

# SHIMMERING SEA

BY ASER TOLENTINO





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# INTRODUCTION

Beneath the sparkling waters of the contested South China Sea, powers beyond the sight and reach of mortal mankind exist beyond the scope of human affairs. However, every now and again, the ignorant primates who think themselves masters of their world find some bobble of a bygone age and believe themselves sufficiently clever to wield tools powerful enough to draw the attention of things older and mightier than they can comprehend.

The Western Pacific teeters on the edge of open war. Naval task forces from half a dozen nations including two aircraft carriers have gathered to confront one another over the disputed re-sources of the crowded island chain. In the past week, tensions have escalated as a U.S. Navy underwater research drone has gone missing in the vicinity of a Chinese battle group. But aboard the navy's newest warship, the Zumwalt-class stealth destroyer USS Lynden Johnson, another mystery that may actually have far more disastrous consequences for the world is in need of investigation.

On August 24, 2019, USS Lynden Johnson in company with a guided missile cruiser USS Normandy and the guided missile destroyers USS Berry and USS O'Cane, sailed into the South China Sea to show the flag and deter aggressive patrolling by People's Liberation Army



Navy ships near islands claimed by other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Three days after beginning their patrol, Sonar Technician Third-Class Arthur Duncan disappeared sometime between 0230 and 0730 hours after coming off the mid watch. Once alerted to the disappearance, the officer of the watch alerted the captain and a search of the ship was conducted. When no sign of him could be found, the ship came about and a search of the waters traversed since his last sighting was performed with aid of the ship's SH-60 Seahawk helicopter and aviation assets from allied ships nearby. No sign of Duncan could be found.

Two days later, Chief Master at Arms Phil Claremont shot himself with a sidearm taken from the ship's armory. He left behind no suicide note and investigation yielded no evidence of odd behavior leading up to his suicide. The Naval Criminal Investigative Service has taken an elevated interest in this case at the direction of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff due to the circumstances of Duncan and Claremont's death and disappearance and the sensitive nature of the technologies aboard the USS Johnson, among which is the navy's first railgun.

Investigators are assigned to a special working group to determine the nature of the situation aboard the Johnson and whether a threat to national security exists. Seconded to the NCIS, investigators will be given full authority to look into all aspects of the disappearance and death to discover whether any evidence exists of espionage, sabotage or foul play. Unfortunately, due to the importance of the Johnson in maintaining the credibility of American commitment to its security obligations, military exigencies will require the ship to remain on a heightened defense posture while the team conducts its investigation.

As part of its deployment, USS Johnson is testing a new towed array sonar and a magnetic anomaly detector. It is a component of this array that is the source of Johnson's misfortune. Installed as a self-contained unit that delivers processed telemetry to the ship's combat systems, the revolutionary detection system is not actually a part of the magnetic anomaly detector or sonar at all. Rather, it is a form of resonance imaging acting on artificially excited molecules within the hulls of ships and submarines illuminated by its beam. Unfortunately for the Johnson, the component that provides the illumination for its beam is acting like a beacon to a Shoggoth under the control of a nearby Deep One colony, disrupting their link with the creature and leaving it free to prey upon anything it encounters in the overpopulated waters of the South China Sea. It is the Shoggoth which destroyed the navy's drone, as well as Chinese PLAN supply ship, a cigarette boat smuggling arms to Philippine insurgents from Indonesia and an unlucky Vietnamese fishing boat.

In their attempts to regain control of the Shoggoth, the Deep Ones have increased the power of the signal they use to summon it. This signal is picked up by the Johnson's array and helpfully translated by the ship's computers into a form comprehensible by Duncan and Claremont as a call to return to the sea. Claremont, being debilitatingly aquaphobic suffered a nervous breakdown after being unable to completely resist the influence of the signal.

# THE SCENARIO

## THE BRIEFING

Investigators are summoned by their commanding officers and informed that they will be assigned to a special mission under the highest possible secrecy. They are immediately driven to the nearest airfield where they catch air transport to Manila International Airport. There, they are loaded aboard a C-w Greyhound carrier onboard delivery (COD) aircraft loaded with their fellow investigators and supplies intended for the USS Carl Vinson.

The plane takes off and flies for about an hour before landing aboard the USS Carl Vinson. The landing is jarring for anyone that has never experienced it before, as the plane is dragged to a stop by a cable strung along the carrier's deck. Onboard, investigators are led to a small briefing room where they are met by a lieutenant commander in the Judge Advocate General's Corps. Patricia O'Leary is a 5'5" brunette who looks like she might be a year out of law school at best. She says she will be supervising the investigation from the Carl Vinson and facilitating any requests for support the team should have when on sight.

