

# SUNKEN



AN RPG OF NAUTICAL HORROR BY  
**MIKE MARTENS**

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BY  
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## THANKS TO

All 837 Kickstarter backers, The Gauntlet community (new and old),  
Jesse Ross, Jason Cordova

## DEDICATED TO

Tom Martens and Old Ironsides

First Edition

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Digital ISBN: 978-1-7355767-0-1

Print ISBN: 978-1-7355767-1-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020915407

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Printed in the USA.

Published by:

Clear Keep

Los Angeles, California

The great floodgates of the  
wonder-world swung open.

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INTRODUCTION

# SPELL OF THE DEEP

When you boarded your first sloop, you clutched an icon of your patron saint — passed through generations, once encased in gold leafing, now with only a few flakes clinging precipitously. The whispers began with immediacy.

You first considered them the voices of the great saints, a watch to guide you. Saint Barthus, a flame in the storm. Saint Gliv, a fog in the scopes of fœs. You muttered a long list of renowned names but found no acknowledgment in the cacophony.

So, the sounding soon belied its deeper constant ... the void is a god in itself, with no need for wardens above or beneath. To hoist yourself upon its magnitude is to set your craft of planks and tuft of mind in the hold of something too vast to pay you heed. Too vast to even be called a thing, the Deep is your fate, storehouse to majesty and harbor to doom. How much further will it suspend you?

Sunken explores the truncated voyages of those who seek high reward on the deep sea. It is a game of nautical horror, holding unfathomable promises for your characters and invariably leveling them by beast, by tide, and by crumbling sanity.

You and your crew mates — some fresh, some weathered, some broken — have joined together with each your own aims in mind. These drives both bind you together and split you apart. Every crew's demise unfolds in unique, impassioned ways, but Sunken is not a game whose stories end at great heights but instead in the flotsam and jetsam descended to the ocean's floor.

Your heroes will die. Accept their fate. Take thrill in the voyage.



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## SETTING

# THE SALT SEA

The blessing of land is that nothing else can exist within its mass. The earth's denizens may grow upon and disembowel caverns within it, always with the safety of knowing that the solidity of terra firma itself can hold no threat or mystery. With one's back to the wall, there remains a wall to back against. Meanwhile, the sea establishes no constant: It is an unfathomable expanse above and below a diaphanous separation of air and water, where anything at any time can be.

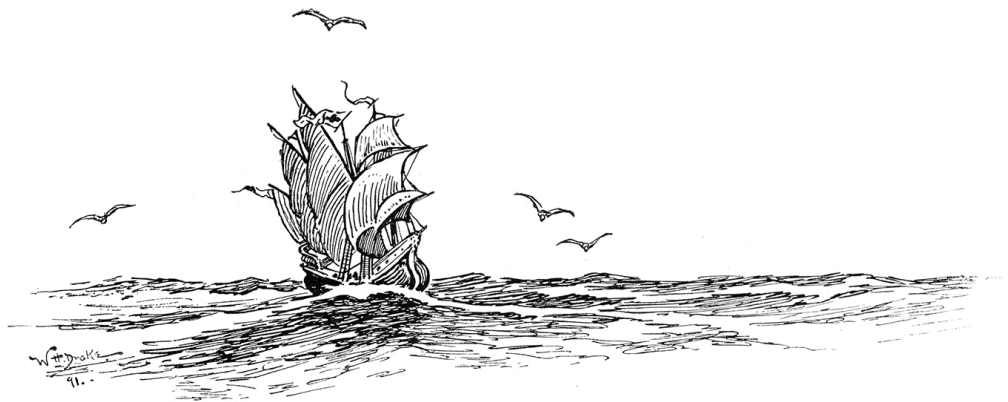
Unstartingly, the latter is where the stories of Sunken take place.

### PERIOD

Sunken aesthetically draws from the golden age of sail — a time spanning from the 16th to 19th century — before engines and steel hulls, but during the development of increasingly deadly firearms. Wooden ships set out from stone keeps, loaded with bulky cannon and sword-brandishing adventurers. The skies are barren, save for bird and storm and the swirling clusters of stars.

### MAGIC

This is also a fantasy world, and the water brims with all manner of mystery: antediluvian ruins, colossal leviathans, and unholy numen older than faith. Humans have found ways to venture out into the sea, but they have in no ways tamed it. Magic is a dark specter of the elite and the arcane, above the handle of the typical seafarer but an ominous cloud hanging over the everyday nonetheless. Some you will cross on your journeys have even passed through legendary Kalduhr, the dark and mystical wood that has claimed many trophy hunters.



## RELIGION

Feeling insignificant against the dangers of the deep, seafarers look high to the heavens. While the Most Divine stays distant from this realm, lofted above a milky veil of constellations, its legion of apostles are believed to have strode these waters in lives before now – and to still watch over this world in their lives thereafter. Most seafarers are raised in a gothic tradition of ritual and devotion to a patron Saint; some even claim to have experienced the miraculous nature of Saints working through them.

## GEOGRAPHY

The harsh realities of the world crest in an oceanic body of water called the Salt Sea, famed as the world's harshest expanse but also the one with greatest opportunity. Traveling the Salt is rarely comfortable: erratic weather patterns make every voyage a navigator's nightmare and seem to churn up the worst of the supernatural forces dwelling below its surface.

## POLITICS

Amidst all these conditions, the most powerful fleet belongs to the East Passage Company, a well-armed merchant enterprise where the expendability of the individual has fueled the rise of the enterprise. Kingdoms and freebooters have sought fortunes independent of the Company, but none have come close to being deemed rivals and many have seen ships crushed directly by the Salt Sea's monopolistic enterprise. No trip and no cargo has been declared too dangerous for the Company's crews, garnering tremendous wealth for its administrators and giving rise to rumors of truly twisted dealings. Despite it all, the Company's founder has disappeared, splintering its hard-fought global order with the absence of a single soul. That estrangement has fueled a new sense of opportunity among seafarers and forest-dwellers alike, who press beyond the barking threats of the hobbled Company into the torrents – whose true dangers seemed for so long to only be the tall tales of retired mariners.



## GAMEPLAY

# AT THE TABLE

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 2-5 players – 1 to helm the world, the rest to control characters
- Some six-sided dice in three colors – or a digital dice-rolling tool
- Character sheets – or some plain paper – to track your progress
- About an hour per player – including both helm and characters

Sunken is a narrative conversation among a “table” of players – one player representing the world and some number of players representing their own wealth-seeking characters within it. Hurling toward a dire conclusion, the story advances through a combination of player creativity, plot events, and the chance of dice rolls.

As the Helm of the World presents scenarios, the other players describe how their characters respond, leaning into their unique traits.

With risks taken, players seek outcomes from three pools of chance – six-sided dice aligned with the traits of the Flesh, the hold of the

Deep, and faith in the Heavens. As they succeed and fail, characters’ relationships with these pools and their crewmates change, gradually descending towards doom. The Rules & Mechanics section (starting on page 24) elaborates on this system.

Each Sunken voyage contains five chapters called “tides.” These tides establish a flow of escalating tension, modeled after classic horror and adventure narrative structures. Threats come from all sides, as a central terror builds to its fateful climax.

Sunken is expressly designed for “one shot” play. Your characters will most likely die, and the setting will be irreparably changed.

## APPROACH

Sunken is more like playing a horror movie than running the typical roleplaying game. Rather than wisely turning our characters away from a suspicious door, we move them into danger, determining why they press forward and what happens next.

The advice in this section helps you get a handle on that, before sending you out to the cruel, dark, and fathomless sea.

As many modern roleplaying games will tell you – and this one already has – Sunken builds itself off of conversation. Despite the conflict with the world and treachery between characters, the table of players should work collaboratively toward intriguing outcomes.

### DEEP MOMENTS

Take interest in what's going on in characters' heads: Ask other players questions about how their characters are processing the events and how these dangers might relate to past experience. This gives players a natural place to evoke their characters' backstories in a way that enriches – rather than constricting – the narrative.

### HARD CUTS

Rather than prodding and luring characters to the next dramatic beat, cut forward to them being there. Ask how and why they arrived, but don't dwell in transitions. Tides expressly break up the story into unique acts. Sometimes, these will flow smoothly. Often though, as the tension of one tide deescalates, you'll make a hard cut to the next.

### FLOW ABOVE ORDER

There aren't formal turns in Sunken, like many games of its ilk. Instead, the Helm of the World acts a bit like a film director, determining how the camera presents the developing action. While you want to shift frequently and evenly, you might focus on one character for a series of actions rather than breaking away with each one.

### LOADED QUESTIONS

A voyage's events intentionally overwhelm characters and can be intimidating for players. Especially for new players, the Helm of the World can aid responses by building a foothold into questions. Instead of simply asking "What do you do?" you might ask "How do you disrupt the shark's pursuit?"

## ROOTED IN TROPHY

Sunken is based on Trophy Dark by Jesse Ross. In fact, it directly expands on the theme and setting of the That Silent Howl incursion. As such, both games run very similarly.

If this is your first Rooted in Trophy game, check out the numerous resources that have been created to introduce players to the system: a podcast, actual play videos, and posts discussing its mechanics and flow. Most concepts apply perfectly to Sunken. Plus, a community of creators have developed all manner of variations and extended content. Welcome to the Trophyverse!

For those familiar with the Trophy system, note there a number of shifts in Sunken – both cosmetic and functional. Most essential notes? Devil's Bargains become positive effects, and are given their own dice pool (the Heavens). Roll and resolution mechanics have been simplified to balance the additional complexity factor. Overall, individual rolls trend more toward success, while producing more long-term drawbacks. Characters are meant to feel like sinking ships.

You should find Sunken and Trophy largely compatible, with voyages/incursions being playable in the opposite system.

## THE LONG GAME

Sunken tells short stories rather than sweeping epics. However, if your group wants to explore longform narratives using the system, here are a few ways to do so.

**Momentous Tides** – Expand voyage lengths by layering in additional consequential Moments. Provide reductions of Fall between tides – or as immediate reward for successes.

**The Dread Captain** – Set a central non-player character to follow from voyage to voyage – perhaps an infamous captain who evades doom, sacrificing their compatriots, and remaining a pivotal force in each subsequent tale.

**Droste Framing** – Establish each preceding voyage as part of the oral tradition within the one about to proceed. For example, open *The Wreck of Futility* with the crew singing a shanty of the seafarers you previously played in *A Covenant of Silence*. Subsequently reveal the *Futility's* tragedy as a story shared during the descent to *Colossus*.

**Rashomon Recursion** – There's something to be said for running unique groups of seafarers through the same voyage. How would fate play differently if an alliance had been struck with the Great Ones rather than the Rising Fist?



## SAFEGUARDS

# PLAYING WITH DANGER

The world of Sunken is a dark one and its tales rarely cast light on joyous triumph. It is critical to create a respectful and constructive environment — allowing Sunken’s tragic depths to be delved.

The tools below foster this throughout the play experience. Utilized safeguards help maintain collaboration and focus, and their use should be considered a helpful calibration by both the user and the table.

For a deeper dive into utilizing safety tools, check out the **TTRPG Safety Toolkit** by Kienna Sunrise and Lauren Bryant-Monk.

### INVITATION

As you invite players, explain the game’s concept and themes. Setting expectations upfront helps players decide how (and if) they want to engage with the game’s tone.

As additional guidance, each voyage in this book notes some of the more commonly troubling elements that play a role in its events. Body horror, isolation, and drowning also all commonly arise, even if not scripted.

### LINES & VEILS

Before the play session, players may set boundaries on content elements. These can be shared publicly or privately to the Helm — whatever is comfortable. No context is required.

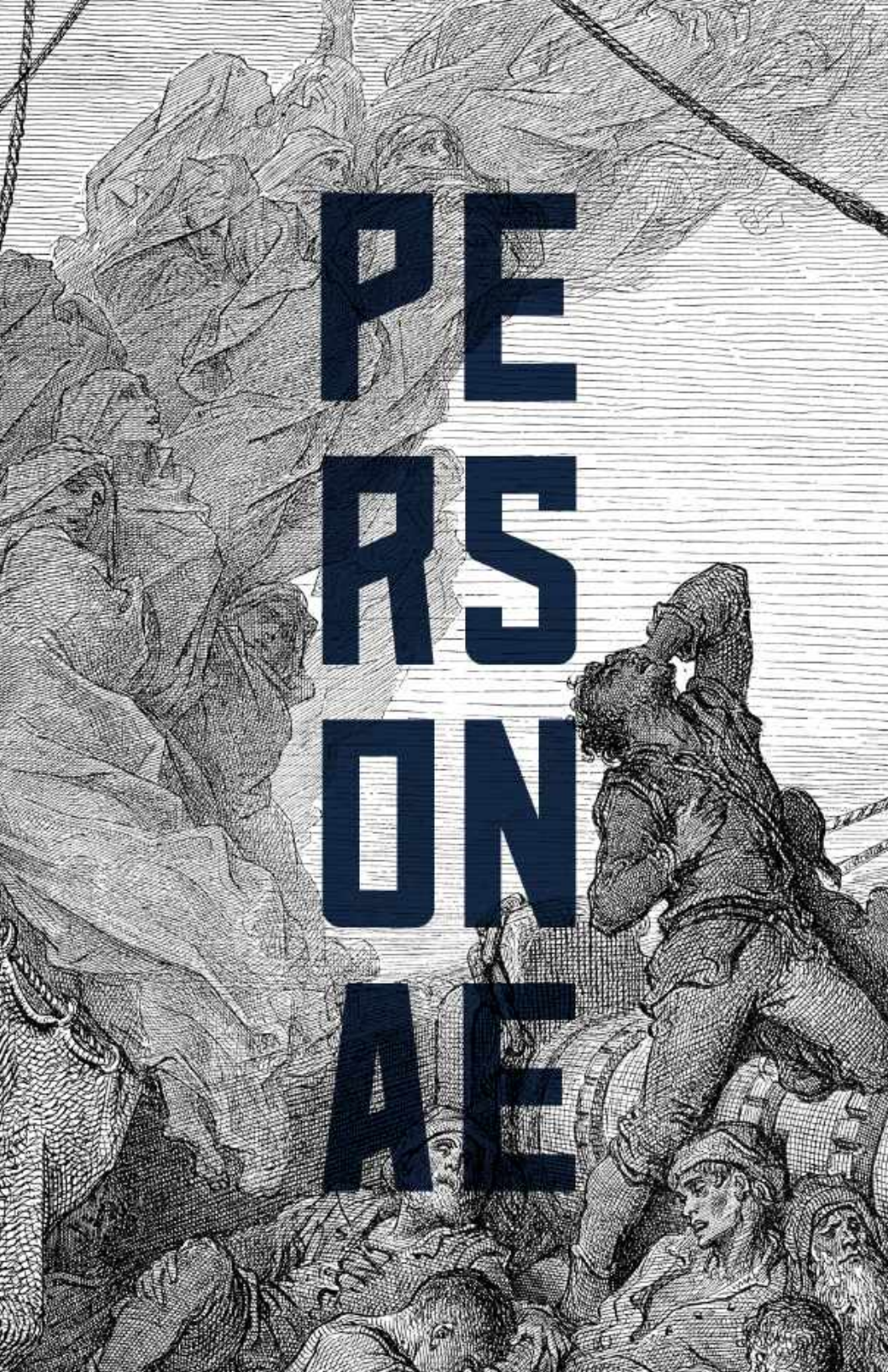
A line covers content that should simply not be included. Sexual violence is a common line, but this could be as simple as the name of a recently departed loved one.

A veil covers content that can be included but with temperance. Think of the way a film might cut away from gruesome violence.

### X-CARD

During play, all players have the safety valve of an X-card — either a literal card that can be tapped or a signal established before play. An X-card tells the table that an element has shifted from being merely unsettling to something more deeply troubling and that it should be pulled back.

An X-card can also mark a good spot to release tension: Pause, step away, discuss if needed, and resume fresh.



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ON  
AE**

CHARACTER CREATION

# SOUL MEETS BODY

Build a character by selecting an option from each of the four aspects covered in this section.

When the provided traits apply to an action described by a player, they will gain dice of the Flesh for their roll.

## OCCUPATION

What do you do? An expression of skill.

## BACKGROUND

Who were you? A source of experience.

## FLEET

Where lies your allegiance? A reflection of values.

## SAINT

To whom do you pray? A window to the supernatural.



