work its way through the residential areas toward the warehouse district.

Note that if the barracks force fails to defeat the Balbanese guards, any other encounter in the raid which calls for guardsmen will face an additional 3  Squads of guardsmen. For this reason the barracks mission is crucial to the success of the raid.

The King's Compound

The palace compound of King Wadi-Maru is surrounded by a 10 foot wall, enclosing a sizable garden of shade and fruit trees, a small pond, a smaller barracks for the king's personal guard, a lavish guest house for the king's seraglio,

and the even more spacious and resplendently furnished palace. The fat, languid King Wadi-Maru resides here with his guards, wives, servants, and pet leopards. Wealth and finery abound within the palace walls, from gold fixtures and furnishings to women dripping with jewels, to the rich furs, clothing, and jewelry of the king himself.

The king's compound raid force intends to enter the wealthy residential area near the center of Balbenon, take out the guards, and either capture or kill King Wadi-Maru. With the king in hand or dead, the city's morale will be further weakened. The opposition includes at least 6 Squads of regular guardsmen, 4 leopards, 6 Squads of elite guards, and King Wadi-Maru himself.

D'rogah himself prefers to lead this company, as he can best deal with the slaves he intends to send to help seize the king. If a player character leads this mission, he needs to be a capable warrior and a strong leader, to control the slaves D'rogah sends with the force.

The Residential Districts

A major part of the sack of Balbenon involves the attack on the central residential districts of the city. Over three-fourths of the city's population live in the northern residential districts, through which the entire raid force, in its various mission companies, must travel. The buildings are low and rather simple, and few families in this part of Balbenon own livestock.

The company (or companies) sent ahead into the residential districts are there simply to kill and cause panic, to demoralize the citizenry. Again, D'rogah sends several Mobs of slaves with each company into the residential areas, knowing they will brutally beat down the people of the city who meant to sell them into slavery either here or elsewhere. The opposition here is more numerous, but less well-armed and not as skilled in combat as other areas of the city. In short, there is a lot of fighting, but against weaker opposition. The defenders include at least 25 Mobs of rabble and at least 15 Squads of Balbanese guardsmen.


As this phase comes to a close, any player character or mission leader who is outdoors may attempt a Challenging (D2) Observation or Awareness roll; if it succeeds they see the skies above the city reddening with flame — and an eerie tinge of *greenish smoke* hovering over it as well.

PHASE 17

The battle at the barracks continues from where it left off before. That first dreadful, bloody fight eventually comes to an end...

As they enter the palace of the king, the raid force is confronted by the king's personal bodyguards, 6 Squads of Elite Guards. They defend their master to the death.

Starting now, the Leader of each company sent to attack the **residential** areas must make a Challenging (D2) Warfare or Command check (unassisted) each phase to marshal his or her forces against the opposition, which is now beginning to form more organized defenses (barricades, fires, crossfires, ambushes, etc.). If the test fails the defenders are assumed to have 1 additional Momentum that phase. The defenders are made up of 5 Squads of Guards and 5 Mobs of Rabble.

Entering the warehouse area, the leader and each Squad in his force may attempt a Daunting (D3) Observation check (Awareness for Squads). If the roll succeeds, they discover the corpses of several Balbanese citizens and guards outside a ransacked warehouse: crates have been opened and the contents strewn about, and 2  +2 worth of scattered gold and jewelry has been left behind. Obviously someone (Captain Daimos!) got here before the raid force.

Again, as this phase comes to a close, any player character or mission leader outdoors may attempt a Challenging (D2) Observation check; if it succeeds they notice that not only is the sky above the city lit by dozens of fires, but an eerie greenish smoke also wafts above it. And now that greenish aura appears to be *glowing*...



PHASE 18

The raiders press their way into the barracks, to be met by 10 more Squads of Guards. The fighting is fast and bloody...

In the palace of Balbenon's king, the raiders find the flabby monarch barricaded himself inside his chambers. A Dire (D4) Brawn test (from 1 character or 1 Squad or Mob)

THE WAREHOUSE DISTRICT

This area of the city includes both the markets, stalls, and shops, but also, nearer the docks, the warehouses where merchants store incoming and outgoing goods, everything from ivory, weapons, grains, fruits, vegetables, and spices, to diamonds, jewels, rare and fragrant woods, and other valuable commodities. As with most of the city's buildings, those in these areas are of a single story and made of stone or adobe, but here there are patrolling guards and watchmen and locked and barred doors.

The warehouse raiding force is initially sent ahead of the residential forces, to swiftly and stealthily move through those areas into the district. There they are to overcome the guards in the area and begin marking the wealthiest shops and warehouses for later plunder. Their goal is not to loot these places immediately, but clear out any opposition before the combined raid forces arrive to begin the actual plundering. In addition to a few Mobs of Rabble they meet *en route*, once in the merchant district these raiders face 20 Squads of Guards, 10 Mobs of Rabble, and, unexpectedly, 4 Mobs of Dweller-Human Hybrids!

is required to break in and seize him, or a Daunting (D3) Persuade roll (D2 if the speaker knows a language of the Black Kingdoms) to convince him to surrender and his life will be spared. Once each of these methods has been tried and failed, a hasty mob of slaves sets fire to the palace and compound: the blaze spreads swiftly, killing the king and preventing the raiders from looting the premises.

Once again the Leader of each company sent to plunder the residential areas must make an unassisted Challenging (D2) Warfare or Command check to marshal his or her forces against the opposition, which is now beginning to form more organized defenses (barricades, fires, crossfires, ambushes, for example). If the test fails the defenders are assumed to have 1 additional Momentum this phase. The defenders are made up of 5 Squads of Guards and 5 Mobs of Rabble.

The raiders in the warehouse area are attacked by 5 Squads of Guards and 5 Mobs of Rabble.

All player characters and mission leaders may attempt a Challenging (D2) Observation/Awareness roll, and if successful they see that the fires of the city reflect *green* in the eyes of the combatants on both sides of the battle for Balbenon. If they ask one of their companions, they learn that *even their own eyes glimmer with green flame*...



PHASE 19

The bloody struggle at the guard barracks nears its end, as 5 Squads of Elite Guards — the officers of the Balbanese militia, and the last combatants left in the barracks — surge forth to make one last desperate attempt to drive off the raiders.

The company at the king's compound regroups, and perhaps secures the terrified king, as the slaves ransack the palace, destroy his belongings, chase his harem, and loot his treasury. The looters round up plunder worth 7☹+3 gold for the party. In addition, if the king was captured alive, the freed slaves now wish to disembowel him; a Dire (D4) Persuade, Command, or Society check is needed to prevent this act, should anyone care enough to try and stop them. If someone does stop the lynch-mob, the terrified king gratefully offers them a reward: roll twice on the Special Loot Table.

The Leader of each company sent to assault the residential areas must make an unassisted Challenging (D2) Warfare or Command check to lead his or her forces against the opposition, which is now beginning to form a more organized defence (barricades, fires, crossfires, ambushes). If the test fails the defenders are assumed to have 1 additional Momentum this phase. The defenders are made up of 5 Squads of Guards and 5 Mobs of Rabble.

The company raiding the warehouse district is surprised to find a force of 10 Squads of Guards formed to meet them

in the streets. Even more surprisingly, these Guards are strictly disciplined, and if the Leader of the raid force fails an unassisted Challenging (D2) Command or Warfare test, the defenders are assumed to be at +1 to their Combat skill.

At the end of this phase a massive earth tremor shakes the ground. Greenish-yellow lightning flashes from the bodies of nearby dying victims, arcing into the sky to join the glowing green cloud hanging overhead. Then the cloud explodes, and a bolt of green lightning rips across the sky toward the west, far out to sea; the greenish cloud is almost entirely consumed by this eerie event. This magical conflagration causes all player characters and mission leaders to take 1☹ damage to Vigor and Resolve; armor provides no Soak. Any character rolling an effect also suffers a brief vision of an awful black island rising out of the sea, and of terrible soulless eyes glaring from somewhere beneath the waves: this triggers a mental attack that causes 6☹ damage and has the Vicious 1 quality. This was the culmination of Maledict Mer's ritual, briefly rousing the dead god sleeping beneath the distant ocean, and calling upon Th'sylla to raise the black island on which it lies, awaiting resurrection.

PHASE 20

The fighting at the barracks ends, and during this phase the remainder of the raid company catches its breath, binds its wounds, and prepares to follow the other forces into the city, toward the warehouse district. If the leader (or leaders) makes a successful Challenging (D2) Observation test, they may roll on the Mundane Loot Table.

The raiders of the king's compound begin to move toward the Merchant/Warehouse district. Around them the city is engulfed in fear, as residents flee, buildings burn, animals cower and bolt, and resistance in this area is completely crushed. If the Leader of this force fails a Challenging (D2) Command check (or Dire (D4) if the Leader prevented them from killing the king), any remaining slaves depart the group and go forth to pillage and burn the city.

The residential raiders reach the edge of the warehouse district. The Balbanese citizens are either in flight or hiding within their homes, so no one dares confront the blood-spattered killers in their travels. The freed slaves, however, are thirsty for revenge, and the leader of each force here must make a Daunting (D3) Command check or the slaves break away to spread more mayhem throughout the city.

The raiders of the warehouse district push further into the area, where they are faced with 5 Mobs of Rabble and 5 Squads of Guards. At the end of the fight, the leader should attempt a Challenging (D2) Observation test. If it succeeds they may roll once on the Mundane Loot Table; with 1 Momentum they may roll on the Special Loot Table; with 2 Momentum they discover another, already plundered,

warehouse (see Phase 17 above, including loot left behind). The leader may expend 3 Momentum to have the raiders happened upon be Captain Herge Daimos and what remains of his crew (2☹+2 Squads of Pirates). If this turns into a confrontation between Daimos and a player character, consult the section below entitled “Captain Herge Daimos, At Last”.

The tiny fire-ship raid force can make a Challenging (D2) Observation test (Awareness for the Squads). If successful, they spy a small group moving furtively through the fleeing residents, smoke, and chaos, headed for the waterfront; if any Momentum is expended the observer swears it was Maledict Mer — and a handful of stooped scaly humanoids with the faces of fish! If they pursue, roll on the Events Table, and, once the Event is dealt with, make a further Challenging (D2) Observation check (Awareness for Squads) sees a small ship slowly sailing out of the harbor; again, any Momentum expended spots Daimos’s crafty sorcerer aboard the ship...

PHASE 21

By now most of the fighting has died down in the city, and the slaves are eager to burn and pillage. The leader of each force must again make an unassisted Challenging (D2) Command test to keep the slaves from running off to their own devices in the beleaguered city.

The barracks and king’s compound raiders pass through the devastated residential areas *en route* to the Merchant/Warehouse district. Continue to roll on the Events Table, and if additional enemy forces are called for, assume it is 2 Squads of Guards. Otherwise there is no resistance from the shattered city of Balbenon.

The raiders from the residential forces now move through the rapidly-emptying Merchant/Warehouse district. They too roll on the Events Table, facing 2 Squads of Guards if additional opposition is called for. Any roll of 11, 22, or 33 on the Event Table indicates the party has found Captain Daimos and his men (2☹+2 Squads of Pirates), leading to a showdown between the pirate and a player character, which their accompanying forces also join in (see the section below entitled “Captain Herge Daimos, At Last”).

In addition to their normal roll on the Events Table, the leader of the warehouse company can attempt a Challenging (D2) Society check to predict where the richest spoils are

likely to be found in this area, and thus where Captain Daimos might be found. If the roll succeeds this force discovers him next phase.

As the fighting dies down in most areas of Balbenon, and conflict reaches deeper into the Merchant/Warehouse district, the minimal force from the fire-ship can also join in the fray.

PHASE 22

As before, the Leader of each raid force must make an unassisted Challenging (D2) Command roll, or the slaves accompanying his men depart to burn and pillage the city which had enslaved them.

Roll on the Event Table for the barracks, king, residential, and fire-ship raid forces, and proceed in that order. Rolls of 11, 22, and 33 indicate the force has encountered Captain Daimos and his men; rolls of 5, 15, 25, or 35 indicate that force has met up with the fire-ship raiders (or the fire-ship meets a randomly-determined company from those present).

The raiders of the warehouse company, however, are shocked to enter a darkened warehouse to discover 4 Mobs of Dweller-Human Hybrids. The batrachian horrors fight for 1 round before attempting to escape by diving into the water. After the encounter, the raiders notice that any deep-dwellers killed are wearing ☹+1 gold worth of weirdly-wrought pale gold jewelry. The pirates also discover several more sealed jars of the powder Maledict Mer used to enhance the rage of the combatants engaged in tonight’s battle for Balbenon.

This phase marks the end of the major combat actions in the sack of Balbenon. There is sporadic fighting for several more hours: small pockets of resistance, mostly put down by raiders still under the influence of Maledict Mer’s alchemical smoke. But for all practical purposes, the city has been conquered.

PHASE 23

The raid forces now converge on one another in the warehouse district, where, if they haven’t already, they encounter Captain Daimos and the last of his men (2☹+2 Squads of Pirates).



CAPTAIN DAIMOS, AT LAST

As the fighting dies down somewhat in the sack of the slave-city, and the various companies of raiders begin to meet one another in the ravaged merchant/warehouse district of Balbenon, the player characters and their crews of pirates finally catch up with their enemy, the murderous rogue pirate captain, Herge Daimos. Whether they are with a single crew or the entire horde of raiders, the adventurers are sure to want to exact their revenge on the villainous dog...

If a player character and his crew encounter Daimos and what's left of his crew (2☹+2 Squads of Pirates), the fight can go as the player character desires. Both crews are likely to join in, especially if the player character's crew includes anyone surviving from the initial encounter with Daimos on the *Ebony Rose* (Chapter One).