She will inform them of the loss of the drone, the disappearance of Duncan and Claremont's suicide. All reports are preliminary and very little is certain. Claremont's body was flown to the carrier yesterday and is on its way to Japan. Investigators should interview witnesses to determine Duncan and Claremont's mindsets and search for any evidence of espionage or sabotage aboard. All findings should be kept absolutely confidential and reported to O'Leary only by encrypted communications.

The investigators will be taken to an SH60 Seahawk for a flight to the USS Lyndon Johnson. On the way, they are shadowed and eventually buzzed by a pair of Chinese J10 fighters. The Sea-hawk's crew chief will point them out and tell the Investigators that they've been doing this a lot lately. A successful engineering, history, or piloting roll, or simply asking the crew chief will identify the fighters as J10s, the Chinese copy of the Russian SU-30 that flies off their new aircraft carrier. The Chinese jets loiter for a while but then peel off suddenly as the crew chief points out the destroyer ahead. The helicopter will land on the destroyer's helipad which extends out to recovery position and then pulls the helicopter into the hangar when it is down. The ship's executive officer, Commander Winters will greet the Investigators and take them up to the bridge to meet the captain.

## AREAS OF INTEREST

### THE BRIDGE

The bridge of the Lyndon Johnson is a technological marvel. Large glass displays line the space and tall windows provide the Captain and Executive Officer in their matching command chairs a sweeping 180degree view of the front of the ship including its two main guns.

One of these is the oft-discussed railgun, capable of firing a projectile at six times the speed of sound with a range greater than one hundred miles. The Captain is a severe-looking bald man named Jack Picard who seems to be trying to maintain a business-as-usual approach despite increasing tensions and the fact that two of his sailors have been lost in the last week. A successful psychology roll will conclude that what was supposed to have been a quick route to a surface action group command and an admiral's star is devolving into a career jeopardizing debacle that the captain is not handling well. Pi-card is turning a lot of questions over to his XO Commander Steven Winters who is helpful but not showing any signs of taking the initiative. A successful anthropology roll will suggest that the Johnson is effectively on auto-pilot and any major crisis could be catastrophic for the command team.

### SHIP MISSION CENTER

The ship's Mission Control Center is a room that frequently draws comparisons to the bridge of the starship Enterprise. There are three large flat panel displays on the front wall with four rows of Common Display Stations, computer consoles equipped with three large LCDs each, exercising centralized control of the ship's systems. On an elevated deck to the rear in a glassed in planning area, the task force's command staff can plan operations without disturbing the crew below. Investigators who succeed at an anthropology roll will realize this space is currently empty because the ship sailed without a flag officer aboard, another example of the hurried nature of this deployment. To the sides of the compartment are areas set aside for other operational teams such as sonar control. Senior Chief Petty Officer Aaronson will be overseeing some sailors on watch in the Mission Center when Investigators care to look for him. A successful computer use roll will note that any system on the ship can control any of the ship's systems with the appropriate clearances. Attempting to access the ship's systems without authorization requires three successful computer use checks at -40 and will result in an armed response from the acting Master-at-Arms if failed.