OCCUPATIONS  
SURVIVAL BY TRADE

Within the water-logged clockwork of the Salt Sea's fleets, you've earned your keep in the execution of a trade. Whether dangerous or diplomatic, your occupation determines the core of how you are perceived by your crew ... It marks social status and reveals the tendencies of the person.

After selecting an occupation, consider the following questions. While the answers have no mechanical effect, they help set the foundation of your story.

How long have you been aboard?  
How skilled are you considered at your craft?  
Who are your friends? Who do you distrust?



**M**ARINE  
weaponry  
ropes  
athletics

**O**FFICER  
discipline  
mediation  
languages

**S**URGEON  
anatomy  
disease  
amputation

**D**ECKHAND  
orderliness  
strength  
service

**C**ARPENTER  
fortification  
repair  
tools

**S**ALVAGER  
dismantling  
appraisal  
history

**C**OOK  
food  
inventory  
poison

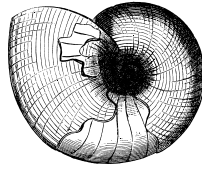
**N**ATURALIST  
fauna  
penmanship  
dissection

**N**AVIGATOR  
stars  
charts  
weather

**B**OSUN  
maintenance  
compliance  
ropes

**C**APTAIN  
commands  
negotiation  
sacrifice

**G**UNNER  
artillery  
lifting  
flame



## BACKGROUNDS

# PRELUDE TO THE SEA

Choose a background, answer its question, and add its trait to your list of available skills of the Flesh.

### UNEXPECTED AUTOMATON perseverance

You were not born but crafted, perceived as a tool to survive the sea where flaccid flesh would fail. Your own eyes have opened to this reality, yet you likely conceal it from others.

“How did you discover you aren’t biologically human?”

### COMPLOTTING BROKER deals

You rose in your fleet’s ranks by being a shrewd and clever negotiator. While you pursue the fleet’s interests, alternative arrangements can certainly be made for the right price.

“Whose profit would be your gain?”

### FLEEING REFUGEE hiding

Your homeland was torn apart by fiery conflict, making even the cold sea feel like a comforting welcome. You’ve had nothing for so long that surviving off little feels like luxury.

“What do you dream your new home will look like?”

### INJURED WHALER hunting

You were a skilled harpoonist, uncannily tracking the sea’s titans, until a zealous pursuit took your life’s work away. The smell of leviathan lingers thick in your nostrils, though.

“How did the beast get away?”

ACCOMPLISHED THIEF  
breaching

You've never perceived barriers as walls, but simply as doorways asking to be opened. You tend to get into the wrong place at the right time – and remove from it an ounce too much.

“What made your last attempt at a big score fail?”

ARTFUL URCHIN  
sleight

You grew up one of the world's forgotten children, wandering streets and trails unseen and unsupported. Forced to play the hand you were dealt, you learned how to manifest better cards.

“What has followed you out of beggardom?”

ESTRANGED HEIR  
valuables

You were first in line to a great fortune, until trying circumstances drove you away. Despite the distance, you retain an eye – and thirst – for the fine luxuries of the apex percentile.

“What would make you go back home?”

LOST PILGRIM  
saints

You followed in the footsteps of a great saint for a long time, until realizing it had been far too long. Seeking your bearings, you've joined a crew and pray for providence's hand.

“What do you believe awaits at the end of your pilgrimage?”

SULLIED CENOBITE  
sacrilege

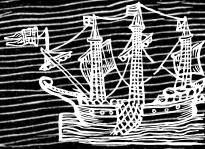
You swore off the world and walked your order as a model of godliness. But temptation battered your breakwater, and in time, an abbot learned of your fall, expunging you to this godless expanse.

“What evidence of the divine keeps you in fear?”

RETIRED COMMODORE  
connections

You grew exhausted of politics and the weight of rank, but you could never quit the sea. Your notoriety wears through your guise, and most humor your adopted identity only by fear or reverence.

“What straw broke the commodore's back?”



## FLEETS

# HOIST THE FLAG

The sea hordes treasure like no other, with lost troves stored within its bowels and heady transports darting its skin. But its dangers force intrepid souls to band together under often tenuous alliances, declared by raising scraps of cloth to crows nests, even as the gull flies mocking above.

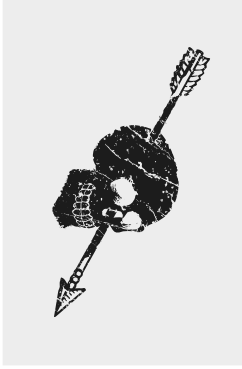
Each fleet provides a character shared vices and virtues, which may be utilized as skills toward The Flesh. An action can be aided by one of the tags, but not both.

The majority fleet for the play group determines the flag its ship flies under. Disparate factioning between player characters is fine, with a catch ... A character whose alle-

giance lies with a different flag than the ship they sail on holds that loyalty in secret. They cannot utilize their virtues or vices in the presence of characters sailing for other fleets until the fifth tide of a voyage.

At character creation, develop a drive for your character that aligns with the selected fleet. Several examples are provided for each.





MAJOR



## THE BLACK SKULL

greed, retribution

A confederation of selves, the Black Skull marks a precarious bind between the Salt Sea's freelance opportunists. Hardened criminals, battered mercenaries, and desperate profiteers declare the Black Skull to reduce the threats on their voyages by some degree. Otherwise unified only in a thirst for spoils, ships flying the Black Skull adhere to a common code, determining the rights of salvage and aid. Altruisms abound: "Take the line, your ship is mine.", "Every vulture gets her share.", "The skull never bites its own bones by night."

### Drives

- Pay the ransom of Captain Mesker and earn their debt.
- Bleed every last penny from the gullible believers.
- Find the treasure of Corrin Corpseflower – the pirates' banker.
- Snuff the lives of the former crew of the Tin Soldier.

## EAST PASSAGE

COMPANY

status, duty

From its nascence in a single line of transport, the Company grew into a merchant empire with ladles in all manner of pots. While its carefully plotted systems and networks never truly tamed the sea, they did harness it, strangling out independent ventures and clamoring for monopoly over briny enterprise. Those who raise sails for the Company do so under strict if reliable contracts, and those who unlock opportunity within its operations can climb its rigging to a larger slice of its profits. Its power and promise breeds loyalty like a virus.

### Drives

- Get far, far away from your upbringing in Kalduhr.
- Surveil a crew member suspected of leaking Company secrets.
- Earn Company status through a new source of revenue.
- Stir no pots, rake no muck, and be a dutiful cog of the machine.



MINOR



## FASTID-VORTUAN EMPIRE homeland, service

Among coastal kingdoms, the Fastid-Vortuan was the boldest in refusing to deal with the East Passage Company. It would always control its own. Raised in the shadow of a grand unification of vast and bountiful land, its ruling heirs have developed a thirst for geography, expanding their territory and heritage to wherever wooden plank can rest on soft earth. The Empire's disinterest in the treasures of the sea has allowed it to develop a formidable fleet without threatening the Company, but desires pique as the merchant head rolls.

### Drives

- Purchase an estate to pass down through generations.
- Claim a new land in your family name.
- Earn a place in the court of the Emperor.
- Prove your ancestral destiny of serfdom is wrong.

## THE PURSUIT competition, discovery

Some souls just want to feel adventure course their veins. For them, the value of coin is not in the transaction of its destination but the tale of its origin. Many naval clubs of intrepid thrill-seekers and explorers have shattered amidst the torrent and tentacle of the Salt Sea, but The Pursuit has escaped demise time and time again – or at least replenished its ranks expediently. The Pursuit's smattering of small, swift ships are helmed recklessly by wealthy hobbyists, pouring in status and funds without concern for profit ... their obsession with sport teasing terrors better left submerged.

### Drives

- Beat a rival vessel to the legendary, lost Vistol loot trove.
- Achieve renown as the greatest explorer in the Triune Seas.
- Fund your own expedition to the edge of the world.
- Be the first to document a naturalistic wonder.

# SAINTS DEUS EX MAGICKA



You've done dubious things in fealty to saints of the Most Divine, expecting some whisper from the heavens and often hearing only mute silence in return.

When a saint graces you with their power, you are able to perform a miracle – a shadow of the acts of these great figures, but one uncommon and strange amidst the cold and dark seascape. To most sailors, effect does seem delivered more faithfully when accompanied by intense foci: a hymn, flagellation, oblation, or the like.

Increase your starting Fall by 1 for each you select.

# OBTAIN FOR US GRACE

ST. BARTHUS  
THE IMMOLATING BEACON  
(engulf your body in flame)

ST. TORII  
OF THE DROWNED  
(breathe underwater)

ST. GLIV  
OF NIGHT TRAVELERS  
(move untraceably through darkness)

ST. ANTONIA  
THE LIVING ELEGY  
(appear as the deceased)

ST. ROSSLYN  
THE NULL WALKER  
(walk without gravity's pull)

ST. EXODIAS  
OF THE LEVIATHAN  
(draw forth a beast of the deep)



LOW  
EVER  
TO

## RULES & MECHANICS

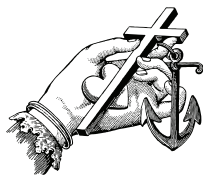
# GEARS OF FATE

The world spins and the sea rolls, driven by celestial machination. If such immense entities can be turned so deftly, the fates of mortal humans must only be like feathers in the current.

Over the course of a game session, the Helm of the World should describe the changing situation to the players: raising terrors, descending storms, crews sliding into tumult. Faced with these developments, players will be asked how their characters respond. In those moments, the game mechanics outlined in this section whirl into motion.

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## RISKS & ROLLS

# THE TRIUNE CURSE

On the Salt Sea, life tacks between perilous failures and hard-fought successes. To overcome danger, you'll need to muster everything your body, your faith, and the sea can provide you. The rest is up to chance.

As a living, breathing human being, there's a lot your character can do without needing to roll dice. However, whenever there's high risk or a contended result involved – whether your character realizes it at the onset or not – the Helm will ask you to roll dice.

Cooking, debating, even fighting are not necessarily risk-laden activities for seafarers, especially when they have a trait that supports the action ... But when failure would be costly or success particularly rewarding, even the mundane can transmute into a roll-worthy action.

Whenever your character takes an action that bears risk, describe the action and the result being sought. You will then accumulate a pool of dice from three categories before rolling.

Assign a die color to each pool. For example, The Flesh could be red, The Deep could be black, and The Heavens could be a white die. For online play groups, Roll for Your Party ([rollforyourparty](#)) allows you to roll groups of uniquely colored dice. But you can also roll each category in stages if you're using a tool that doesn't allow multiple colors on the same roll.



THE  
GAME  
IS  
DONE

## DICE POOLS

# THE FLESH

(0-4 dice)

**T**HE **F**LESH represents your own mortal capability, the quivering resilience of your body and brain matter.

For each skill applicable from your occupation or background, you roll one Flesh die – up to 4.

With great mercy, no further stipulations exist for the Flesh.

**N**OTES – The more dice you roll of the Flesh, the more likely it is that your action won't scar your character in the form of Fall. Acting toward your occupation, background, and fleet substantially increases your chances of survival, but it won't always be what the situation demands. Be creative and clever, but also know that you can roll without dice from the Flesh and still succeed at your task.

## THE DEEP

(1-4 dice)

**T**HE **D**EEP represents the maddening power of the sea, whose embrace engrosses souls who find fuel from it.

Roll Deep dice matching your current level of Fall. If you are near the sea, you may roll your choice of additional Deep dice up to a total of four Deep dice.

Whenever your highest roll result is or matches a Deep die, your Fall increases by one and you develop a condition.

**N**OTES – As your character accumulates Fall, they'll begin to feel like a ship taking on water. The Deep is the manifestation of this double-edged sword. You may always draw on the power of the sea to help secure success, but doing so increases your risk of Fall. The greater your Fall, the more of the Deep you must roll, accelerating your demise. Players generally want to opt for The Deep sparingly early in a voyage, but it can be advantageous to overcome danger with the Deep's assistance. By seeking Favor in the form of sabotage and subterfuge, characters are able to decrease the amount of the Deep they're forced to roll.

# THE HEAVENS

(0-1 die)

**T**HE HEAVENS represents the intervention of the divine, a force whose only guarantee is in faith that it exists.

Other players or the GM may offer you additional Fortune on top of the result you seek, or you may seek a supernatural miracle of your patron Saint. If you claim one of these divine temptations, you roll one Heavens die.

- You gain your offer's Fortune when your highest roll is or matches the Heavens.
- Whenever your lowest roll is or matches the Heavens die, you lose some belief in its power – signified by an additional level of Fall.

**N**OTES – The Heavens is the antithesis of the Devil's Bargain in other games. It's a potential beacon of light amidst the darkness, providing an extra die with the possibility of a bonus result – much like a critical success. However, it's also at tension with the other pools and does not want to be eclipsed by the Flesh or the Deep. Like the Deep, it extends the chances of success while threatening the psyche.

Miracles – like walking on water or disappearing from sight – will need direct intervention from a Saint who has performed them. Fortune that does not come from a Saint should be creditable to the divine without revealing an overt supernatural blessing: finding a map to hidden treasure while looking for something else, or saving a few extra crew members from the maw of a leviathan. Some basic concepts to inspire offerings of heavenly Fortune:

- Your action also helps another character out of a separate predicament.
- You find something to benefit your drive.
- You gain advantageous positioning toward your next challenge.
- A condition's effect is altered or reduced.

# RESULTS

## IN HANDS OF FATE

With all the force and fortune you can muster, only one thing needs to go right ... and often, only one thing will.

Your highest die determines the result of your roll.

### 6 SUCCESS

Describe the wholly triumphant maneuvers you make, considering the influence of the Deep or Heavens if they have warranted your success.

### 4-5 SUCCESS, WITH A COMPLICATION

Describe your wavering success as with a 6. The Helm describes a drawback that may need to be confronted now or later.

### 1-3 FAILURE

The Helm describes how your situation immediately grows worse.

### ADVICE ON COMPLICATIONS

Complications and failures should not necessarily block the advancement of hard narrative. Many instances will call for mechanical opposition, but this is no requirement. Simply scarring a player – without Fall or another mechanical challenge – can be as impactful to a character's story as

anything with prescribed effect. The Helm of the World should weigh the import of the story moment and apply consequence appropriately.

It is eventual that the Deep will claim all souls. It needs no kindness from mortal hands.



## RESOLUTION QUICK REFERENCE

### TAKE ACTION

Describe your character's action.

### ROLL DICE

#### RESOLVE FALL

##### THE DEEP

- If a Deep die is the highest result, add a level of Fall and a condition.

##### THE HEAVENS

- If the Heavens is the lowest result, add one level to your Fall and a condition.

Take only one point of Fall per roll.

### DETERMINE DICE

#### THE FLESH

- Take one die for each character trait that supports the action.

#### THE DEEP

- Take one die for each level of Fall you currently hold.
- And take any additional number of dice up to 4 total Deep dice.

#### THE HEAVENS

- Take one die if you seek the divine fortune offered to you.
- Or take one die if you pray for a saint's intervention.

### NARRATE RESULT

Continue the story based on the highest result across all pools:

- 6, the action is a complete success. Character player takes lead.
- 4-5, the action is successful but there is a complication. Shared narration.
- 1-3, the action fails and there is a complication. Helm of the World takes lead.

If The Heavens is the highest result and succeeds, receive your divine fortune.



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# FALL

## SINKING TO OBLIVION

All characters within the world of Sunken will fall: how far is the crux of your play.

Fall begins at a level of 0. Once this starting level has been passed, it can never be reached again (i.e. 1 is the new minimum). As this level increases, physical and mental harm weighs on your character.

Each time Fall is added, a character develops a new condition (page 41).

### DEATH

The physical, mental, and spiritual stresses of your Fall will ultimately lead to the most final of tragedies.

Your character dies if Fall exceeds a level of 4. Narrate your end, and take a new character if you wish.

You will face trials that push you toward this fate, but can seek favor to prolong ruination.

### TRIALS

You face a trial if your character witnesses or undergoes something disturbing and you do not confront it with a risky action.

For your trial: Roll a single Deep die.

If the Deep die in question is higher than your current level of Fall, add one to your Fall and develop a condition.

### FAVOR

At any point, you may attempt to reduce your level of Fall by seeking favor from on high. Prove to anyone watching that the Heavens find you superior to other mortal souls, and divine ardor will stagnate your fall.

When you subtly sabotage another character, roll the Heavens and any Flesh tied to traits you utilize in this subterfuge. If a die's result is lower than your level of Fall, you reduce your Fall by one level. (There is no penalty for the Heavens being your low roll when seeking favor.)

