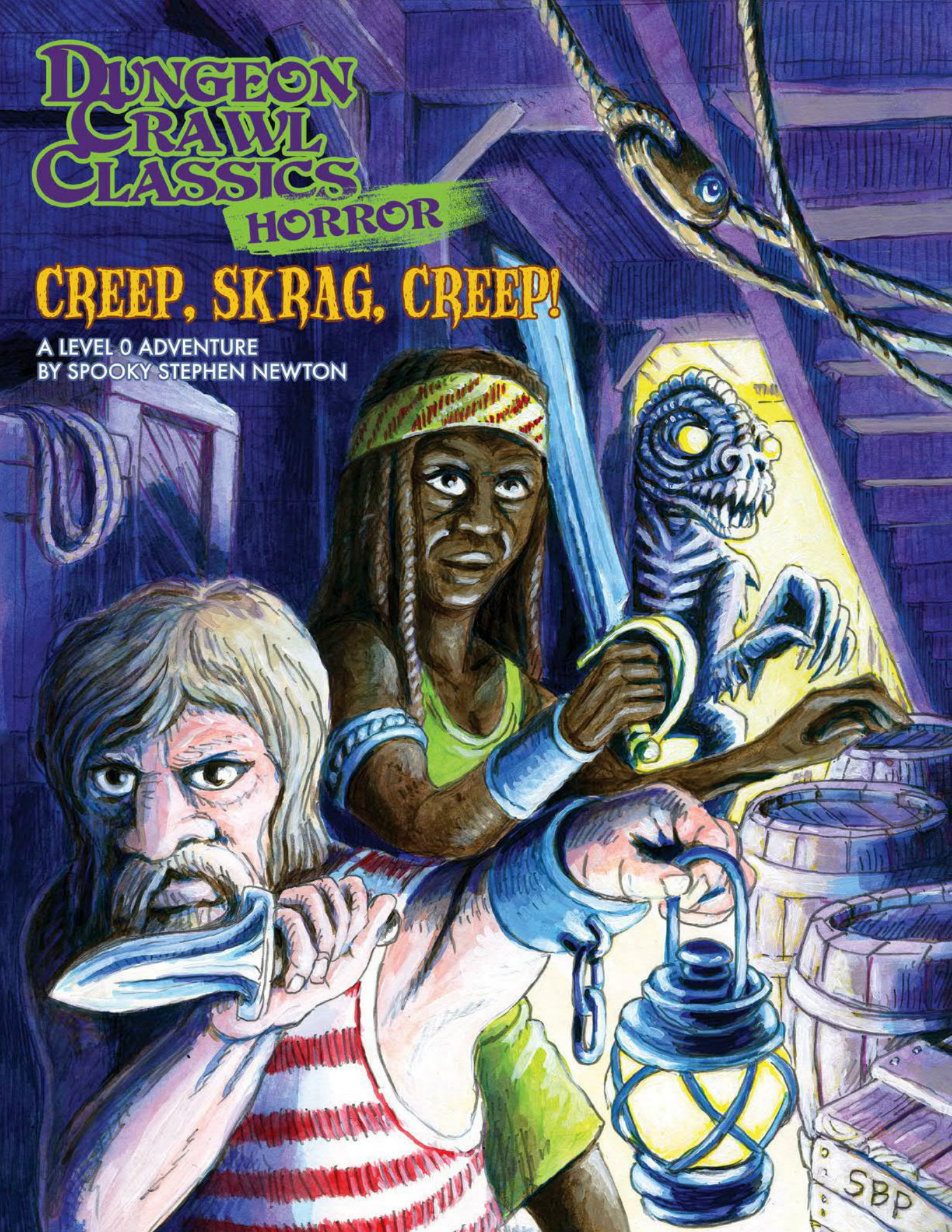


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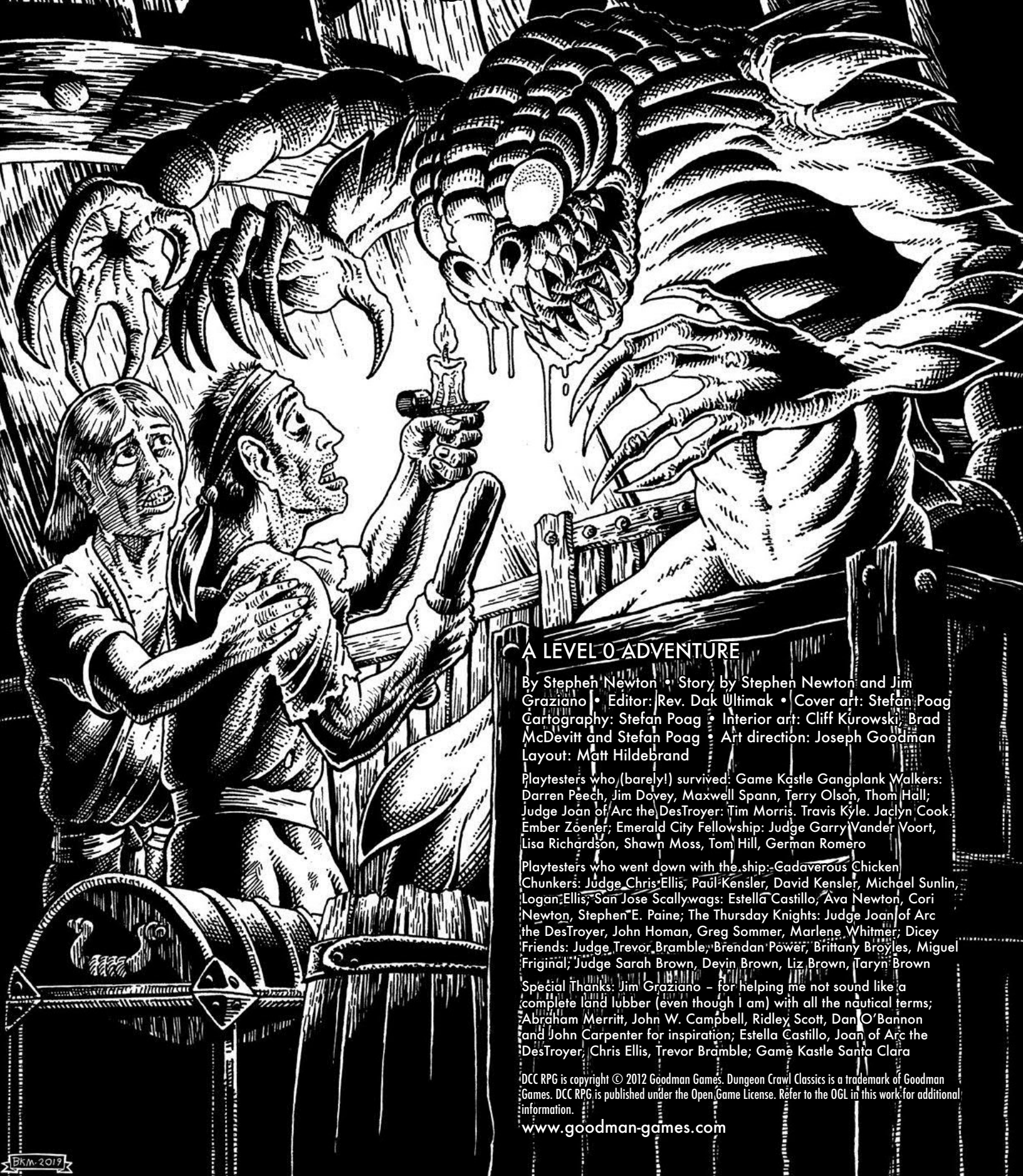
HORROR

CREEP, SKRAG, CREEP!

A LEVEL 0 ADVENTURE
BY SPOOKY STEPHEN NEWTON



CREEP, SKRAG, CREEP!