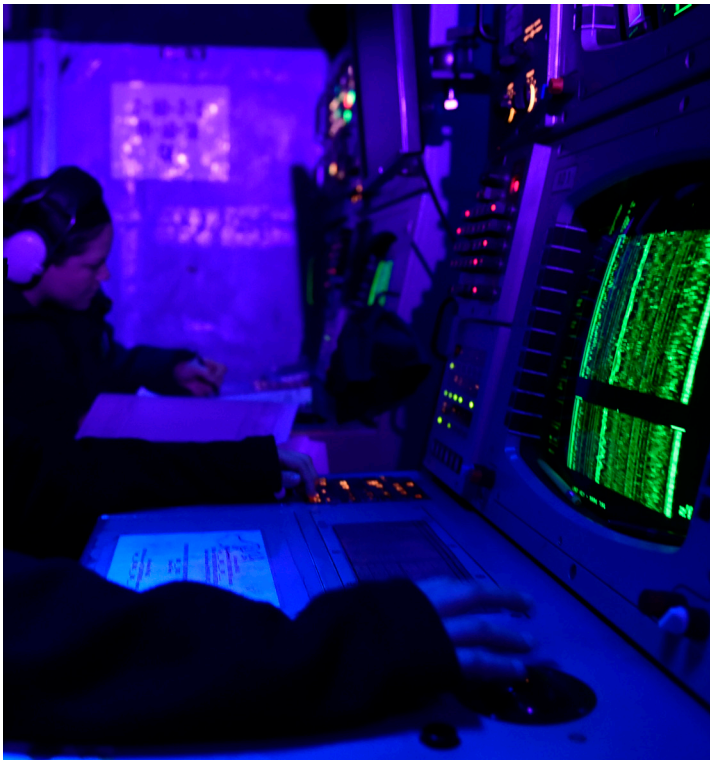
### SONAR CONTROL

Duncan's workspace was a compartment where the ship's sonar technicians monitored the telemetry from the hull-mounted and towed arrays. Investigators who succeed at an electronics or science roll detect that one of the computers in this room is unlike the others. While similarly modern in appearance, its construction is cruder and does not conform to the rest of the compartment's design. Several non-standard cables connect the box to a cable run that looks newly installed and disappears into the bulkhead. Other cables connect the computer to a large flat-screen display with a complicated cascade of acoustic waveforms and a rough map of the ocean floor. If asked about the computer, the technicians will report that it is a prototype that was being tested when the ship was ordered to respond to the crisis. If questioned further, they will describe the system as similar to a magnetic anomaly detector that uses variations in ions disrupted

by water displacement to track submarines and other large metallic objects by the magnetic signature they leave behind. Investigators who succeed at a physics roll will recognize the principle as being an application of the Debye Effect.

Any Investigator who succeeds at a history or science roll will notice the plots on the sonar technicians displays register an abnormally high degree of precision. The ship appears to be almost certain of each contacts location down to within a few hundred feet at ranges up to a hundred miles. This level of accuracy is unsettling in the extreme and triggers a 0/1 San loss due to the revolutionary possibilities for naval warfare.

The two sonar technicians on duty, STG Dennis Warner and Ricardo Garza say that Duncan was a team player who worked hard to train the people he was put in charge of. They speak in respectful terms and say the only guy who was better at his job on the whole ship was probably Chief Aaronson, and that only because Aaronson has been on the job for almost twenty years. They can point Investigators to Duncan's best friend on the ship, a Gunner's Mate Second-Class named Todd Fuller.



### **DUNCAN'S BERTH**

Duncan's berth is a stateroom below decks. He has three roommates, Gunner's Mate Third-Classes Monsour, Putnaam and Chavez all in the Weapons department. None of them report him acting strangely though he did seem more enthusiastic about spending time in Sonar Control after the ship got the new sensor equipment. Succeeding on a psychology roll will determine that none of the three men were particularly close to Duncan. They will also point to Todd Fuller as someone who might know more about him.

Success on a Spot Hidden roll will discover that Duncan had a flash drive hidden in the pocket of one of his gym shorts. The contents of the flash drive are described further in the discussion of "The Signal," below. Duncan kept a diary that when read reveals that he was working on a puzzle that he believed was key to figuring out what happened to the drone disappearing. He believed that the drone had been misdirected somehow by the signal he had recorded.

### **CLAREMONT'S BERTH**

Master-at-Arms Claremont shared a stateroom with two other chiefs, who have been moved to other quarters as he shot himself while sitting at his desk. The two Chiefs, Mendoza and Butler, are from the Administrative Department and say that he was a diligent cop who ran a tight ship. The person they say could probably tell them more about him is Lieutenant Sheridan, the ship's Communications and collateral duty Legal Officer.

Succeeding on a hard psychology roll will reveal that Butler is holding something back. A successful persuade roll will convince him to tell Investigators that he found a Vodka bottle on the deck next to Claremont's body. He removed the bottle and threw it overboard.

A successful Spot Hidden roll will find that Claremont had shredded the remnants of what look like a nautical chart by hand in his trash can. Investigators can also find pieces of electronic components under the desk. He smashed a laptop and flash drive with a heavy metal object, presumably the bar-rel of the gun he used to shoot himself.

### **THE ARMORY**

The ship's armory is a modest space, about the size of a medium-sized office or bedroom. It contains racks of firearms ranging from pistols and rifles to machine guns of various caliber. Several Gunner's Mates are working in the room, servicing weapons and doing paperwork. Gunner's Mate Fuller is among them.

Fuller will report that Duncan was on duty when the drone disappeared and he was spooked by a strange sound he swore he could hear in the distance that wasn't recorded by the ship's equipment. Succeeding on a psychology or persuasion roll will convince him to reveal that Duncan had taken the data and was running it through some personal sound restoration gear to try to reconstruct what he had heard.

The ship's armory includes M-16 rifles, M-240B medium machine guns and Mossberg M590A1 shotguns.