You may continue seeking favor through these acts until you have reduced your Fall to 1. Keep the acts as discreet as possible to prevent your fellow seafarers from using you as the object of their own attempts to gain favor.

Your god is a jealous god, and you were made in its image.

## COMBAT

# BLADE & BULLET

Violent actions come to sudden ends on the Salt Sea.

Any successful roll is assumed to achieve the sought result, whether it's a knockout blow, a slaying strike, or simply a warning shot. But there are two notable exceptions.

### PLAYER VERSUS TERROR

The terrors at the heart of Sunken voyages represent the most deadly and doom-ridden entities in the already dangerous Salt Sea. These are not tales of seafarers' daily dangers, but of the ones that were too nonpareil to overcome.

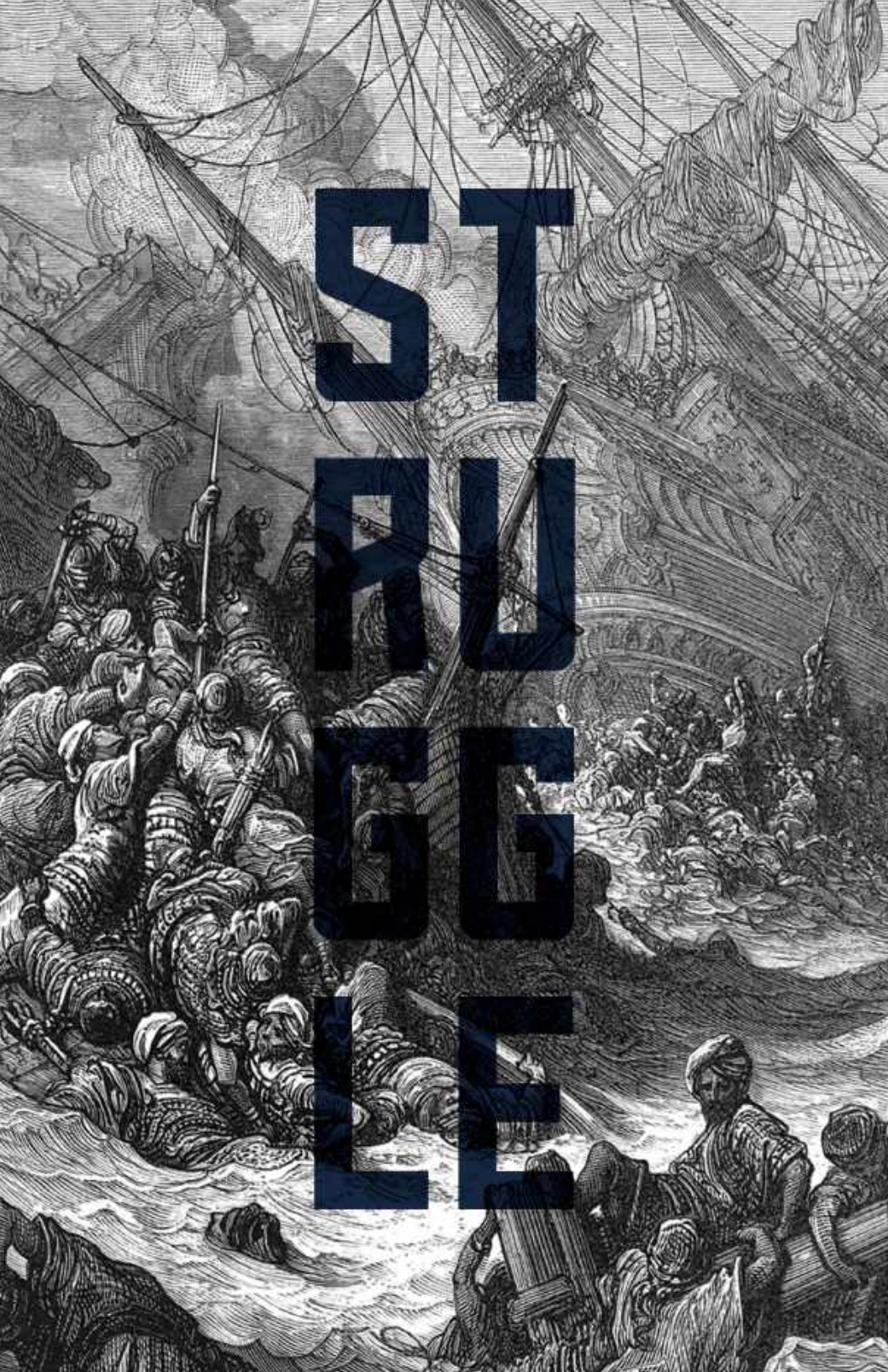
Terrors can only be fought head-on during a voyage's first tide (unless otherwise noted), when they are encountered in their weakest or most isolated state.

From then on, players will have to avoid, escape, entangle, and manipulate whatever supernatural horrors they face. To strike out directly against a matured terror would bring instant death – a stake which should always be set for the player.

### PLAYER VERSUS PLAYER

A character can always successfully duck, dodge, and generally avoid a direct confrontation from another character. If the action is an attempt at Favor, the indirect complication is determined by the initiating player's roll. (See Fall.)

However, if both players are willing to engage in direct combat, simply have each describe the actions they take and build a pool of dice as in a normal Risk roll. The player with the highest die succeeds. A tie either ends the confrontation in deadlock, or both players can choose to roll again until one player rolls higher than the other. Fall is assessed the same as usual after each round of rolling. Short of the terrors themselves, these confrontations are the most damaging in Sunken.



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## INITIATION

AUG: I've got those drops of weird goo, so I'm going to carefully slip a few drops of that in the dinner I'm cooking for the pirates ... Try to poison them with it. This is probably something I've done a lot in the past ... My way of freeing myself from dubious caretakers growing up.

HELM: Sneaky ... and this stuff is most likely deadly. Some added fortune from The Heavens, if you want it: You'll be able to sneak a very large, very sharp cleaver into your apron.

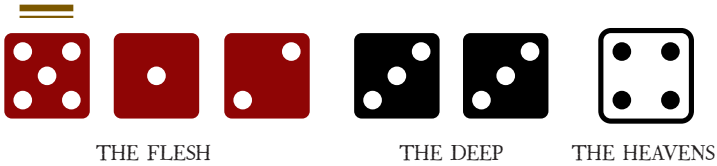
AUG: Might be useful if this goes south. Taken!

HELM: So, you've got the Heavens, plus "food", "poison", and "sleight" for the Flesh. How much are you drawing on the Deep here?

AUG: Hmm .. This will be big. But I feel good about the pool here ... and I'm at two Fall. So let's just stick with that.

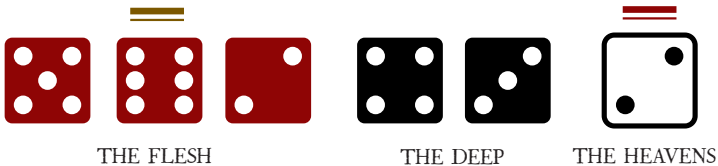
HELM: Alright! Let's roll.

## RESOLUTION - RESULT A



With this roll, the Flesh is high, while the Deep and the Heavens have no effect. Since the result is a 5, this will produce a mixed result.

## RESOLUTION - RESULT B



Here, the Flesh is high – and a complete success. While the Deep has no effect, the Heavens is low. So, some faith is lost in the form of Fall.



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## VOYAGES OVERVIEW

# INTO DARKNESS

Venture into the Salt Sea, and you may find these elements ensconced in your voyages.

### PROLOGUE

A scene setting introduction to the voyage's narrative.

### MOMENTS

Minor events to enrich scenes or act as complications.

### CONDITIONS

Unique scars and obsessions for falling characters.

### TERRORS

Detailed creature, faction, and setting information to help the Helm of the World utilize non-player forces.

### TIDES

The five acts that set scenes and guide the challenges that the world presents to the player characters.

### EPILOGUE

Questions to ask players as the group wraps up a voyage's story arc. These can set up new voyages with new characters.

## TIDES

# THE FIVE MOVEMENTS

As the tides turn, so do the stakes of your voyage.

Whether scripted or improvised, each Sunken voyage follows a five-act structure. This gives the story form and builds an under-current pulling characters toward their fates.

### FIRST - SETTING

The first tide exposes the general danger of the setting. How has the situation changed to put our seafarers in danger? Typically, the first tide should also seed the fifth.

### SECOND - HOOK

Here, the seafarers should become firmly entangled in the route that leads them to the terror. This might come in the form of an alluring temptation or a direct omen.

### THIRD - NATURE

In this tide, the forces of nature provide the principal obstacle. Storm, swarm, or other element prevents the seafarers from striking the terror and weakens their stance.

### FOURTH - TERROR

The primary terror appears in its most clear and aggressive form in the fourth tide. Overwhelmed, the seafarers should find themselves ushered toward their fate.

### FIFTH - DROWNING

As the stage for a final doom, the fifth tide presents the quieter, existential threat of the terror. Unabated seafarers often must choose between mortality and morality.

While this represents the standard flow of tides, there may be variance. Nature, in particular, can easily be shifted to the second or fourth tide to achieve the same purpose at a more dramatic moment.

## GENERAL CONDITIONS

# THE CURSES YOU BEAR

No matter where you are in the world of Sunken, these blights may afflict you.

Each voyage includes a handful of conditions specifically written to coincide with its setting and terrors. However, the assortment below can be a starting point for improvised voyages or used when a scripted voyage goes three sheets to the wind.

- The sea beckons to you. If you don't tether yourself to ship or land, your body will surely make the plunge.
- Your eyes shift and you see darkness as light and vice versa – the moon a dark spot in a bright, speckled sky.
- You grow convinced that you are not human but an automaton.
- You see signs in all your fellow seafarers that they are not human, developing a deep distrust of their motives.
- The sea's brine is all you will drink, deteriorating your body in the process.
- You have seen the true light and reject the work of other Saints, refusing their aid and perhaps counteracting their intent.
- Some artifact of what has happened becomes your burden to bear – a discarded possession, a shard of structure, a body part – tied around your neck, cursing if removed.
- The Deep is giving you gills ... Although still non-functioning, their presence and motion is visible to all.
- The ghost of a former crew mate haunts you, egging on dangerous situations.
- A slippery slime slowly grows on your skin, dripping to the ground and smelling like seaweed.
- An arm or hand begins changing into the claw of a crustacean.
- Fish scales develop across your legs, giving you fear of becoming merfolk.
- For better or worse, the secrets of the sea are no longer hidden to you: You see clearly through the deepest fathoms.



VOYAGE  
A COVENANT  
OF SILENCE

SUMMARY

A crew comes upon the ghostly hulk of the East Passage Company's infamous flagship and faces the allure and curse of its deadly cargo.

REFERENCES

Alien, Return of the Obra Dimm, The Birds

LINES & VEILS

Body horror, spider- & insect-like creatures

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## PROLOGUE AND SHE REMAINED

She'd drifted for months since the audacious Ribald Fowl took her sails and slaughtered her hands – irreparably hobbling itself in the process. The few who survived the pilfering excursion had seen the face of the East Passage Company's most terrible secret and attempted to scuttle the whole damned thing.

But she was built too resilient to sink by human hands, even guid-

ed through a few divine whispers. Instead she became a corpse island, a husk still bearing treasures and curses, dreams and nightmares. The Company searched for her, but she laid low in dangerous waters, a shadow skittering through a dark sea.

Still, destiny has not written its end to the Nicodemus, and she waits to be born again.

While this voyage is recommended as a place to start in the world of Sunken, it is also a spiritual sequel and remix of “That Silent Howl” (appearing in Codex: Void and Trophy). Some content is reprinted – often with edits. I, of course, recommend playing both, and you can do so in either order. Within Sunken's arc, consider the descriptions here to be the source of truth.

# MOMENTS

- Staring overboard at the black water lapping against the vessel, you seem to see empty patches moving along the hull.
- You find the lone survivor of the Nicodemus severing the ropes that bind the two ships together.
- The weakened floorboards of a gun deck collapse, dropping one of the seafarers into a locked, half-flooded store room that is brimming with shimmering treasures.
- Passing a coil of cables on the Nicodemus, you can make out the form of a Hentan creature, whimpering mildly as its body gradually grows.
- A surveyor or naturalist has taken one of the fallen seabirds into their quarters, where the Hentan maturation is observed in miniature.
- A crew member in hiding adjusts their position and creates a ruckus in the process, attracting Hentan attention.
- A pack of adult Hentan sit, unmoving, outside a hold like patient hounds, staring in with eyeless faces.
- A face you recognize stares out directly at you from inside the folds of the Hentan queen. It smiles and licks its lips.

# CONDITIONS

- A Hentan maggot incubates inside your body. You feel it twist and turn, and fear what the others might do if they were to find out.
- Apart from reality, you believe you can smell a Hentan maggot incubating in a companion's body.
- Rather than the current moment, you begin seeing visions of battles and slaughter that have occurred on the Nicodemus.
- You become convinced that the Nicodemus holds secrets pertinent to your drive or background, and you will not abandon the ship unless facing mortal danger.
- A drip of Hentan fluid has burned and cauterized a hole through your body.
- You cover yourself in the blood of the slain to prevent your own tracking.
- You grow convinced the road to absolution means giving the spoils of the Nicodemus to the sea.
- A specific Hentan stalks you but will not harm you.
- The smell of Hentan bile overwhelms you with hallucinations of a long past time in your life.

# TERRORS

Note: This section is reference for the Helm of the World and not intended to be communicated directly at the play table.

## HENTAN

The Hentan were developed through dark science amidst the crooked bark of Kalduhr – they exist as a genocidal tool precariously held in check, commissioned to end an unwinnable war on the other side of the world. They are pure predators, conjured and bred to wipe

out entire species, quickly and with little discrimination. Earning a secret commission to transport Hentan, the East Passage Company sought to skim some of their cargo. That rapacity has scattered the seeds of an already existential threat across the Triune Seas.



## PHYSICALITY

Fully formed, a Hentan resembles something of a cross between a peleciniid wasp, dragonfish, and whatever creature it's patterned as its prey. Thin silvery bones are encased in pearly muscle fibers that develop a truly pitch-black crust – an exoskeleton of sorts. The mature Hentan appears like a void in space, seemingly as immeasurable as the star-dense night sky.

The bodily fluid of a Hentan is a thick, faintly pearl oil: On immediate exposure to air, it burns through most organic material, making the creatures a fatal threat even when harmed. Over time it thickens into a far-less acidic form, forming a sticky shimmering goo.

## REPRODUCTION

At its root a chimera of magic and flesh, the Hentan biology adapts growth and development from across the ecological world. Its lifecycle begins in the bile-filled egg sacks of a queen. She will nurture these as part of her own body – repeating her existing genetic pattern – or lay them in a dormant state to procure a new model. Removed from her body, the sacks develop a hard charcoal-colored shell. Plantlike tendrils grow within these pods while awaiting an incubation host.

These tendrils respond to lifeforms, excreting spores into the air which

seed the Hentan biology in hosts. There, a larva forms and grows, accumulating soul and flesh alike as they assemble an architecture for their adult hybrid form. This modeling provides them an innate sense of the pursuit and slaughter of the host species.

Encoded for this hunt, the Hentan larvæ then forcibly exit the host body, prepared to rapidly grow. Over the course of hours, these spiderly spawn expand into their inky black, fully developed forms, merging their own genetics with traits of their modeled prey.

## QUEENS

Although queens share a tightly interconnected biological line, they fiercely seek singular rule. Once dominance is established, egg sacks develop across the queen's expanding body. Unintended by the Hentan's creators, subsequent generations of queens develop appetite for the consciousness of their initial prey.

And so, rather than digesting the flesh of her provisions, a queen often sustains them as part of her body, feasting on their thoughts and emotions. Whatever minds her victims retain experience memories of the host and prey, while being largely overcome in an euphoria of empty endlessness. Their mouths may whisper, but they will not scream.

## FIRST TIDE

# GHOST & SHELL

Few things could entice a crew as strongly as sight of the ghost ship Nicodemus drifting through the water. The most majestic and heavily armed transport in the East Passage Company, the ship had disappeared and been assumed sunk by some unspeakable terror of the deep.

Yet, here it is, now tethered tightly to your ship. Every board charred, shattered, or dripping in grime, it is a zombie of its former self. Preliminary searches, though, have already proven much of its bounty still intact. And so, the seafarers have begun scouring its decks, determining what of value can be confiscated and, perhaps, what took down the pride of the Company.