On the other hand, if D'rogah is present when the player character(s) run into Daimos, he attempts to quell the hostilities, even though the adventurers are certain to want their revenge. At the very least D'rogah insists other crews stand down, as there is still work to be done in Balbenon. He has his own crew to back him up, and perhaps that of Muhummok as well. Red Ortho, for his part, is content to sit on the sidelines — it's not his business.

In the event Daimos brings down a player character, D'rogah protests if another steps in to finish off the pirate captain, but he won't press the matter. Even so, Daimos's crew join the fray to try and prevent a second duellist from attacking their captain. At this point, D'rogah and his corsairs try to intercede to stop an all-out brawl. If the gamemaster wishes, he might spend 2 Doom (repeatable) to bring in 20 Squads of Guards or Rabble to try and rout the distracted raiders.

As the duel commences the player characters may ask Daimos what he's done with Emeraina: "Hah! She's with me now, you fools. And she won't be going back with you to warm some soft-handed man's arm or bed, either." He continues to taunt his foes, declaring Emeraina is safe and warm back on his ship. If he can be convinced that this is not the case, he seems genuinely concerned: "Damn that conniving Shemite wizard..."

If and when Daimos is brought down, and lays dying, he splutters through his own blood "Make sure she's safe, you dogs, or I'll come back from Hell to hound you. If she truly is gone, that damned sorcerer's to blame. He's had his eye on her, and something else up his sleeve, ever since this Balbenon raid idea started..." Just before he dies he mutters "If you can find it, use his amulet..."

Once Daimos is dead, his crew glowers menacingly, but a Daunting (D3) Display of Might forces them to back

down. If the Display fails Daimos's crew may attack, if they have the numbers, but more likely they drift away to loot the city, hoping for a chance to avenge their captain at a later date.

With their nemesis finally slain, the player characters are free to help the other raiders in the plunder of the warehouses and residences of this part of the city. See the "Aftermath" section below for details of what they find. Or they can try to find out what happened to Emeraina. Alternately, the heroes can try to find out what Maledict Mer was up to during the sack of the city. Regardless of which path they choose, they aren't likely to be happy with what they find...

THE SORCERER'S STRATAGEM

Maledict Mer's plan almost certainly worked out exactly as he planned it. It was he who originally suggested to D'rogah several months ago that a massive raid on one of the slave-ports of the Black Kingdoms would be both profitable and — knowing of D'rogah's past — a means of gaining a measure of revenge. The sorcerer joined Herge Daimos's pirate crew, intending to steer him and a few other pirates and freebooters to join D'rogah's budding scheme. Once the raiders had chosen their target, Maledict Mer and his inhuman allies created enormous quantities of the rage-inducing powder so the attack would be even more brutal and bloody.

The attack on Balbenon is a huge human sacrifice of hundreds, perhaps thousands of souls. Maledict Mer and his deep-dweller allies would be present in the city to harness the power of these violently-lost souls to cast a spell to temporarily awaken their dead god Th'sylla, hoping the monstrosity could raise the dreaded sunken black islands on which it was imprisoned. Then the sorcerer and his fellows would travel to the islands to cast the spell freeing the sleeping corpse-god to ravage the world again.

Now the raid has succeeded — even if it failed, the loss of life would still be sufficient to power their spell — the sorcerer and his Deep-Dwelling kin have escaped in the chaos of the sacking of the city. Prior to the raid Maledict Mer secured a small vessel of his own with which he intended to escape and sail to the Black Islands. Bribing a small crew, he kidnapped Emeraina from Daimos's ship, and has her captive on his ship. As the other raiders killed and plundered across the city, Maledict Mer cast his great spell, harnessing the souls of the slain. The flickering flames of madness shone in the eyes of those infected by rage, and the ground shook as the magical energy harnessed by the sorcerers was used to awaken the slumbering-dead

god Th'sylla. Elated with his success, the sorcerer fled the burning city of Balbenon, sailing off toward the Black Islands — with the girl Emeraina captive aboard his ship.

DIVIDING THE SPOILS

As the raiders begin to loot the warehouses and merchant shops and stalls, angry murmurs and grumbings pass among the crews: there is wealth here, to be sure, but there is nothing resembling a “mountain” of either gold, or diamonds. D'rogah can be found marshalling slave forces and freeing slaves in other parts of the city. Confronted about the scarcity of the types of valuables he had promised, D'rogah freely admits he lied. He didn't know if there would be great amounts of treasure to be had, he merely needed the pirates and Nordheimers to help attack the city so he could free the slaves and end Balbenon's status as a slave-city once and for all. D'rogah has several dozen of his own crew and scores of slaves to back him up, should violence threaten. He attempts to appease the betrayed raiders by offering his share — and the shares of his crew — to the other pirates. This goes some way toward softening the bitterness of the betrayal and the paucity of the expected payoff, as it nearly doubles the take of each raider. To the player characters who slew Captain Daimos, he suggests they take the villain's ship — no doubt still loaded with the rogue's treasure. Anyone still not satisfied with their shares is eyed menacingly by several dozen corsairs and over a hundred slaves. If further violence is threatened, D'rogah states that anyone not satisfied with their share would do well to remember that they are in waters claimed by the corsairs, and anyone who would oppose him would oppose their brotherhood as well: it's a long sail back to Argos...

If the other raiders accept D'rogah's offer, each participant in the sack of Balbenon receives treasure in various forms (coins, jewels, weapons, furs, cloth, wine) worth 8☹+5 gold. This is in addition to any finds made by a player character during the raid. If the player characters choose to seize Daimos's ship, the *Devil's Shadow*, they can claim an additional 3☹+1 ×100 gold worth of treasure, including the personal effects of the crew, the treasures of Daimos, Emeraina, and Maledict Mer, and the cargo of loot in her hold. Note that this treasure should be divided among the player characters' crew, and perhaps shared with Red Ortho and his crew. Even so, this is a small fortune in and of itself. Maledict Mer's discarded valuables includes jewels, relics, and various bits of sorcerous paraphernalia (magic books, spell scrolls, or other minor magical items, as the gamemaster desires). In addition, while searching the wizard's cabin, a Challenging (D2) Observation or an Average (D1) Sorcery check discovers one of the strange

coral amulets he used to track the *Ebony Rose* in Chapter One (detailed in a nearby sidebar).

Player characters gain 1 point of Renown each for participating in the Sack of Balbenon, a legendary battle not just among the peoples of the Black Kingdoms, but a bold tale of blood, steel, heroism, and the freeing of hundreds of slaves, a tale destined to travel across the Thurian continent.



WHAT OF THE WIZARD?

The player characters will undoubtedly be wondering what became of Emeraina, since she's not aboard Daimos's ship. They are also concerned about the missing wizard Maledict Mer, and whether or not Emeraina's disappearance is related to the mage's absence. The most logical way to find out the sorcerer's plans is to find and question members of Daimos's crew. There are still a few in the city, gathering their shares of loot. Getting them to talk is another matter entirely, especially if they clashed at the time of the duel with Daimos. A Daunting (D3) Persuade roll is needed to get one or more of the crew to talk; the difficulty becomes Dire (D4) if the player characters and Daimos's pirates parted on bad terms, or Challenging (D2) if the adventurers shared their loot with Daimos's crew.

The crew know little of Maledict Mer's actions. Daimos kept Emeraina aboard the *Devil's Shadow* while he and the wizard scouted and made preparations in the city. Sometimes the wizard went out on his own. One crewman recalls hearing the Shemite sorcerer asking one of the locals where the temple of Mitra was.

Once the pirates learn of the player characters' interest in Daimos's crewmen, some of them drag forward a pathetic, shaken, drooling wreck of a sailor. The pirates claim this one went off with Maledict Mer, along with several others, sometime before the raid. The man is wild-eyed, clearly mad, and keeps muttering about “the black islands”. If a Daunting (D3) Counsel check is made to soothe the madman's nerves, he can be questioned. Unfortunately, most of what he says are ravings such as “the black islands have risen”, “the thing beneath the waves that sees”, “it whispers in my mind!”, and “gods! *there's more than one of them!*” A second Daunting (D3) Counsel check, or any Momentum gained with the first test gets the ruined wretch to mention that “the wizard has the girl... he had her on his ship...”

If the adventurers seek out the temple of Mitra mentioned by one of the crew, they find it in the eastern portion of the central residential district. The temple steps are splattered with the blood of slain priests and their flock. There are strange web-footed prints in the blood, and many of the dead sport terror-filled faces amid the blood and gore. Outside the temple are more pots of the green powder used by Maledict Mer to boil the blood of those involved in the battle for Balbenon.

As the heroes explore the blood-spattered temple — already plundered of valuables by pirates or slaves or whomever — a bent black figure strides boldly out of the shadows. In the Kushite tongue he dares the defilers, the cowards, the murderers, the sons of dogs, to kill him. Kill him as they

have done the others! If he can be communicated with, it takes a Daunting (D3) Society or Persuade check to calm him down enough to talk with those he (rightly) deems responsible for the murder of his city; if the speaker doesn't know the Kushite language (or some other language of the Black Kingdoms), the difficulty of this test is Dire (D4).

The old priest says the Shemite wizard and a small group of men stormed the temple and slew the priests and those who came to seek shelter inside. The old priest hid in the shadows, and watched in horror as the barbarians slaughtered his people and began lighting the jars of hell-spawned smoke — jars dragged forth by devils from the seas of hell, foul scaly things walking like men, croaking like frogs. The old man passed out when the wizard began his ritual, as visions of bloodshed, green smoke, and black islands rising from the sea wracked his mind. The old priest knows what these things portend, too: he heard the wizard calling to the black gods of R'lyeh, and if the witch-man woke any of *them*, then all who live are doomed. He calls the raiders fools for aiding the sorcerer: "If the witch-man wakes even one of those foul ones, all the seas are at risk. And if that one dark *thing* awakens its brothers, or worse yet, their priest-king, then all is lost as they who once ruled the world return to scream their songs of death and madness into the minds of every living thing. No one will be safe. And you fools have done this! A curse on you! Death and madness! Madness and death!"

If the gamemaster expends 2 Doom the old priest attempts to slay one of the player characters; lunging at him or her with a hidden dagger, attacking first. The old priest has Combat 7, and the dagger is 3 damage, Hidden 1, Unforgiving 1. After his first attack the old man collapses, his fury spent, his willingness to talk gone.

After dark, anyone looking out over the western sea who makes a Daunting (D3) Observation check can see, in the extreme distance, what appears to be flickers of green lightning...

PURSuing A MADMAN

Hopefully the player characters realize the escaped sorcerer Maledict Mer's plans threaten all mortals, perhaps in particular those who ply the seas. Presumably they also realize they have immediate access to a ship, in the form of Daimos's *Devil's Shadow*; they'll need at least 25 men to sail her. If they want to raise a crew to pursue the wizard and put a stop to his plans, they'll need to make a Dire (D4) Persuade check. They might try to gain D'rogah's help before they make their call to arms: convincing D'rogah is only an Average (D1) difficulty Persuade test, unless they previously attacked him or his forces, in which case it might also be a Dire (D4) proposition. If D'rogah is convinced of the threat, he can stand with the player characters as they try to recruit



a crew to find Maledict Mer, reducing any Persuade check to Daunting (D3).

That test only gets the men to listen — they'll need more than mere words: why should these men risk their lives for nothing? The adventurers need to offer the pirates and corsairs something tangible to gain their service. Offering part of their share of the Balbenon loot might gain a few men; noting the weird gold jewelry worn by the fish-headed horrors accompanied the wizard might gain a few more. If the player characters give up some or all of their share of the reward for Emeraina's safe return, that too might gain a few more; and reminding whatever's left of the *Ebony Rose's* crew that their other enemy, Maledict Mer, is still out there, should bring at least a few of them on board. If D'rogah was convinced of the danger posed by the missing sorcerer, he sends several of his pirates to fill out the crew.

The player characters might also try to solicit the aid of Red Ortho and his remaining Nordenheimer reavers. If the heroes have done well by Ortho, saved him or his men or fought bravely alongside them, this requires a Challenging (D2) Society or Persuade check. If they haven't done anything to gain his favor, the Difficulty is Dire (D4): again, Ortho and his men have better things to do than die on some gods-forsaken island, and if fate would have the horrors of the sea rise up to engulf the worlds of men, well, it will be a damned good fight when it comes. *If it comes.* If Ortho joins the crew, he and his men will either take a small merchant ship from among those in the harbor at Balbenon, or sail aboard the player characters' vessel, if there's room. It's

generally agreed by those present that it while it would be preferable to fetch their own ships to go after the wizard, time might be short, so they're better off taking what they have at hand before Maledict Mer gets too far ahead.


With luck the player characters survive the sack of Balbenon with newfound wealth and newfound allies, a willing crew, and a new ship laden with even more loot. But they still have a dark wizard to find and kill, a woman to rescue, and, perhaps, a world to save.

Setting sail from the ruined city, they head out to sea, where devilish green lightning flickers on the far horizon...

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Any character who survive The Night of The Yellow Sashes receives 200 experience points. If they led their men competently, acted honorably or bravely, or otherwise acquitted themselves well, award an extra 50 points. Award an additional 10 points each for remembering the amulet used by Maledict Mer in chapter one, understanding or discovering the specific threat posed by the "black gods of R'lyeh", or achieving a specific raid goal (capturing the king, helping wipe out the guards at the barracks, successfully piloting the fire-ship at its target). The player character who slew Herge Daimos receives an additional 50 points. Finally, if the adventurers decide to pursue Maledict Mer, award each another 25 experience points.