### **LEGAL OFFICE**

Lieutenant Junior Grade Jeffrey Sheridan is an earnest looking man with fair hair who is situated behind a desk in the Administrative Department. With Claremont dead, he has taken over the investigation of Duncan's disappearance. He appears to be well out of his depth and is eager to turn over the investigation to more qualified hands.

He will tell you that the probe has been hindered by the fact that Claremont seems to have destroyed much of the evidence including Duncan's laptop and handwritten notes. He is prepared to write everything off as a pair of suicides, even though as he puts it, "The whole thing is weird as fuck." He will show Investigators the gun and laptop, carefully stored in evidence bags. Attempts to recover the laptop's hard drive will require a luck roll and a electronics roll at -40 to recover the drive intact and successfully reassemble and reinstall it in another computer.

### THE HANGAR

The hangar where the Investigators first arrive currently houses an MH-60R Seahawk helicopter. It is armed with Hellfire missiles under each of its stubby wings.

### THE BOAT BAY

Investigators are quartered in a set of staterooms intended for an embarked special operations detachment near the ship's boat bay. There are sufficient bunks to berth fourteen operators. A successful history or anthropology roll will identify this as another example of the hurried nature of the ship's deployment, as the ship put to sea without a SEAL compliment aboard. The bay itself houses two rigid-hull inflatable boats, which can be launched down a ramp into the water. The ship's stern opens and the aft compartment partially floods to allow the boats to easily transition to the ocean outside.

## THE CHINESE TRAWLER

A few hours into the investigation, Captain Picard summons the Investigators to the bridge and in-forms them that the Johnson has been ordered to stop a Chinese trawler sailing towards the line of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) ships patrolling west of the Philippines. The order comes from the National Command Authority (military lingo for the President) and is likely meant to be a show of American resolve. With Claremont dead, Picard wants the Investigators (whose background makes them more qualified for this duty) to go across in small boats with a team of sailors to inspect the boat to make sure it isn't carrying supplies or weapons intended for one of the artificial islands built by China in the disputed part of the South China Sea.

The Chinese vessel has its nets out and only heaves to after repeated orders to stop. Investigators may have to use persuasion to assert their authority over sailors eager to fire warning shots. The captain of the vessel protests their coming aboard but will comply when push comes to shove.

A successful psychology roll clues the Investigators into the fact that the crew is nervous. While they open up their hold for inspection, to reveal fish that could be better refrigerated, they steer sailors away from parts of the ship they identify as crew quarters. If Investigators succeed on a spot hidden roll, they discover that the ship's holds don't seem to be large enough. A hard success on a spot hidden roll on the main deck will detect more than the usual amount of radio antennas integrated into the ship's superstructure. A successful electronics, history or science roll will identify this vessel as an electronic intelligence gathering platform.

Investigators who use Persuasion on the ship's officers will learn that the crew has been ordered closer to the Americans to learn if they are in communication with the American submarine that sank a Chinese supply ship the day before. An idea roll reminds Investigators that there are no American submarines operating in their task force. If pressed, the officer being interviewed will tell Investigators that he personally witnessed the ship sink. According to the officer, there was a green light that appeared under the freighter which was offloading construction equipment. Without warning, the ship suddenly pitched up as though it had run aground before the crew heard a tremendous crack that they believed was the ship's back being broken. If the Investigators express disbelief or make an exceptional success, the officer will grow irate and claim to have proof. He will retrieve a phone and play a recording of a radio intercept he claims came from an arms smuggler three days before. The man, speaking Tagalog shouts frantically over the radio that something under the water is chasing his boat. He says it has a green light and he thinks the Americans have found him. The transmission ends suddenly with the sounds of the boat breaking up.

If the Investigators attempt to detain the vessel, the captain will protest but will obey any instructions given. Upon their return, Picard is furious at now having been made the center of an international incident and will blame the Investigators for his predicament.





## AVENUES OF INVESTIGATION

### THE ARRAY

Any Investigators who suggest shutting down and/or investigating the Debye array are swiftly and vigorously opposed by the ship's senior officers. Captain Picard views the success of the test as just the thing that could get him onto the radar of a powerful patron. Now, he thinks that getting this ship home with the test data is the only way he can save his career....and his men, as the ship is operating far from support and needs every technological edge available. A Psychology roll will detect this when the subject is broad up.

