



WHERE WATER CROSSES WATER A QUEST FOR EVERWAY

by Ken & Jo Walton

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Game Designer's Introduction

Ken & Jo's quest represents the sort of adventure that *Everway* is especially suited for. While quests and realms can vary as much as the gamemasters who create them, this quest has certain aspects that mark it as an *Everway* quest.

Ken & Jo use the concepts of elements and gates in a way that is at once new and consistent with the *Everway* background. The elements have a spiritual side, so the danger and challenge in the quest are spiritual as well as physical. While gates are often simply entry and exit points for a realm, the gate described here is at the heart of the issue.

The setting is highly unusual, so strange that it might not work as the setting for an extended campaign. But as a place to visit, as the site of a quest, it excels. Since *Everway* heroes travel from place to place, the gamemaster can present colorful settings like Brightwater and Deepwater, milk them for what they're worth, and move on. With so many different realms for heroes to explore, flights of fancy such as this one fit right in.

This quest also fits the *Everway* style in the way it leaves behind standard elements of fantasy (combat, conquest, the battle between good and evil) in favor of character interaction. The fun in this quest comes from the heroes interacting with the strange and even self-defeating people to be found here and solving a problem that isn't presented to them in the opening paragraph.

- - *Jonathan Tweet, author of Everway*

Where Water Crosses Water

This adventure concerns the linked realms of Deepwater and Brightwater.

Brightwater is a mer-realm. Deepwater was once known as Golden Palms, and is slowly filling up with water because of an imbalance of the elements. The party must find a way to restore the balance. This is both a physical and a spiritual problem, and the party must find a way to solve both. Fifty years ago the priests of Water in Golden Palms tried to open a gate to a world more strongly aspected in Water. They were more successful than they had hoped, and found their way into Brightwater, where mer-folk and humans can breathe the water. There is now a thriving trade through the gate in pearls in one direction and coconuts in the other. The connection appears to be a good thing for everyone, and nobody wants to give it up. However, since the gate was opened the water level in Deepwater has been rising and now everyone there is living on islands which used to be mountain tops.

There are a number of ways the party could become involved. They could be summoned by the few remaining worshippers of the fire cult and begged to help. They could be advised by someone outside the realm that Deepwater needs help. They could just stumble upon a gate leading to Deepwater. If they are seeking a realm which is highly water-aspected then Deepwater may be suggested to them.

If the GM wishes to add an element of urgency to the heroes' quest, they could be sent through by the powers that be in the realm next to Deepwater (suggestions could include Hard March or Heaven) - - the water has nearly risen to the connecting gate, and unless it begins falling within a month, the gate between the two Realms will be closed forever. If the heroes don't solve the problem and escape, they'll be trapped in Deepwater.

Note that the water isn't actually coming through the gate - - it is the spiritual imbalance, rather than the physical link which is causing the problem. The fears of the people in the realm next to Deepwater are probably groundless - - but this won't stop them closing the gate!

In any case, they should come into the realm through a gate from elsewhere to find themselves standing on a tiny rocky outcropping surrounded on all sides by sea. There are other islands visible not very far away, but out of comfortable swimming distance. The sun is shining, and the water is sparkling. There are many watercraft making their way between the islands. They are long canoes with square-rigged sails, and they all have three or four people in them. It's possible to wave and get the attention of one of them. They will take the party to the nearest settlement.

The Realm of Deepwater

Virtue: The Fish (The Soul Prevails)

Flaw: The Priestess Reversed (Impracticality)

Fate: The Phoenix (Rebirth vs Destruction)

The Usurper

This is the Usurper card for the realm of Deepwater, which should be used when



the Usurper is drawn from
the Fortune Deck:

The Fisherwoman

This card shows a woman leaning from a boat to draw in a huge fish. She is smiling, and looking at the fish, which is clearly a great prize. If she leans even a little further, the boat will clearly capsize, but she doesn't seem to realize. Upright the card means "winning a spiritual treasure," reversed it means "overlooking an obvious defect."

Rule: There is no overall ruler of the Realm. Local issues are dealt with by the elders of each island (mostly female, though a respected male may be allowed to join). The Priestesses of Water are the nearest thing to a ruling body for the entire realm, though their interests are narrow (hence the current problem).

Religion: The more intelligent and spiritually inclined of the fisherfolk are generally recruited by the Water Temples. Each settlement has at least one Water Priest. None of the fisherfolk are worried about the rising water level - - some of them believe that if the land is swallowed up they will be able to breathe their water like the people of Brightwater. Others refuse to believe that the water is rising. Despite this it should soon become obvious to the heroes that the water has risen appreciably and that soon there will be very little land left. The Priests of Fire are the most active in trying to stop the problem, but can think of little which will help. The Temples of Earth and Air have declined in influence and popularity, and few worship at them any more.