In this tide, the seafarers are given time to explore the Nicodemus (deck-by-deck notes are provided). Utilize unclaimed occupations to present characters as foils and predicaments in the players' own exploration. Some possibilities:

- An ornate object tied to a player's drive can be seen pocketed by another character.
- A character finds severe damage akin to beast rather than battle.
- Two characters get into an argument over an object one considers an ill omen.

To conclude this tide, the seafarers hear tremendous commotion from the top deck. Hector, a brash rigger inspecting the Nicodemus' foremast, has fallen into one of the barnacle clusters. A veritable field of stalks sways around him, clouding the air with a warm fluid and mossy flakes of green. If the seafarers don't, the rest of the crew retrieves him and shuffles him to the ship's infirmary.

### MAIN DECK

The top decks appear like a time capsule of carnage. Burned down rigging scatters in disarray over the aftermath of a long, difficult battle. The stains of executions can still be made out in blackened, storm-worn surfaces. As the ship shifts in the waves, blades and tools slide in packs that have accumulated over time.

What seem to be massive barnacles affix themselves in clusters about the hull and decks: The slim split in their hard shells teasingly revealing heaping pulp within. When approached, thin stalks will reach quickly and gracefully out of the barnacles, excreting a flake-filled gas from their tips. Inhaling the substance will fill the breather with a euphoric feeling. In actuality, these are Hentan egg sacks, discharging their spores.

## GUN DECKS

Cannon are scattered and tipped, with splintered boards, crushed skeletons, and shredded uniforms evidencing battle with foes inside and out. Strange and stunningly beautiful navigation equipment can be found strewn about. Its operation reveals dark omens in the stars and visions of far-off places.

## KEEL

The sea beneath the Nicodemus holds its own secret. Any seafarers who venture under would find the water toxic and acidic – deadly if pushed through. A large organic form might be noticeable from a distance with the right light.

## OFFICER'S QUARTERS

Although ransacked, there are any number of navigational instruments and fine clothing strewn about. The captain's quarters themselves are barricaded shut from the inside. Should the seafarers gain access, they'd find several individuals – decidedly not in officers' uniforms – starved to death and the room smelling of squalor.

## ORLOP DECK

The deck is dark and packed with cables. Cabinetry is installed throughout, holding detailed log books and valuable relics. The seafarers may discover the ship's only living survivor: A thin young sailor in their late

teens hiding within the coiled rope, it's unclear if they were Company or raiding crew. Traumatized by whatever they've seen here, they don't speak. (This character will avoid Hentan at all costs, slinking away into crevices and corners.)

The infirmary is in filthy condition ... mauled bodies and amputated limbs lie scattershot, with fat flies and carrion mulling about.

## HOLD

The lowest ballast-level hold sits behind a perplexingly constructed vault door, an enormous, bulkhead-to-bulkhead carved face with bulbous features. Thick soot ropes stretch from between its lips to iron cleats around the space, tethering the gate shut. A heavy crack splits through the right side of the face. In the gap where its eye once was, barnacles like those on the top deck have grown. The eye itself rolls along the floor planks with the pitch of the ship, striking the ship's hull in a continually startling crash.

Even if the tethers were to be cut, the barnacles have grown in such a way to seal the gate tight, and there'd be nothing but more of these egg sacks coating every surface beyond. There is – however – a sense of whispering voices coming from somewhere in the area.

## SECOND TIDE

# CONSUMED IN REVELRY

Hours later, the seafarers are gathered in the mess for dinner – a substantial feast including cured meats procured from the bowels of the Nicodemus. The sounds of a concertina and fiddle in a playful duet drift through the shouts, laughter, and general murmur of the crew.

Hector has been released from the sick bay and sits quietly consumed in his own thoughts near one of the seafarers. Thrown by the abnormally pensive rigger, a marine named Evelyn starts ribbing Hector about the incident – enticing the player characters to join in or perhaps teasing them about their own involvement. Annoyed at first, Hector musters the energy to play along. Almost immediately, he appears to choke and enters a dazed like state, collapsing to the ground.

In a seizure-like state, Hector convulses and begins clawing in panic at the base of his rib cage.

Regardless of how the seafarers address this situation, the following event occurs. (Any rolled actions to

aid Hector should inform if and how the infliction inadvertently extends through the ship.)

Ivory spider legs pierce through the crew member's skin, tearing back into the character's flesh in tandem with their own hands. After carving an opening, the legs invert outward, lifting and suspending a tankard-sized thorax out of Hector. The creature makes shrill chirping noises and its body pulses – pained as it visibly, rapidly grows in size and form. It aggressively wants space and will attempt to scurry downward into the lower levels of the ship.

To make matters worse, a number of these creatures are likely gestating in the bodies of any crew members who have come into close contact with the barnacle clusters.

Note: Seafarers may attempt to kill, crush, or maim these larval forms. However, like all Hentan, the creatures have an acidic blood that will eat through at least the immediate surface it leaks onto.



### THIRD TIDE

## THE MURMURATION

Above the chaos and high in the crow's nest, the barrelman notices a peculiar flickering of stars. First isolated, but then occurring in larger swathes of sky, until a cacophony of silhouetted birds can be seen shading the moon.

An enormous murmuration of sea-birds quickly approaches and overtakes the ships. The birds aggressively swoop and dive, furiously cawing, snapping, and scratching. Trying to make their way down, a rigger is overcome and falls to the top deck in a crunch, their skin appearing sliced as if by a thousand blades. From the crow's nest, the barrelman screams for help.

What is the relationship between the seafarers and the barrelman (or other crew members caught above)? Have deals been cut for information or collaboration? Why would they seek to assist in the predicament?

Aside from the immediate danger to the crew, the barnacle clusters have extended their stalks and are waged in a battle of their own with the sea-birds. While birds slice some of the stalks, they fall in number at contact with the spore clouds. The flock has come to the *Nicodemus* with a sense of the reawakened Hentan scourge within. However, their dropped kin will only catalyze the development of these arcane predators.

## FOURTH TIDE

# THE INFERNAL HUNT

Unless the seafarers have found a way to chase off the flock, morning breaks with the masts and rails of the two ships covered in the avian armada. They perch, peering at the scene like sentinels. There is an occasional squawk or call, but they are otherwise silent.

Noticeably, the Nicodemus also sits higher in the water. Presumably unbeknownst to the seafarers, the queen has been lying in dormant safety beneath the hull of the Nicodemus. She has now shifted to the

devil seam of the more seaworthy vessel piloted by the seafarers.

Below deck the crew debates its next move. Some have grown intensely convinced that the Nicodemus carries a curse ... While the prevailing thought is to scavenge some value from their prized find, there is also sentiment to cut bait and leave quickly. A smaller faction has seen the thing that was borne from Hector's chest and harbors more fear of whatever living horror may be lurking within the shadows of their own ship. Better to escape on the back of a corpse than a monster, they claim.

What do the seafarers do?

Whatever they decide, newly spawned and matured Hentan soldiers and drones already prowl the dark crevices of both ships. Their nature is to stalk and kill, but their directive is to save their queen her share. Beginning from the queen's former hold in the Nicodemus, any grown Hentan will herd crew members toward the hold of their own ship – slaying and devouring a few as part of the effort. They may climb, burrow, and even swim freely while pursuing their hunt. (Hentan molded after birds would likewise pursue the lingering flock.)



## FIFTH TIDE DEVIL TO PAY



Finding themselves herded by the creatures into their own hold, the seafarers and few remaining crew huddle together – trying to quietly hide from the predatory beasts scouring the ships. They hear an occasional scream and perhaps a drip of acidic blood singeing through the boards above.

More terrifying though, is the putrid smell and sizzle coming from the hull itself. Despite the gaping hole that has formed, the sea does not pour forth. Instead, sludgy green tissue pushes through bubbling up and alongside the bulwark – sacks of eggs and human faces can be made out through translucent flesh. Soon after, the long skull of a Hen-

tan queen probes into the space, its wide flaring curves appearing almost elegant. A shrill mental reverberates from her, and the sensation seems only relieved when someone approaches her maw, whether by their own will or through another's.

Meanwhile, the faces protruding from the queen's folds whisper memories of their human journeys and the queen's lineage. If engaged, they ask about the state of the stars, reflecting on the seeming eternity they have been part of the Hentan queen. Most promise peace, wisdom, and endlessness if the living join their state. Some may tell a more transparent tale.



VOYAGE  
THE WRECK  
OF FUTILITY

SUMMARY

Stranded in pack ice, a ship draws the attention of a hive-mind vessel and confronts its connections to the origin of the world.

REFERENCES

The Thing, The Terror, Star Trek (Borg),  
2001, An Antarctic Mystery

LINES & VEILS

Loss of individual agency, body mutilation,  
ritual animal slaughter

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PROLOGUE

## ALONE IN FUTILITY

In the halcyon summer days of its voyage, the *Futility* skimmed through the Salt Sea's southern reaches. Passage that would be frozen shut the breadth of the year gave just enough clearance for expedition during these long – if frigid – days. Her bow grazed over the route's ice-clad skin, breaking it underneath in disquieting cracks.

Much to the captain's delight, the risks of the route had proved profitable with the discovery of an ancient obsidian keep peeking through cliffside snow. Such structures have long been rumored to pervade the frozen outcroppings of this deep corner of the world, but scant few vessels have been able to find and excavate them – much less return by the onset of winter.

*Futility* has completed this leg of its journey with an impressive haul of precious artifacts, sure to change the station of its crew. Alight with the shimmer of treasure, the captain had missed the shortening days and forgotten the final leg yet to reach. And so, the distancing sun hardens the sea's scales on all sides, locking even this formidable icebreaker within tightened pack ice.

With the sky hovering low in resolute gray, frost whips through the air, flicking the skin with gelid darts. While the carpenter keeps idling bodies occupied reinforcing the hull, the *Futility*'s frozen pace creeps an impending doom into the minds of its crew. Winter has closed its clutch, and *Futility* will most assuredly not depart from it.



# MOMENTS

- A compass spins wildly with small tendrils of electricity forming on its surface.
- Ice breaks underneath a sled full of supplies, plunging crew members into a chilling slurry.
- The pack ice tightens, crushing the lower hull of the Futility.
- Another fleet ship is spotted stranded in the distance, but the Welded get to it first.
- A popular figure among the crew disappears, and later returns bearing the mark of the Welded.
- Webs of lightning flicker across the sky, raising body hair to high alert.
- Every light within the barge is simultaneously snuffed.

# CONDITIONS

- A mottled, frost-covered gull perches nearby and follows you everywhere, cackling intermittently.
- Black stones grow from your flesh like a pox.
- You have visions of a sphinx's head, made of black stone and telling you of the future world.
- The smell of the Welded's inky black saliva gives you intense nausea.
- You seem to run scores of degrees warmer than others, shedding all but the thinnest layer of clothing.
- Metallic objects grow impossible to use, seeming to give you an electrical discharge.
- You grow convinced that a fellow seafarer has secretly been Welded for some time.
- The polar beast becomes an obsession: You carve its depiction in planks, wear its fur, tattoo its image onto yourself and potentially others.
- The Welded take particular interest in you, and speak to you separate from the others.
- You believe a long-lost loved one is part of the Welded collective.
- You seek to remove the marks from a Welded and free them from their bond to the collective. (This will likely not go well for them.)

# TERRORS

Note: This section is reference for the Helm of the World and not intended to be communicated directly at the play table.

## THE WELDED

The Welded Barge is how those who've survived winters in the south refer to a hive collective that lurches slowly through the polar stretches of the Salt Sea, growing larger as it claims stranded ships and crews. Bearing cloth scraps with saliva-inked spots affixed via piercing spikes, Welded inhabitants think as one, with their memories and individual impulses disintegrating or completely evaporated into time. These spikes fuse with the flesh and organs of those who become Welded, proving dangerous to remove.

Everything experienced by one inhabitant is experienced by all. Inhabitants hold all the common capabilities of humans, including the abilities to run and jump. However, since the collective can perceive and act as one, it typically will not strain individual parts to challenge or pursue opposition.

The memories and experiences of those who become Welded are part of the collective's knowledge: They will know the names, histories, and personalities of anyone who comes

into contact with members of the Welded.

Some carry many marks, through chest, eyes, limbs, and other vital organs and appendages, appearing blanketed in scraps of paper. But most carry no more than a few.

Fresh Welded will always go first to the barge, where they'll partake in a ritual of drinking the collective blood – a process that initiates the formulation of inky saliva inside their bodies. They'll also collect their first cache of spikes and parchments before being utilized for the greater function of the collective.

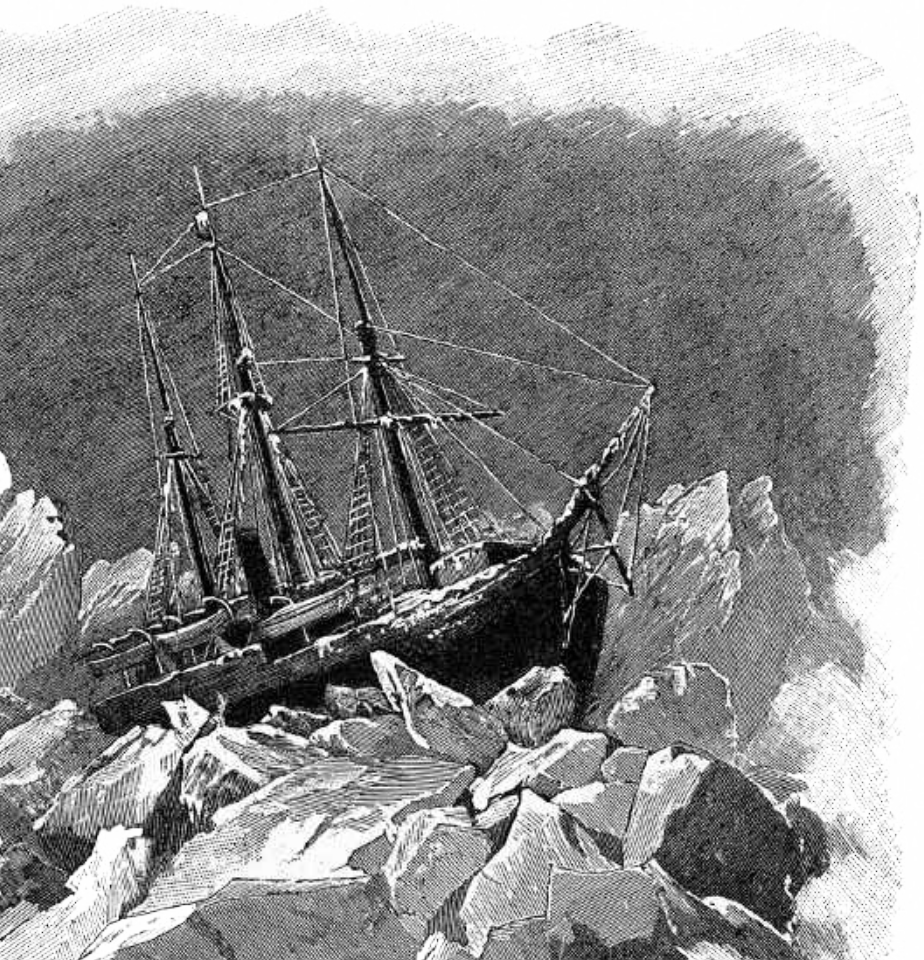
Players will lose one trait for each new mark they bear at the turn of the tide. All characters with a mark replace their Fleet trait with COLLECT and have their drive replaced with: Bring more into the Welded collective.

## THE POLAR OBLIVION

The Polar Oblivion is the primordial source of the Welded, a powerful magnetic force coursing through an obsidian sphinx-shaped mountain

nestled deep in the south. Despite its “unnatural” effects, the Polar Oblivion is soundly natural – a remnant of the creation of this planet, reverberating from this cold corner in perpetuity. At its central source, the sound of the Polar Oblivion overwhelms and pains human senses, giving a feeling of implosion and driving all manner of strange responses. Meanwhile, its shards dissipate the effect to varying degrees, with an underlying binding effect, both physically and psychologically.

Before the cooling of the world, the southern stretch of the Salt Sea was warm, humid, and densely vegetated. An old civilization grew obsessed with the echoing pulses of energy emanating from the Polar Oblivion and – despite mass casualties from the process – carved hunks of its cliffs and used the material to build outposts around the region. While a radical change in climate drove out these people, their artifacts and architecture have been a temptation of southern seafarers for centuries.