### THE SIGNAL

Examining the data on the hidden flash drive or on the repaired hard drive from the laptop can access Duncan's work with a Computer Use roll at -20%. Those who examine the signal picked up by Duncan's restoration efforts must make a 1d4/1d8 Sanity Roll. The signal is perceived as a whisper at the edge of one's awareness, teasingly similar to the voice of a close friend or loved one. The voice, if that's what it is, speaks of going home or returning home to the sea. Investigators who fail their sanity roll must make a further sanity roll every thirty minutes: failure does not result in further sanity loss but will cause the Investigator to start unconsciously moving toward the closest exit from the ship. This will likely involve leaving the compartment they are in and climbing to the main deck and to the rail where they will have one final opportunity to roll sanity before they jump into the sea. Any contact with another person that prompts the Investigator to question why they are going to the edge of the deck will be enough to return them to their senses enough to make another sanity roll to negate the effect of the signal.

### EXAMINING THE ARRAY

The array is contained in a sealed container measuring two meters long and a meter wide and tall, with a long cable that serves as an antenna extending from one end to be reeled out behind the ship to be held up by a small float. When activated, the antenna resonates with two small crystals, one in the float and the other in the casing. The inside of the service hatch on the array is labeled "Project Couplet." Removing one of the crystals from the housing reveals a tag reading "Project Quire, re-covered Roswell AFB"

### THE LOSS OF THE TYPE 091

At 2300 hours, the Johnson goes to battle stations. A successful Idea roll will suggest to Investigators that the best way to find out what is going on is to go to the bridge, the Ship Mission Center, or the auxiliary Ship Mission Center further aft. If they go to one of these places, they will see that everyone present is watching the large screens where an underwater scene is being rendered from available sensor data. What it shows is the Chinese submarine thought responsible for the destruction of the American drone the week before is rapidly changing depth, diving and climbing in quick succession. Such maneuvering would be highly stressful to the crew as they struggle to cope with the changes in relative pressure. At one point, the submarine undergoes a crash ascent that sends it almost completely out of the water before slamming back down. The Chinese captain begins pinging with his active sonar, rapidly drowning out the image for a few moments with noise. This stops as he apparently tries something different and fires two torpedoes in an apparently random direction. A luck roll will be required at this point. If it fails, the torpedoes arm and strike a coastal steamer some miles away carrying two hundred people.

Soon after, the sonar technicians report hearing the sound of metal buckling. The submarine's pres-sure hull ruptures, a sound that is played on the speakers. It is the sound of metal crumpling and rending, something that causes a San loss of 1/1d6 as Investigators realize they're hearing the deaths of a hundred Chinese sailors. Captain Picard orders the launch of the ship's helicopter to search for survivors.



## SOMEONE ON THE HULL

At 2355, another alarm rings through the ship as a watchstander reports seeing movement near the stern. Walking on the upper deck of the Johnson can be a dangerous feat of athletics, as it is not a flat surface and is subject to rapid changes in height and angle. Investigators must make a hard dexterity check for every round they are not standing in one place and devoting a majority of their attention to actively balancing. Most sailors who go out on deck secure themselves with a safety line. Tying off to a scansion will prevent an Investigator from going over the side. Having someone assist by securing the line by hand will negate the need to make balancing rolls. Failing the dexterity check causes a character to fall prone and begin sliding towards the edge of the hull. Failing three successive checks will send an Investigator over the side where they can be fished out by the crew when the deck is secured. Success while sliding towards the edge permits a second dexterity check to stand back up.

At the stern of the ship, Investigators will spot a figure attempting to gain entry to the winch that reels in the Debye sensor's towed array. Standing between the figure and the Investigators are four Deep Ones.

The Investigators have five turns to defeat the Deep Ones and stop the Debye Sensor. If they fail to do so, the SHoggoth will appear. The Deep Ones standing between them and the stern want to kill the ship's crew for bringing the device to their domain. The fifth Deep One is what remains of Arthur Duncan. He does not want to see his shipmates killed and wants to try to turn off the sensor without hurting anyone. If he can explain in time, the Investigators can attempt to persuade Picard (a hard roll) to shut down the array. If they succeed, the Shoggoth appears off the stern, rises out of the water to cause the Investigators the requisite San loss but then retreats back into the depths. If they fail to shut down the array in five rounds, the Shoggoth will attack the ship regardless of what they do.

## THE FINAL BATTLE

The crew of the USS Johnson is entirely unprepared for this threat. The Investigators will need to control the ship's weapons or use persuasion or Psychoanalysis to order the crew to follow through on their training. Investigators may use Persuasion or Psychoanalysis at -30% to direct the crew to fire their weapons. They may also use Computer Use at half their skill to attempt to use the computer-controlled weapon systems themselves. Otherwise, they will need to use the artillery skill to take direct control of the main weapons or heavy weapons to man the ship's defensive 25mm cannons. Another option is to use Persuasion to call back the Seahawk to use its Hellfire missiles.