BALBENON RAID EVENTS (2D20)

Roll	Event
2-4	An enemy soldier or soldiers attack a slave-combatant with sadistic glee. A Daunting (D3) Observation roll notes that any nearby flames reflect an eerie green in the attacker's eyes.
5-8	A terrified Balbenon resident begs the player character for mercy for their family and children. Does the hero accept their surrender? What about the rest of the raid force?
9-10	A frightened Balbenon merchant offers the player character and his companions a bribe to allow him safe passage. The bribe is  +2 gold per member of the hero's immediate force.
11-13	The player character has a chance to procure some battlefield loot. Roll on the Mundane Loot Table.
14-16	The player character witnesses one or more slave-combatants ruthlessly slaying Balbenon residents or soldiers. A Daunting (D3) Observation roll notes that any nearby flames reflect an eerie green in the attacker's eyes. Does the player character intercede?
17-18	The player character finds him- or her-self and a Squad of companions cut off from their allies; a Challenging (D2) Command or Survival check is necessary to regroup with your own forces. If the roll fails the adventurer and his allies must face a Mob of Balbenese Rabble forces; the player character and his men must continue to make this test and fight Mobs of Rabble until they succeed in the test, thus returning to their main force.
19	The player character or group leader is ambushed by a Balbenese soldier (Minion) armed with three spears. The first thrown spear attack costs the gamemaster 1 Doom, but occurs before the player character can react. If the player character fails a Challenging (D2) Observation test a second spear is thrown before the hero can react, costing the gamemaster a further 1 Doom. At that point the player character or his men spot the ambusher and may deal with him normally.

BALBENON RAID EVENTS (2D20) CONTINUED...

Roll	Event
20	The player character and his men have forced ☹+2 Mobs of Balbenese Rabble into a dead-end amid the streets of the city. With nowhere to run, the desperate enemy soldiers will surrender if outnumbered by the raid force, or fight to the death (with +1 Combat). Do the player characters' men allow the armed residents to surrender, or do they slay them?
21-22	After the first round of fighting this combat phase, the Balbenese forces are joined by a band of reinforcements: ☹+2 Mobs of Rabble fighters.
23-24	The player character's force discovers a series of clay pots whose contents are burning and sending a reeking greenish smoke into the air, hanging as a dreaded fog above the city. A Daunting (D3) Alchemy or Sorcery test reveals there is something unnatural, perhaps magical about the smoke. During the next phase everyone in this group of raiders gains +1 to their Combat skill, and a Daunting (D3) Observation roll notes that any nearby flames reflect an eerie green in the eyes of the attackers.
25	A riding beast of some kind encounters the player character's force. If no Momentum are spent, it is a camel (Daunting (D3) Animal Handling roll to calm and mount; Challenging (D2) thereafter to command). For 1 Momentum it is a riding horse (Challenging (D2) to calm and mount, Average (D1) to command). For 4 Momentum it is an elephant (Dire (D4) to calm and mount, Daunting (D3) to command). A mounted leader adds 1D20 to his forces' combat rolls, in addition to the advantages for the leader himself, and to say nothing of the possible advantages of riding an elephant into battle!
26	The player character's force is prevented from advancing by burning buildings. Unless the leader succeeds in a Challenging (D2) Survival or Command check, the searing flames slay or incapacitate 1☹ Squads of the hero's force.
27-28	The way forward is blocked, or the raiders have come to a dead end. The raid force must either backtrack and find another route (do not roll for an Event next turn) or, with a successful Daunting (D3) Observation test, find and clear a path through the rubble/brush/fencing/etc (roll for two Events next turn and take the least beneficial — GM's choice).
29-30	The leader of the opposing forces this turn is a Balbenese captain (Toughened), who fights the player character only on the second and subsequent rounds of this encounter.
31	The player character's raid force is attacked by ☹+1 Mobs of frenzied slaves. They flee when they have lost half of their number.
32-33	(Phases 16-20 only): The player character makes a Challenging (D2) Sorcery check, and if successful they feel a surge of alien energy in the air, raising hackles and gnawing at the brain, as if some major sorcerous ritual is underway. If any Momentum is gained the adventurer notes the distant call of arcane phrases in an alien tongue, and if more than 1 Momentum is scored the words "Th'sylla" and "R'lyeh" are distinctly heard. If any Complication is indicated, the character suffers a brief vision of an awful black island rising out of the sea, and of terrible soulless eyes glaring from somewhere beneath the waves: this triggers a mental attack that causes 6☹ damage and is Vicious 1. A successful Daunting (D3) Lore test recalls that R'lyeh is believed to be an ancient sunken city wherein "dead" alien gods sleep, awaiting the time when their island rises from the waves to ravage the surface world once more, as they had done in eons past...
34-35	With a Daunting (D3) Observation roll, the player character spots one of Daimos's pirate crew. Roll 1D20 for his condition: 1-6 dead, 7-13 injured and dying, 14+ alive. If alive he won't recognize the player character from their previous encounter aboard the Ebony Rose, and may be approached and questioned. If the pirate is injured, a Challenging (D2) Healing roll is necessary to keep him alive long enough to divulge Daimos's whereabouts.
36	The enemy forces faced this round are Balbenese soldiers escorting a merchant and his retinue (an extra Mob of rabble Minions). If the enemy are defeated, the survivors may roll once on each Loot Table for their reward.
37-38	The enemy forces this round have rallied, giving them +2 Combat.
39	The player character has stumbled across something rare and valuable. Roll on the Special Loot Table.
40	The player character's force rounds a corner and runs into a horde of ichthyic humanoid creatures — ☹+1 Mobs of Dweller-Human Hybrids (Minions), led by a Dweller (Toughened). The lesser Dwellers attack with claws only, not their strange knives, but the leader does have a Strange Coral Knife. If an Effect is rolled on the ☹, each dweller carries a clay pot containing the mysterious green powder Maledict Mer has been burning throughout the city to increase the savagery of the fighters on both sides of the struggle. After the encounter, each of the slain dwellers of the deep is found to be wearing ☹ gold worth of weird gold jewelry.



BALBENON LOOT TABLES

These valuables will have to be salvaged from the bodies of slain Balbenese soldiers and citizens, especially the weapons and armor. A Challenging (D2) Observation rolls might be required to find smaller items, or Challenging (D2) Melee tests to recognize the worth of weapons and armor.

MUNDANE LOOT TABLE (D20)

Roll	Result
1-3	A purse or pouch of coins worth 1 gold.
4-5	An item of jewelry worth 2 gold.
6-7	1 bolts of silk or cloth worth 1 gold apiece (1 encumbrance per bolt).
8-9	An ivory carving of 1 Encumbrance worth 4 gold.
10	An idol of carved ebony wood worth 5 gold (1 Encumbrance).
11	A superb example of a Ghanata knife (Hidden 1, Vicious 2). Alternately, a very fine javelin (Fragile, Piercing 2, Thrown — Medium).
12-13	A jug of very fine wine worth 1 gold.
14	A small wooden crate filled with containers of various exotic spices, worth a total of 2 gold (2 Encumbrance).
15-16	A scroll or book of some kind, written in an obscure southern language. To the right scholar, it is worth 2 gold.
17	A rolled-up animal skin inscribed with a map leading to an ancient, long forgotten temple.
18-19	A fine Brigandine jacket offering 3 points of Armor Soak with 3 Encumbrance. Alternately, a helmet carved with a lion's visage (3 Armor Soak).
20	3 bolts of exotic animal hides or furs, worth 1 gold per bundle (2 Encumbrance per bundle).

SPECIAL LOOT TABLE (D20)

Roll	Result
1-3	A short sword with a pointed blade (Piercing 1). Or a spear whose point is a large piece of razor-sharp meteoric metal (5 Damage, Unbalanced, Piercing 1, Fragile, Intense). Or a hunting bow and a quiver containing 2 Loads of obsidian-tipped arrows (Vicious 1).
4-6	A short sword with a jewel in the pommel worth 2 gold. Or a ceremonial spear with jeweled head and silver-filigreed haft worth 3 gold. Or a decorative knife with etched blade and ebony handle worth 3 gold.
7-10	An exquisite piece of jewelry worth 2 gold.
11-13	A cured vest made of some distinctive animal hide (Armor Soak 2, Encumbrance 1). Or a jeweled coif helmet (Armor Soak 2, Encumbrance 2) worth 3 gold. Or a shield made of ebony wood and black metal plates (as per a regular Shield, but 3 Damage, Unbalanced).
14-15	An ornately-carved ceremonial baton identifying the bearer as an agent of king Wadi-Maru of Balbenon. Worth 1 gold for its workmanship or to an artifact collector, but potentially invaluable in political or economic dealings.
16-17	A small "hoard" of treasure: coins, gems, jewelry or other small valuables worth 6 gold!
18-19	An idol representing some human-animal god, carved of wood or stone, worth at least 4 gold (3 Encumbrance).
20	An elaborately decorated leather scoll-case containing a vellum scroll or small animal hide. This is a detailed map to some unknown location within the southern interior. Emptying out the scroll-case deposits a small emerald worth 1 gold.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

D'ROGAH (NEMESIS)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	10	11	10
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
9	10	9	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	1	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	1	Social	1

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 11, Resolve 11	
■ Soak: Armor —, Courage 2	

ATTACKS	
■ Javelin (M): Reach 2, 3 ☹ 1H, Fragile, Piercing, Thrown	
■ Short sword (M): Reach 1, 4 ☹ 1H, Parrying	
■ Steely Glare (T): Range C, 4 ☹ mental, Stun	

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
■ Strength from the Sea: Pirates are used to combat aboard ship and only suffer penalties in the fiercest of weather.	
■ Boarding Action: Pirates are experts at boarding unfriendly craft and know all the best places to seek cover. When boarding, pirates gain 3 ☹ Cover against missile weapons.	
■ My Ship is My Castle: On his own vessel, a pirate captain always has Light Cover, with 2 ☹ Cover Soak against ranged weapons.	

DOOM SPENDS	
■ Fearsome Reputation: At any point in an encounter the pirate captain can spend one Doom (Repeatable) to add 1 ☹ to the mental damage of a Steely Glare attack.	

MUHUMMOK (NEMESIS)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	7	8	10
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
11	11	10	

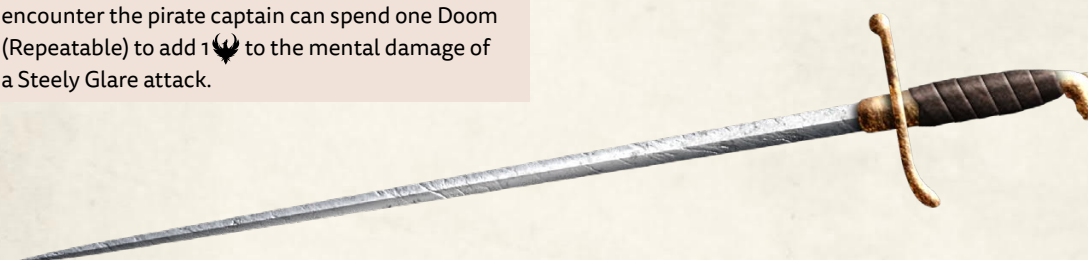
FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	2	Movement	—
Fortitude	1	Senses	—
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 12, Resolve 11	
■ Soak: Armor —, Courage —	

ATTACKS	
■ Javelin (M): Reach 2, 3 ☹ 1H, Fragile, Piercing, Thrown	
■ Short sword (M): Reach 1, 4{CD}, 1H, Parrying	
■ Steely Glare (T): Range C, 4 ☹ mental, Stun	

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
■ Strength from the Sea: Pirates are used to combat aboard ship and only suffer penalties in the fiercest of weather.	
■ Boarding Action: Pirates are experts at boarding unfriendly craft and know all the best places to seek cover. When boarding, pirates gain 3 ☹ Cover against missile weapons.	
■ My Ship is My Castle: On his own vessel, a pirate captain always has Light Cover, with 2 ☹ Cover Soak against ranged weapons.	

DOOM SPENDS	
■ Fearsome Reputation: At any point in an encounter the pirate captain can spend one Doom (Repeatable) to add 1 ☹ to the mental damage of a Steely Glare attack.	




CORSAIRS (MINION)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	7	7	7
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
9	9	8	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	1	Movement	—
Fortitude	—	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	1

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 5, Resolve 4	
■ Soak: Armor —, Courage 1	

ATTACKS	
■ Javelin (M): Reach 2, 3  1H, Fragile, Piercing 1, Thrown	
■ Shield (M): Reach 2, 3  1H, Knockdown, Shield 2	

DOOM SPENDS	
■ Battle Cry: Prior to and during boarding actions, corsairs let out a blood-curdling battle cry. For 1 Doom, a corsair can add +1  to the mental damage of a Steely Glare attack.	

RED ORTHO (NEMESIS)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	9	10	10
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
9	11	9	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	2	Movement	—
Fortitude	1	Senses	—
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 12, Resolve 11	
■ Soak: Armor 1, Courage 1	

ATTACKS	
■ Battleaxe (M): Reach 2, 6  1H, Unbalanced, Intense, Vicious 1	
■ Broadsword (M): Reach 2, 7  1H, Parrying	
■ Shield (M): Reach 2, 4  1H, Knockdown, Shield 2	

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Sea Raider:** The Difficulty of all Sailing tests made in the waters off Vanaheim are reduced by 1 step, to a minimum of Simple (Do). Additionally, the difficulty of any Athletics test related to swimming is similarly reduced.
- **Strength from the Sea:** Vanir raiders are used to combat aboard ship and only suffer penalties in the fiercest of weather.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Go Viking:** Ortho can spend 2 Doom points to summon 2 Vanir Raiders to his side.

VANIR RAIDERS (MINION)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	6	7	7
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
9	10	9	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	1	Movement	—
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 10, Resolve 7	
■ Soak: Armor 2 (Brigandine), Courage 1 (Savage)	

ATTACKS	
■ Battleaxe (M): Reach 2, 6  Unbalanced, Intense, Vicious 1	
■ Broadsword (M): Reach 2, 7  1H, Parrying	
■ Shield (M): Reach 2, 4  1H, Knockdown, Shield 2	

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
■ Sea Raider: The Difficulty of all Sailing tests made in the waters off Vanaheim are reduced by 1 step, to a minimum of Simple (Do). Additionally, the difficulty of any Athletics test related to swimming is similarly reduced.	
■ Strength from the Sea: Vanir raiders are used to combat aboard ship and only suffer penalties in the fiercest of weather.	