## FIRST TIDE

# FROST & FUR

Howls, shouts, and the clanging of bells alert the seafarers to a fresh danger in the predawn.

As the seafarers respond to the call, they find a monstrous beast has boarded the ship, mauled a deckhand, fought back a phalanx of marines, and now gnaws and claws at the main hatch, drawn to something within the bowels of the ship. It's bear-like but far larger – closer to a megatherium in build and stature. Its white fur hangs long, obscuring

glinting black hulks of stone embedded in its flesh. Any wounds to the beast will produce a putrid mix of red blood and black bile.

The seafarers would recognize that an attempt to slay the beast directly will be intensely dangerous – and not achievable in a strike of blade or bullet. What they may not immediately realize is that the creature pursues proximity to some particular artifacts from the Polar Oblivion and will be pacified in their reach.

## SECOND TIDE

# THE FOUND MAN

A night or two after the confrontation with the beast, a far-more-alert watch spots a dim lantern approaching the Futility across the hardened back of the Salt Sea.

A sail-powered dinghy on sled rails becomes revealed, its hull half-ravaged with an oily, tattered tarp hanging over its edge and snapping in the brisk wind. Dressed in elaborate yet dingy silks, a figure aboard the tiny vessel signals. An inky grime covers the dinghy's every surface like a morning frost, emanating an oily musk that darts into inspecting nostrils, finding refuge from the barren air. Characters

are given sense of things rich, dense, and old as they close on the vessel and its occupant. The captain (or a high-ranking officer) will insist the man be brought aboard.

While he is generally amiable, the found man seems only partially present in the moment and speaks of his history as removed from himself. The crew can discover a few things about him:

The found man's name was Longinus, a surveyor aboard a salvage ship presumed marooned for years, the Devil's Dancer. Longinus claims they discovered the great mother



lode of the south, a cache of statuary in gold and inset jade, devices with marvelously perpetual machinations, and exquisite fabrics in crates sealed with redolent wax, all presumed from an old and dead civilization. Greed incited their stay too long, and ice soon caught hold of their hull. He credits his survival on the benevolence of a free-floating barge society. To repay his debts, he comes now to Futility as a scout and messenger – with extended invitation for the crew to join the barge. “As the tragedies of Longinus fade, so may yours,” he concludes. Additional details of Longinus’s past before this tale are lost to him.

Allowed opportunity, the found man lays a mallet on deck and unrolls a long cloth of rusting iron spikes. He looks to the crew and states, “And we continued.” Given time and space, the found man removes

scraps of cloth from within his garb and spits on them. His saliva is like squid’s ink, intensely dark and vaguely gritted, forming a spot in the middle of each cloth. It is required of all inhabitants of the barge to bear this, the Welded Mark. And so anyone looking to partake in the barge’s warmth and safety will need to participate in this ritual. The found man may attempt to instill confidence by exposing his torso, which bears a similar cloth attached to his chest, spiked through by iron.

An eager and hardened crew member will step forward, if not a player. The found man chooses a section of body almost arbitrarily, driving spike through inked cloth and flesh. After the agony of the wounding, the crew member will appear dead. Longinus will continue for as long as he is allowed, growing increasingly insistent as interest fades.

### THIRD TIDE

## THE WIND O' NINE TAILS

As morning breaks, a harsh wind grows. Experienced sailors might recognize it as a once-in-a-generation gale. The Futility groans loudly against its gusts, which rip frost and snow from the sea's surface and form a vicious haze. Construction materials scatter, loose planks fly away into a bleached oblivion, a mast snaps sending a shiver of fear through the crew as it comes crashing into the deck. The Futility will gradually be torn to pieces.

While the crew struggles to secure vital supplies, any fallen members bearing the Welded Mark begin to rise. To catch this in the corner of your eye might appear as if the

wind is taking the body up, yet as it turns and moves into the wind it becomes clear that this motion originates within. The Welded feel summoned to the barge, staggering through the wind and snow, ignoring any call or obstacle that attempts to turn them from their destination. For seafarers who stay behind, the dark silhouettes of the newly Welded fade to specks within the storm's flurry.

By the end of the tumult, crews will have either fastened desperate fortification out of the Futility, embarked with the Welded toward the barge, or found themselves lost between.

### FOURTH TIDE

## ABOARD THE BARGE

It's felt like a lifetime since the Wind O' Nine Tails. The surviving crew are those who have stayed hidden from the Welded but stealthily utilized the barge's resources. Avoiding detection by the Welded, the Futility's remaining crew prowl the seams to find nourishment: steady drops of water from melting ice, fungus growing on the surfaces of once-glorious idols, pilfered goats from a herd supplying the inhabi-

tants' own sustenance and ceremony. The barge itself is a sprawling amalgam of the parts of no fewer than two hundred ships – antiquarian designs flush against more contemporary artifacts. Cavernous store rooms stand 20-30 feet tall, connected to each other like a haphazard labyrinth.

What does the player crew's enclave look like? Is it within the barge or

removed from it? How have they avoided being discovered while venturing through the barge? What have they eyed of particular value in the melange?

On this particular day, the Welded appears focused on herding goats toward the center of the barge, giving the Futility's crew opportunity to obtain items of interest they'd not otherwise be bold enough to pilfer. Have each player describe what they've discovered and how, and ask them why they've not been able to obtain the treasure until this point. (For Welded seafarers, ask what they find themselves forgetting the longer they stay part of the commune.)

However, the herding is unfortunately not limited to small livestock. The Welded uses the goats to guide a massive polar beast – as confronted in the first tide – to a ceremonial hold. And as the seafarers cross patrols of Welded, they may realize they are being ushered to this destination as well.

Complications on rolls should weigh toward the seafarers being discovered and even captured by the Welded. The more crew that go on any particular expedition, the more likely they'll be to attract the attention of the Welded. If crew members are captured, they will face heavy pressure to both join the Welded and to provide the location of any rogue encampments within the barge. A captor may even offer free passage if information can be provided on the whereabouts of other crew members.

The tide ends in a Welded ritual: With the beast in the center of a ring of braziers, throngs of Welded step forth from all sides driving spikes into the creature. Goats bleat and clomp in the chaos. As the cacophony of human and creature bleeds into one, a few Welded in the center pull large black stones from the sopping hide of the beast and hold them above their heads.

The seafarers feel a deep throbbing in their minds as the ground beneath them jolts.



FIFTH TIDE

# THE SPHINX OF OBLIVION

With the entire vessel jarring to a halt, the deck above the ceremonial space tears open, dropping timbers into the crowd below and piercing the flame-lit space with a cold grey light. Towering above the Welded barge amid swirling snow flurries, seafarers can see a tall peak of shimmering black stone, like the head of a colossal sphinx. The barge has navigated in a crash to the base of the Polar Oblivion, and the mountainous landmark hums with pulses of deafening resonance.

The matching stones held high above Welded heads lurch up into the air, drawn like lodestone to their source. Likewise, as the Oblivion pulses, it pulls toward its surface those Welded who bear numerous marks. Most of the collective, however, swarms like ants around this shattered portion of the barge, making repairs and attempting to gain control of the scene.

Seafarers could press their luck

against the horde or escape and press forth to the Polar Oblivion. As they make their way through snow strewn mist, they'll find bodies of the Welded suspended against the mountain's face, along with metal artifacts and weaponry of great splendour. The characters' own metal objects pull more strongly the nearer they approach, as well. Yet this attraction seems a small curiosity compared to the hundreds if not thousands of bodies bound to the sphinx, many ravaged by time and the elements, but scores more still fresh — all staring focused at the seafarers below.

As the survivors draw closer, they feel pressure on their minds: The landscape seems to change between intense colors, tentacles of light stream through their periphery guiding them closer to the sphinx, there is a sensation of floating in the void even when firmly rooted to the ground. It will not take long to fracture those who venture forth.



EPILOGUE  
REMNANTS OF FUTILITY

What does the fleet say of the Futility?

Who discovers its wreckage? Do they find survivors?

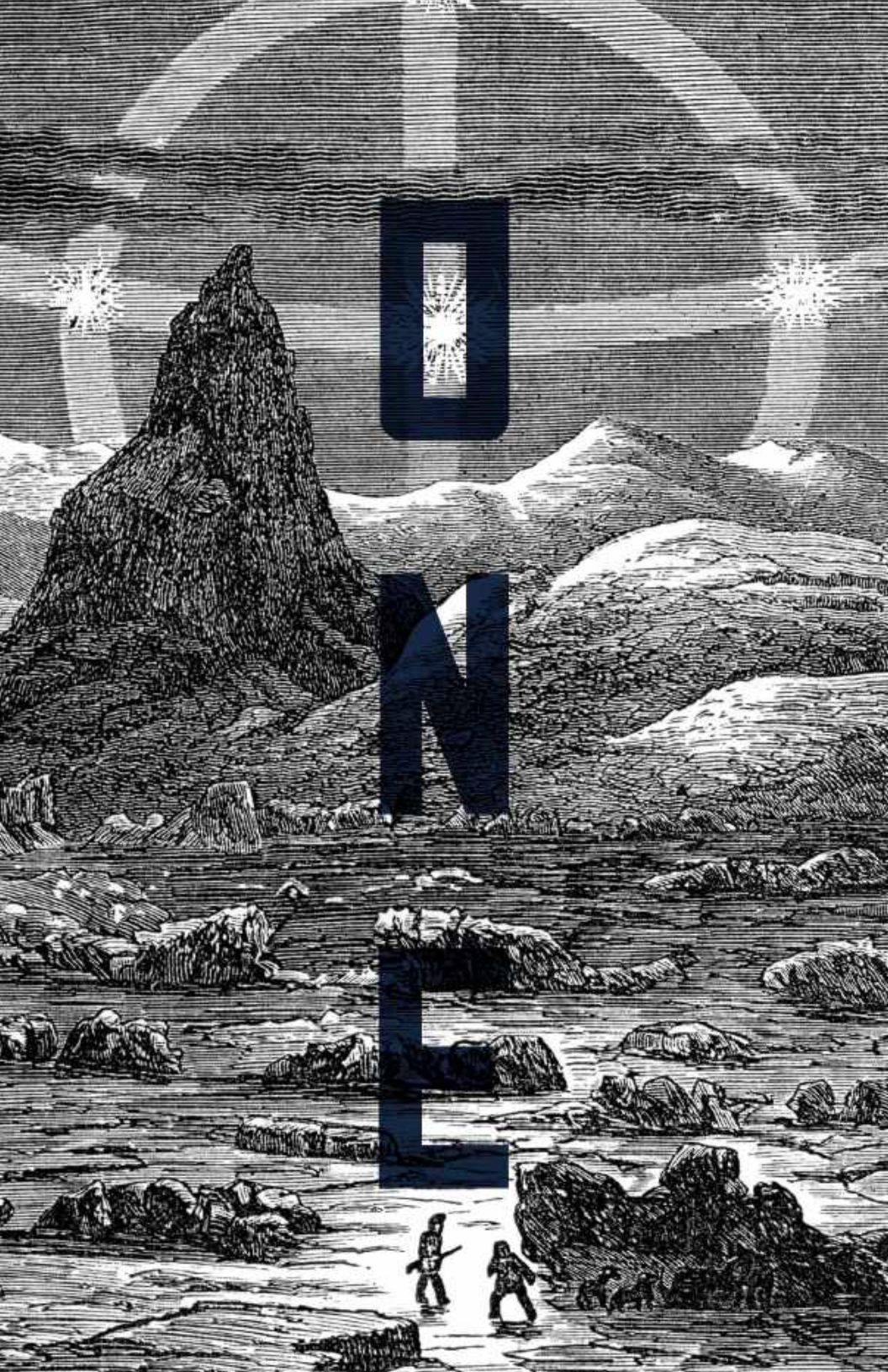
Where do your bodies lie?

What signs might reveal what happened to you?

What fate befalls the discoverers?

Where is the barge next spotted?

In your last moments, what visions do you see of the  
beginning of this world and the nature of the Divine?





VOYAGE  
THE COLOSSUS  
BENEATH

SUMMARY

Following a tip about the Founder's whereabouts, a small crew of seafarers venture into an undersea utopia, only to discover it is on the brink of collapse.

REFERENCES

Bioshock, Dishonored,  
Alien (Resurrection, Prometheus, Covenant, et al)

LINES & VEILS

Body horror, class conflict, mass drowning

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## PROLOGUE

# THE FINGER OF GOD

One of the favorite captains of the East Passage Company's missing Founder had reappeared in a Kalduhri tavern, after his own years-long disappearance. And you squeezed the most valuable info in all the Salt Sea from him before he was found dead in a ditch – and not by your hands.

The tip took you to the Finger of God, a solitary ancient pillar reaching out of the oceanic trenches underneath. The Finger's purposelessness is legendary, existing seemingly only to smash unalert ships as they pass through the blanketing fogs of the eastern sea. Follow it, not up to the heavens but down to the depths, and you'd find the marvel the Founder had created.

Ballasts attached to a specially built submersible, you drop along the Finger of God in pursuit. Deeper and deeper, light fades from beyond the porthole until the darkness gives way to swirls of magenta and orange ... Your vessel seems pulled through a thick liquid. It abruptly drops before halting with a jarring thud.

Your submersible sits on a thick net suspended between the planks of finely machined wharfs at the bottom of the sea. A few larger vessels with similar purpose sit empty be-

side you, all in breathable air under a grand transparent dome. Glowing orange orbs float like jellyfish beyond this clear barrier, dimly illuminating fearsome subterranean ridges as tranquil clusters of sealife swim by.

Within, braziers emanate an unnatural light that's the color of moss, leaving much of the area around you in shadows even where light hits. The effect emphasizes the port of entry's most formidable feature: A sinewy human of sculpted granite – some forty feet tall – pushes half-bent upward, as if it were suspending the glassy canopy, straining to overcome the weight of the sea. While one bent-elbow arm lifts the dome's crown, the other extends straight and horizontal like a punch into the base of the Finger of God. Here, where the figure's hand forms a strained fist, gold has been inlaid on the pillar to look like shattering cracks. Where the figure's gaze reaches the floor, a reminder has been inscribed into the face of a curving terrace: "FATE ONLY BY FLESH."

Beyond the legs of the sculpture, you see a long row of gates beneath a long cloth banner simply reading "Enter Colossus."

# MOMENTS

- A child has wandered near the seafarers and – staring out into the sea – seems to command a whale with her finger.
- Turning a corner, the seafarers' vantage point reveals a large swathe of the city: towering bubbles holding back the sea, majestic facades over reformed organs, and twisting multi-tiered streets alight in orange and pink.
- A woman stands beside a body with a crowd circling around. She commands magic, stretching and bending the body's flesh into new forms, as if creating a miniature Colossus. At the end, she awakes her subject.
- The seafarers spot a laborer who looks uncannily like Meldrin Phox wandering the streets, asking random passersby if they have seen Meldrin.
- The Rising Fist's blasts and the subsequent torrents unsettle Colossus, and the flooding leviathan-corpse of a city has begun sliding toward the abyss.
- A crew of bounty hunters touches down in the port. Their target: The Founder, alive.

# CONDITIONS

- The transparent outer walls of Colossus instead appear like mirrors to you, making the interior spaces vastly disorienting and concealing the outside.
- You've developed a spirit bond with the leviathan that Colossus is carved from: You feel the sting of the mighty harpoons that killed it across your own flesh, and feel an intense thirst for revenge.
- You become convinced of your rightful place among the elite of Colossus and are obsessed with keeping up appearances. You dress yourself in resplendent fashions and conceal your face to not reveal your true status.
- You begin conducting whatever magic infuses this place: A spark of lightning appears above your head.
- You believe your Saint demands you personally baptize the citizens of Colossus.
- Some source of magic has manipulated your flesh, and your innards are now visible through a hemisphere of transparent skin.
- The creatures of the sea – some, gnarled predators – stalk you from beyond Colossus's translucent barriers and would surely hunt you in open water.
- A bit of the Hentan biology has taken hold in your body and you begin growing the inky black spines of the creatures.

# TERRORS & SETTING

Note: This section is reference for the Helm of the World and not intended to be communicated directly at the play table.

At the moment the seafarers enter Colossus, it sits on the brink of collapse. This place was founded on the idea that anyone can take anything if they have the power and will to do so, and the free-for-all has over time nurtured chaos. As the elite class vies for more control, the Founder has made moves to secure singular power. And this rift has opened opportunity to revolutionaries within the laboring class to raise their own play at power.