A LEVEL 0 ADVENTURE

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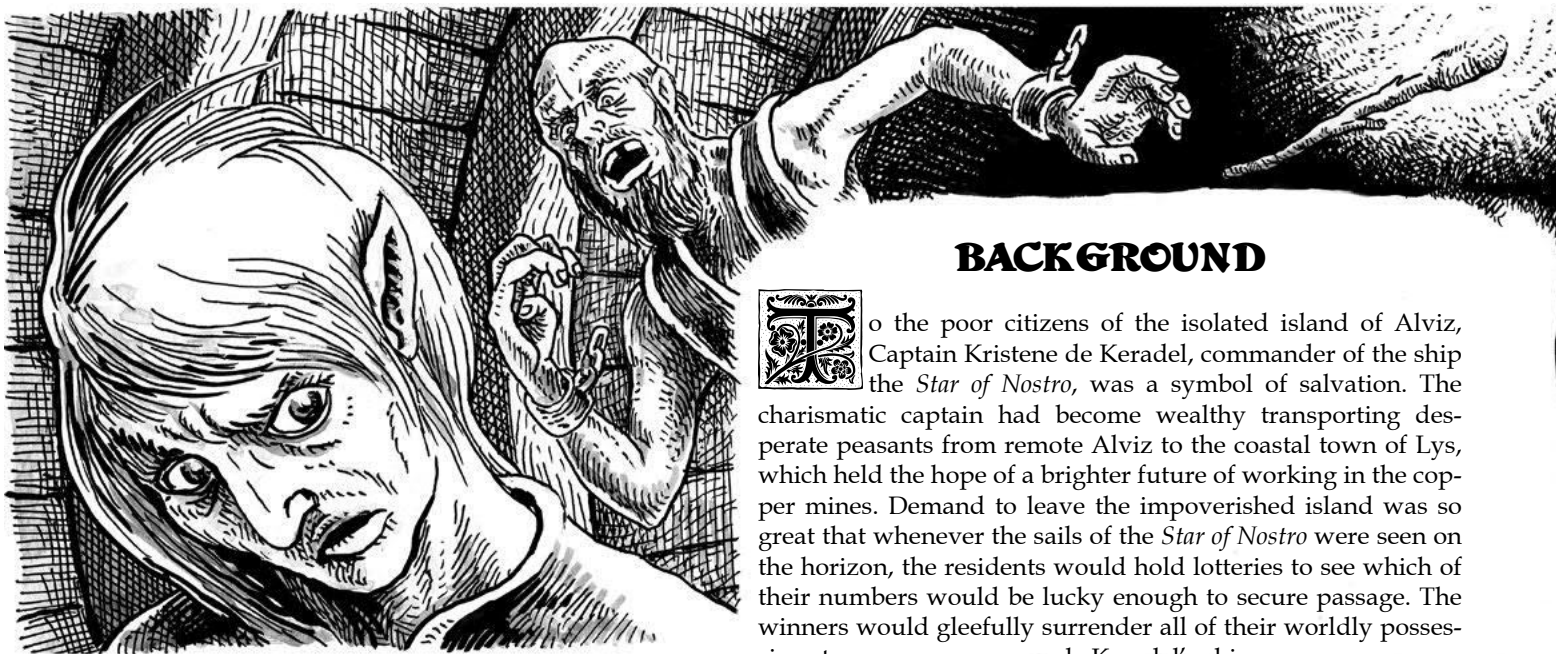
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"De Keradel is an enthusiast, and thorough. Like Napoleon, he knows that you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs; nor can you have meat without cattle; nor human sacrifices without humans."

- Creep, Shadow! Abraham Merritt

INTRODUCTION

Remember the good old days, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics adventures don't waste your time with long-winded speeches, weird campaign settings, or NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you remember, and the secret doors you know are there somewhere.

Creep, Skrag, Creep! is designed for 12-16 0-level characters. While it can be used with 1st-level characters, the adventure has been specifically designed to cull PCs, so player beware! The trope for this adventure is that of an "unstoppable stalking monster", similar to those found in movies such as *Alien*, *The Thing*, or *Halloween*. There are three familiar elements common within those movies which the author is attempting to recreate for this adventure: First, the characters have been isolated in an unfamiliar location. Second, the PCs must slowly unravel the mystery of their situation and the severity of the threat they're facing. And third—and this is likely the most important—the players will need to eventually understand that they are dealing with a force they have little to no hope of defeating. This adventure embraces the Appendix N ideal that not all encounters are balanced, and some horrors must be fled from. The PC's survival depends on them coming to learn that they cannot necessarily defeat this monster, only stave it off long enough to find a means to escape.

This adventure resulted in "total party kills" (TPKs) for several of the playtest groups. While we encourage you to run the adventure as written to see if your players are up to the challenge, we have also included tips on how to tone down the lethality in the *Running the Adventure* section below.

BACKGROUND

To the poor citizens of the isolated island of Alviz, Captain Kristene de Keradel, commander of the ship the *Star of Nostro*, was a symbol of salvation. The charismatic captain had become wealthy transporting desperate peasants from remote Alviz to the coastal town of Lys, which held the hope of a brighter future of working in the copper mines. Demand to leave the impoverished island was so great that whenever the sails of the *Star of Nostro* were seen on the horizon, the residents would hold lotteries to see which of their numbers would be lucky enough to secure passage. The winners would gleefully surrender all of their worldly possessions to secure passage on de Keradel's ship.

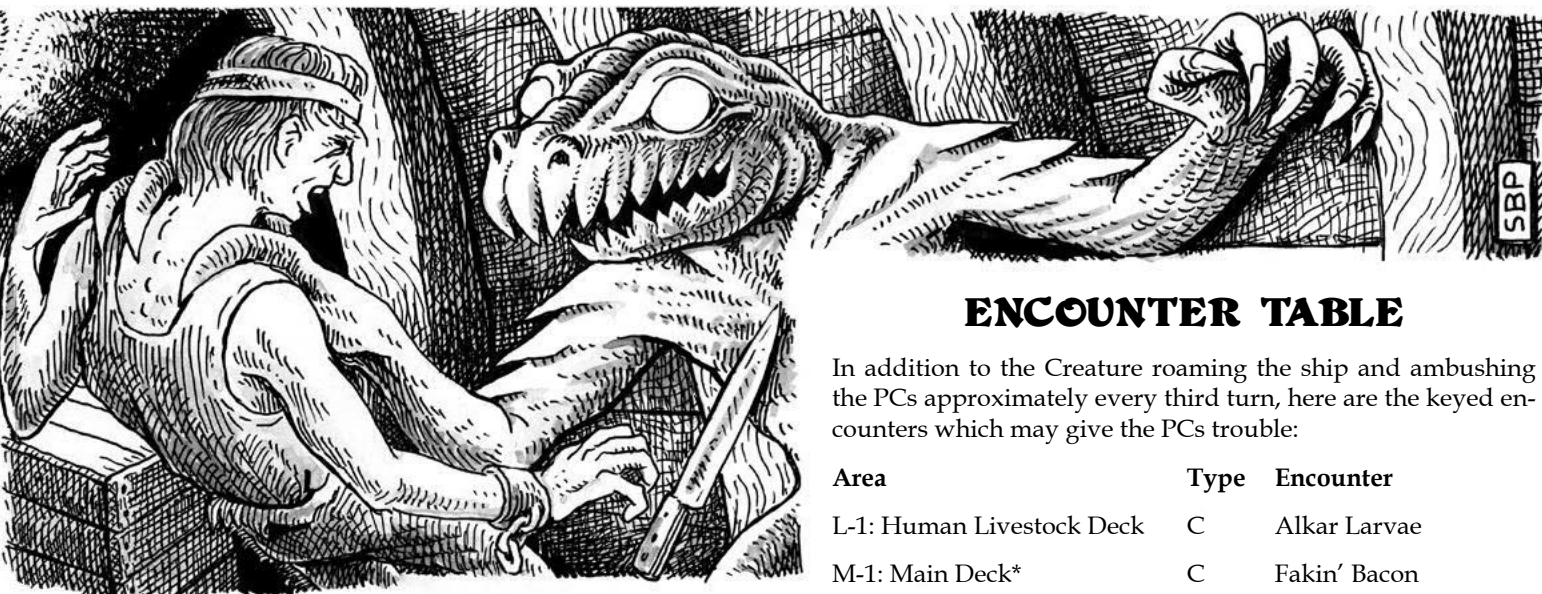
The reality, of course, is never quite as it seems. While it was true that Captain de Keradel was transporting the desperate Alviz islanders to the copper mines of Lys, there was no work waiting for them there. The mines of Lys are a false-front operation for a group of cultists led by the warlock Tirrem and his pursuit to raise the stone demon Alkar-Az.

The monthly ritual attempting to raise the stone demon requires scores of human sacrifices. Captain de Keradel, who is also a leader of the cult, is tasked with "recruiting" the humans necessary for the sacrifice. Once the PCs boarded the ship, they were secretly anesthetized, and typically would only be awakened once they were in the mines of Lys—just moments before they were offered up in sacrifice under the crushing blow of Tirrem's unholy maul, the *Mael Bennique*. With de Keradel's assistance, Tirrem has sacrificed over a hundred "miners" from Alviz to the demon Alkar-Az.

Tirrem and de Keradel are able to maintain the ruse with the islanders by occasionally returning a peasant back home with a purse full of copper nuggets and a head filled with *charm person*-induced lies to describe the riches that await those who make the voyage. It's a small price to pay to keep the operation running smoothly.

For over a year this cruel hoax has been successfully orchestrated. That was until recently, when Tirrem briefly lost control of the ritual magic which constrains Alkar-Az! In the mayhem that followed, the rock demon violently exploded sending stone slivers into the congregation and injuring several cultists and crew members. The injured unknowingly became infected with a demonic parasite. After a long and painful gestation period, the Creature and several of its siblings spawned—hatching from the limp corpse of Captain de Keradel's cabin boy—and subsequently slaying most of the crew of the *Star of Nostro*.

Thus, the PCs enter the drama. As a last resort before her death, de Keradel ordered that the PCs be awakened to assist in the fight against the Creature, but it was too late. The PCs have awakened on a ship, shackled and groggy, unaware of how or when they became bound, nor what is responsible for the carnage around them.



RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure effectively happens in two parts: the exploration of the *Star of Nostro* and escaping to the *Bom Homem*.

During Part One, the PCs will be attacked by the Creature approximately every third turn. When the Creature attacks, it will seek to collect the livers of two PCs per attack and then escape (effectively limiting the death toll to two PCs per encounter). The Creature will persist in ambushing the party until either all the PCs have escaped to the *Bom Homem*—a ship which can be flagged and then used to flee to safety—or they are all killed. One method for simplifying the attack schedule is to sequence them to trigger on each third location the PCs enter for the first time.

Part Two is triggered when the PCs somehow manage to get the attention of the *Bom Homem*. Once the *Bom Homem* is hailed and near enough to board, the Creature will transform into its adult form so the judge can run one last “boss fight” battle.

Tips to improve chances of survivability: This adventure resulted in TPKs for several of the playtest groups. To improve survivability, judges may consider the following modifications to the adventure (with each tip becoming more generous):

- Allow NPCs that are sleeping on the Human Livestock Deck to occasionally awaken from their “shroom sleep” earlier in adventure, giving the Creature more targets to attack.
- Reduce the frequency of the Creature’s ambushes from every three turns to four turns.
- Make the Creature vulnerable to fire—fire damage adds an additional 1d6 damage.
- Modify the Ibis Pirates into Ibis Privateers hired by Alviz. After learning the truth about Captain de Keradel from the sick cultists left on the island, the Alviz islanders hire the Ibis to rescue their fellow villagers. This removes any doubt as to whether the players should attempt to flag down the pirates—a frequent source of playtester debate often ending in TPKs.)

ENCOUNTER TABLE

In addition to the Creature roaming the ship and ambushing the PCs approximately every third turn, here are the keyed encounters which may give the PCs trouble:

Area	Type	Encounter
L-1: Human Livestock Deck	C	Alkar Larvae
M-1: Main Deck*	C	Fakin’ Bacon
M-1A: Crow’s Nest	C	Creature
C-1: Cargo Hold	H	Cargo and 3 Lanterns
B-1: Bilge*	C/T	Dung Eels, Eggs
M-2: Captain’s Stateroom*	T	Locked Desk
M-5: Surgeon’s Quarters	H	Alkar Zombie
M-6: Stone Dahut	C	Stone Dahut Statue
Part 2: <i>Bom Homem</i>	C	Ibis Pirates & Finale

* indicates a known area where the Creature will potentially ambush depending on the PC’s actions.

ABOUT THE CREATURE

The Creature is a unique abomination which has evolved from a wound inflicted by the demon Alkar-Az. Throughout the course of the adventure, the beast will continue to mature and grow more powerful before eventually reaching adulthood at the climax of the adventure. Throughout the adventure it has two primary motivations: provide nourishment for its eggs and protect its eggs until they hatch. Unfortunately for the PCs aboard the *Star of Nostro*, the nourishment the Creature seeks is their fresh livers. The Creature will methodically seek to ambush and slaughter two PCs at a time to harvest their livers. A critical hit always results in a liver extraction. Additionally, when a PC is killed by the Creature, the judge should describe how the creature removes the PC’s liver, and then stuffs it into a bulging hamster-like cheek pocket. Once the Creature has taken two livers, it will clamber back over the side of the ship—crawling upside down the hull like a lizard—and disappear into the water where it will subsequently insert the livers into its egg pouches. The Creature will repeat this process until all of the PCs are slain, or until the PCs manage to escape the ship.

It bears repeating that given the regenerative nature of the Creature, as well as the dearth of magic available to the PCs, finding a means of escape from the *Star of Nostro* is likely the only way to prevent the total destruction of the party.

See *Appendix A: The Creature* for the full write up of the Creature and its abilities.

ABOUT THE CREW



With the exception of Stone Dahut (area M-6), all of the crew have been killed by the Creature. Most of the victims were pulled out to sea, but there are a few corpses still on board. Whenever the PCs come across a victim, they will have at least 1 item in their possession (roll d4: 1. dagger, 2. hand adze, 3. marlin spike, 4. tobacco). The sailors will be inked with 1d3 tattoos—see *Appendix C: Sailor Tattoos* to randomly determine which tattoos they have inked on them.

RUMORS AND PERSONALITY QUIRKS



Since the PCs have dealt with the threat described at the player start (area L-1), the judge should feel free to distribute rumors/superstitions and PC personality quirks.

Rumors & Superstitions: Each PC knows one rumor/superstition that they were told before the voyage. Most superstitions have no specific game mechanics attached to them but judges are encouraged to incorporate where possible and/or appropriate.

Roll d12:

1. Dwarves are unlucky—it's well known having a dwarf on-board a ship will cause misfortune.
2. Red-haired people on a ship are especially unlucky, even more so than dwarves.
3. Ibis Pirates have been known to capture ships along this route. Those who are captured are pressed into service and never heard from again.
4. Each ship has a Klabautermann—a water kobold—associated with it, for a ship that fails to obtain a Klabautermann cannot survive its maiden voyage. The Klabautermann can sometimes be heard singing sea shanties, but is never seen except when the ship is doomed. The Klabautermann can be called through song to help repair ships or protect the faithful.
5. Captain de Keradel left one of her crew on the island before you set sail. The abandoned sailor looked deathly ill.
6. Pelagia rewards those who tattoo their bodies at sea; different symbols offer different types of protection.
7. It's considered bad luck to have three lit lanterns in the same compartment.
8. Seabirds must not be harmed—the presence of seabirds brings good fortune for finding land and/or safety. Con-

versely, causing any harm to a seabird is terribly unlucky.

9. Dolphins swimming alongside a ship are a sign of good luck.
10. Sharks swimming alongside a ship are a sign of bad luck.
11. A red sky at night means good weather and, conversely, a red sky in the morning indicates an impending storm.
12. Some words or phrases must be strictly avoided. Offering "good luck" brings exactly the opposite. Mentioning "drowning" puts a sailor at risk of a watery grave. The word "skrag" risks summoning a dreaded water troll.

Quirky Personality Traits: Long sea voyages and trauma have a tendency to tarnish a person's social skills. The following is a list of personality traits that can be distributed to players as a result of their harrowing experience at sea. There is no specific game mechanic associated, but players and judges are encouraged to incorporate similar to a PC's background occupation.

Roll d14:

1. Afraid of the dark: panics in areas with low light sources.
2. Claustrophobic: panics in cramped spaces or compartments.
3. Afraid of open water: nervous when traveling over large bodies of water.
4. Fear of fire: character screams at the sight of any flame and will compulsively act to extinguish it above all other actions when seen.
5. Fear of heights: resists climbing into rigging or higher than 5' from a base.
6. Cannot pass a rope without coiling it neatly on the deck or re-tying into a clean knot if hanging.
7. Intuitive: knows the background and benefit of any tattoo they see on a sailor.
8. Living barometer: can accurately predict when a storm is coming (usually through complaints about pain in their joints).
9. Pelagia devotee: obsessive need to throw any treasure or items of value overboard into the sea as offerings to reverse bad fortune.
10. Subject to mirage and hallucination: sees and reports other ships, land, and sea monsters whenever outside on the weather decks or in the rigging.
11. Paranoid: convinced a party member is the source of bad luck. Randomly assigns one of the PCs the title of 'Jonah'—a person bringing bad luck to the boat. This character will not cooperate with the PC they are convinced is the Jonah.
12. Nervous whistler: PC begins whistling when scared.
13. Rambunctious: PC will drink any alcoholic beverage available and start fights with the nearest characters.
14. The Loquacious Mansplainer: feels compelled to give their opinion on a matter, any matter, all matters.



PART ONE: ABOARD THE STAR OF NOSTRO (PLAYER START)

AREA L-1: HUMAN LIVESTOCK DECK

The sounds of waves and the smell of salty air peels you away from the torpor of sleep. Fighting a headache and a stiff back, you open your eyes just wide enough to realize you've been chained to a pole deep in hull of the sailing ship The Star of Nostro.

Your last memory was sharing a goodbye dinner your neighbors, the ship's captain Kristene de Keradel, her consort Dahut, and the ship's crew. You were all celebrating your last night on your island home before departing to seek a better life working in the copper mines of Lys, where the promise of wealth and opportunity awaited.

After your eyes adjust to the dark, you realize you are bound to a wooden pole with 2 others – three-to-a-pole – by a rusty chain shackled on your wrist.

To add to your misery is the gagging odor of rot and dank earth. The source of the earthy smell is not obvious, but it's easy to spot what reeks of decay: over half of the passengers – aspirational miners like yourself and similarly shackled – are starting to burst from the bloat of death.

Suddenly, someone shrieks out in terror. Turning towards the noise, you see one of your shackled neighbors struggling against a small black dragon! With a quick snap of its jaws, the dragon completely severs the man's hand, ending his mining career in a single bite. As you struggle against your chain, several more of the vicious creatures approach.