People: The fisherwomen are golden-skinned with slightly slanting eyes. They wear their hair coiled up in complicated twists, held in place with a sharp toothed bronze comb. This comb is also used for scaling and gutting fish. Their clothes are embroidered, often with watery motifs such as stylized waves, fish or mer-people. They are concerned with the fishing, which is very good at this season. Their men live on shore and spend their time taking care of children, cooking and making ropes and nets from coconut fibers. They are almost all preoccupied with their complicated love-affairs and other emotional entanglements - - their descriptions of their lives and problems will remind any stranger of hearing an adolescent talking about themselves. They are usually cheerful and friendly to strangers. They are however curiously passive.

Economy: Most communities are self-sufficient, catching fish and growing small quantities of crops on the islands. There is some trade between islands, mostly of luxury goods such as fine embroidered clothing (each island has a different style) and carved bone jewelry. In recent years, pearls from Brightwater have become very fashionable, and are traded avidly, almost becoming a currency in their own right.

War: There has been no war in Deepwater for generations.

Technology: Most things are made of wood, stone or bone. Some metal is used but there has been no new mining since the water level has risen. This makes the metal combs much prized artifacts. The most advanced technology is boat-building, and the fisherfolk's small sailing craft are some of the most efficiently designed in all the Realms.

Learning: Learning used to be highly respected, taught by the priests of Air, but in

recent years, people would rather have fun, and the old knowledge is being forgotten.

Domesticated Animals: There are few domestic animals. Some islanders keep pigs, and rarely, a fisherwoman will train a cormorant to help her fish.

Common Foods: Fish, coconuts, yams, pork and bacon on special occasions.

Outsider Contact: The pearl/coconut trade is very strong, though it is performed mainly by the priests of Water. The people of Deepwater are interested in people from other realms, and delight in gossip from far flung Spheres they are never likely to visit.

Finding Out What's Going On

The heroes may talk to the inhabitants of the village they arrive at, and learn the basic facts of the problem. But even though there is a problem, the villagers seem curiously unworried, and will be more keen to hear the latest gossip the heroes have to tell about Everway and other realms. If they are asked about the problem of the rising water level, they will direct the heroes to the Great Water Temple (see below). Otherwise they will spend an eventless evening, partying with the locals on the beach and generally getting nowhere.

If the heroes have not initiated anything themselves, have the Priest of Fire, Bushel, turn up the following morning.

The Great Water Temple

Rising from the water is a great blue and gold pagoda, rich with domes and fantastically ornamented. Everything is curlicued and elaborated with decoration. There are many mosaics with pearls inlaid in them, and pearls are a persistent motif. Once this temple stood by the shores of a lake, now it is mostly underwater. The above-water part of the temple is the seventh storey, and it is flooded inside. There is no dry land nearby, and very little flooring within the temple. Movement within the temple is by boat. The temple is a maze, with many shrines and living quarters. The Hall of the Dive contains a great altar and many niches filled with gilded statues of Water Gods. A faint glow can be seen from the water in this room, emanating from the Gate seven stories below. If the heroes are offered hospitality they will be offered a room with boats made up as beds. If the heroes want to enter Brightwater they will have to win the confidence of the water priests to be taken down with breathing bags on their faces, or find some way of breathing while they sneak through the flooded levels of the temple making their way to the gate.



Standing Wave, The High Priestess

Air	4	2	Fire
Water	7	4	Earth

Magic: Open Chalice 3

The chief official of the Water Priests is the High Priestess, Standing Wave. She wears a dress richly embroidered with pearls in a wave pattern. She will listen to no talk about restoring fire, but will respect anybody with a high water-aspect. She will see through most deception. She will be reluctant to take any action and will spend a long time considering, but will have the party imprisoned if they continue to annoy her.

The Fire Cult

Ever since the Great Fire Temple was burned to the water-line in a last ditch attempt by the fire-priests to balance the elements, fire has been in decline in Deepwater. The few remaining adherents live in the drowned remains of the Old Capital. Whether they summoned the heroes or not they will try to contact them as soon as they hear about them. They are concerned about the rising water levels but have not been doing anything about it. They are the party's natural allies in this situation. They may be able to put the party in contact with wandering priests of Air who are the people who bring news from one island settlement to another, and with the priests of Earth whose mountain-top temple is still standing on dry land.

Bushel, The Priest of Fire

Air	4	4	Fire
Water	4	6	Earth

Powers: Priestly Rites (Fire) 1

The Priest of Fire is a likeable but rather bumbling man. He is aware that there is a problem in the Realm, but like most of the people, lacks "fire" and is very under confident about his ability to solve the problem. He is eager for the heroes to do something before it is too late. Quite what should be done, he isn't sure.