CAPTAIN KRONECTE, MERCENARY (TOUGHENED)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	8	10	9
Agility		Brawn	Coordination
9		10	9

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	2	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	—
Knowledge	1	Social	1

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 11, Resolve 10	
■ Soak: Armor 3 (Heavy Hauberk), Courage 2	

ATTACKS	
■ Sword (M): Reach 2, 5 1H, Parrying	
■ Knife (M): Reach 1, 4 1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1	
■ Shield (M): Reach 2, 2 1H, Knockdown, Shield 2	
■ Steely Glare (T): Range C, 4 mental, Stun	

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
■ Leadership: Kronecte may spend 1 Doom to grant two bonus D20s to a single Mob or Squad within Close Range. Usual dice maximums apply. These bonus dice may be used on any skill test attempted by the group before the end of the next turn.	

EMARIUS'S MERCENARIES (MINIONS)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	7	8	7
Agility		Brawn	Coordination
9		9	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	Movement	—
Fortitude	—	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 5, Resolve 4
- **Soak:** Armor 3 (Heavy Hauberk), Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Sword (M):** Reach 2, 5 1H, Parrying
- **Knife (M):** Reach 1, 4 1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1
- **Shield (M):** Reach 2, 2 1H, Knockdown, Shield 2
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 3 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Training:** Kronecte's mercenaries can reroll any dice that fails to score a success when making a Melee attack, but must accept the new result.
- **Fierce warriors:** if one of Kronecte's mercenary squads is defeated in combat, each of the remaining Squads gets a bonus D20 to its next Melee combat test.



HERGE DAIMOS, ZINGARAN PIRATE CAPTAIN (NEMESIS)




ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	9	11	10
Agility		Brawn	Coordination
9		10	10

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	1	Movement	—
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	1



STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 10, Resolve 11
- **Soak:** Armor 3 (Heavy Hauberk), Courage 2


ATTACKS

- **Cutlass (M):** Reach 2, 5  1H, Unbalanced, Fearsome, Vicious 1
- **Knife (M):** Reach 1, 4  1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 4  mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Strength from the Sea:** Pirates are used to combat aboard ship and only suffer penalties in the fiercest of weather.
- **Boarding Action:** Pirates are experts at boarding unfriendly craft and know all the best places to seek cover. When boarding, pirates gain 3  Cover against missile weapons.
- **My Ship is My Castle:** On his own vessel, a pirate captain always has Light Cover, with 2  Cover Soak against ranged weapons.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Fearsome Reputation:** At any point in an encounter the pirate captain can spend one Doom (Repeatable) to add 1  to the mental damage of a Steely Glare attack.

PIRATES (MINION)

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	7	7	7
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
9	9	8	




FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	Movement	—
Fortitude	—	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—


STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 5, Resolve 4
- **Soak:** Armor 1 (clothing), Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Cutlass (M):** Reach 2, 5  1H, Unbalanced, Fearsome, Vicious 1
- **Knife (M):** Reach 1, 4  1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1
- **Hatchet (M):** Reach 2, 5  1H, Vicious 1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Strength from the Sea:** Pirates are used to combat aboard ship and only suffer penalties in the fiercest of weather.
- **Boarding Action:** Pirates are experts at boarding unfriendly craft and know all the best places to seek cover. When boarding, pirates gain 3  Cover against missile weapons.

FREED SLAVES (MINION)

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	7	6	7
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
9	10	8	


FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	—	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	—
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 5, Resolve 4
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Improvised Weapons (M):** Reach 1, 3  1H, Improvised, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Strength in Numbers:** If any Momentum is gained, they receive 1 additional Momentum.





REGULAR GUARDS (MINION)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	7	8	7
Agility		Brawn	Coordination
8		9	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	1	Movement	—
Fortitude	—	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	1

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 5, Resolve 4	
■ Soak: Armor 1 (clothing), Courage —	

ATTACKS	
■ Spear (M): Reach 3, 5 1H Unbalanced, Piercing 1	
■ Medium Shield (M): Reach 2, 2 1H, Knockdown, Shield 2	

ELITE GUARDS (MINION)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	7	8	8
Agility		Brawn	Coordination
9		9	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	1	Movement	—
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	1

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 5, Resolve 4	
■ Soak: Armor 1 (clothing), Courage 1	

ATTACKS

- **Spear (M):** Reach 3, 6 1H, Unbalanced, Piercing 1
- **Medium Shield (M):** Reach 2, 3 1H, Knockdown, Shield 2
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 3 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Leadership:** In any combat involving Elite Guardsmen, if any Momentum are gained, 1 additional Momentum is added to the total.

BALBENESE RABBLE (MINION)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
7	7	6	6
Agility		Brawn	Coordination
7		8	7

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	—	Movement	—
Fortitude	—	Senses	—
Knowledge	—	Social	1

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 10, Resolve 17	
■ Soak: Armor 2 (Brigandine jacket), Courage 2	

ATTACKS	
■ Improvised Weapons (M): Reach 1, 3 1H, Improvised, Stun	

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
■ Defending Their Homes: If any Momentum is gained, they receive 1 additional Momentum.	

DOOM SPENDS	
■ Strength In Numbers: Any time a Squad of Rabble are defeated, the gamemaster can spend 2 Doom to add another Squad of Rabble to the battle (not repeatable).	

KING WADI-MARU (TOUGHENED)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	9	9	9
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
7	9	7	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	—	Movement	—
Fortitude	1	Senses	—
Knowledge	1	Social	2

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 10, Resolve 10	
■ Soak: Armor —, Courage —	

ATTACKS	
■ Short Sword (M): Reach 1, 5 1H, Parrying	
■ Royal Threat (T): Range C, 4 Stun	

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
■ Protect the King! If the King is directly involved in a fight (i.e. there are guardsmen protecting him), if any Momentum are gained by those guardsmen, 1 additional Momentum is added to the total.	

LEOPARDS (MINION)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	5	6	8
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
12	8	7	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	1	Movement	2
Fortitude	—	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 8, Resolve 8	
■ Soak: Armor —, Courage 1	

ATTACKS	
■ Claws (M): Reach 1, 3 Vicious 1	
■ Bite (M): Reach 1, 2	

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
■ Keen Senses (Scent)	
■ Pounce: If a leopard makes the Minor Movement Action before attempting a close combat attack, it gains 1 additional Momentum if it makes a successful attack.	

The slant of the moon presaged evil for the king of Vendhya; the stars are in turmoil, the Serpent in the House of the Elephant. During such juxtaposition, the invisible guardians are removed from the spirit of Bhunda Chand. A path is opened in the unseen realms, and once a point of contact was established, mighty powers were put in play along that path.

— “The People of the Black Circle”

THE BLACK ISLANDS RISE

*Why he had been spared so long, he did not understand,
unless the malign entity which ruled the river meant to
keep him alive to torture him with grief and fear.*

— Conan, “Queen of the Black Coast”


The player characters now set out in pursuit of the wizard Maledict Mer, who has kidnapped Emeraina, as part of his insane ritual to bring a dread elder god back to life. As they pursue the fugitive mage, eerie skies and storms haunt their travels, and finally the ship comes upon a series of black islands newly risen from the sea-bed, where no islands had been known before. Maledict Mer's ritual during the sack of Balbenon raised these islands from the sea, but in doing so has cost him dreadfully. He grows ever more akin to the deep-dwelling horrors who serve him.

The black islands are shrouded in an eerie greenish fog, and horrors abound: ancient alien ruins, seaweed-festooned undead sailors, and various monstrous arthropods and cephalopod creatures. Fear and dread come to the fore as the adventurers and their terrified crew navigate the fog-drenched islands. Treasures lurk amid the muck: bizarre golden jewelry and other artifacts. Within the awful mud-choked island chain the adventurers encounter insane members of Maledict Mer's crew, deserting their ship as the mage became less and less human. In light of each new terror, the player characters' crew murmurs of mutiny. As they near the largest of the black islands, with its towering temple-crowned hilltop, the heroes find more ruins and swarms of the ichthyic humanoid dwellers of the deep. Fighting their way past the slimy hordes, the player characters finally find Maledict Mer, his few remaining human crewmen, and several deep-dwellers prepare to sacrifice Emeraina to the god Th'sylla. The wizard is now horribly transformed into a croaking deep-dweller, eager to awaken the “god” slumbering beneath the temple-hill. The player characters can foil the ritual if they can rescue Emeraina — but the titanic tentacled god still rises to

vent its wrath on the wizard, his followers, and anyone else present. The adventurers must race against time to escape the horrors of the island, and the sinking of the island-chain itself.

TO SAIL THE DARKENED SEAS

The player characters sail into seas crowded by sullen skies, an eerie tension filling the air. An Average (D1) Sailing check reveals a storm is brewing, and by the first afternoon the breeze from the west brings both the smell of rain — and some rank stench, as of dead fish, or something worse...

At night the ship is hit by the storm. At first it is a squall, what would normally be a welcoming rain if not for the slimy feel it leaves on exposed skin. The storm worsens, lightning slashing the sea, all player characters or crewmen left on deck suffer 2  of damage per four hour watch, for the next 16 hours. In addition, during each of the four watches spanned by the tempest, the helmsman must make a Challenging (D2) Sailing check or some misfortune has befallen the ship: most of the time this “merely” involve the loss of 1 crewmember overboard for each die failing the test.

Below decks, during the storm, a few of the pirates and merchant crew begin to grumble about this accursed voyage...A Daunting (D3) Display quells this talk for the time being; if such an attempt is not made then future murmurs of mutiny (see below) add an additional level of Difficulty to future tests.

By the middle of the following morning the storm has abated. Anyone looking out over the western sea succeeding

on a Dire (D4) Observation roll can see, far out across the choppy seas, flashes of green light. If they don't spy the light during the day, by night the Difficulty reduces to Daunting (D3) the second night out, and reduces by one difficulty step each night thereafter.

THE GREEN HAZE OF THE DAMNED

By the dawn of the fourth day out — or later, if the mariners haven't been able to spy the green lightning — the player characters and their crew sail toward a vast sea-hugging cloud of fog filling the horizon, spanning over 50 miles across. Within its depths, green lights flicker, as if unearthly lightning were dancing to an unheard song.

The sailors proceed with caution, uncertain as to the depths of these waters, wary of colliding with hidden rocks or tearing out the hull on some unseen reef or shallows. Progress is slowed as soundings are made and lookouts strain to see ahead in the murk. Before they realize it, the adventurers find the air around them has grown heavy, wet, slimy-feeling, and tinged with a green miasma that smells of dead fish — or perhaps *something else* dead, dead for a very long time... The Black Islands are in sight!

THE SEVEN ISLANDS

The black islands were raised from the ocean floor by the god Th'sylla in answer to Maledict Mer's call. They are covered with muck, mud, seaweed, and unidentifiable plants and arthropods, among scores of other types of sea life. The black islands are studded with greenish-black ruins, buildings and temples that aeons ago housed worshippers of the black gods of R'lyeh. Now that Maledict Mer has caused the islands to rise, the dwellers have been drawn to this long-abandoned ruined city, hoping to aid the hybrid sorcerer in awakening Th'sylla once and for all.

A weird greenish phosphorescence tinges many stone and mud surfaces on these islands — the source of the weird flickering lights seen from afar. Every once in awhile this alien energy hisses, crackles, and discharges into the atmosphere, causing the green lightning hanging over these islands ever since they were brought up from the sunless depths. A Challenging (D2) Observation roll spies one of these discharges from a safe distance, giving some warning of the danger of the green glowing surfaces.

The islands are labeled and described below, along with other features of the stinking green-clouded region. The player characters are free to navigate the archipelago as they see fit; though each island offers opportunities for combat, horror, and treasure, the longer they take to find Maledict Mer, the closer he draws to slaying Emeraina — and awakening his dark god.



When the player characters' ship approaches the black islands, roll 1D20 and consult the following list to see which island is nearest:

RANDOM BLACK ISLAND (D20)	
Roll	Island
1-6	Island of the Monolith
7-12	Island of the Ruins
13-16	Island of the Reeking Vault
17+	Island of the Village

It's up to the player characters whether or not they visit the closest island or keep sailing into the green murk.

Each time the player characters leave the ship to explore one of these islands, the gamemaster should consult the appropriate entry below. In addition, each time a new island is searched one of the players should roll on the "Discoveries Within the Nightmare Islands" table, shown below. The gamemaster should feel free to integrate the indicated result in that island's encounter, or use it separately before or after the "main" encounter.

Note that when exploring an island, the player characters must use the ship's longboats to go ashore. This leaves the ship in the hands of whatever crew remains, a situation that becomes important later, as the frightened crew moves closer and closer toward mutiny.



DISCOVERIES WITHIN THE NIGHTMARE ISLANDS

There are seven reeking black islands hidden in the green fog. Each time the player characters explore one of the islands, in addition to the specific encounters listed below for each, roll 2D20 and consult the following table to see what else has been found.