The PCs begin the adventure shackled in the ship's hold by the wrist to wooden poles and carrying none of their belongings. The chains which bind them are old and rusty, making them relatively easy to escape as they are only used as a precaution (the cultists rely on the Sleep Shrooms to keep the PCs sedated during the voyage). The chains can be pulled from the pole with a DC 13 Strength check, escaped from with a DC 13 Agility check, or broken by two rounds of bludgeoning. PCs who manage to escape can use their chains as weapons (1d3), and PCs searching for makeshift weapons can find them with a successful Luck check.

The PCs belongings were taken as their fee for passage. They have been distributed to the crew and can now be found in the crew's berthing area (area C-1).

Alkar Larvae: The creatures are not actually dragons, but given the dark and commotion, they are easily mistaken for them. They are actually alkar larvae recently hatched from some of the pods attached to the hull of the ship. They are three feet long and resemble stony iguanas. Their large powerful jaws are capable of making any sailor eligible for a peg leg.

Alkar Larvae (6): Init +0; Atk bite +0 melee (1d4); AC 11; HD 1d8; hp 4 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP severs limb on crit causing additional 1d5; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will -1; AL C.

Once the danger has passed, read or paraphrase the text below. This would also be an ideal time for judges to distribute rumors and personality quirks.

The carnage within the cramped berth is horrific. Some of the chained passengers are disemboweled, while others have bled out from a missing hand or foot. The entire area reeks of death and a strange, earthy musk.

Among the dead are two of the crew. Their faces are covered with cloth masks resembling large bird beaks. They are slumped on top of a coffin-sized box in the center of the berthing. Their hands are gripped to the lid of the box in their death pose, and their swords remain sheathed at their sides.

A narrow ladder leads to the deck above. There are two large cargo hatches, one overhead and one in the deck.

Mushroom Crate: PCs examining the "coffin-sized box" will quickly realize it is the source of the pungent stench. Once opened, it releases an overpowering odor. The box is filled with manure, soil, and Sleep Shrooms. PCs not wearing one of the bird-beak masks have two rounds to move to a different area or risk falling into a Deep Shroom Sleep Coma (DC 20 Fortitude save to avoid; gongfarmers, and mushroom-farmers are immune) which lasts for 1d4 turns. Buried deep in the dung are 10 gp, which, despite the odor, can be smelled by dwarves.

Dead Sailors: The sailors were attempting to wake the passengers/PCs by closing the lid to the Mushroom Crate when they were set upon by the Creature. They had just finished closing the lid when they were ambushed, and thus, the PCs have awakened. The "bird beak masks" are filled with coffee beans which staves off the effect of the Sleep Shrooms. A short sword can be retrieved from each corpse.

Dead Passengers: The dead passengers fall into 2 categories: those who died from disembowelment, and those who perished due to a severed limb. If examined by a PC whose background occupation is butcher, grave digger, healer or something similar, they will notice that each of disemboweled victims have had their liver removed (the Creature has taken the livers, the Alkar Larvae have eaten the extremities.)

Comatose Passengers: There are nine passengers which are actually still alive and merely in a Deep Shroom Sleep Coma. They cannot be revived manually, but if the Mushroom Crate remains closed, they will naturally awake in 2 days (However, they will re-awaken as needed if the judge needs replacement PCs.)

Cargo hatches: there are heavy wooden hatches overhead and on deck. The bottom hatch can be opened if at least 3 PCs work together and each make a DC 12 Strength check. The overhead hatch can only be opened from the main deck.

AREA M-1: MAIN DECK

Note: The Creature will not randomly attack on the main deck, as it will wait to attack the first PC who descends from the crew's nest (see area M-1A).

You stand on the main deck of the ship. The ocean stretches in all directions around you unblemished by land or other ships beneath an eerie red sky. Despite loose sails, the ship moves smoothly along in the water under a fair wind. High on the mainmast above, you see the

ship's unmanned crow's nest. The two-handed lever of the ship's bilge pump is affixed near the port side of the ship.

The ship's animal livestock is on this deck, but many of the cages have jostled open. Chickens, pigs, and a few goats wander the deck aimlessly, happily clucking and bleating. As they roam, you notice a trail of slimy mucus clings to their feet and hooves.

Three sailors with swords near their bodies lie dead on the deck. Based on their pallor and lividity, you'd guess they've been dead at least 24 hours.

There are four doors leading into cabins, and separate ladders leading up to the fo'c'sle and poop deck. Another ladder leads down to the deck from which you awakened, and a second narrower ladder descends deeper into the ship. Sail rigging can be climbed to the crow's nest above.

Animal Livestock: The 3 goats and 10 chickens are normal and harmless. The pigs, however, are not what they seem. The original pigs were consumed by the Creature and these abominations are demonic swine mimics (fakin' bacon) which sprouted from a mixture of the original pig's spilt blood and the Creature's saliva. By all examinations, they appear as normal pigs with the following exception: if any of the PCs are carrying coal, they will notice that the coal pulls towards the demonic swine (similar to a magnet attracted to metal). The demonic swine will not immediately attack the PCs unless they are attacked first, they wait until the PCs try to leave the area and only one or two PCs remain. At that point, all three demonic swine will stand upright on their hind legs and attack the straggler PCs attempting to knock them overboard.

Fakin' Bacon (3): Init +3; Atk tusks +0 melee (1d4 + DC 8 Ref save or knocked overboard); AC 10; HD 1d8; hp 5 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP demon traits, crit table DN: Demons (1d6); SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1; AL C.

Rigging: Climbing the rigging to the crow's nest (area M-1A) requires a DC 5 Agility check, with failure resulting in the PC slipping from the ropes and plunging back down onto the deck for 1d6 hit points in falling damage. It takes 3 rounds to safely climb up or down the rigging to or from the crow's nest.

Slime: The slime is harmless, but if carefully examined, the PCs will notice the slime tracks lead over the side of the ship as well as into the human livestock deck (area L-1). Any coal that the PCs are carrying will gently pull towards the slime.

Bilge Pump: Two PCs working together can operate the bilge pump to extract waste water collected in the bilge (area B-1). The bilge water will spill onto the deck before flowing overboard through a scupper and into the sea. For each round that the bilge is operated, there is a 1-in-8 chance that one of the dung eels from area B-1 will be sucked into the pump and dumped onto the deck, startled and angry.

Dead sailors (3): The sailors were killed trying to fight off the Creature. Each of the dead sailors has had their liver removed. Three short swords can be collected near their bodies.

AREA M-1A: CROW'S NEST

Note: The Creature will not randomly attack on the main deck or while the PCs are in the crow's nest. The Creature waits to attack the first PC that descends from the crow's nest while they're vulnerable in the rigging.

The crow's nest can hold a maximum of 2 PCs at a time and is a bane to PCs with a fear of heights.

From within the cramped crow's nest, you can see for miles in every direction. The wind whips at you and the red sky seems to be filling with foreboding clouds.

A damaged lantern is affixed to the mast. The lantern's mirror is missing, and its oil reservoir is empty.

A large albatross lazily circles above the ship, and the fins of two sharks can be seen breaching the water nearby.

The View: From this height, a character of the right race or using the appropriate equipment has a chance to spy the sails of the *Bom Homem* just peeking over the horizon to the northwest. The ship cannot be spotted by the naked human eye, but can be seen by an elf or halfling, or by PCs using a spyglass they've found on the ship (or something they've fashioned into a spyglass). A generous judge might also permit a Luck check if there are no characters which can meet any of those requirements.

The Albatross: the albatross is a lucky portent to sailors. If the players indicate they are watching the movement of the albatross, explain to them, "While it may just be your stressed mind playing tricks on you, you could have sworn the great bird dipped a wing in salute towards you before flying towards the northwest." (This is a clue to steer the ship in that direction to alert the Ibis pirates.)

The Lantern: replacing/repairing the lantern using supplies found in the cargo bay (area C-1) and then lighting it will trigger the ship being sighted by the Ibis pirates (see *Part 2: Deus Ex Bom Homem*).

The Creature attacks: the first PC to climb down from the crow's nest will trigger an attack by the Creature. As the PC descends, the Creature will emerge from underwater, scale the hull, and then drag itself over the bulwark into the forecabin (area F-1). From there, the Creature will nimbly climb across the ropes to attack the PC clinging to the rigging.

AREA M-2: CAPTAIN'S STATEROOM

Compared to the other areas you've explored on the ship, which are tightly packed with equipment and cargo, this stateroom seems opulent and spacious. Inside the cabin is a bed against the starboard wall, six chairs which surround an ornate table, a writing desk, and a wardrobe. Affixed to one wall is an elaborately crafted rope mermaid which sparkles in the light.

Along the aft wall is a block of windows which have been smashed open, allowing fresh, salty air to permeate the cabin. The floor of the cabin is covered in broken glass and slime trails.

This is the quarters of the late Captain Kristene de Keradel, master of the *Star of Nostro*, and devout follower of Alkar-Az.