The weapons available for the ship's defense are as follows:

- 1x Railgun 1 combat rounds to reload 10d10 damage 3 meter radius
- 1x 155mm main gun 3 rounds to reload, damage 10d10 5 meters

- 30x Vertical Launch System cells with four Evolved Sea Sparrow Missiles each, damage 3d6 (2 meter radius)
- 2x Hellfire missiles, damage 5d10 (2 meter radius)

The Shoggoth's first action will be to attach itself to the hull and seek out part of the ship's computer network. It will then home in on the source of the signals directing the weapons attacking it to pinpoint the location of the Investigators. It will then make four Power rolls per turn, with the number of successful checks equal to the number of attacks it is permitted to make. Having grown to an inconceivable size through the consumption of multiple vessels, it is able to project parts of itself over through and within the ship to attack the investigators at any point in the hull.

If the Investigators are unable to neutralize the shoggoth within five rounds, the ship's structure will begin to come apart. Characters must make a luck roll to determine whether they are dragged down with the ship and a dodge roll to avoid being engulfed by the shoggoth as it picks off survivors in the water. Surviving the sinking of the ship costs 1/d6 sanity.

If the ship survives, the captain (or senior surviving officer) places the crew under a communications blackout. A helicopter from the Carl Vinson arrives an hour after the dust settles with several high-ranking officers aboard. The ship is escorted out of the theater to Pearl Harbor Hawaii where all survivors are kept under guard as they are interrogated about a possible Chinese chemical or biological agent that appears to have caused mass hallucinations among the crew. The survivors, including the investigators are ordered never to discuss the events of that night with anyone again under any circumstances.

If the ship sinks, the same occurs except that the helicopter is a V-22 search and rescue aircraft that picks up the (1d20) surviving members of the crew along with the investigators and transports them to the Carl Vinson where they are held under guard in sickbay while the same debriefing process occurs.





# TIMELINE:

## AUGUST 20-23, 2019

People's Liberation Army Navy ships begin offloading troops on artificial islands in the South China Sea that emplace shore-based anti-ship and anti-air weapons capable of threatening local sea lanes. Their stated purpose is to protect Chinese commerce from Islamist groups that have been operating drone bombs targeting local shipping. With the USS Carl Vinson having just returned from a deployment to the Yellow Sea, the most combat ready unit available is the newest destroyer in the Pacific Fleet, the USS Lyndon Johnson. The ship has just finished working up and is cruising in the Sea of Japan when it is ordered to the area with as many other ships as can be gathered.

## AUGUST 24, 2019

The USS Lyndon Johnson arrives in the South China Sea with the USS Normandy, USS Berry and USS O'Caney. It joins ships from the Australian, New Zealand, Vietnamese, and Republic of China navies in opposing a PLAN task force that has grown to more than a dozen ships.

## AUGUST 25, 2019

2345 Hours: An underwater research vehicle, the Maury, operated by the USNS Bowditch disappeared while mapping the ocean floor near the Spratly Islands at 0148 Hours. Prior to an engineering casualty disabling its sensors, the Johnson had detected an underwater contact positively identified as a Type 093 attack submarine in the vicinity. Washington accused the People's Liberation Army Navy of destroying the drone. As a response to this action, the President of the United States ordered the deployment of the Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group.

## AUGUST 28, 2019

Morning: Sonar Technician Third-Class Arthur Duncan disappears after Mid Watch at 0200 hours. His absence is not detected until 0730. A search and subsequent investigation are launched.

0210 Hours: a cigarette boat carrying small arms, ammunition and explosives destined for MILF separatists in the Southern Philippines is destroyed when it collides with an unidentified object. Chinese eavesdroppers intercept a frantic radio call warning fellow fighters of an American submarine with strange green lights.

## AUGUST 30, 2019

0200 Hours: The sailor in charge of investigating STG Duncan's disappearance, Chief Master-at-Arms Claremont destroys material collected from Duncan's quarters and shoots himself at his desk.

0220 Hours: A Chinese support ship sinks after its back is broken within sight of the garrison on Triton Island. It is feared that the Americans or one of their allies has just tested a new weapon, but the decision is made to remain quiet and see what the notoriously leaky American White House discloses to the New York Times without external pressure.

## AUGUST 31, 2019

1600 Hours: Investigators arrive aboard USS Carl Vinson via C-2 Greyhound Carrier Onboard Delivery aircraft. They immediately board an SH-60 Seahawk bound for USS Johnson.