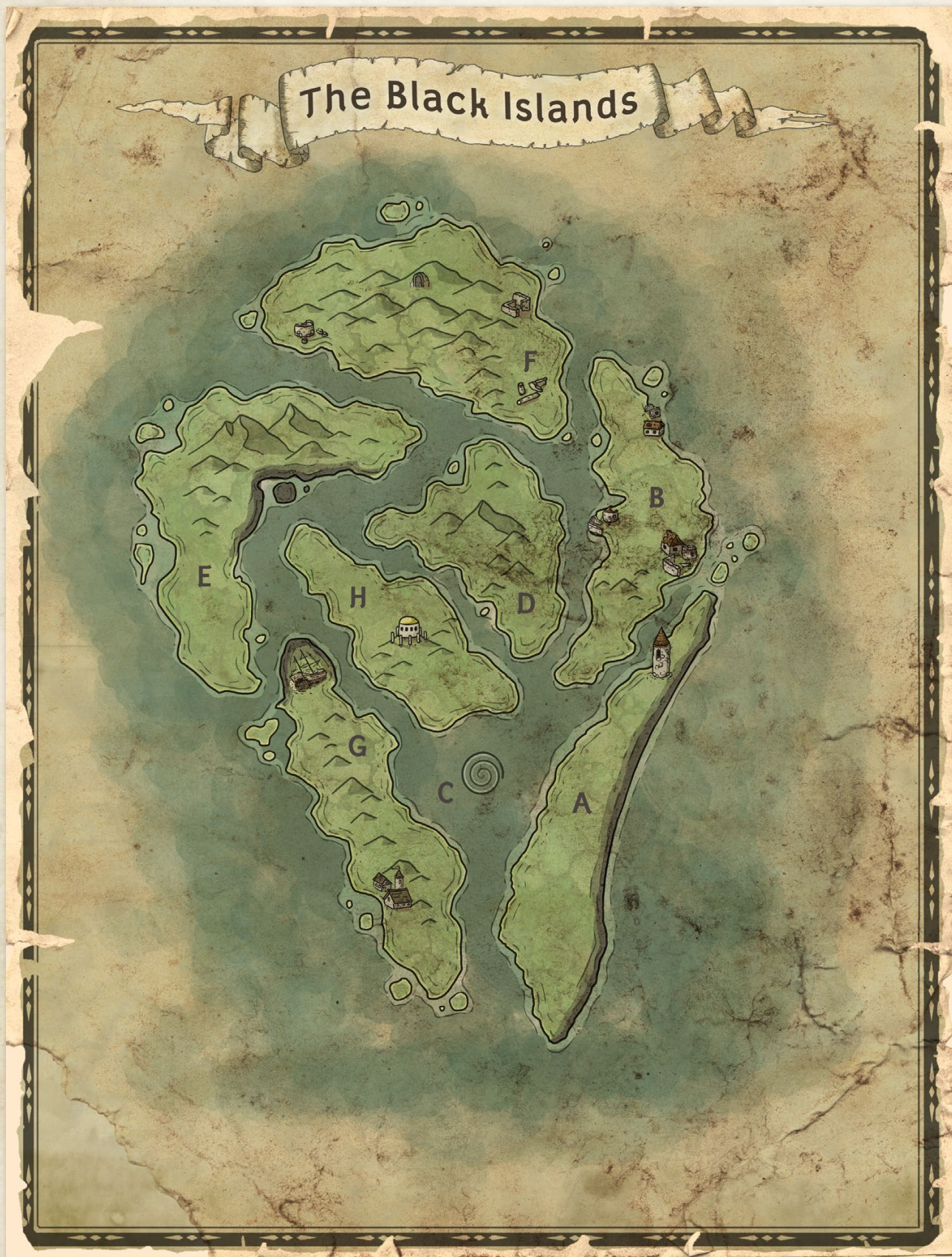
NIGHTMARE ISLAND DISCOVERIES (2D20)	
Roll	Discovery
2-7	The searchers unearth a piece of unearthly jewelry (ring, armband, bracelet, torc, anklet, etc), or a small statuette of some kind; these items are fashioned from a strange pale gold, and each is worth 1 gold (some of these minor treasures may be pitted or greenish, or otherwise of little actual value, even though they contain some gold).
8-11	Scattered and half-buried in the muck on this island are 1+1 small gemstones of some unknown variety. Each is worth 1 gold.
12-13	On a portion of this island where no deep-dweller will be found, the player characters' party discovers 1 (minimum of 1) strange slightly-slippery pale-green stones shaped like stars. These stones are roughly fist-sized, with an undecipherable carving at the star's center. A Daunting (D3) Lore or Challenging (D2) Sorcery check recognizes these as ancient stones of Mnar, used by prehuman civilizations to fight against the followers of Cthulhu and his alien brethren/spawn. If they are taken, anyone who carries one conspicuously on his person causes a 3 mental Threat attack against any deep-dweller or Th'sylla; any creature suffering damage from the attack will not attack that person unless the Elder Sign is removed from him or her.
14-17	Among the ruins on this island is a mud and barnacle-encrusted mosaic depicting a large tentacled mass apparently worshipped by finned man-like creatures. Several humped areas are shown where other tentacled monstrosities — some vaguely humanoid — lie either dead or sleeping. A Daunting (D3) Lore check identifies these as kin of the "black gods of R'lyeh": Cthulhu and his spawn, including Maledict Mer's favored demon, Th'sylla.
18-21	A mosaic is found similar to the one above, only in this one bizarre plant-like beings are shown wielding star-shaped weapons to drive off the finned humanoids and even the much-larger inhuman tentacled things. If the player characters have found any of the stones of Mnar (Elder Signs, see above), an Average (D1) Lore check understands how they might be used against the monstrous inhabitants of the black islands.
22-25	Explorers of this island are attacked by 1+1 Dweller-Human Hybrids (Minions). If an Effect is rolled on the die, they are led by a Dweller of the Deep (Toughened). If all the dripping horrors are slain, each corpse yields 1 gold worth of the weird white-gold jewelry, described in entry 2-7 above.
26-29	Anyone searching this island is attacked by 1+1 of the Drowned Dead, described in the entry for "The Island of the Monolith", below. These are human corpses inhabited and animated by intelligent weed-like creatures.
30-32	This island is inhabited by 1 (minimum of 1) sea-scorpions, as described in "The Island of the Mud-Crawlers" below.
33-34	The slimy seaweed-festooned ruins on this island tilt at all angles, and anyone failing a Challenging (D2) Discipline test takes 2 damage to Resolve, as the oppressive architecture disrupts their vision and suggests awful alien shadows; each Effect rolled on the damage dice indicates an additional 2 points of damage, and anyone suffering a Trauma here attempts to flee — back to the ship, to some hiding place, or somewhere away from others.
35-37	During the adventurers' travels on this island, the weird green phosphorescence clinging to the surfaces of stones, mud, and seaweed here seems to wax and wane. A Challenging (D2) Alchemy or Daunting (D3) Sorcery check guesses that some mystical energy is at work, and that this energy is unstable. Unless the group deliberately avoids these glowing areas, at some point one of these places violently discharges, draining all the green glow from an area several yards across and blasting a bolt of green lightning into the sky; any character in the area takes 3 of electrical damage unless they can make a Challenging (D2) Acrobatics roll to dive out of the way at the last moment.

NIGHTMARE ISLAND DISCOVERIES (2D20) CONTINUED...

Roll Discovery

- 38-40 While exploring this island, a Challenging (D2) Observation roll spies furtive movement, or hears a pitiful sobbing. Seeking out the source, the player characters discover a muddy, cowering, pathetic sailor. A Daunting (D3) Counsel roll is needed to calm the man down to speak with him. If the roll fails, he merely curls up into a ball and weeps uncontrollably; if one Complication is rolled the man feebly attempts to fight off the newcomers: roll D20, and whoever rolls the lowest takes  damage from the man's fists for the single round he fights. If more than one Complication is rolled the man dies of fright before their very eyes. If the man can be calmed down he says he was one of the crewmen aboard Maledict Mer's ship when it left Balbenon. He and a dozen or so others helped the wizard prepare his ritual in the slave port, and saw the horde of fish-headed horrors croaking in unison with the sorcerer as the city fought, screamed, and burned. The wizard and his crew fled the city after the spell had been cast, taking a small dhow they had secured earlier. They took Herge Daimos's woman with them as well, and set sail for these damned black islands. The closer they got to their destination, the more like a fish Maledict Mer himself became, until now he looks almost like one of them. He babbles about his god, and how the god had raised these islands, and now lies in wait for Maledict Mer to awaken it... awaken its brothers... and rule the world. Tharen, the sailor, claims that when they reached the black islands he jumped overboard at the first opportunity, and he has been hiding out in this hell ever since. If the player characters take Tharen with them, each may recover  Resolve for not leaving a fellow human to die alone in this slimy green-hazed hell.






THE ISLAND OF THE MONOLITH (A)


As the player characters' ship sails past this long strand of black sand and slime and tumbled stones, an Average (D1) Observation check spies a tall structure of some kind, rising up out of the green mist; any Momentum gained suggests to the character that if the structure is a building, its summit might make a good vantage point from which to view the surrounding area.

If the adventurers choose to explore the island and its looming tower, roll for a Discovery as normal, and the gamemaster should incorporate the result into the following encounter.

The monolith, or tower, as it proves to be, is a sagging conglomeration of slimy black and green stones. Its lone mud-caked entrance takes a few minutes to clear. Within, a slippery ramp encircles the darkened interior, winding upward towards the summit. A Challenging (D2) Acrobatics check is needed to keep from slipping off the ramp and falling, incurring 2  damage. Ragged cracks and holes mar the tower's sides all the way to the top, which proves to be sheared off at a height of over 70 feet. From this point, gazing out across the green haze the viewer sees the following:

- To the northwest, another island, dotted with groups of black-stone ruins (Island of Ruins, #2);
- To the west, a vague blur of white-water seas, but an Average (D1) Observation check hears the sounds of rushing waters (Maelstrom, #3);
- Further to the southwest, a Challenging (D2) Observation check spots another island dotted with black stone ruins; any Momentum gained in peering here spies vague man-sized shapes moving among the ruins (Island of the Village, #7);
- Directly to the west, a Daunting (D3) Observation test sees another island, this one with a central hill and several more ruins on its sides; if any Momentum is gained, movement is detected near the hill's summit (Island of the Temple, #8).
- Further to the northwest, there is another island strewn with ruins; on this one a small fire is clearly visible, and a D2 Observation picks out human-like figures moving around near it (Island of the Madmen, #4).

When the player characters descend the ramp and exit the tower, they are faced by a group of seaweed-dripping, once-human, skeletal horrors; the things crouch and glower with empty eye-sockets, limbs and features squirming unnaturally




as the seaweed writhes and contracts, animating the dead like grotesque puppets. These are the Drowned Dead, human corpses lost at sea, washed up here and animated by a bizarre form of intelligent weed. There is one Drowned Dead per player character present, and an additional  of the weed-animated corpses. Their first attack is their Ghastly Animation Display, as the weed writhes within their skeletal remains...

DROWNED DEAD (MINION)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
5	5	5	7
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
5	9	9	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	1	Movement	—
Fortitude	2	Senses	—
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 6, Resolve 5	
■ Soak: Armor 1 (Slimy Hide), Courage —	

ATTACKS	
■ Claws (M): Reach 1, 3  Grappling	
■ Broken Weapon (Improvised Strike) (M): Reach 1, 3 	
■ Ghastly Animation (T): Range C, 3  Area, Stun	

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
■ Brain Dead	
■ Fear 1	
■ Inured to Cold, Fear, Pain, Poison	



THE ISLAND OF THE RUINS (B)

Like others in the dark archipelago, this mudslick island features several groupings of dark stone ruins. There are three main "villages" of ruins, each of which allows a separate roll on the Discoveries table.

THE MAELSTROM (C)

As the player characters' ship nears this part of the island cluster, an Average (D1) Observation test detects the unmistakable roar of the sea ahead. At that point an Average (D1) Sailing check realizes this is an unnatural sound, and if 2 Momentum are spent the exact reason is grasped: there is some kind of deadly whirlpool or maelstrom ahead! At this point a successful Average (D1) Sailing check halts the ship's progress and turns it about, avoiding the hazard ahead.

If the ship heedlessly proceeds, a second Average (D1) Sailing check perceives the danger ahead; unfortunately, a further Daunting (D3) Sailing check is needed to avoid the deadly whirlpool's pull, and swing the ship toward a safe passage. If this roll fails the player characters have one last chance to swing the ship around out of the relentless grasp of the maelstrom: if they fail a Dire (D4) Sailing test the vessel is sucked inexorably down into the churning waters, and all hands are lost. In this case a player character expending a Fortune point would — miraculously — be washed ashore on The Island of the Temple, #8. Additional Fortune point expenditures can be used to save either another player character or ☠+1 Mobs of crewmen, who also drift ashore with the player characters (if the gamemaster is feeling generous, any Fortune point spent to save a player character might automatically also save ☠+1 Mobs of pirates/sailors).

MUTINY, PART ONE

Once the player characters have explored at least two islands, and braved the hungry maw of the maelstrom, the crew of their ship begin to voice their terror of the gloomy green-hazed cluster of islands. Several men beg the player characters to turn back, to leave this haunted place and sail back to sanity and civilization. A Challenging (D2) Command, Counsel, or Persuade check is needed to reassure the crew that the current course of action must be seen to its conclusion or *everyone* will be lost — sailors no doubt the first to suffer and die at the hands of the alien menace that threatens them all. If the roll fails the crew call for a vote for a new captain, or, if a Complication is rolled, each player character is attacked by ☠ (minimum of 1) of their own crewmen. Remember that if the player characters failed to reassure the crew during the storm (see "To Sail the Darkened Seas" above), the Difficulty of this roll is increased by one. If the player characters are deposed as leaders of the expedition they are set forth in one of the ship's boats, left to their own devices in this terrible place...

THE ISLAND OF THE MADMEN (D) — MUTINY, PART TWO

If they climbed the Monolith on Island #1 the player characters may have seen the puny fire burning on the shore of this muck-encrusted island. If not, as they sail past they see its dim glow, and an Average (D1) Observation spies a handful of men clustered around it; they wave and shout as the player characters' ship passes, pleading for rescue.

If the adventurers put ashore, their first encounter is 2☠+2 crewmen from the ship Maledict Mer used to depart Balbenon. They are ragged-looking, desperate, and at least half-mad from their experiences with the inhuman sorcerer and his deep-dweller allies. They beg the player characters to be taken away from this godforsaken place. If refused, or if the heroes say they want to continue in their efforts to stop Maledict Mer, the insane crewmen attack, attempting to kill the player characters, claim their ship and escape. A successful Daunting (D3) Counsel check calms them and convinces them to return to the ship. If this roll fails they attack as previously indicated. For that matter, a Challenging (D2) Insight test suggests these men are at their wits' end, and that a fearsome Display might send them into paroxysms of terror.