Creature Attack: If the PCs spend more than five rounds in this stateroom, the Creature will attack. The round before the attack, inform the players they begin to hear sea birds screeching outside and notice a dark shadow passing across the aft windows. If a PC looks out the window to investigate, the Creature—who lurks outside clinging to the hull—will gain a surprise attack grabbing the curious PC by the head. PCs must make an opposed Strength check against the Creature's 22 Strength (+6)

or be dragged through the window and into water below to be drowned and have their liver removed.

Desk: On top of the desk is an ocean map showing several islands and coastlines. The PCs will recognize the names of Alviz (their island home) as well as Lys (their original destination). But unless the PCs have a background occupation in navigation, it will require a DC 15 Intelligence check to learn anything useful from the maps. For those that can read maps and know how to use the navigational tools found on the poop deck (area P-1), they will estimate that Lys is seven days sail to the southwest, and returning to Alviz is three days sail to the northeast.

The desk drawer is protected with a simplistic needle trap that is easily spotted and disabled if the PCs mention they're looking under the desk before opening it (DC 12 Reflex save to avoid 1d3 damage). Once opened, the desk contains a spyglass, a purse containing 15 gold pieces, and the Captain's Log.

Rope Mermaid Scroll: At first glance, the rope mermaid appears to be an exquisite craft: it is a 3-foot tall mermaid constructed from a skillfully knotted and twisted rope attached to wooden planks. PCs who carefully examine its design realize it's more than it seems. On a DC 15 Intelligence check (+2 bonus to elves and PCs whose background occupation are mariner, sage, wizard's apprentice or something similar) realize that it's actually a magic scroll. When the knots are carefully traced with the finger, the PC can attempt to cast either *water breathing* or *dispel magic*.

Captain's Log: For each round spent reading the captain's log, one of the following entries can be revealed.

- "Officer on deck spotted a sloop flying Ibis colors—likely the raider Irdy-Es! *The Star* was able to evade her during the night. Must be more careful with the lanterns."
- "Made anchor in Lys. Transported the human livestock to Tirrem. Bit of trouble when a few woke up. Flogged Lowell for his incompetence. Despite slight delay Tirrem informs we are on schedule for tomorrow's ceremony. Tirrem, Stone Dahut, and I all agree that this latest shipment of livestock will please The Gatherer Alkar-Az."
- "Alkar's stones! Mayhem during the ceremony! Tirrem had sacrificed half of the cargo with the *Mael Bennique* and The Gatherer had begun to take shape. All thought the sacrifice would be sufficient to please the Stony One, but His shape erupted in exploding rock! Several of the crew were injured including my steward McCann—the poor bastard lost an eye! All were brought back to the ship so Lowell could treat the wounds."
- "Raising anchor with a course charted for Alviz for fresh "miners." Har har."
- "Arrived in Alviz. No problem avoiding the Ibis pirates, but Crew balked when I instructed them to avoid fires and lanterns. I had Master of Arms Ricori put the rope to those who balked too loudly."
- "Strange! The crew injured in the ceremony seem to have taken on a sickness. Lowell believes it may be Banana Fever. I've instructed Lowell to leave the sick behind on Alviz but ordered that McCann stays—I won't be without my Steward."

- "Fresh livestock picked up in Alviz – 40 "miners" in all. They were all asleep as soon as we put the shrooms in their wine. Gullible floppers."
- "Alkar's Stones! My Steward McCann has been killed! The boy was found eviscerated in his bunk gutted like a pig. I've tasked Mr. Connant to find the murdering fiend!"
- "Three more murders! Entrails removed just like with McCann. The crew fear we may have a reef-wraith on board and are now singing to the Klabautermann for protection from dawn to dusk. I brook none of this nonsense. The culprit is a man and we shall unveil the fiend! Doubling the watch. Tempted to light the lanterns at night despite the Ibis risk."
- "Four more taken tonight! Crew on double shifts. Some of the crew have been heard whispering 'skrag'."
- "Met with Mr. Connant and Stone Dahut privately. Connant confided he fears we are being tracked by a skrag. I told him little chance of that that this far into open waters and do not dare whisper that thought to the crew. Stone Dahut fears McCann may have brought something unholy back from the ceremony when he was injured. Lowell has no opinion as he's joined the dead. Either theory is devastating. Soon won't have enough souls to crew the ship."
- "Six more taken during the night! Have now lost over half the crew. Some have claimed to have seen the skrag taking a boy over the railing. Dahut nowhere to be found. I've given orders to Master-at-Arms Ricori to wake the livestock... Alkar-Az help us all!"

AREA M-3: GALLEY

Creature Attack? If the Creature is scheduled to attack this round, the coal in the area and storage bin will start to vibrate and rattle as the Creature approaches.

You've entered the ship's galley, and it's obvious from the disarray that violence has broken out here recently. Utensils, pans, and cups are strewn about scattered and broken. A portly sailor lays on the floor bloody, lifeless, and gray. Her abdomen has been ripped open with a savagery similar to the other bodies you've seen on the ship. A kitchen knife is still clutched in her hand.

The ship's oven smolders slightly and gives off a faint heat. The coal used to fuel its fire is stacked in a crate nearby.

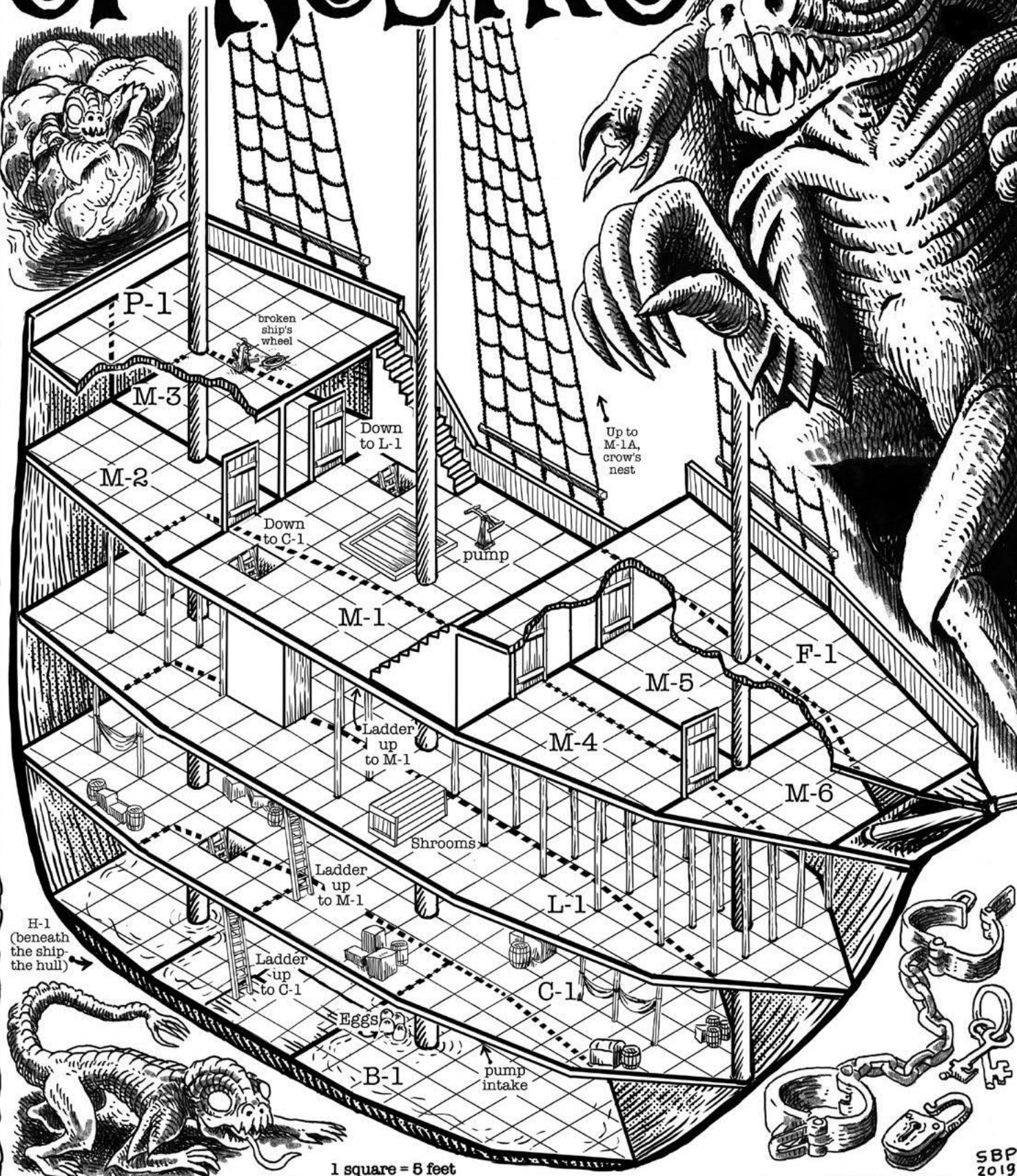
The floor of the cabin is covered in debris. Broken shards of ceramic, blood, flour, and coal dust covers the deck. A trail of slime leads from the port window towards the compartment's exit. The coal dust seems to be clinging to the slime.