1730 Hours: Seahawk carrying Investigators intercepted and photographed by Chinese fighters.

1800 Hours: NCIS investigators are delivered to USS Johnson by SH-60 helicopter.

1930 Hours: USS Johnson conducts visit, board and search (VBS) operation aboard Chinese fishing trawler. Investigators participate. This operation takes about three hours to conduct.

2300 Hours: Johnson goes to General Quarters as sonar detects Chinese submarine has initiated aggressive maneuvering. Ships across South China Sea man battle stations and observe sinking of Chinese submarine under mysterious circumstances.

2355 Hours: Arthur Duncan attempts to access towed sonar array to disable Debye detector.

## SEPTEMBER 1, 2019

2400 Hours: Shoggoth attacks USS Johnson.



# BESTIARY:

## AMERICAN SOLDIER

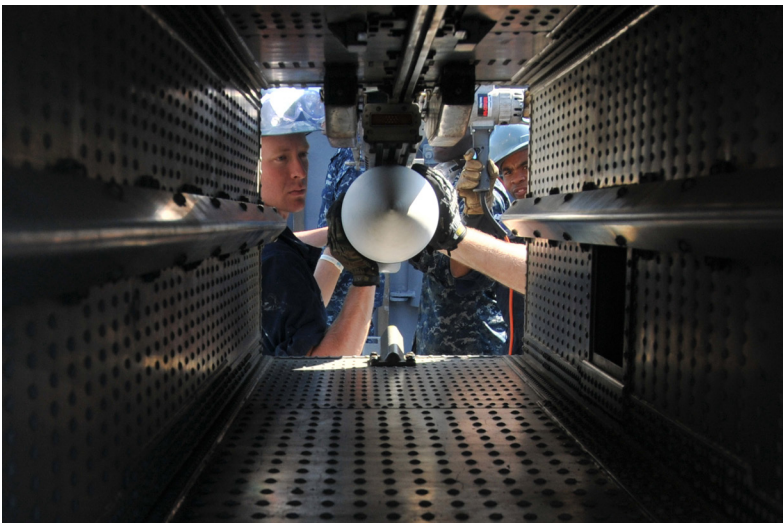
STR 70                      CON 55  
SIZ 60                      DEX 75  
INT 65 (Officers 75)    EDU 60 (Officers 80)  
CHA 50 (Officers 60)    POW 60  
HP 11  
San 65

Brawl 45%  
Fast Talk 50%  
Firearms (Handgun) 55% M9 Pistol, Damage 1d10  
Firearms (Rifle/Shotgun) M4 Carbine, Damage 2d6+1  
History 25%  
Language (Japanese or Cantonese) 15%  
Persuasion 40%  
Psychology 50%  
Spot Hidden 45%

## CHINESE SAILOR

STR 75                      CON 65  
SIZ 50                      INT 55 (Officers 65)  
EDU 50 (Officers 75)    DEX 60  
CHA 50 (Officers 60)    POW 80  
HP 12  
SAN 60

Brawl 65%  
Fast Talk 60%  
Firearms (Handgun) 50% Type 54 Pistol, Damage 1d10  
Firearms (Rifle/Shotgun) 45% Type 56 Assault Rifle,  
Damage 2d6+1  
History 30%  
Language (English) 25%  
Listen 40%  
Persuasion 40%  
Psychology 60%  
Spot Hidden 60%



## DEEP ONE

STR 90                      CON 80                      SIZ 70  
DEX 80                      INT 75                      POW 80  
HP: 13                      Magic Points: 10  
Damage Bonus: +1D6  
Build: 1

Move: 8/10 Swimming  
Armor: 1-point skin and scales.  
Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 Sanity points to see a deep one.

### ATTACKS

Attacks per round: 1  
*Fighting attacks:* Deep ones can use weapons as humans do. They are skilled with their spears and tridents.

Fighting 45% (22/9), damage 1D6 + damage bonus or by weapon type (e.g. spear, damage 1D8 + damage bonus)  
Dodge 25% (12/5)

## SHOGGOTH

STR 450                      CON 250                      SIZ 200  
DEX 30                      INT 50                      POW 85  
HP: 80                      Magic Points: 10  
Damage Bonus: +8D6  
Build: 9

Move: 10 rolling  
Armor: None, but  
(1) explosive, fire and electrical attacks do only half damage;  
(2) physical weapons such as firearms and knives do only 1 point of damage per hit;  
(3) a shoggoth regenerates 10 hit points per round.  
Sanity Loss: 1D6/1D20 Sanity points to see a shoggoth.

### ATTACKS

Attacks per round: 2  
*Fighting attacks:* In combat, a shoggoth covers an area 5 yards square and is able to produce tentacles, claws, or any manner of appendages at will with which to perform a crushing attack. Those unfortunate enough to be hit by a shoggoth attack may also be engulfed.