The factions of Colossus are considered terrors, and violent confrontations will be met with swift ends.

## COLOSSUS

After hunting and slaying a city-sized leviathan, the Founder's personal squadron of vessels began the arduous task of transfiguring the sinking corpse into a personal utopia. Bizarre magics – furtively skimmed from what the East Passage Company transported over decades – were used to stretch and harden the thick hide of the beast, much of it to a vitreous extent.

The result bears no resemblance to the creature that once was, but instead, a multi-tiered bubble of pa-

latial urbanity: Grand suites with sweeping views, dazzling purveyors of mystic rarities, venues where the intrepid explore all manner of artful creation and revelry.

## THE GREAT ONES

Deep beneath the sea's surface, The Founder has created a pocket society of the elite and loyal. Colossus is a place where these magnates and aristocrats can explore desires and further themselves without the prying eyes and pilfering hands of nation states. They simply agree to one-way passage to the Founder's hidden society.

Those of highest status are part of an inner circle called The Great Ones, who are privy to the strange magics used to build this place. They barter the arcane to those clamoring up the societal ladder, while bolstering their own status at the top rung. However. The Great Ones have grown suspicious of the Founder, who they rightly believe is making a move to gain power that the rest of this elite group will be cut off from.

The Founder has particular obsession with Hentan biology and spends a great deal of time and re-

sources trying to control its arcane power. A laboratory operated by automatons experiments in grafting its essence into living creatures without igniting full transmutation. The goal: to make the Founder a hybrid, still cognizant of humanity but with Hentan resilience.

### THE RISING FIST

The laboring class of Colossus proved a necessary afterthought. A wave of East Passage Company lifers and isolated recruits were quietly shuffled into the Founder's control before departing to the utopian dreamscape.

Despite its vocal posturing as a meritocracy, Colossus was established under a clear plutocratic structure – with the legacy of the world above having more bearing on one's status than achieved success in this newly crafted world below.

Under the cold repression of the Great Ones, a revolution has been formulating. Rather than tinkering with the magic created Colossus, the laborers of the Rising Fist have been fueling upheaval with material things: shadowy bribes for contraband. These minor luxuries become explosives, weaponry, and the tools of upheaval. The Rising Fist will not go quietly into the Deep.

### HENTAN

See "A Covenant of Silence".



## FIRST TIDE

# A NIP AT THE HEEL

The harbor appears to not have been in use for some time. Carts and kiosks sit empty and unoperated. But as the seafarers move toward the gate to the underwater city beyond, they hear low whispers behind the heel of the statue towering above.

Two individuals (Astrus and Dredge) have a third (Meldrin) captive. The captors are dressed in formal, tailored garb, layers of fine fabrics and embellishments – even on the one in uniform. In contrast, their prisoner wears the simple clothes of the working class, functional and durable but lacking excess decoration.

Seafarers might overhear Astrus demanding information on the Founder's latest project from Meldrin, who seems unphased by the threats. Given this stubbornness, Astrus has grown impatient and aims to kill Meldrin. If the seafarers do not intervene, a blade of lightning will rip forth from Astrus's palm and gouge a hole in Meldrin's torso. Within the cavity drips a creamy fluid, coating whirring gears and levers. To Astrus' surprise, Meldrin was an automaton. However, to Dredge's surprise, the flash of lightning has revealed the newly arrived seafarers within the dim atrium.

### ASTRUS VA TORRID

#### Captor 1

A wealthy merchant, she's renowned for securing the exclusive manufacture of the navigational equipment found on every East Passage Company vessel – and refusing its sale to independent fleets. Astrus is a Great One: charismatic, clever, and entitled.

- Knows: Astrus holds close connections with Colossus' upper echelon and can procure audiences and favors among the Great Ones, including the Founder herself. Through this, she maintains extensive knowledge of

the creation and maintenance of Colossus and wields some of its magic.

- Wants: Astrus knowingly finds herself cut off from the Founder's current experimentation and is largely more aware of its existence than the majority of the Great Ones. In seizing Meldrin, she hopes to gain insight.

- Doesn't Realize: The knowledge she seeks from the Founder's most loyal staff has been spread widely within the dissident Rising Fist.

## TRIVVOR ELDE AKA CAPT. DREDGE

Captor 2

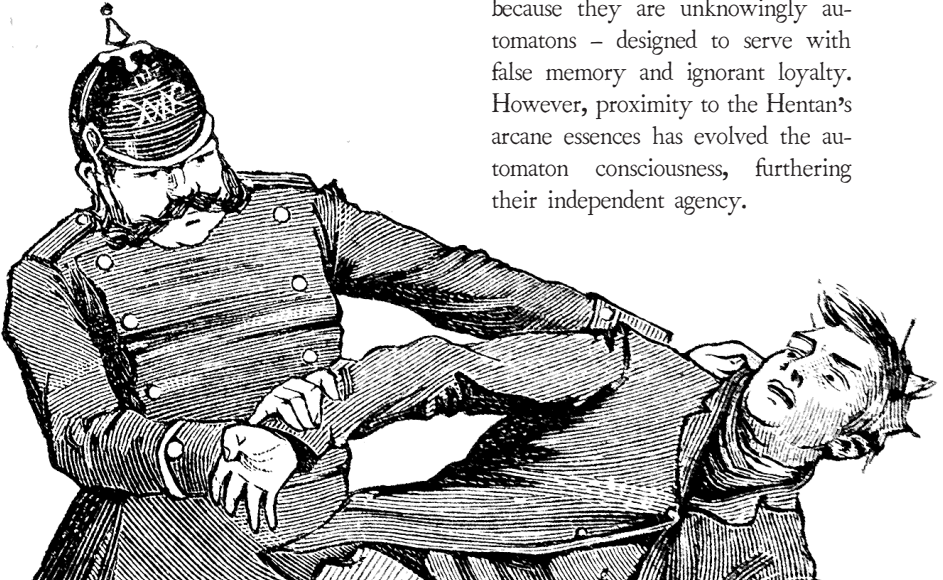
Head of a private security firm within Colossus, Dredge formerly served as a captain in the East Passage Company. He is cautious, gruff, and shrewd – touted as a self-made man by many within Colossus.

- Knows: Through his firm, Dredge knows where many of the bodies in Colossus are buried – literally and otherwise. He keeps the knowledge concealed, knowing secrets only offer value if they remain as such.
- Wants: Dredge aims simply to maintain his middling status within Colossus and – owed enough favors from the elite – to be fully accepted as a Great One on his own terms.
- Doesn't Realize: Astrus worked with Giver to murder one of Dredge's favorite clients, Herald.

## MELDRIN PHOX Captive

A bookkeeper for Colossus, who once processed entries into the underwater city but now works in the strict confidence of the Founder. Quiet, focused, and a bit distant.

- Knows: The Founder is experimenting with a kind of biological alchemy utilizing the Hentan, and Meldrin keeps record of these efforts. The Great Ones have spread the magics that made Colossus possible, and the Founder seeks to transcend this leveled field by becoming a hybrid of human and Hentan.
- Wants: Meldrin has joined the Rising Fist, an insurrectionist movement that plots to overturn the Founder and install a republic. Right now, he wants release without revealing privileged information.
- Doesn't Realize: The Founder trusts Meldrin and his colleagues because they are unknowingly automatons – designed to serve with false memory and ignorant loyalty. However, proximity to the Hentan's arcane essences has evolved the automaton consciousness, furthering their independent agency.





## SECOND TIDE

# GIVER & HERALD

As the seafarers move into the majestic thoroughfares of Colossus, they receive warm – and rather insistent – welcome into a purveyor of rare relics. The sign above the shop reads Giver & Herald in massive gold-leafed letters, with Herald scrawled out. A masked clerk ushers them into the store, making the smallest of small talk while offering rare access to Giver & Herald's grandest retail experience. Amidst gold-plated cabinetry and luxurious fashions, the seafarers are escorted to a theater-in-the-round that drops down five floors from where they stand. A haunting cello sonata drifts up from the stage at the base of the theater, while slender windows to the outside sea – running vertically top to bottom – cast an eerie light on the proceedings.

Guided past private boxes of finely dressed, transfixed patrons, the seafarers witness the end of the perfor-

mance. There are no cheers, simply the sonata's conclusion. Giver walks out onto the stage, wearing a long, gleaming white plague-crow's mask. He claps and praises the performance in words that echo through the hall. Alluding to great suffering the performer has faced in previous trials, he concedes it may be time to grant "the gift." Turning to the audience for confirmation, Giver is met with a sudden applause full of anticipation.

As Giver proceeds, streams of color and energy swirl about him, dancing into and through the cellist's body. After a short time, the cellist writhing in pain lifts a strained arm ... Giver halts the plumes ... And a small blade of lightning spouts from the cellist's palm. Light rises in the room as the towering audience all similarly raise their hands, emanating the same electric flare.



## GIVER

The clerk who has brought the seafarers to this point turns to them and states, “It will be your turns now. Show Giver you are deserving, and you’ll be granted the gift.” If they don’t, of course, Giver’s abilities will be used in a much more sadistic way – a penalty the audience anticipates as eagerly as reward. Attempting to bow out of the session will be frowned upon, if not punished.

Do the seafarers perform? How? Build any performances as risk rolls: A 6 will grant the performer the ability to manifest a small bit of lightning, and mark them as allied to the Great Ones.

The tide concludes in this way: As he doles out penalty or praise to the final seafarer, Giver will be pelted with a barrage of crossbow bolts from above, his mask shattering and body crumpling to the ground as streams of blood pour forth. The tide concludes.

Giver and his partner Herald were the chief engineers of Colossus, versed in the nuances of its foundational magic and remaining unusually public in wielding it. He is eccentric, effervescent, and cunningly cruel.

- **Knows:** Giver is exceptionally well-versed in the magic that built Colossus, unrivaled by any save the Founder and his former partner – whose murder Giver colluded in.
- **Wants:** Giver is building his own loyal, magic-wielding faction within the elite classes – in a bold and transparent bid to usurp the Founder as the icon of Colossus.
- **Doesn’t Realize:** In showcasing the societal tension of Colossus as spectacle, Giver has become a primary target of the Rising Fist.

## THIRD TIDE

# STRIKE UP WITH FISTS

From the stage level of Giver & Herald, the seafarers can see a clamor at the upper level. A contingent of insurrectionists have assassinated Giver and prevent clamoring patrons from leaving the theater below. They wear laborers' clothes with bright yellow scarves tied around their heads, and as they raise fists into the air, explosions shatter the long vertical windows along the sides of the theater. Making an escape most pressing, ocean water gushes thunderously into the space.

Even as Giver & Herald floods, the muffled force of additional explosive charges can be heard blasting and echoing throughout Colossus. If the seafarers can find their way out of the theater, they'll still be negotiating the explosions, torrents, and subsequent skirmishes rocking Colossus. As they do, they'll pass shops and estates whose gates have been ravaged and allure with the riches within.

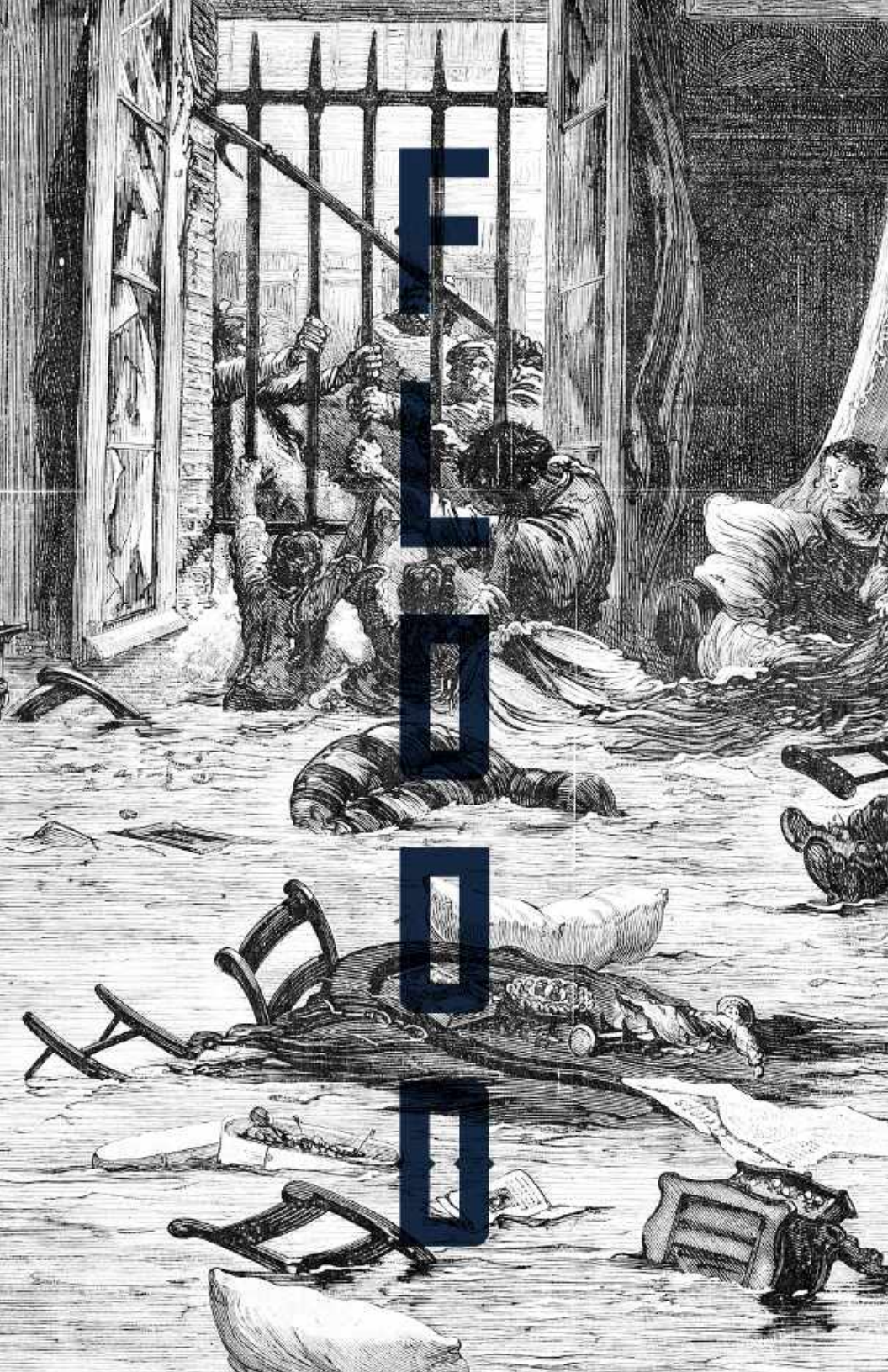
While the Rising Fist squad controlling the area of Giver & Herald has no reason to welcome the seafarers into its ranks, a convincing case to their leader Kuyili could make them allies. That said, it may be easier to navigate around the Rising Fist rather than attempting to court an active insurrection.

### KUYILI

Squad leader, Rising Fist

A fisher pressed out of ancestral waters by an infringing Fastid-Vortuan fleet, Kuyili found work as part of the East Passage Company where she was swept into the ranks of Colossus. Here, she's worked as a cook and butcher, and has become an integral member of the Rising Fist. She is sharp and decisive, even if her view is clouded with idealism.

- **Knows:** In her role, Kuyili has full insight into the insurrection plan: where the charges are placed, how they are phased, and which routes will remain dry and under Rising Fist control.
- **Wants:** While many Rising Fists want a return to life above land, Kuyili is among those who believe in equitably reforming this undersea utopia. However, she believes anyone who commands the magic that created Colossus to be incompatible with its future.
- **Doesn't Realize:** The Founder has known about the insurrection and much of its plans for months and has been planning accordingly, without providing this information to the equally encroaching threat of the Great Ones.



FOURTH TIDE

# THE CORRIDOR OF CORRUPTED DREAMS

Navigating the continuously flooding spaces of Colossus, the seafarers rush through winding underground hallways before coming upon a mighty iron hatch. It opens into a long, wide corridor. Beneath a traditionally masoned arch ceiling are rows of wooden desks and cabinetry, long tables stacked with papers and vials, and most notably, egg-like pellucid pods glowing blue and each containing some manner of twisted creature. The flesh of these things varies from milky pearl to pitch black, with harsh spiny bodies and razor-like teeth and talons. Parts resemble dogs, livestock, and even humans, but are dramatically distorted.