Brightwater

Brightwater is entered through the gate at the bottom of the Water Temple of Deepwater. As soon as the heroes pass through the gate (which takes about four days of real time, but is a timeless drifting as far as the heroes are concerned) they will be aware of a difference. They are in an underwater corridor. The water is faintly lit, and the walls are made of glowing coral. The water is breathable. The passage is guarded by a school of tiny red fish, who will alert the mer-folk if anyone passes them. The walls are not ornamented, but everything is naturally brightly colored. The heroes will be taken before the mer-queen. There are many people in her throne room, mostly mer-folk with human torsos and fish tails, but some are fish. In one corner a green crab sits playing chess with a merman. Everywhere there is evidence of the coconut trade with Deepwater - - people are eating coconuts, wearing things made from coconuts and using things carved from coconuts. The people of

Brightwater are completely unaware of any problem. They do not often go to Deepwater because they cannot breathe the water there and do not like being above the surface. If the problem is explained to them they will be concerned - - not that Deepwater is filling up, but that they may be losing water: "You mean the world is shrinking?" The queen, Golden Tail, will not tolerate rudeness or disrespect but will be generally sympathetic if the problem is explained. She will be reluctant to close the gate, but prepared to do so if convinced that her realm is in danger - - however, someone will need to close it from the other side as well.

Running this Adventure

This is a very open scenario, with what happens dependent very much on what the heroes decide to do. The problem is the imbalance of elements which must be restored. It is important to make this more than just a problem of rising water levels and to stress the spiritual imbalance. A good way of doing this is to make all the inhabitants of Deepwater very passive. Even the Fire Cult should say things like "We're so glad you've come to help us" and "Somebody must do something for us" and "It's past time something was done, I've been waiting for someone to do something for years." In fact, to restore the balance it is necessary to get them to do something - - Fire cannot be restored by the heroes acting alone. The GM may decide that whatever the inhabitants of Deepwater are stirred to do is sufficient, as long as they actually take some action. The solution may be to close the gate - - which will require action from someone on both sides. Alternatively it can be more abstract - - a powerful fire wizard could set off an extinct volcano, thus by the action of fire on earth and air creating new land and changing people's perception of their realm. (If none of the party have the ability to do this then there might be an old wizard who could be persuaded that she can and should do it.)

Suggestions for the GM

The heroes should be able to think of lots of things to do in this situation, but if they are getting a bit stuck, here are some ideas to throw at them:

- The Water Priestess may be hostile to the idea of closing the gate, and the heroes will have to sneak into the temple and find their way down through the many underwater levels, dodging guardian sharks, octopuses, or other hostile sea creatures.
- The gate must be closed using a special ritual which needs a person on either side of it. One of the heroes must volunteer to stay in Brightwater in order to close it.
- The heroes could find a group of disaffected islanders, who were fed up with the Priestesses of Water, and would be prepared to rise against them if given the proper leadership.
- The Priests of Fire could be involved in some last ditch attempt to save the world from Water by calling on all their powers. This will make the seas boil and destroy the realm - - can the ritual be stopped in time?
- If the heroes go straight to the Water Temple, an acolyte there could be a secret adherent of the fire cult and offer to take them to her grandfather, Bushel.
- Golden Tail could be so upset by the news that she immediately shuts the gate of her own volition, cutting off Brightwater - - but the water level keeps on rising in Deepwater.
- There might be an artefact made long ago in Deepwater - - for instance a

Golden Palm from the time when the realm was called Golden Palms - which was traded to Brightwater long ago and which must be recovered before the water will stop rising. This artifact could have been traded to a distant mer-community and the heroes would have to quest for it through the mer-realm.

- The Priests of Earth are very resigned to the situation and refuse to help, saying "Everything will come out all right in the end." When it does, because of the heroes and other people's efforts, they'll say "I told you so!"

Boons

There are various things which could be given to the heroes as boons during the quest. Suggestions include the following (but don't give the heroes *all* these!):

- They could receive something to allow the heroes to breathe underwater. This could be some kind of magical talisman (a pearl if given by Queen Golden Tail, a tiny Golden Palm if given by Standing Wave) or a blessing from Standing Wave which gives the heroes a new Power.
- The Fire Priests could reward the heroes with magic knapsacks which will always keep their contents dry, or something similar connected with protecting against water.
- The people of Deepwater could reward the heroes with a number of pearls, or pearl-decorated jewelry, which could be valuable in other realms. Alternatively, they could give the heroes a magical fishing net, woven from coconut fibre, which will always catch fish if there are any in the water.

Note

This quest was originally run using photographs from *In Search of Burma* by Caroline Courtauld (London: Frederick Muller Ltd, 1984). The photographs of people in fishing boats and spectacular temples by the water were a major inspiration for the quest.

Our original playtesters (Nina "Striding Willow" Baur, Sebastian "Moss" Graubner and James "World Changer" Walkerdine) solved the problem by causing a volcano to erupt - - something we hadn't thought of, but which seemed so appropriate that we let it solve the problem.

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