*Engulf:* Each person engulfed within the shoggoth is attacked separately and each must make a successful opposed STR roll or be sucked apart. If the shoggoth attacks more than one target, it must divide its STR among all targets. Those held within the shoggoth's black bulk can strike back only on rounds in which they successfully roll STR or less on 1D100. Each round a victim is held within a shoggoth, he or she loses hit points equal to the shoggoth's damage bonus; the damage describable as rupturing, crushing, and being sucked into pieces. A shoggoth can engulf any number of enemies; however they may not exceed a total SIZ greater than its own SIZ.

Fighting 70% (35/14), damage equals damage bonus or it can choose to engulf the target (see above)  
Dodge: 8% (4/1)

## PLAYER CHARACTERS:

### LIEUTENANT COMMANDER JILLIAN MORRIS

Jillian Morris is a career engineering officer in the United States Navy on special assignment with NCIS to provide technical expertise for a highly sensitive investigation. She is of mixed African-American and Latina ancestry. As an expert in electronic warfare, Lt.Cmdr. Morris expects that she will be called upon to determine whether Chinese intervention played a part in what happened to Duncan and Claremont. She is deeply concerned that political pressure will be involved in shaping her findings. She possesses a BS from MIT and PhD. From CALTECH in electrical engineering and optics. Her mother was a secretary and father a janitor at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. They have since retired to Arizona. She still sends them a third of her paycheck.

### SPECIAL AGENT ALEJANDRO ESTRADA

With over a decade of experience working in organized crime, Special Agent Estrada is used to everyone lying to him. The challenge is in finding out why the people feel it necessary to hide the truth. He enlisted in the navy in his native Puerto Rico, a decision that proved divisive in a family that boasted more than a few advocates for Puerto Rican independence. After his four years were up, he used the GI Bill to fund four years at Florida State, where he earned a psychology degree with honors. He has been assigned to Dubois to help handle the administrative load and learn something from the veteran investigator about handling major cases.

### CAPTAIN WESLEY FORSYTH

This captain is a recruiting poster marine, whose father, grandfather, great grandfather and so on back to the War of 1812 were also marines. With five years of force protection and counterterrorism operations behind them, they've been brought on to look at readiness on the Johnson, literally how well defended the ship is from attack by people like them. They're pretty sure they've ruled out all the usual bad guys in the region, but there are always the threats they don't know about. They will not respond well to cajoling, or intimidation. The possibility that Chinese covert operations played a part on what happened aboard the Johnson has to be investigated because the Commander-in-Chief is bound to ask about it, even if it's ridiculous on its face. It is hoped that the professional opinion of a veteran of the fighting in Syria will provide added weight to the report. They are physically fit as one would expect from a member of Marine Force Recon, and maintain a rugged appearance complete with shaved head. They have not told anyone that they intend to undergo gender reassignment at the end of this tour.

### DR. SHEENA BROCK

A foremost expert in marine life, Dr. Brock has been requested to lend her expertise to the analysis of several competing theories suggesting that there may be undiscovered species living in the South China Sea, which may or may not have precipitated the events leading to Sonarman Duncan's disappearance. She attended the University of Washington as an exchange student from Australia and remained in Seattle to pursue research and raise a family with her American husband. She does not know who forwarded her name for such an assignment, as she is a confirmed skeptic of cryptozoology, but the request was forwarded along with provisional grants for some of her biggest research proposals, so she isn't about to look a gift horse in the mouth.

### SPECIAL AGENT BLAINE DUBOIS

Special Agent Dubois is the oldest member of the team by far. He is a lifer who did twenty years in the navy before transitioning to counterintelligence work for the FBI and eventually switching to NCIS. He is a reserved-looking man with a mix of Native-American and French-Canadian ancestry. He is extremely observant and has spent a great deal of time serving in the Western Pacific. He has been carefully selected for his ability to get the job done without making waves.

### LIEUTENANT MARILYN "TWEAKER" CHAN

Summoned from the waiting area at LAX at the start of a well-deserved leave, Lt. Chan has been recalled to round out this odd assortment of knowledgeable people with her experience as a pilot and maintenance officer. She doesn't ask about the orders, just follows them. She has just finished a familiarization course on drones and is probably going to have to spend a few weeks auditing maintenance records or something else to keep herself busy. She is of slightly below-average height with three generations of Chinese immigrants in her family tree. She finds the technical aspects of this investigation interesting at least and she'll always be able to say she was involved in the South China Sea Incident, no matter how this turns out.