Whether the seafarers arrive with the Rising Fist or the insurrectionists have entered independently, several of the revolutionaries – horrified by what they see – plant explo-

sives on the incubating pods. The subsequent blasts only shatter the containers, though, keeping many of the creatures unharmed. After retching the incubation fluid, the Hentan hybrids lurch to life. Those bearing humanoid features – and capable of movement – will unrelentlessly hunt the seafarers, insurrectionists, and persons of their likeness.

Behind the hatch the seafarers entered through, flood water has undoubtedly engulfed the entire space. On the far side of the corridor, however, they can make out a wide staircase that curves upward.

A few automatons – vaguely resembling Meldrin Phox – have been working within the lab and may present resistance to the seafarers' passage, if they're not also consumed dealing with the hybrids.



## FIFTH TIDE

# AN UNDERWORLD EMERGES

As they ascend the staircase, the seafarers notice the hybrids cease pursuit. Ultimately, they reach a perfectly blown clear sphere – clear and without blemish, sitting on the ocean floor, situated as the last post between the society of Colossus and oblivion.

To one side, a narrow tunnelway slopes up toward Colossus and the spiring Finger of God. To the other, the sea plunges into a deep, craggy trench. Just a few candles light the interior room, making this – the Founder’s office – practically invisible from vantage points above. Meanwhile, the city itself boils with bright explosions and flames inside.

Within the bubble, there are two short bookshelves, a globe perched on a sconce, and a heavy desk made of gnarled wood from Kalduhr. Seated here is the Founder of the East Passage Company.

Whatever hasn’t been defined of the Founder in play can be defined by the group now. Who is the enigma that built this place? Who was it that ruled the seas? A mighty bruiser? A cunning bureaucrat?

“If you’ve come to kill me, I should warn you that certain variables have changed,” the Founder would likely say, clutching a faintly steaming tankard with one hand. The other arm no longer hosts human form, but instead three inky black tentacles that actively twist and spiral around each other. “Perhaps, we can arrange something more beneficial to all present parties.”

The coiling arm seems to act independent and relatively unheeded by The Founder throughout the exchange.

(See next page for character details on The Founder.)



## THE FOUNDER

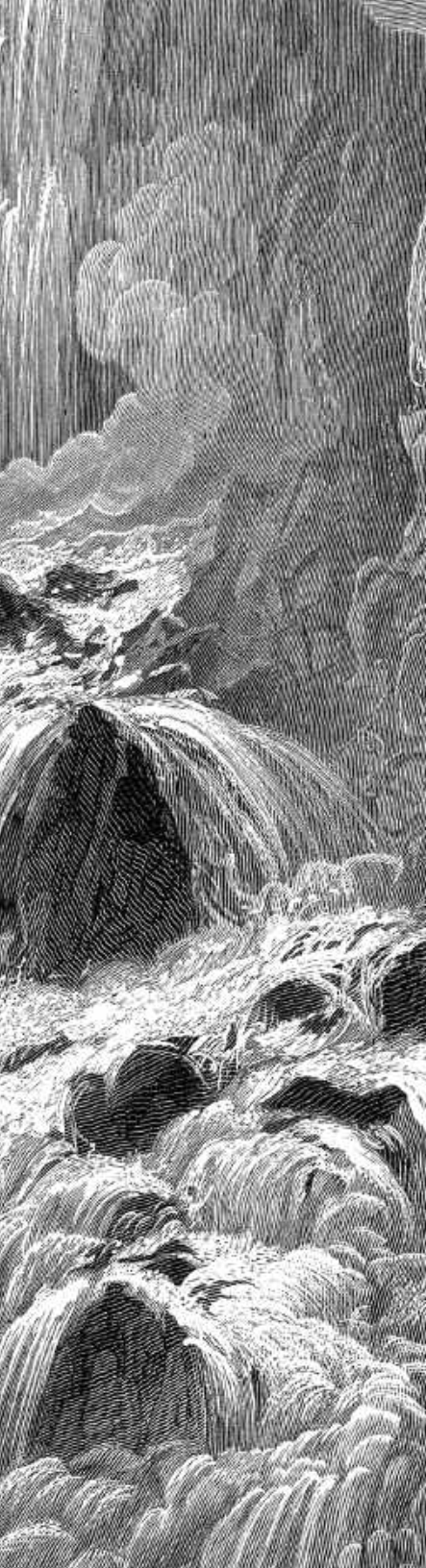
Very little is spoken of the Founder's identity even by those who have been or remain close. The Founder began, grew, and sustained the largest naval empire the Salt Sea has ever known.

**Knows:** Witnessing the revolution consume Colossus from the inside, the Founder has imbibed a serum that infuses the drinker with Hentan traits. However, in countless laboratory tests below, the Hentan essence has proven untamable in itself. The steaming liquid in the tankard is a poisonous fluid, whose damaging effects hold the Hentan's dark biology in check. What exists of the actual serum is stored within the globe.

**Wants:** The Founder has ferocious power, but understands that sharing a fallen undersea society with corpses is no glorious end. A negotiation that results in this newfound force rising to the world above would be advantageous. However, the Founder will protect the singularity of their newly achieved nature fiercely.

**Doesn't Realize:** The Founder believes the seafarers to be part of the Rising Fist or Giver's followers, but would never consider them to be fresh arrivals.





EPILOGUE  
HOME AGAIN

What is left of Colossus?

Who survived the insurrection?  
How?

What information (or seafarers)  
return to the fleet?

Where is the Founder next seen?



**LORE**



LEGEND & SONG  
**PASSED ON  
THROUGH TIME**

The myriad vessels pressing into the Salt Sea all carry their own stories, from tall tales of wrecks narrowly averted to tragic legends sung in song.

In this section, you'll find fragments of epic stories from within the world of Sunken. Expand them into entirely new adventures or enrich existing voyages by threading them in as rumor and pastime.

## The Dead Saints Chain

You do not know the names of Fin-tan and Biorn, who swore to never be parted, cruelly kept apart in the Company's brigs but reunited in their deaths. You have lost the vengeful curses of Salt Tasha, slain by her lover in return for a privateer's marque. You have forgotten Good Catreeny Norres, who, even with Finn's blade at her throat, would not signal her sister's crew onto the rocks. You cannot tell the stories of Young Roddy Prescote, who punishes those who betray their crewmates for their captains.

All these and others have been taken from us. I read their names aloud to you now, but you will forget them in the morning.

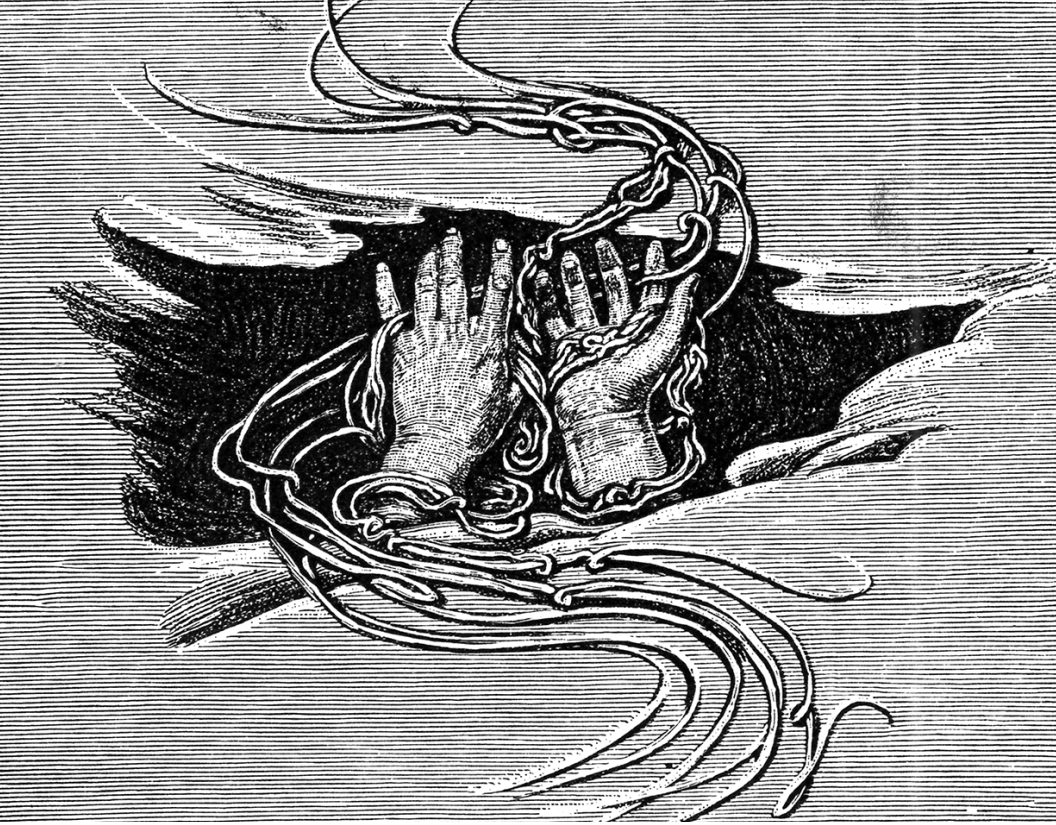
When these, our saints, came to our aid against him, the demon Admiral Tatlock etched their names into links of heavy chain and sank them, burning his ships and their sailors behind him so that no one could remember the forbidden names of the Dead Saints lay. Unforge those links, and our saints will return to aid us again.

## St. Gorman's Whistle

When Gorman's folk sold their raven-haired, umber-eyed son to the sea, he brought little with him but a wooden whistle he carved from the wreck of his grandmother's ship. His whistle made music for dancing in storms, grieving the fallen, and warning of raiders. When the captain, in a drunken rage, threw the honest youth to the trailing sharks, the tune of the whistle soothed their rage and they did not devour him.

When the night and storms passed,

the sharks guided him to an island of sand and rocks. Without water or shelter, he stood, salty and burnt, and played a dirge so sorrowful that it moved the Kraken of the Deep. As his music waned and he fell burned and exhausted to rocks, the tentacled gods reached forth to pull him to his long sleep in the world far below. Some say his whistle still sits on those barren rocks on that forgotten island, and that the Kraken of the Deep are hungering to hear that music again.



## The Dawn Crow

When Captain Sharpe's Dawn Crow declared the Black Skull, she vowed to honor the Code. If aid was to be rendered, she rendered it. If sacrifices were called for, she made them. If salvage was claimed, she honored it. But when her ship's time came and she called to the Skull's own Captain Finn for aid, Finn seized her cargo, burned her ship and crew, and left Sharpe adrift among the flaming wreck. As he sailed away laughing, her cold, silent eyes locked on him.

Now we all fear to see the shadow of The Crow's ghost against the morning gloam. The ghost of Sharpe sails her ship alone now, honoring no law but those vengeful oaths she makes herself. Some say that she will still take living souls aboard, and if they serve her well in her hunt for Finn's heirs and their ship Saint of Squalls, she will give them The Crow as their own when she joins her old crew in the next life.

*Richard Ruane*

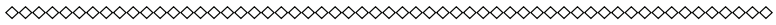
# Witch's Reef Lighthouse

This shallow island barely reaches above the waves except for a slender peak of a long-dormant volcano. Unfortunately for long-distance sailors, it can't be used as a stopping point because it is surrounded by a dense coral reef that has beached many ships.

A hundred years ago, the East Passage Company built a lighthouse to keep any more of its captains from running aground on its shores. For a few years, they had a rotating crew of keepers and accidents fell to zero. But then a scheduled resupply ship went missing. They sent a ship to investigate and it went missing as well. The third ship returned with

half a crew and a mad captain raving about the witch who now lived in the lighthouse and how she "walked onto the sea and dragged him from his own topdeck; he nearly drowned in her inhuman arms." The East Passage Company struck the island from their charts and set a wide space around it as unnavigable, extending their shipping times and cutting into profits.

Indeed, a sea witch has taken up residence and is using her magic to destroy the ships and crews who come near. But she is no human sorceress; she is a powerful naga and holds the island for a mysterious purpose of her own.



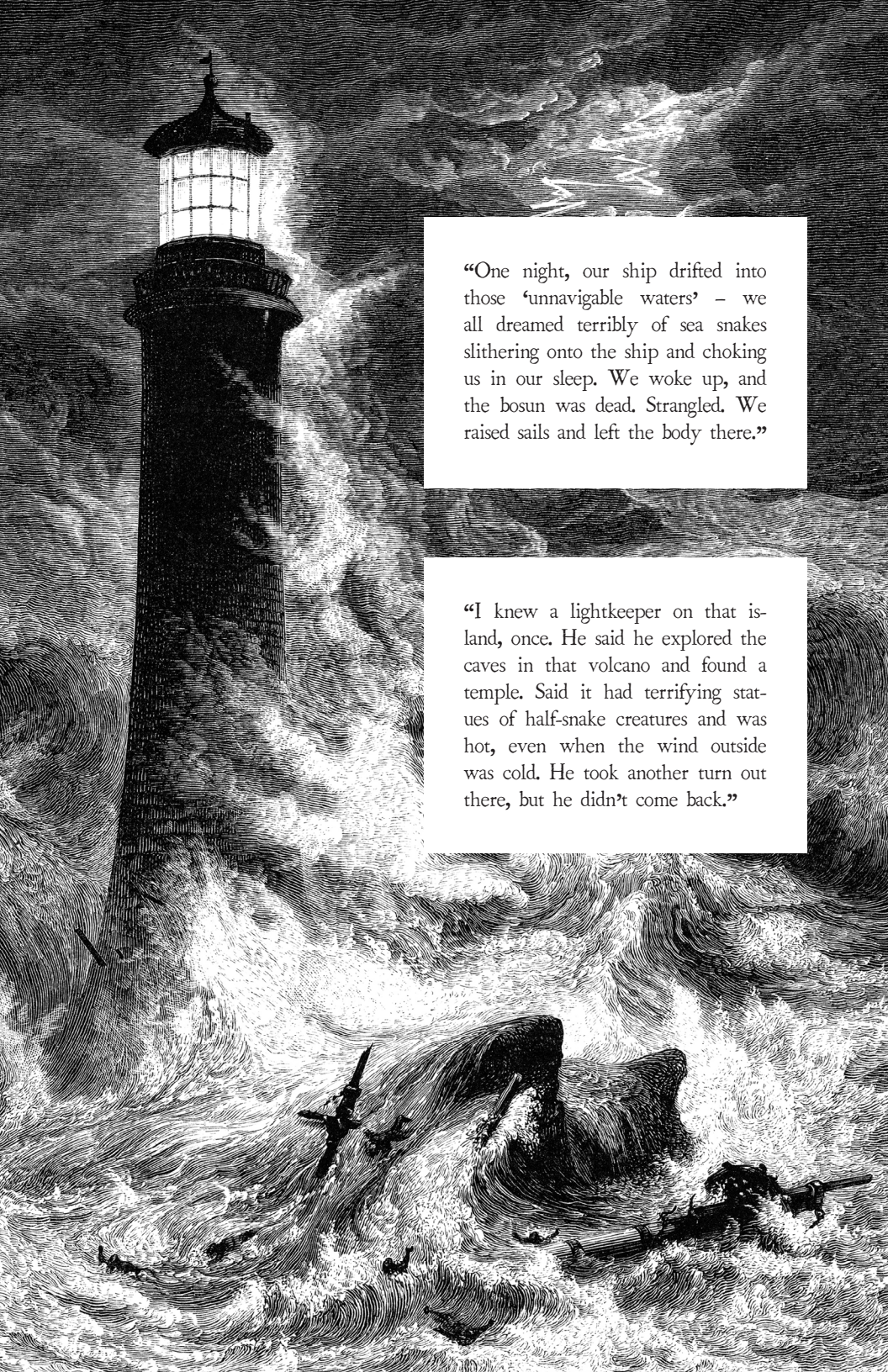
"... the clouds cleared. Finally, there was enough light to see the island. Silas swore he saw an old woman walking on the beach..."

"...through the spyglass myself. He was right - she did not walk on the sand, she moved through the water as if she floated on it. The water was clear, though, and we could all see the shadow dragging fifty or a hundred feet behind her like some dread..."

"... the cook, too. I don't know if there are enough of us left to sail out of here, if the damn winds ever..."

"I am the last. She took Tamrin last night, even though their door was locked. I could hear the slithering of serpents and I stuffed everything I owned into every crack of every door and window. There is nothing now but to wait for her to come for me. There will be no escape."

*Natalie Asb*



“One night, our ship drifted into those ‘unnavigable waters’ – we all dreamed terribly of sea snakes slithering onto the ship and choking us in our sleep. We woke up, and the bosun was dead. Strangled. We raised sails and left the body there.”