If the player characters wish to explore the island after they deal with Maledict Mer's crew, then roll on the Discoveries table. Note however, that if any Complication is rolled on the Counsel roll above, and the player characters left no one to guard their boat as they explore the island, the mutinous crewmen return to their ship and sail off, abandoning the foolish adventurers to their fate in the black islands.

MALEDICT MER'S MAD MUTINOUS CREWMEN (MINIONS)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	6	6	6
Agility		Brawn	Coordination
9		9	8
FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	1	Movement	—
Fortitude	—	Senses	—
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 5, *Resolve 0
- **Soak:** Armor 1 (Clothing), Courage —
 *Most of these men are at least partially insane from what they have seen while serving Maledict Mer, so their Resolve is determined by rolling a 0 for each man. Those with Resolve 0 have the Difficulty of any Intelligence, Personality, or Willpower test increased by 1 level. If they would take a further Trauma they either flee screaming into the wilderness or collapse into sobbing, gibbering uselessness.

ATTACKS

- **Cutlass (M):** Reach 2, 5 Unbalanced, Fearsome, Vicious 1
- **Knife (M):** Reach 1, 4 1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1
- **Hatchet (M):** Reach 2, 5 1H, Vicious 1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Strength from the Sea:** Pirates are used to combat aboard ship and only suffer penalties in the fiercest of weather.
- **Boarding Action:** Pirates are experts at boarding unfriendly craft and know all the best places to seek cover. When boarding, pirates gain 3 Cover against missile weapons.

THE ISLAND OF THE MUD-CRAWLERS (E)

This island is similar to the other muck-drenched masses in the chain, but here the ruins are even more dilapidated, little more than slime-streaked mounds of rubble. The island's surface is also slicker, stickier, and more treacherous: all tests involving Agility, Brawn, or Coordination made here have their Difficulty increased by 1 level.

If the player characters decide to explore this island, roll for a Discovery as normal. As the adventurers deal with whatever they have found, they are attacked by (minimum of 1) pony-sized aquatic scorpion-like creatures. Each possesses two great claws on their front limbs, and a wicked-looking stinger on their long surprisingly supple tail. These things clamber out of the muck, and scuttle forward to attack the intruders.

After the battle is over, allow a second roll on the Discoveries table.



SEA-SCORPIONS (TOUGHENED)

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
6	3	3	7
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
10	10	3	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	—
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 11, Resolve 7
- **Soak:** Armor 2 (Shell), Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Claw (M):** Reach 1, 4 Grappling
- **Tail Stinger (M):** Reach 1, 3 Piercing 1, Persistent 3
- **Unnerving (M):** Range C, 2 mental, Area

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Second Claw:** The gamemaster can spend 2 Doom to have a sea-scorpion attack with its other claw in the same round.

THE ISLAND OF THE REEKING VAULT (F)

Nearing this island, the sailors can make out more of the slimy, seaweed-and coral-clotted alien ruins they have seen elsewhere throughout the nightmare archipelago. An Average (D1) Observation roll notes, on one high hillside, an enormous door of some kind, partly collapsed inward. If the crew choose to explore the island, allow the usual roll for Discoveries. As they approach the hillside with the gigantic door (it must be a hundred feet long and half that wide), each automatically suffers 2 of mental damage, as the unbearable stench from the crumbled doorway overpowers



their senses; any Effects rolled incur an additional point of damage to Resolve and to Vigor, as their stomachs revolt due to the tremendous reek of alien death.

Reaching the collapsed doorway and peering into the black gulf, viewers see a vaguely humanoid creature ten times the size of a man, partially covered with mud, seaweed, and other debris. The thing lies, unmoving, several yards below the level of the doorway, as if lying in its tomb. Its head is covered with eyes of all shapes, sizes, and colors, and its jaw terminates in a mass of tentacles. The whole nightmare entity seems to be naked, decayed and rotting, with bones and tendons exposed, lying on the tattered remains of huge bat-like wings. Anyone who dares to look too long into its eyes (necessitating a Challenging (D2) Discipline check to avoid) suffers a further 2 of mental damage, this time with an additional 2 points of damage to Resolve for any Effect rolled. If any Complication is rolled on the Discipline test the poor soul automatically suffers 1 Trauma, as — even dead — monstrous visions from the alien horror's brain seep into the viewer's mind. Anyone who looks upon the body of this alien monstrosity gains an additional point of Fortune for use during this adventure only.

There is nothing more to gain here, other than the knowledge that Maledict Mer's "god" may have kin perhaps as horrific, even in death, as their slumbering "brother".

MUTINY, ONE LAST TIME

After the player characters have explored four islands, or after they have visited the Island of the Reeking Vault, their terrified crew makes one final attempt to plead with their leaders to leave this accursed place. The crew are even more volatile and on edge, and more insistent that if the player characters won't leave with the ship, the crew take it by force and depart. A Dire (D4) Command, Counsel, or Persuade check is now necessary to assert control over the mutinous men. Again, remember if the player characters' representative failed to calm the mutinous talk during the storm in "To Sail the Darkened Seas", at the beginning of this chapter, this Difficulty level is increased by 1; the roll to call for an election of a new captain is not affected by this increase in Difficulty. If the check fails the pirates give the player characters the choice of either fighting the entire crew or leaving in one of the long boats. At this point a final Dire (D4) Command or Counsel check calls for a new vote for captaincy of the ship. If a vote is agreed to, the player characters' candidate must make a Persuade or Counsel check as a Struggle against the crew's two candidates (Ruthes, Personality 8; and Dimekker, Personality 9). The player character can increase their die rolls normally, but the pirate candidates roll only 2D20 each unless the

gamemaster decides to spend Doom to give one or both of them additional D20s. Whoever gets the most successes is named the winner. If the result is a tie, continue making the test until someone is the victor, making that person the captain. If the player character is made captain, the mutiny is quelled for now. If one of the pirates wins, the player characters are put to sea in the longboat, and the crew sail the ship away from all these horrors.

THE ISLAND OF THE VILLAGE (G)

This island is part of a once-submerged village of the dwellers of the deep. Now that the black islands have risen from the seas, that small group of buildings has been wrenched to the surface as well. These buildings are in slightly better condition than the ruins seen on the other islands; these habitations have been lived in in more recent times, though only temporarily, during “pilgrimages” made by the ichthyic humanoids to visit their slumbering god-things.


This means that the Island of the Village is a regular haunt of the deep-dwellers: the player characters’ first encounter on this island is a Mob of +1 Dweller-Human Hybrids (Minions); if an Effect is rolled on the die they are led by a Toughened member of their species; all Toughened dwellers of the deep are armed with the Strange Coral Spears listed in the statistic block below. Once these deep-dwellers are slain, each of their corpses yields enough of the strange whitish gold jewelry and accoutrements to be worth +1 gold.

As the player characters continue to explore this island, the gamemaster can expend 2 Doom to bring forth another Mob of +1 dwellers, again perhaps led by a Toughened example, exactly as the previously detailed encounter.

Depending on the route the adventurers took to reach this island, and how much time they spend searching it, they may make out, at the northernmost tip of the island, the mast of a ship standing above a mud-caked beach. If they come closer they see it is a small dhow, beached, and looking somewhat the worse for wear, but apparently seaworthy. If the player characters approach the ship, 2 +2 deep-dwellers rise up out of the black waters to attack; see above for the chance of a Toughened leader, and for treasure to be looted from the dead things.

If the player characters board and search the beached vessel, they find her to be a single-masted dhow, the *Tururshia*. Her statistic block appears in boxed text nearby;

THE TURURSHIA (SMALL DHOW)

ATTRIBUTES		
Sailing Range		Crew (+ Passengers)
12 days		12 (+18)
Impact Damage		Maneuver
3 		1
STRESS AND SOAK		
Soak	Structure	Breaks
2	10	4
QUALITIES AND NOTES		
■ Qualities: Portage, Shallow Draft, Ship		
■ Stowage: —		

the gamemaster should roll 2 worth of Surface damage to the vessel, and any Effect rolled indicates 1 point of damage to Structure as well. The ship is empty, though the crews’ quarters are scattered with coins and items of jewelry worth a total of 2 +4 gold. The main cabin reeks of fish, and contains a few items of note: lesser spellbooks, a couple of the Strange Coral Knives used by the dwellers of the deep, nearly-empty pots of the greenish powder used by Maledict Mer in Balbenon, a few pieces of the odd pale-gold jewelry worn by the deep-dwellers, and so on. Together these items might be worth +1 ×10 gold. More importantly, a crudely drawn chart spread out on the central table shows the basic layout of the black islands, with the Maelstrom (#3) clearly indicated and the central island (#8, The Island of the Temple) marked with a bold circle.

As the adventurers finish exploring the *Tururshia*, a Challenging (D2) Observation check enables the player characters to hear a weird chant in the distance, part song, part wild croaking. Leaving the ship to listen more carefully, a further Challenging (D2) Observation checks reveal that the bizarre chanting is coming from the central island (#8), due north of the Island of the Village. There Maledict Mer is engaged in the ritual he hopes will awaken — permanently — the god Th’sylla, priest of the black gods of Rlyeh, and possible herald of the end of the world.



THE ISLAND OF THE TEMPLE (H)

When the player characters approach this island, they hear the croaking voices of several dwellers of the deep, led by a partly human voice singing and chanting. An Average (D1) Observation hears the sobbing and cursing of a female human voice which, if any Momentum were gained, is identifiable as Emeraina's. The voices are coming from the top of the hill in the center of this island.

As the heroes head across the island, roll for a Discovery, ignoring results of 12-32 (nothing is found).

Reaching the top of the hill, an Average (D1) Stealth check is needed to peer from cover into the bowl-like depression below. A failed roll indicates that ☹ (minimum of 1) lesser deep-dwellers from the gathering have spotted the suspicious movement and come to investigate. In the muddy, partly-flooded valley below are several flabby fish-faced humanoids: roll a ☹ for each player character and Mob of allies present, the total indicating the number of Dweller-Human Hybrids participating in the ritual; any Effect rolled adds a Toughened deep-dweller to the group. A stooped, robe-wearing hybrid human priest leads the ichthyic horde in the chant.

The center of the "bowl" is ringed with several greenish-black coral menhirs, each a dozen feet high and a yard or so thick. The coral menhirs form a rough circle about 30 feet across. The fish-men are scattered around the outside of the ring of stones, while the priest and his sacrifice are inside it.

That sacrifice is Emeraina, and she is stretched upright, held by tentacle-like projections from the largest of the coral menhirs, protruding from the earth in the center of the ring. She alternates between spitting and cursing at her tormentors, and falling into depressed silence as the blasphemous horde around her sing her death-song.

The priest is barely recognizable as the once refined, stately Maledict Mer! Where Maledict Mer once stood tall, straight and lean, his bearded face gaunt and saturnine, his eyes glinting with sardonic menace, his clothes rich and well-maintained, the sorcerer is now a different creature entirely: his once-fine clothing is torn and dirty, the hem of his robes worn and caked with mud and muck. His back is stooped, his belly bloated, his beard falling out in ragged patches, his skin scaly and rough-looking where it's not pale and clammy. His eyes and lips bulge, and small bony whisker-like projections have formed at the edges of his mouth. There is fleshy webbing between his fingers, and the fingers themselves end in bony talons.

From the top of the hill where the player characters spy on the ritual, the closest dwellers of the deep are at

Medium range, while Maledict Mer and Emeraina are at Long range, for ranged weapon purposes. The heroes may be able to down a few of the deep-dwellers before they can react, but as soon as the intruders are spotted, half of the remaining creatures will charge up the hill after them. If those dwellers are defeated the remainder shamle forward to attack. The gamemaster can spend 2 Doom to bring a Mob of lesser dwellers to the scene in the next round. Only one Mob can be summoned each round in this way.

Maledict Mer, meanwhile, attempts to finish the ritual that will awaken Th'sylla. The number of rounds he needs to complete his magic working is equal to 10 minus the number of black islands the player characters visited before they reached the Island of the Temple. (So, for example, if they visited 3 islands, Maledict Mer needs $10-3=7$ rounds to finish the awakening ritual). The hybrid sorcerer continues to laboriously intone the words of the spell, even if he is engaged in combat with one or more player characters.

The player characters may or may not have learned of the importance of the purity of the sacrifice to Th'sylla, but it may become important nevertheless. If Maledict Mer is injured within the circle of coral menhirs, and more than one Effect is rolled for damage, the sorcerer's tainted hybrid blood spatters the central stone on which Emeraina is suspended. Each time this happens, the earth shakes within the bowl, and ☹ (minimum of 1) of Th'sylla's six 40-foot long necks bursts from the ground, a vast, draconic head wailing, hissing, and snapping in berserk rage (see Th'sylla's complete description on page 94). Each of the heads has 6 Vigor, 2 Soak (scales), and attacks as listed in the complete description below; each head attacks a randomly-determined target from all in range — including deep-dwellers and Maledict Mer. The former flee, while the latter attempts to finish his ritual.

Once Th'sylla begins thrusting its heads above the surface, it begins to lose ☹ points of Resolve each round. If its Resolve reaches 0 or all six of its heads are "destroyed", the thing retreats back into the earth, its energy spent until some other time when the stars might be right for its release. If, on the other hand, Maledict Mer finishes the awakening ritual before all of its heads are destroyed or its Resolve reaches 0, the whole nightmare bulk of Th'sylla erupts to the surface: the beast is free to rave and slay and ooze forth to awaken its brethren, sleeping within the ocean's depths. If this happens, see the creature's full description and powers in the following section.