Corpse: Chincho the cook died valiantly trying to defend herself from the Creature. The butcher knife in her hand can be retrieved and used as a dagger.

Items: For each round the PCs spend searching the kitchen, they can find one item of the judges choosing from the trade good list in Table 1-3: Occupation (p. 22, DCC RPG rulebook). Other items that can be found are spices (garlic, paprika, sugar, cinnamon), and hardtack biscuits.

Slime: The slime is harmless, but if examined the PCs will notice that both coal and coal dust are attracted to the slime like a magnet to metal.

THE STAR OF NOSTRO



AREA M-4: FIRST MATE'S QUARTERS

Creature ambush? If the Creature is scheduled to attack during this round, the PCs will hear the creaking of wood from the main deck one round before the attack. The Creature will attempt to pull the nearest/unluckiest out of the cabin and onto the main deck before commencing attack.

This spacious cabin contains a simple bed, wardrobe, and locker for storing personal effects. On the table is a journal scribed in elegant handwriting. The front of the journal says, "Property of First Mate Connant" The journal has artistic drawings of mermaids, birds, anchors, and other nautical-themed items on the cover and in the margins.

A hatch on the opposite wall leads to a forward cabin.

Connant was the ship's First Mate and kept a log of his travels. As he was also a skilled artist, many of the crew came to him when they wished to get tattoos inked on their bodies.

Locker: the locker contains Connant's clothing, a purse of 20 sp, a handaxe (1d6), hand adze (1d6), a quill pen and parchment, and a needle and ink set used for inscribing tattoos (six applications).

Connant's Log: The final entries in Connant's Log:

- "Scheduled to drop anchor at Lys tomorrow. Eager to drop off the livestock and take my fill of rum. No doubt the Captain and Stone Dahut will force us to go to one of Tirrem's ceremonies. Hopefully it will be brief. Tirrem crushing the livestock with that black maul all night turns my stomach."
- "Alkar's Stones! That daft fool Tirrem fumbled some words during the ceremony and the demon thing exploded like a volcano! Several of the crew were riddled with shards and the Captain's boy lost an eye! Returned to ship so Lowell could patch us up."
- "Loaded fresh livestock from Alviz. Har! I can't believe the addlepates on that backwater island continue to sign up for work. Fools."
- "These are not murders, we're being hunted by a skrag. I'd bet my life on it. The Captain is worried about lighting lanterns and Ibis reavers, but sailors are being ripped apart! I swear I hear the beast scratching at the hull. Some are now refusing to enter the bilge as they swear they hear it breathing down there."

Tattoos: The drawings in Connant's Log are patterns for tattoos. Tattoos have mystical symbols for sailors. It takes one turn to inscribe a tattoo on another PC. Upon a receiving a tattoo, the newly inked PC makes a Luck check, and if successful, they are blessed by Pelagia with benefits of the tattoo for the whatever time they have left during the adventure. See *Appendix C: Tattoos* for more details.

AREA M-5: SURGEON'S QUARTERS

Creature ambush? If the Creature is scheduled to attack this round, the PCs will hear a slimy, squishing sound coming from beyond the door. The Creature will attempt to pull the

nearest/unluckiest out of the cabin and onto the main deck before commencing attack.

This stateroom has a large table, a desk, and a shelf with several stoppered jars. Next to the large table is a smaller table with surgical equipment and a large book. Hanging by a hook over the table is an unlit lantern.

On the large table is the exposed body of a young male sailor. Someone has taken forceps and pulled back the flesh of its midsection as part of a post-mortem examination. The corpse bears a savage wound in its abdomen as well as many lacerations on the arms, face, and neck. The corpse has one eye open that leers at you disturbingly.

The corpse is Captain de Keradel's personal steward, the young McCann. McCann was one of the crew first infected in the ceremony that went awry on Lys, and patient zero. His "leering eye" is actually an expertly painted glass ball installed after his accident. The glass eye is now magically associated with the Creature and enables sensing when it's nearby (see below). The surgical instruments can be treated either as a weapon (dagger, 1d4) or as thieves picks and tools. The book is "Madeline Moon's Modern Translation of the *Tacuinum Sanitates*".

The Tacuinum Sanitates: The *Tacuinum Sanitates* is a book filled with detailed illustrations depicting how certain herbs are essential ingredients for a variety of healing and necromantic rituals. For each round spent reading the tome, roll to determine the properties of an ingredient. There are 2 doses of each ingredient stored within the jars on the shelf. Remember, these are just the ingredients used in complex and arcane rituals, merely possessing an ingredient doesn't necessarily mean the 0-level PCs can cast the associated spell. But then again, magic is mysterious...

Roll d12:

1. Acacia - protection from evil, second sight
2. Ayahuasca - healing, hallucination (*color spray*)
3. Bamboo - protection from evil, luck, hex-breaking (*remove curse*)
4. Belladonna -poison, astral projection (*planar step*)
5. Cedar - protection from unholy
6. Copal "blood of the trees" - purification, *invoke patron*
7. Garlic & Juniper - prevents thievery, healing, exorcism, protection from un-dead/unholy
8. Pufferfish venom - *animate dead* (when ingested)
9. Rue - induces sleep
10. Tobacco -removes fear, removes phobias
11. Violet - enchantment (*charm person*)
12. Yew- *animate dead* (when burned)

Experimenting with the pufferfish venom or yew on any corpse will cause the corpse to flutter awake - scared and confused - and answer 3 questions (similar to a *speak with the dead* cleric spell). Once the questions are answered, the resurrected body will succumb to the lingering effects of dying at the hands of demonic violence, and immediately be transformed into an Alkar zombie.

Alkar Zombie: Init -1; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4 + disease); AC 9; HD 3d6; hp 15 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP Alkar larvae host, un-dead traits; SV Fort +4, Ref -4, Will +2; AL C.

Alkar Larvae Host: any PC that takes damage from an Alkar zombie is at risk of becoming a host for an Alkar larvae (DC 12 Fort save). PCs lose 3 stamina points per day as their liver is eaten from inside their body. When they reach zero hit points, an Alkar larvae bursts from the PCs body in its quest to reach full maturity.

McCann's Glass Eye: PCs attempting to look through this exquisitely painted glass eye can see a hazy shape which represents how soon the Creature will be attacking the PCs. If an ambush is 3 or more turns away, the image is cloudy, but as the attack draws more imminent, the Creature's silhouette in the eye becomes more defined.

AREA M-6: STONE DAHUT'S STATEROOM

The Creature detects the dark energy of its ancestor Alkar-Az in this area and will not enter or ambush any PC in this location.

Entering this large stateroom, you feel like you've stepped off the ship and into a cave. The walls have been adorned with clay and rock in such a meticulous and ingenious manner, the cabin resembles an underground cavern.

On one side of the "cavern" is a small sitting ledge with an open scroll and candle. Laying on the floor is Dahut! You recognize her from your farewell dinner with Captain de Keradel the night before departing on your voyage.

Dahut's arms are crossed over her chest and she's holding an ornate rock pick, but both she and the tool are transformed! Dahut's flesh is in a state of petrification, half flesh and half stone. It's as if she's been gazed upon by a basilisk!

This is the chamber of Stone Dahut (her name is actually Dahut, "Stone" is a clerical title), a disciple of Alkar-Az. This area acts as both her berth as well as a chapel to the stone demon.

The Scroll: the scroll is the spent remnants of the spell *sleeping stone* which Stone Dahut cast upon herself. By reading the remains of the scroll, PCs will understand Stone Dahut's condition and how to counter it (see below). However, the scroll does not enlighten the PCs of the ramifications of a failed revival attempt.

Stone Dahut: Dahut, suspecting they were being stalked by a lesser demon with no chance of escape, has cast the spell *sleeping stone* upon herself. Similar to the conventional *sleep* spell, she will awaken when her pre-determined interrupt condition is met ("When my body reaches dry land"). Unlike the normal *sleep* spell, *sleeping stone* slowly transforms her flesh into petrified stone while under the spell's effect. Her pick, Alkar's Hammer, is also petrified and is not retrievable unless she is revived.

The PCs can attempt to revive Dahut via one of two methods (both explained in the scroll):

1. Casting *dispel magic*: requires at least a spell check result of 16 if reading the rope mermaid scroll from area M-2. Remember 0-level PCs use a d10 for this check (although a generous judge might offer a 0-level elf a d12 to attempt

this roll), so the would-be spellcaster better be ready to burn some Luck.

2. *Blood from a stone* ritual: Only attemptable in the first days of the spell, the PCs may attempt to extract a few drops of blood from the not-yet-petrified heart of Stone Dahut using the tattoo needle from area M-4. This intricate procedure requires a DC 17 Agility check to be successful.