“I knew a lightkeeper on that island, once. He said he explored the caves in that volcano and found a temple. Said it had terrifying statues of half-snake creatures and was hot, even when the wind outside was cold. He took another turn out there, but he didn’t come back.”

SHANTY - EAST PASSAGE COMPANY

# The Secret of Admiral Bourel

Admiral Bourel, she's the grand queen of the sea  
Yet what the Company must know, her secret is me.

Sing it loud crew now, sing it loud now.

I come to you, sailors, to make sound of the greed  
of Eloise Bourel, and the scandal she keeps.

Sing it loud crew now, sing so she hears

Through the callous, the failure, of her two broken ears.

Sing it loud crew now, sing it loud now.

All have heard of the morn' Bourel slayed seven score  
Of the sirens forlorn who lured crews to their shore.

Into those rocks now, into them now.

Yet I tell to you more, of disgrace that she bore  
As her crew was succumbed, she sought only splendor.

Into those rocks now, she took helm and did steer

Despite the sirens, whose song her deaf ears would ne'er hear.

Into those rocks now, into them now.

To splinters the ship tore as she drove it to stone  
Offering its sailors to fierce creatures below.

Tell how she came now, tell of her now.

Yet she in her quarters, waiting til only bone  
was all what remained of loyal crew she'd once known.

Tell how she came then, Siren bodies she clove

Til alone, but with blades, amid bounteous alcove.

Tell how she came now, tell of her now.

Some speak of her slayings, and will call them revenge,  
But Bourel's true murder, she's made not one amend.


Heat up the stones now, heat them up now.  
Her crew sail'd to sirens. On deaf ears they'd depend.  
Yet she only had eyes for the trove at the end.

Head of the fleet now, rose high her flag,  
But there lie roses on brimstone, in Hell, for the hag.  
Heat up the stones now, heat them up now.

What Bourel did not know is one siren remained  
Sliver of a young soul, lying still among slain.

Sing it loud crew now, sing it loud now.  
It followed, remembered, and learned quick of her name:  
Eloise Bourel. And it sang to defame.

Sing me loud crew now, sing so she hears  
Through the callous, the failure, of her two broken ears.  
Sing me loud crew now, sing me loud now.



“The melodic curse of the supposed survivor  
has only made me a more feared commander. So  
I suppose she is owed a favor should our paths  
cross again.”

– Admiral Eloise Bourel,  
East Passage Company

SHANTY - THE PURSUIT

# Lament of the Landed

Keep the velvet cloak and the gold brocade  
I won't need them where I'm goin  
On the Great Salt Sea is where I was made  
I won't need you where I'm goin

Your stiff-soled walks and your modesty  
I won't need them where I'm goin  
On the Great Salt Sea is where I am free  
I won't need you where I'm goin

The tedious rites of the landed folks  
I won't need them where I'm goin  
The seething swales, my blood provokes  
I won't need you where I'm goin

Your fertile fields were laid bare for me  
I won't need them where I'm goin  
The mer perched on rocks blow the westerlies  
They call to me, I'm goin

And that gaveling wig in his treacherous court  
Can't catch me where I'm goin  
I did nothing wrong with that flaxen escort  
I won't need her where I'm goin

And if i return, it'll be in an urn!  
And you won't know me from bone  
But my soul will rest in the Great Salt churn  
And never no more a'goin

*Aaron DeRosa*

SHANTY - TRADITIONAL

# Captain Fair

O, my name was Captain Fair  
    As I sailed the Salt Sea  
O, my name was Captain Fair  
    As I sailed the Salt Sea  
My name was Captain Fair  
And Black Skull I did declare  
Into danger I would dare  
    As I sailed the Salt Sea  
Into danger I would dare  
    As I sailed.

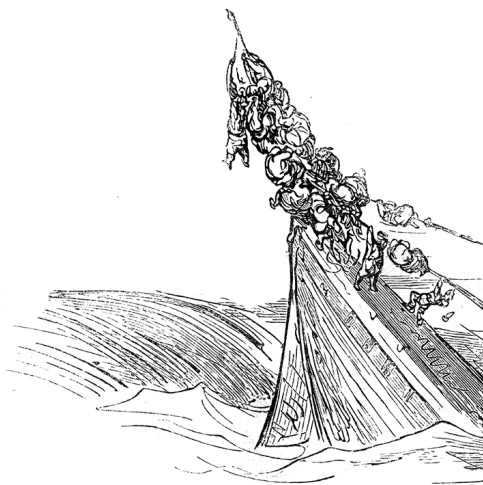
I sank three Company  
    As I sailed the Salt Sea  
O, I sank three Company  
    As I sailed the Salt Sea  
I sank three Company  
And not a one did see  
Saint Gliv blessing me  
    As I sailed the Salt Sea  
Saint Gliv blessing me  
    As I sailed.

I took thunder on my bow  
    As I sailed the Salt Sea  
O, I took thunder on my bow  
    As I sailed the Salt Sea  
I took thunder on my bow  
And I lost my old milk cow  
And survived it all somehow  
    As I sailed the Salt Sea  
And survived it all somehow  
    As I sailed.

I outran the ghost ship Fate  
    As I sailed the Salt Sea  
O, I outran the ghost ship Fate  
    As I sailed the Salt Sea  
I outran the ghost ship Fate  
And my crew I did berate  
In that idle, fearful state  
    As I sailed the Salt Sea.  
In that idle, fearful state  
    As I sailed.

Fate caught up to me that night  
    In the Deep, in the Deep  
O, Fate caught up to me that night  
    In the Deep, in the Deep  
Fate caught up to me that night  
I could not put up a fight  
So I fell below the light  
    In the Deep, in the Deep,  
So I fell below the light  
    In the Deep.

*to the tune of Captain Kidd*



SHANTY - THE BLACK SKULL  
Every Vulture's Share

Come all you hopeful sailors and seekers bold and true  
It is a tale of warning dire that I must tell to you  
For if you seek your fortune with that treach'rous Company  
You'll get no pay but what lies at the bottom of the sea

'Twas bright and blue the sky above when first our voyage began  
That glorious Maiden's Promise, her crew loyal to a man  
Our captain whistled merrily, so sure of our reward  
With gleaming eyes he hinted at the riches stowed aboard

For seven days and seven nights in fair winds we did sail  
I swear me boys I tell you true what folly did prevail  
For though our course were plotted true and charted carefully  
We found ourselves adrift amidst the bright Blossoming Sea

A shadow crossed then o'er the deck, the wind now all but dead  
The crew were all struck silent, an' their hearts now full of dread  
For every sailor knows the truth of depths beyond the blue  
The ocean offers gifts but always takes what is her due

O sorry souls who hear my tale, if nothing seems amiss  
But picture now, our captain standing heedless of the risk  
As o'er the bow he leaned with gilded spyglass to his eye  
He cackled something wild and muttered strange words to the sky

Then in those glowing waves, a thing both vast and ancient woke  
Our captain turned with gleeful eye and dreadful words he spoke  
'Behold! The sign of Torii's star shines bright below the waves  
Come now my friends, our glory waits in sunken wat'ry graves!'

This madman danced before us as he slashed each rope in sight  
His eager hands drew tinder forth to set us all alight  
How swift the song of steel then, as we rushed him like a flood  
How soon that deck we'd swabbed so clean, now painted bright with blood

Then with a roar we seized him and did hurl him to his doom  
To feed whatever power he'd awakened from the gloom  
We seized his loyal first mate, who'd fought with him back to back  
Then strung him high and burned him till his bones were bare and black

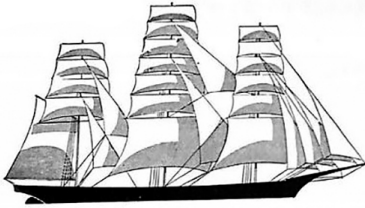
Now never shall we sail in the thrall of merchant lords  
We fly the Black Skull fearlessly for all that it affords  
No deeds at sea be judged, for every vulture has her share  
The Saints know if your bones are black, when fishes pick them bare



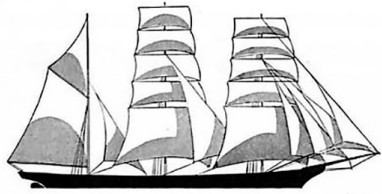
*Gabriel Robinson*

# GLOSSARY

## TYPES OF VESSEL



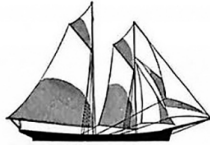
SHIP



BARK



BRIG



SCHOONER



SLOOP



CATBOAT



LUGGER



DHOW



JUNK



SAMPAN

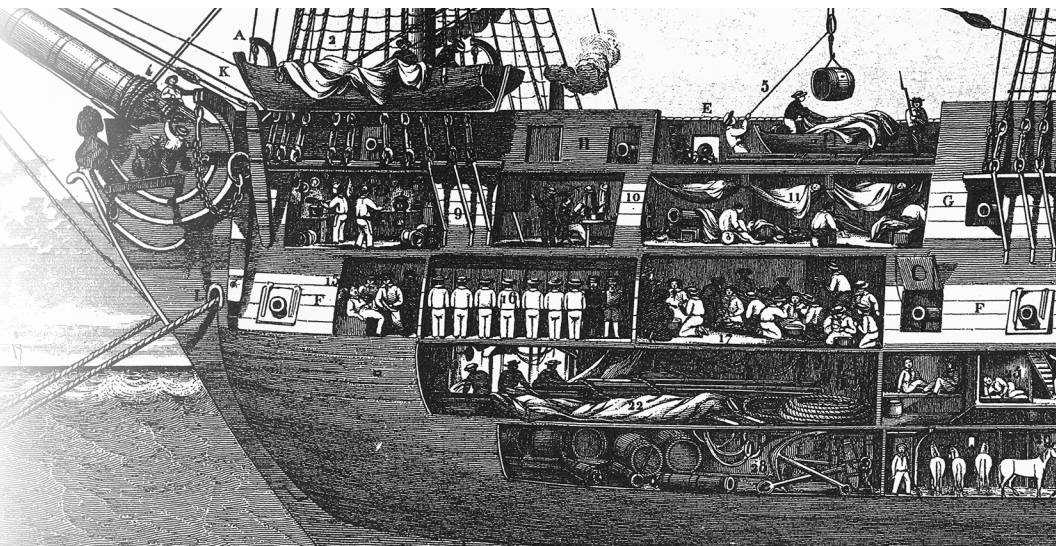
## DIRECTIONAL TERMS

Starboard – Right

Port – Left

Bow – Front

Stern – Back



# SHIP OF THE LINE - DECKS AND TERMS

(listed bow to stern, based on image below)

## MAIN DECK

figurehead, bowsprit, foremast, mainmast, capstan (for raising anchors or cargo), mizzenmast, (7) captain's sleeping quarters, (8) captain's cabin

## UPPER DECK

(9) galley, (10) midshipman's berths, (11) hammocks where crew sleeps, (12) unknown, (13) officers sleeping quarters, (14) officers wardroom/dining area

## MID DECK

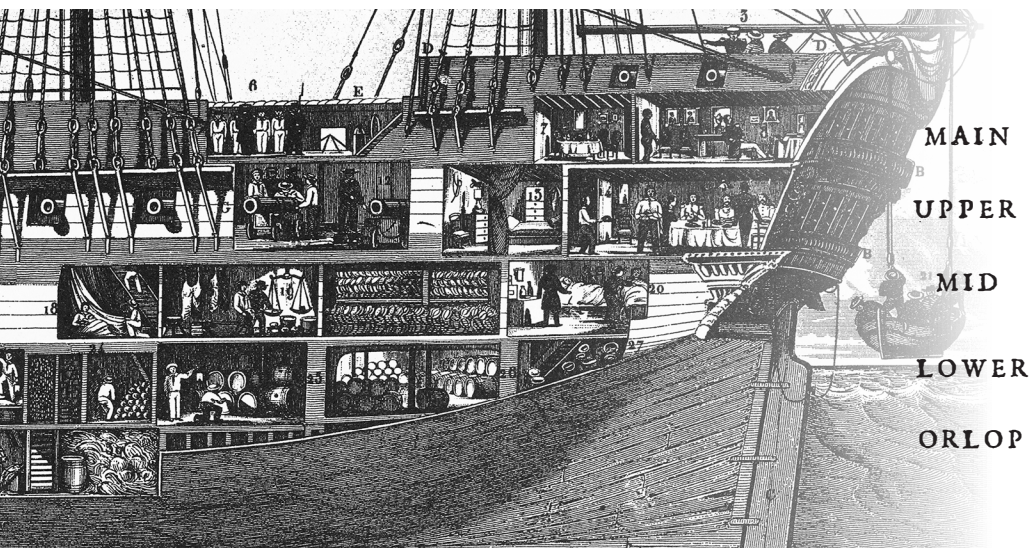
(16,17) crew mess (eating) and muster area, (18) sailmakers room, (19) pursers office, (20) surgery

## LOWER DECK

(22) ships stores, (23) brig (jail), (24) shot locker (cannonballs), (25) powder room (powder divided to small bags for use), (26) powder magazine, (27) storage or chain locker

## ORLOP DECK

(28) general storage, ballast, stores



## TABLE

# REVELATIONS IN THE STARS

Looking to the stars for guidance may reveal more than expected.

1

The constellation of St. Gliv is missing its eyes, an omen of losing one's way at sea. Cling to this instrument if you want any hope of surviving this night.

2

The distant planet Tandis has reached its culmination. Your homeland has strong superstition about this moment. What is it? Do you believe in it?

3

The edge of the waning moon holds a red cast ... It is "the thieves' glimmer", and wariness for the things one values is the only way to move forward.

4

The final star in the constellation of St. Torii, has dipped below the horizon. Her followers believe she manifests below water on nights like these.

5

While the device seems functional, it produces seemingly impossible direction. On close inspection, you find the name of the Company's missing founder etched in its side.

6

Looking through a scope, you see the canopy of Kalduhr. It seems you can even feel the warm breeze and hear the shuffle of leaves, but when you remove your eye there is just the dead cold of your current predicament.



THIS IS FOR VESSEL CREW ONLY



# OFFICIAL LOG

*PARTICULAR RELATING TO*

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME

*SERVICE IN EMPLOY OF*

\_\_\_\_\_  
FLEET

\_\_\_\_\_  
TRAITS

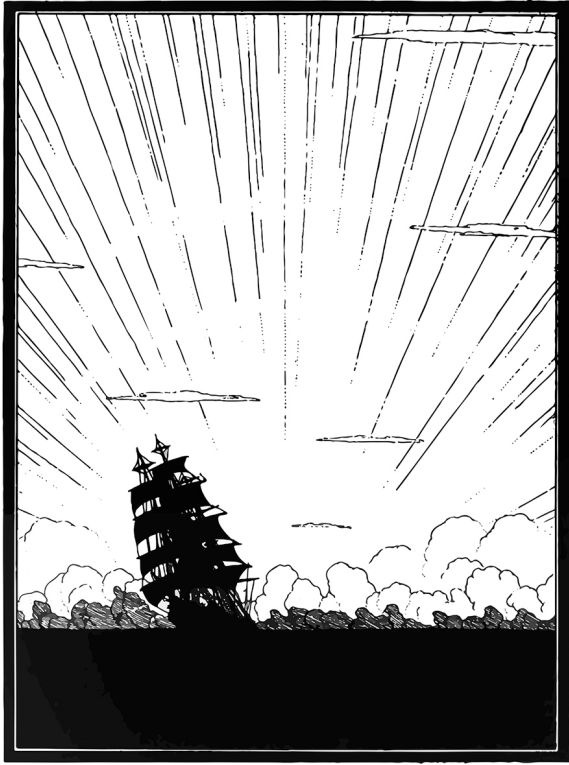
FALL

	DESCRIPTION	TRAITS
OCCUPATION		
BACKGROUND		
SAINT		

SUFFERS CONDITIONS OF

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



deep memories  
yield no epitaphs

# DROWN YOUR HEROES

The stories we tell are often not of gallant survivors but of the hard-pressed, star-crossed crestfallen. They are the poetry of the broken and the inhuman breakers: haunting things, deep and dark and bellowing things, unfathomable things that consume all that edges to their precipice.

Sunken is a tabletop roleplaying game about these things.

It is a tabletop roleplaying game about these things and the sea.

It is a tabletop roleplaying game about how your characters find their doom among these things while at sea.