Note that bringing one of the Elder Signs from Chapter 3 into the ring of coral menhirs also enrages Th'sylla, causing it to send forth ☹ (minimum of 1) heads to attack those present, and begin the Resolve loss detailed above. If Th'sylla actually comes into contact with one of the Elder Signs, it automatically loses ☹+2 Resolve.

If all six of the beast's heads are destroyed, or its Resolve reaches 0, or it is brought to 0 Vigor after it has been released, whatever remains of Th'sylla collapses in a huge stinking mass of oozing slime — and the black islands begin to sink (see “What Has Risen May Sink” below).

Maledict Mer's spell calls for him to make the final sacrifice on the last round of the ritual. He attempts to plunge his coral knife into Emeraina's heart at that moment. Unless a player character is there to prevent this, he succeeds, slaying Emeraina and releasing the dark god Th'sylla. Seeing Emeraina callously slain like this causes a loss of 3 Resolve to the player characters who have sought her rescue throughout this campaign.

But they have more immediate and terrible concerns, for her death has awakened one of the dreaded black gods of R'lyeh!



EMERAINA (TOUGHENED)

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	9	12	10
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
9	8	9	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	—	Movement	—
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	1	Social	2

STRESS & SOAK	
■ Stress: Vigor 9, Resolve 11	
■ Soak: Armor —, Courage 2	

ATTACKS	
■ Dagger (M): Reach 1, 3 Wounds, Hidden 1, Unforgiving 1	
■ Disarming Beauty (T): Range C, 4 Wounds mental, Stun, Intense 1	

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
■ Wealthy Merchant's Daughter: Once per crowd she is trying to impress, Emeraina can name herself and her father and add 2 Wounds to her Disarming Beauty mental damage.	

DOOM SPENDS

- **The Croaking Tide:** For 3 Doom, Maledict Mer can either summon one Mob of five Dweller-Human Hybrids (Minions), or one (Toughened) Dweller of the Deep. The summoning takes one Standard Action, and must be performed on or adjacent to the ocean. The dweller or dwellers will emerge from the surf at extreme range on the following round.

A GOD AWAKENS

If Maledict Mer's ritual succeeds, the ground inside the bowl rumbles as a monstrous beast rises from beneath the circle of coral menhirs. Anyone within the bowl must make a Daunting (D3) Acrobatics test to avoid being knocked prone by the eruption of Th'sylla from the earth. If any Complication is rolled the target also suffers 2 Wounds from falling stones and debris.

The “god” Th'sylla is a bloated tentacled mass, with a hideous, squatting form nearly 30 feet tall. Its body is vaguely sack-like, its thin skin covering what appears to be an enormous bag full of roiling entrails. Thirteen tentacles extrude from beneath its sack-like torso, each about sixty feet long, used to grasp and pull itself along for locomotion, or to grab prey. From the top of the bag of entrails that is its body, six forty-foot long necks writhe and twist. Each of the necks is surmounted by a savage snarling head, combining aspects of wolf and dragon; their mouths are lined with rows of needle-sharp teeth, and each head is adorned with four eyes in various locations. The heads constantly hiss and snarl. The whole thing reeks pungently of dead fish, rotting flesh, and reptilian odors.

Th'sylla spends the first few moments of its release snapping at anyone near it, whether friend or foe. Note that if the horror was released after some of its enraged heads burst forth, any “destroyed” heads remain lifeless until it has time to heal them (it heals 1 head per day, should it become important). If Th'sylla is in danger of being brought to 0 Vigor it attempts to flee the island, slithering for the sea to heal itself and begin its campaign of madness and death across the oceans of the world.

“I need lie to you no more, man of the North,” answered the woman. “They you seek still dwell beneath the sleeping hills. They have drawn apart, farther and farther from the world you know.”

— “Worms of the Earth”

TH'SYLLA (NEMESIS, HORROR)

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	10	12	12
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
11	14	9	




FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	1
Fortitude	2	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—


STRESS & SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 16, Resolve 14
- **Soak:** Armor 2 (slimy hide), Courage —


ATTACKS

- **Grasping Tentacle (M):** Reach 3, 6  Fearsome 1, Grappling
- **Bite (M):** Reach 2, 8  Vicious 2
- **Unholy Writhing (T):** Range C, 6  mental, Area, Piercing 2

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Doom Herald:** If Th'sylla awakens, add  to the Doom pool.
- **Dread Creature 3:** Th'sylla has a personal Doom Pool of 3 points which can only be used on Th'sylla's attacks and effects.
- **Fear 3:** Anyone viewing Th'sylla must roll a Challenging (D2) Discipline test or suffer the damage of the Unholy Writhing attack (see above).

DOOM SPENDS

- **Feeding Frenzy:** If any character is Grappled by Th'sylla's Grasping Tentacles, the gamemaster can expend 3 Doom to make a Bite attack on that target (if successful, does 8  damage, Vicious).



“WHAT HAS RISEN MAY SINK”

If Th'sylla is defeated, either by killing Maledict Mer, foiling the beast's release, or slaying it once it is freed, the nightmare-god's magic starts to fade, and the black islands begin to sink. Th'sylla's destruction sends the dwellers of the deep into retreat, but the player characters must still run for their lives to escape the sinking of the island chain. Seawater froths up through cracks in the ground, occasionally forming geysers as the earth shudders (note also that if Th'sylla is freed, and decides to flee the islands for whatever reasons, this also brings about the events of this section).

Once the islands start sinking, the player characters need to make a Challenging (D2) Athletics check to race up out of the bowl of the temple and down the hillside. Failure elicits a fall causing 1 of damage for each die which missed the roll, and any Effect rolled causes an ankle or knee sprain, adding an additional level of difficulty to all further Agility, Brawn, or Coordination skill checks until the damage is healed.

If the adventurers left any crewmen with the boat they came ashore in, roll a 1, and unless an Effect is rolled the frightened sailors or pirates leave without the player characters. In that case a Challenging (D2) Athletics roll is needed to swim to the ship; if the roll is failed, see the Drowning rules on page 127 of the **Conan** rulebook.

Once the player characters reach their ship (or ships), they'll need a successful Challenging (D2) Sailing test to maneuver each of their vessels out of the reach of the vast whirlpool caused by the black islands sinking below the waves, once again. If this roll fails the ship is lost, sucked into the churning waters and smashed apart. A player character can save themselves by expending a Fortune point, leaving them floating on a piece of wreckage awaiting rescue; players can spend Fortune to save other player characters, or Emeraina, if there is a shortage of Fortune points. A generous gamemaster might again allow 1 of crewmen to also survive the cataclysm for each Fortune point spent at this point, regardless of who it's for.

Hopefully the player characters complete this adventure with their ships and hides — and Emeraina — intact, rather than floating on wreckage in the middle of the ocean hoping for an almost impossible rescue. The Afterword chapter discusses the events that follow this climactic event.

*"I need lie to you no more, man of the North," answered the woman.
"They you seek still dwell beneath the sleeping hills. They have
drawn apart, farther and farther from the world you know."*

— “Worms of the Earth”



AFTERWORD

"A paltry crew, and that chewed and clawed to pieces, but they can work the ship, and crews can always be found..."

— "The Pool of the Black One"

This chapter ties up several loose ends that may have been left unresolved at the end of the campaign, detailing events and situations transpiring in the hours, days, and weeks following the climactic ritual on the black islands. Here also are experience point rewards and other benefits and penalties the player characters may have incurred in the campaign's finale. Finally, several ideas for possible sequel adventures are briefly discussed, everything from the player characters continuing their careers as pirates, to enemies seeking revenge on them for deeds done herein, to suffering the curse of the black gods of R'lyeh!

SHIPS AND CREWS

Depending how the final adventure finished, the player characters may have been forced to swim after their own ship (presumably Captain Daimos's *Devil's Shadow*, taken after the sack of Balbenon in Chapter Four), or driven to take the dhow used by Maledict Mer to reach the black islands. If things went especially bad for the adventurers they may have barely escaped with one of the longboats, or even been left adrift at sea, clinging to wreckage as the black islands sank — perhaps as a result of the wrath of Th'sylla being unleashed upon the world.

In the latter cases, the players have more serious problems to consider, but if they escaped the islands they may have procured an extra ship. If they didn't think of doing so, perhaps an Average (D1) Observation check spies the ship as they are fleeing the Temple island, or one of their crewmen suggests taking the abandoned vessel. The *Tururshia* would make a nice addition to a small pirate fleet, if the player characters wished to ply the seas with their own ship, the *Windblade*, Daimos's *Devil's Shadow*, and the abandoned dhow.

Speaking of the *Windblade*, the player characters probably want to return to the Black Coast to catch up with their old ship, possibly left behind in their haste to pursue Maledict Mer in Daimos's "borrowed" vessel. Once the adventurers have reunited with the *Windblade*, they'll need to figure out how they want to man their vessels. The *Windblade* requires 30 men to sail, the *Devil's Shadow* about 25, and the *Tururshia* 12 men.

Unfortunately, after the catastrophic events of the sack of Balbenon and the foray into madness on the black isles, the player characters may have slim pickings for crew. If the player characters are generous with the shares they took in the slave-port raid, they should be able to buy enough loyalty to last them until they can recruit more men, sell off any extra ships, and take any further prizes.

DIVIDING THE LOOT?

The player characters' hasty pursuit of Maledict Mer after the raid on Balbenon may have caused them to take off before they had received their shares of the loot from the sack of the city. If so, and the player characters left on good terms with D'rogah and the Black Corsairs, the Corsair "king" not only held their shares in reserve for them, but also sheltered their ship and crew in the village of Tambaru. There they wait for the adventurers to return — hopefully successful in their attempts to stop the insane plans of the hybrid sorcerer Maledict Mer. Even if the player characters parted on harsher terms with D'rogah, the *Windblade* still probably holes up in Tambaru: they don't have enough men to sail the ship on their own, so must either hope to recruit more men or hope the player characters return.

Assuming the player characters return to reclaim the *Windblade*, they will be wealthy men indeed, as will their crews. If there are as many as 100 survivors between the various crews, the loot aboard the *Devil's Shadow* would gain each man a solid handful of gold; more than likely there will be significantly fewer than that, perhaps doubling each man's share. Then there is the individual share from the Balbenon attack, effectively doubling the amount from Daimos's ship (see "Dividing the Spoils" at the end of Chapter Four for exact numbers). There are also the individual treasures taken during the raid, and any of the weird artifacts and strange pale gold trinkets taken from the dwellers of the deep.

On the other hand, the player characters may have had to "take out a loan" with the fence on Tortage, master Farmiger, in order to make repairs on the then-bedraggled *Windblade*, back in Chapter Two. If so, they'll need to repay him, or face the wrath of the Red Brotherhood at some point. Remember, the clever fence put a crewman on board the ship to keep an eye on his investment: roll a ♣, and if an Effect is rolled the spy survived, otherwise he perished at some point during the campaign. If he survived he'll be able to tell Farmiger almost exactly how much loot the player characters took away from their experiences after they left Tortage.

In short, as long as their ships survived, the player characters and their crew should be very wealthy after their sojourn in these dangerous southern waters. But no doubt they'll want to return home...



EMERAINA'S FATE

It is hoped that Emeraina survives the ordeal at the Temple in the black islands; it would be especially tragic if the player characters fought their way through pirates, demons, slavers, and horrors from the deep only to lose the girl at the end. If she does survive, she has grown smarter and stronger and more resourceful by the time the adventurers free her from the sorcerous clutches of Maledict Mer.

Which brings up the question of what the player characters plan to do once they have freed her. As shown earlier, Emeraina is fierce enough to fight her way to freedom, once given the chance.

But did one of the heroes fall in love with her, long ago? Is that what drove him or her to try and free Emeraina, initially from Herge Daimos, and later from the monstrous wizard? Is that affection returned, scorned, or politely declined?

Most of the player characters are more interested in Lord Emarius's reward than in Emeraina's affections. If she is alive and has traveled with the player characters (most likely she was left with the skeleton crew aboard the *Windblade* before the Balbenon raid, or left behind in the city when they went after Maledict Mer), Emeraina's servant and mother substitute Katrina is overjoyed to see her. She insists Emeraina should be taken back to her father.

But not all are glad to see Emeraina rescued. Lord Emarius's rival, Lord Valdeus, sent his agent to infiltrate the pirate crew to ensure that the girl would not return to renew her marriage plans with the Shemitish prince. That agent, Orenthes, has made every attempt to insinuate himself into any group or activity that might get him close to Emeraina, even going so far as to join the sack of Balbenon, and, further, to sail to the black islands. But did Orenthes survive these ordeals? As a cunning member of the crew, Orenthes has joined in many dangerous actions, but nevertheless would have tried to stay out of harm's way. To determine if he survived the many dangers he would have faced, the gamemaster should roll ♣, and if an Effect is rolled Orenthes was killed at some point (as a nameless, faceless member of the crew, no one would have missed him in particular); the gamemaster can "save" Orenthes from his unnamed fate by spending 3 Doom.

If Orenthes survives, and Emeraina was rescued, he still has a job to do. Each player character may attempt a Daunting (D3) Observation or Insight roll, and if successful they notice one of the crew surreptitiously watching Emeraina. If any Momentum is spent, the player character recognizes the crewman in question — Lord Valdeus's agent, whom they met in Messantia, and who tried to bribe them to do away with Emeraina! If Orenthes is noticed but not recognized, he continues to watch for an opportunity to kill Emeraina. If confronted, "Thelusi", as he calls himself, claims to merely be smitten with the girl; roll a Struggle between Orenthes's Social Attribute and each attending player character's Insight. If Orenthes wins he convinces his questioners of his honesty, but if a player character wins they realize he is lying.