Attempting one of the reanimation techniques on Stone Dahut and failing results in her rising as a minor living statue:

Minor Living Statue Dahut: Init +5; Atk stone hammer +2 melee (1d8); AC 15; HD 3d8; hp 17; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP surprises 50% of time; SV Fort +4, Ref -2, Will -2; AL N.

If Dahut is successfully awakened, she will be so ravaged from the effects of the *sleeping stone* spell, that she will require at least two weeks of rest before she is able to cast spells or defend herself effectively. However, she will be able to inform the players of everything which has transpired (see Judge's Background). She will also offer the PCs who will assist in her rescue Alkar's Hammer as they are now her last and best hope of survival.

Alkar's Hammer: the rock pick is Alkar's Hammer, a ceremonial ax similar to Tirrem's black maul the *Mael Bennique* which is used to dispatch human sacrifice victims during Alkar-Az ceremonies. The pick is a +1 weapon (1d6) but provides a +2 attack bonus to demonic foes (including the Creature) as well as water-based creatures. The hammer itself emits a loud, satisfied grunt every time it strikes a foe.

AREA F-1: FORECASTLE /FO'C'SLE

Creature ambush? Modify the read aloud text with the following information: If the Creature is scheduled to attack during this round, the PCs will see sharks swimming nearby in the water (a sign of bad luck). If not, the PCs will see dolphins playfully jumping in the ship's wake (good luck).

From the fo'c'sle, you have a magnificent view of the ocean before you as the Star of Nostro continues to glide through the water against darkening skies.

A peculiar dog-like humanoid figure has been carved into the foremast. The creature is approximately 2-feet tall, has a canine face, stands upright like a halfling, but has webbed hands and feet. It is dressed in traditional sailor's attire and is holding a hammer and smoking a pipe. It appears to be smiling cheerfully.

Klabautermann: the water-kobold carving in the mast is the ship's good luck-spirit. The crew held the traditional belief that the Klabautermann protects the vessel and would occasionally sing to it to call its protection, which was happening around the clock once the Creature started attacking. If the PCs call for aid through song, the Klabautermann will not appear, but the spirit's song-of-response will be heard distantly on the winds. Out of sight, the spirit will perform one service of aid. Examples include fixing the ship's wheel, offering advice to sail northwest, providing a hint of where an important clue is on the ship, or something similar that the judge chooses. In addition, if called upon for aid, the Klabautermann will assist the PCs during the final attack with the Creature (see Part 2).

AREA P-1: POOP DECK

Creature ambush? If the Creature is scheduled to attack during this round, the PCs will first be alerted by hearing a hissing sound being carried on the wind. The Creature will then climb up the side of the ship and vault over the bulwark to engage.

Climbing a small ladder, you make your way onto the poop deck which offers a haunting view of the ship enveloped by the darkening skies and the vast ocean. A shark fin can briefly be seen breaching the ship's wake before submerging again.

You're alarmed to find the ship's wheel has been splintered to pieces. So now, in addition to all the other hardships you've endured, you're also left wondering how you will possibly steer the ship?

Near the splintered ruins of the ship's wheel is a small locker.

Locker: The locker is neither trapped nor locked. Inside is a sounding line (50' rope with large lead weight on the end), navigational tools (sextant and astrolabe worth 20 gp), and a spy-glass worth 25 gp. Also in the locker is the ship's ledger containing the names of the crew and an inventory of the "livestock" (see *Appendix D: People, Places, and Things*).

Ship's Wheel: The ship's wheel can be repaired by successfully retrieving the spare wheel from area C-1, and then re-attaching it to the pedestal at the helm, thereby connecting it to the ship's rudder. Alternatively, if the PCs have sung to the Klabautermann in area F-1 for assistance, he will have repaired the wheel when the PCs are not present. Once repaired, if the PCs set a course northwest, they will trigger the finale (see *Part 2: Deus Ex Bom Homem*). The ship is currently drifting southwest.

AREA C-1: CARGO AND CREW'S BERTHING

Creature: The Creature will no longer stage an ambush in this area of the ship, but the judge should continue to maintain the appearance that an attack is imminent (sounds of creaking from behind cargo crates, shadows moving across the walls, etc.)

The narrow ladder from the main deck descends into the ship's cargo hold. The area is dark and cramped, and smells of yeast, rot, and whale oil. The entire area is crowded with crates and barrels carefully stacked and tied together. Along the bulkheads of the ship, tied down with numerous ropes and elaborate knots, are several masts, sails and other items in order to repair the ship while at sea.

Both fore and aft, you see many posts with rows of hammocks fastened between them. The crew's lockers are neatly stacked against the port and starboard bulkheads. Five unlit lanterns sway over the bunks.

Several corpses of sailors lie rotting on the deck. Like the others you've seen, they are bloated and rancid, and appear to have been disemboweled. Rats feeding on the corpse's extremities scurry away as you approach.

Exits include a ladder leading upwards, the cargo hatch overhead, and a smaller closed hatch in the deck.

There are 2 hazards the PCs must contend with: securing the cargo and avoiding "three lanterns".

Cargo: the crew of the *Star of Nostro* have secured the cargo crates and barrels so meticulously that any attempt to retrieve an item without first securing the adjoining containers results in an avalanche of crates and barrels coming down on the PCs.

Securing the cargo requires a DC 10 Agility check; PCs with a background occupation of cooper, dockworker, mariner, smuggler, or similar receive +2 bonus to check. Failure to secure, or attempting to retrieve an item before securing results in a barrel rolling onto the PC causing 1d6 damage (DC 13 Reflex save to avoid).

PCs searching for a specific item can find it with a successful Luck check. Alternatively, the judge can determine randomly what is found during searches of the cargo by rolling a d12:

1. Spare ship's wheel
2. Spare anchor (x2)
3. Spare masts, wood
4. Sail cloth
5. Food (dried beef, cheese, peas, flour, salt pork)
6. Fresh Water (8 barrels)
7. Whale oil (8 barrels)
8. Rum, wine, and beer
9. Tools which can be used as weapons: marlin spike (1d4), hammers (1d6), hand adze (1d6)
10. Cache of short swords (6)
11. 3 mirrors and 2 spare lanterns
12. A crate full of yak pelts

Three Lanterns: as the rumor goes, it is bad luck to have three lit lanterns in a single compartment. When the party enters the cargo hold, the judge should determine what the PCs are using for light sources. If three or more PCs are carrying lanterns, those carrying the lanterns must make a Luck check. Any PCs that fails accidentally drops their lantern igniting a potentially deadly fire. It takes at least 3 PCs working together to squelch the flames, and each PC attempting to extinguish the fire must make a DC 10 Reflex save or take 1d5 points of fire damage (save for half damage).

Corpses: The corpses have been nibbled by normal rats but are otherwise unremarkable. They carry no weapons.

Lockers: All of the PCs starting equipment can be found by searching the lockers. In addition, each PC searching a locker that successfully makes a Luck check can find a trinket worth 4d4 sp (flute, carved ivory, decorative shells, shrunken head, set of giant beaver teeth, etc.)

AREA B-1: BILGE

No Creature Ambush: The Creature will never ambush this area from within the ship, as there is a chance it may burst up from beneath the hull (see below).

The platform at the bottom of the ladder into the bilge is only wide enough to hold three PCs. Any additional PCs entering the bilge will be forced to stand in 16 inches of rancid bilge water. Given the complex construction of the hull's frames and spars, movement is reduced to 5". Any PC with the quirky personality trait of *claustrophobia* or *afraid of the dark* will be extremely reticent to enter or explore the bilge.



Once one or more PCs have entered the bilge, read or paraphrase:

Crouching low, you climb down the ladder and step onto the platform above the bilge water. The rank water is a ripe mixture of sea water polluted with the filth of sailors who, for weeks now, have used this area as a latrine.

Towards the aft, a tube descends from the deck above and into the water. Towards the fore of the ship, protruding up through the water are four large, veiny, leather sacks covered in mucous. You nervously intuit that these may be some sort of unearthly, or unholy, eggs.

As you examine the sacks, a scratching and clawing sound can be heard originating from the bottom of the ship. It is the unnerving sound of someone, or something, trying to claw its way through the hull.

Bilge Pump: The tube is part of the bilge pump which can be operated from the main deck (area M-1).

Dung Eels: Eels which thrive on excreta are a common nuisance on sailing ships, and the *Star of Nostro* is no exception. There are 4 dung eels in the bilge to start, but fewer if the PCs previously siphoned any out using the bilge pump in area M-1.

Dung Eels (4): Init + 1; Atk bite +1 melee (1d4 + disease); AC 12; HP 5 each; MV 10' or swim 20'; Act 1d20; SP disease (DC 12 Fort save or additional 1d4 damage); SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will -1; AL N.

Eggs, Embryos, and Hull Breaches: Poking up out of the water are four of the Creature's leathery eggs whose acidic membranes have burned their way through the hull of the ship. If care is used, the sacks can be carefully sliced open to remove the fragile, squirming, lizard-like Alkar embryos within without breaching the hull (the egg sack produces a watertight seal between the outer hull and the bilge). As each sack is opened to extract an embryo, the scratching from beneath the hull becomes more frantic as the Creature wails in distress. When or if the fourth sack is ruptured, the Creature bursts through the hole in a crazed frenzy, sundering the hull in the process (see "Breached Hull!" sidebar). The Creature will not attack any PCs carrying a live embryo.