When the assassin actually makes his move against the girl, allow each player character another Daunting (D3) Observation roll to detect the too-stealthy movements of one of the crew (if they are already watching Orenthes, make this a Daunting (D3) Struggle between his Agility and their Observation). If successful they can intercept him before he can act. If not, he faces Emeraina alone; roll a Challenging (D2) Struggle of his Social ability versus her Awareness. If she succeeds she can scream and fight back, giving the player characters time to reach her to intercede; otherwise Orenthes avoids suspicions long enough to poison her wine or stab her in the heart and kill her. This results in a murder mystery, as the furious heroes question



the crew and turn the ship upside down searching for the blackguard who killed Emeraina. Much of this is left to the individual gamemaster to create.

If Emeraina survives to reach Messantia, the pirates once again have to decide how to enter the city (though by now their ships will have been gone from the Argossean waters long enough that they may not be recognized — again up to the gamemaster to determine). Emeraina's return to the House of Khaunt, and her father's estate is cause for a great celebration, and the player characters are welcomed warmly and generously. Feasts are held, wine and food piled up, and gold and good fortunes run freely. As initially agreed-upon, each crewman is paid 5 gold, and each officer receives 10 gold. In addition, Lord Emarius may offer to make use of the player characters ships and "talents" in the future.

On the other hand, if Emeraina did not survive to return to her father's house, the player characters may want to tell him in person. If they don't have someone like Katrina or Kronekte, who led the guardsmen accompanying the pirates in their quest, they must make a Dire (D4) Persuade check to avoid Lord Emarius's wrath: they will be accused, hunted, and imprisoned. If they tell their tale, and Emarius glumly accepts it, he merely dismisses them: they gain no reward for their failure, no kind words for their efforts. If the adventurers captured and saved Orenthes, and now hand him over to Emarius, he thanks them and "questions" the

traitor rigorously. It is left to the gamemaster as to whether or not Lord Emarius hires the player characters to exact revenge on Lord Valdeus, and what form that revenge takes...

If the player characters return to Messantia with Emeraina and escort her to her father, they may have double-crossed Emarius's rival, Lord Valdeus. If they accepted his money to "lose" Emeraina, he is none too pleased if she makes it back home safely. He probably won't make an overt move against them, but drops hints to the local authorities about their piratical activities, or hires assassins to kill one or more of them. These events might make good fodder for another sequel adventure, beyond the purview of this campaign book.

THOSE WHO DEFIED THE GODS OF R'LYEH

Every player character surviving the deadly voyage to the black islands receives a point of Renown, as rumors and tales spread across the continent concerning the brave (or foolhardy) adventurers who faced ancient eldritch terrors.

CROM! I COULD USE A DRINK — BETTER YET, A SCORE OF THEM!

Once Emeraina has been returned to her father, or the adventurers have otherwise seen to any remaining obligations, it's time to relax and spend some of their hard-earned gold. They may decide to blow off steam in Messantia or some other "civilized" city, or in Tortage. In the former case, determine their Upkeep normally (see page 290 of the *Conan* corebook), but in any pirate town reduce this level by 1, as everyone has heard of their participation in the Balbenon adventure, and buy them drinks for days on end. In civilized locales, use the regular Carousing tables (pages 295-298 of *Conan* corebook); in pirate dens, use the rules from *Conan the Pirate* (page 107). Again, if they return to Tortage they may have to repay the debt they owe Master Farmiger for his aid in repairing their ship.

BRUSHES WITH THE LAW?

After braving the jaws of death all up and down the coast of the Western Ocean, fighting demons and pirates and monsters from the dawn of time, the adventurers may be lulled into a false sense of security sailing along the northern coasts. Unfortunately, many of the countries on that coast regard them as pirates, especially if they are sailing in the *Windblade*, or, worse yet, the infamous *Devil's Shadow* once owned by Captain Daimos. It's left to the gamemaster to decide how much trouble the player characters have sailing

these waters, but if they return to their predatory ways, use the naval combat rules and sample merchant and naval ships from chapters two and three, or create new ones.

EXPERIENCE POINTS AND OTHER REWARDS

Once the player characters finish their adventures in this campaign, spent some of their gold, and unwound from the rigors they have undergone, distribute the following experience rewards and penalties.

Any player character who survives the campaign receives 300 experience points, regardless of its outcome. If they killed Maledict Mer, award those who took place in his defeat another 30 points apiece. Slaying the monstrous Th'sylla nets each participant an additional 50 experience points. If the player characters managed to prevent a munity by their crews in the final chapter, each gains 10 experience. If they were smart enough to make off with Herge Daimos's *Devil's Shadow* and the stolen dhow the *Tururshia*, award them an additional 20 points. If they rescued any pathetic crewmen from the black islands, give each another 10 points. Finally, if they rescued Emeraina each gets 20 more experience points.



FOLLOW-UP ADVENTURES

The events of this campaign were far-ranging, featuring many non-player characters and locations. It goes without saying that the player characters' actions will have created many possibilities for follow-up adventures.

The most obvious avenue of further adventure would see the adventurers continuing their careers as pirates, plying the coasts of the Western Ocean in search of fat merchant ships to rob. With as many as three ships at their command, the possibilities are enormous. They might fall afoul of navies, or powerful merchants, or Stygian sorcerers or temples whose goods they have pilfered.

Alternately, if the player characters were left adrift at the end of the campaign, perhaps it's not the black corsairs or other allies who come to their rescue, but an enemy of some sort, likely a naval vessel. The pirate-heroes are captured

and forced to escape, either from the "rescue" vessel or a prison somewhere on land.

Revenge is always a good source of follow-up adventures, and the player characters will have made plenty of enemies during the course of the campaign (of course they may not have left many of them alive): rival pirates or pirate captains, vicious corsairs, slavers or powerful residents of ravaged Balbenon, even the dwellers of the deep or their hybrid kin — any of these might pursue the player characters seeking vengeance for the crimes perpetrated against them or their kind.

Other malefactors include the merchant Lord Valdeus of Messantia, especially if the player characters took his money and then betrayed him. If he survived, Valdeus's agent Orenthes is doubtless an instrument in any revenge wrought by the angry merchant.

Lord Emarius might also hold ill will toward the player characters, if they failed to save his daughter Emeraina and were so craven as to not come tell him face to face.

The gamemaster might invent old allies or friends of Captain Herge Daimos or the sorcerer Maledict Mer who might come after the player characters seeking revenge for their demise. Maledict Mer's acolytes from the island of Arzhna are good candidates for vengeance-seekers, if they somehow survived their apparent fates there.

Similar enemies might have been made in the taking of merchant ships, or the destruction of naval vessels, by the pirate player characters. Powerful merchants or embittered naval officers might relentlessly pursue the player characters to seek redress.

The player characters also made friends and allies in the course of this campaign. If they parted on good terms, the adventurers may call on, or be called upon, by the likes of Red Ortho, D'rogah, or Muhummok. One of these raiders has another large-scale plan which might be of interest to the player characters — perhaps sailing north to plunder some Vanir village, or eastward to pillage the fabled ports of Vendhya or Khitai. Or maybe one of their pirate allies has been captured and awaits torture or death in some dank prison — from which the adventurers might rescue him?

Finally, on the darker side, what of the eldritch enemies the heroes might have made at the conclusion of the campaign? Did Th'sylla awaken from its slumber and escape into the seas as the black islands sank? Even if the dark god did sink with its home islands, its malevolent influence might yet persist on those who faced it. Any character who suffered a Trauma in the black archipelago might suffer nightmares and nightly visions, "permanently" reducing his or her Resolve by 1 until the source of those dreams can be faced and overcome. The cursed individual might be compelled to seek some lost artifact or site, unwittingly directed by the the sunken gods of R'lyeh to perform some act which would release one of their kind onto the unsuspecting world.



APPENDICES



“The dead are dead, and what has passed is done! I have a ship and a fighting crew and a girl with lips like wine, and that’s all I ever asked. Lick your wounds, bullies, and break out a cask of ale...”

— “The Pool of the Black One”

When a ship encounter is indicated, the following series of actions are taken, in order:

- Sighting/identification
- Pursuit/closing
- Closing/ranged attacks/evasion
- Grappling
- Boarding/hand to hand combat

When sighting, the ship’s Lookout makes an Average (D1) Observation test; if it succeeds the Lookout can identify what basic type of vessel has been sighted (galley, canoe, carrack, etc.). If any Momentum were gained, roll a ♀, and if an Effect is rolled the Lookout not only recognizes whether or not the vessel is a warship or merchant vessel, but also what nation it is from; any other result on the ♀ reveals only the ship’s nation of origin.

If a pursuit is called for, the Helmsman or Captain must make an Average (D1) Sailing check to close on the intended target. If this check fails, the fleeing ship (whether the non-player ship, or the players’) outruns the pursuer and escapes the encounter.

If the pursuing ship was successful, it is considered to be closing on the target. Another Average (D1) Sailing test is called for. If this roll succeeds the Lookout can now definitely identify the ship’s nation of origin *and* whether it is a merchant vessel or warship. If the Sailing roll succeeded, then any extra crewmen, above the standard number needed to sail the ship, can attempt ranged weapon attacks, at a Challenging (D2) Difficulty due to range and the movement of the ships on the sea. After the initial round of attacks the target ship may attempt evasion, making a Challenging (D2) Sailing check to pull away from the attacking vessel to pursuit range.

The pursuing ship can attempt a grappling action if the Helmsman or Captain succeeds on an Average (D1) Sailing roll; this should be considered a Struggle between the Sailing skills of the pursuing Captain or Helmsman and the target vessel’s captain. If the pursuer wins the ships are grappled; if the target vessel wins the Struggle the ships remain at closing distance. If the target vessel gained any Momentum in the Struggle his ship can pull away to pursuit distance.

Once a ship has been grappled, a boarding action begins: the crews from the two vessels can move between the decks of the two ships to engage in melee combat. Note that of the three different types of crews — pirates, merchantmen, and marines — only merchantmen ask for quarter: the others are bitter enemies and will almost always fight to the death, one way or another.



SHIPS OF THE CRIMSON SEAS

The following list of ships includes both merchants and naval vessels, and indicates the type of craft, its cargo and basic value (according to the guidelines in *Conan the Pirate*, page 110), and the complement of crew it has aboard. The destinations of the ships are given as incoming (to their nation of origin) or outgoing (leaving their home port). The first number given in the Crew listing is the number

of sailors needed to run the ship, while the second number indicates how many marines or other fighting men are on board. Note that asterisked cargo items are exotic cargoes (again, see *Conan the Pirate*, page 99).

Also included in each listing are entries for Defensive or Offensive attitudes. This indicates the likelihood a merchant ship will surrender (Defensive), or attack (Offensive). This is determined by testing the Command skill of the Captain of the vessel (given as Command XX/X, where the first number is the Captain's skill and the second is his or her Focus for that skill). An Average merchant vessel's Captain must roll a Daunting (D3) Command or they give up without a fight; a merchant vessel's Captain listed as Moderate must roll a Challenging (D2) Command to avoid surrendering his vessel and cargo; a Tough Captain must roll only an Average (D1) check to avoid surrendering his ship.

For warships the rolls are much the same, save that the Command tests are made to determine whether or not the Captain wishes to pursue and fight the pirate vessel. An average warship Captain needs to pass a Daunting (D3) test or avoid the fight, a moderate Captain fights unless they succeed on a Challenging (D2) check, while a tough Captain needs only an Average (D1) check to pursue the enemy.

The "Evades" listing for each vessel indicates how many bonus successes the ship gains on any Sailing test. Note that some larger vessels are actually poorer at evading than others, and start with a negative number of successes.

The Argus was a small sturdy ship, typical of those trading-craft which ply between the ports of Zingara and Argos and the southern coasts, hugging the shoreline and seldom venturing far into the open ocean. It was high of stern, with a tall curving prow; broad in the waist, sloping beautifully to stem and stern. It was guided by the long sweep from the poop, and propulsion was furnished mainly by the broad striped silk sail, aided by a jibsail. The oars were for use in tacking out of creeks and bays, and during calms. There were ten to the side, five fore and five aft of the small mid-deck.

— "Queen of the Black Coast"

MERCHANT VESSELS

- Argossean galley, *Sea Nymph*, (incoming), Generous cargo: metals, livestock, rope, food, *spices, *spices; Defensive = Moderate (Command 10/1); Crew: 30+0; Evades +1
- Zingaran galleon, *White Dragon*, (incoming), Meager cargo: rope, wine, food; Defensive = Moderate (Command 10/1); Crew: 60+0; Evades -1
- Argossean galleon, *Golden Prize*, (outgoing), Average cargo: hides, food, food, food, sails; Defensive = Tough (Command 11/1); Crew: 65+0; Evades -1
- Shemite galley, *Lamya*, (incoming), Handsome cargo: cloth, food, food, carpenter's tools, *flowers/live plants; Defensive = Tough (Command 11/2); Crew: 30+5; Evades +1
- Argossean caravel, *Alacrity*, (incoming), Generous cargo: slaves, cloth, wine, sails, *feathers, *incense; Defensive = Tough (Command 10/1); Crew: 25+10; Evades +1
- Zingaran ship, *Lion's Heart*, (incoming), Average cargo: metals, livestock, livestock, food, carpenter's tools; Defensive = Tough (Command 11/2); Crew: 30+20; Evades +0

WARSHIPS

- Argossean galleys ×2, *Water Horse*, *Invincible*; Offensive = Tough (Command 11/1); chase +1; Crew: 30+30 (on each ship)
- Argossean galley, *Water Horse*; Offensive = Average** (Command 11/1); chase +1; Crew: 30+30
- Zingaran galley, *Cormorant*; Offensive = Moderate (Command 10/1); chase +1; Crew: 30+30
- Zingaran carrack, *Vengeance*; Offensive = Moderate (Command 11/2); chase -1; Crew: 30+40
- Argossean cog, *Redwind*; Offensive = Tough (Command 10/1); chase +0; Crew: 10+30
- Zingaran galley, *Mourning Star*; Offensive = Moderate (Command 10/1); chase +1; Crew: 30+40

**The *Water Horse* is less likely to attack if it is patrolling alone.



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