Caring for Alkar Embryos: Once extracted, an embryo will only survive 2 hours (12 turns) unless it is fed a fresh human/hu-

manoid liver (i.e., a liver harvested within 6 turns). If an embryo is cared for and fed 2 livers within 4 hours, it will immediately metamorphose into an Alkar larvae, loyally imprinting onto the PC who nurtured it believing the PC to be its mother.

AREA H-1: BENEATH THE SHIP—THE HULL

Attempting to swim beneath the boat to examine the hull is incredibly dangerous, and doing so puts the PCs at risk of drowning and/or being savagely raked across a reef. First, the ship is constantly moving, and if the PCs forget to tether themselves by rope, they will essentially be lost at sea. Assuming they're tethered, a PC who swims under the ship must make a DC 12 Fortitude save or take 1d3 hit points drowning damage. Finally, the PC must make a DC 12 Reflex save as they go under the hull (effectively keelhauling themselves) or take 1d3 damage as they scrape against the reefs. PCs who successfully cast *breathe underwater* from the Rope Mermaid Scroll (area M-2), are immune from drowning and reef damage.

Assuming they survive the journey, once they swim beneath the ship, they will see there are another 14 eggs attached to the hull similar to the ones found in the bilge (area B-1). If the PCs brought a dagger, two embryos can be removed per "held breath" of the PCs attempting the extraction.

Each time a PC attempts this maneuver, there's a 1-in-3 chance they will draw the attention of the Creature.

BREACHED HULL!

If the PCs breach the hull, either by extracting too many embryos from area B-1 or recklessly causing some other sort of calamity, the ship will immediately begin to sink and will completely founder within three turns. If the PCs have not successfully drawn the attention of the *Bom Homem*, they will likely be doomed to go down with the ship. PCs lost at sea must successfully make a Luck check each day to cling to flotsam hoping to be picked up by a passing ship lest they drown.

PART 2: DEUS EX BOM HOMEM

It should eventually become obvious to the PCs that defeating the Creature is not a viable strategy and that their salvation depends on finding a means of escape. By exploring the ship, the PCs should find enough clues on the means to draw the attention of the Ibis pirate ship, the *Bom Homem*, which patrols these waters and then devising a means to board that ship without the Creature following.

There are clues throughout the adventure on ways the PCs might draw the attention of the Ibis pirates, although judges should successfully reward players who devise other innovative options if that is their stated intention:

- Light a fire on deck of the ship, or create some sort of smoke signal
- Repair and light the lantern found in the crow's nest (area M-1A)
- Repairing the ship's wheel and steering the ship northwest

Performing any of these actions will draw the attention of the notorious pirate Captain Irdy-Es who commands the *Bom Homem*, who will immediately change course to intercept the *Star of Nostro*.

AVAST! IBIS PIRATES!

Captain Irdy-Es is completely unaware of the danger lurking on the PCs' ship, and will therefore board the *Star of Nostro* without hesitation. The *Bom Homem* will be within boarding range in four turns. During this time the Creature will continue to stalk the PCs.

Once in range, Captain Irdy-Es will use grappling hooks to tether the two ships together and send a raiding party of 8 Ibis pirates onto the *Star of Nostro*. The Ibis pirates are seasoned raiders, and barring any extraordinary efforts by the PCs, the pirates should be able to board with little difficulty.

The Ibis pirates are fearsome fighters and imposing figures. Standing at least six feet tall, they have the bodies of humans, but the heads of ibis birds (similar to depictions of the Egyptian god Thoth).

Pirate Tactics: Led by Captain Irdy-Es, the Ibis pirates will use six grappling hooks to tether the *Bom Homem* to the *Star of Nostro*. Once the hooks are in place, the pirates will use three planks to board the ship. The Ibis pirates will be expecting resistance, and as a result, will not hesitate to kill a few of the PCs if they do not immediately surrender the ship.



Ibis pirates (8): Init +0; Atk short sword +1 melee (1d6) or beak stab +0 melee (1d4); AC 11; HD 1d8; hp 4 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +1; AL C.

Ibis pirate Captain Irdy-Es: Init +3; Atk scimitar +3 melee (1d8 +2) or beak stab +2 melee (1d6); AC 14; HD 2d8; hp 14; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +2; AL C.

STAND-OFF WITH THE CREATURE

The PCs have two rounds to interact with the Ibis pirates to plead/negotiate/surrender/attack before the Creature makes its final appearance. The Creature has now reached full maturity and strikes an imposing figure, standing nine feet tall and has developed a spiked tail capable of impregnating a PC with eggs (see "Phase 3: Adult Creature" in Appendix A).

Despite its low intelligence, the Creature can sense that the arrival of the *Bom Homem* offers the PCs a means to escape. It will instinctively try to board whichever ship has the most characters on it. The fate of the PCs rests on their ability to somehow extract themselves to a ship away from the Creature and separate the ships.

The Klabautermann Cometh: If the PCs previously called out for the assistance of the ship's Klabautermann (area F-1), the water kobold will make an appearance to fight on behalf of the PCs during the final encounter. **Note:** given the Klabautermann is a magical being, his attacks always do full damage against the Creature.

Klabautermann: Init +1; Atk scimitar +1 melee (1d6); AC 12; HD 2d6; hp 9; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2; AL L.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Assuming the PCs escape from the Creature, the following scenarios can be used as plot hooks for future adventures:

- The Creature is still out there: The Creature is likely not defeated, and therefore, will eventually make its way to the mainland. The surviving (now 1st level) PCs should quest to find items like *Alkar's Hammer* and the *Mael Bennique* capable of permanently eradicating the Creature.
- Tirrem: Despite the setback on the *Star of Nostro*, The Warlock Tirrem is still out there with his black maul the *Mael Bennique* sacrificing humans and attempting to raise Alkar-

Az. If Tirrem is not put in check, he will eventually be successful in his efforts to release The Gatherer onto the world.

- Infection at Alviz: Remember, according to the ship's logs, other infected sailors were left on the PC's home island of Alviz. That has got to be cause for alarm.
- Marooned! A freak storm could easily destroy the PC's ship, marooning them on an island where cannibals worship a giant stone face carved into a mountain. It is rumored that there is a secret tunnel behind one of the idol's eyes.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: THE CREATURE

The Creature is a unique, mutant abomination which has evolved from a corrupted sliver of the stone demon Alkar-Az. After gestating in the body of the Captain's young Steward, McCann, it burst out of the boy's body and now stalks the ship. The Creature's primary motivation is to ambush the PCs, extract their livers, and then use their organs as nourishment for the eggs it has attached to the hull of the ship.

As the adventure progresses, the Creature will rapidly mature—progressing from young, to adolescent, and then finally mature by the adventure's finale. It should go without saying, but the Creature becomes more deadly as it matures.

Regardless of its lifecycle stage, the Creature has the following characteristics:

- *Regeneration*: Upon reaching zero hit points, it does not die, but becomes an oily black pool which seeps through the nooks and crannies of the wooden ship.
- *Transmute to Oil*: While rarely doing so, the creature can transform into black oil at will similar to how other demons can assume gaseous form, making it extremely difficult to trap.
- *Trail of slime*: the creature leaves a thin coating of slime behind in its tracks.
- *Doesn't require breath*: As the creature doesn't draw breath—at least not in the way that prime material plane creatures might think of breathing—it is immune to breath-based attacks and is not vulnerable in areas deprived of air (underwater, etc.)
- *Protective of embryos*: The Creature will not attack a PC carrying one of its embryos (areas B-1 and H-1).
- *Attracts Coal*: Given it is a descendant from the stone demon Alkar-Az, its body, and slime trail, attracts coal similar to how a magnet is attracted to metal.

PHASE 1: YOUNG CREATURE

Creature (Young): Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d6); AC 13; HD 2d8; hp 12; MV 30', swim 20', climb 20'; Act 1d20; SP demon traits, crit results in immediate liver extraction (3d10 damage), transmute to oil, regeneration, immune to *charm* and breathing-based effects; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0; AL C.

Description as Young: As a youngling, the Creature resembles a 4-foot long stony iguana; effectively a larger version of the Alkar larvae. The Creature's rough hide is dark gray in color.

PHASE 2: ADOLESCENT CREATURE

Creature (Adolescent): Init +2; Atk bite +3 melee (1d8) and claw +2 melee (1d4); AC 14; HD 3d8; hp 18; MV 30', swim 20', climb 20'; Act 2d20; SP demon traits, crit results in immediate liver extraction (3d10 damage), transmute to oil, regeneration, half-damage from normal weapons, immune to *charm* and breathing-based effects; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0; AL C.

Description as Adolescent: By the time the Creature has become

an adolescent, it has lost some of its "baby fat" and now resembles something more akin to a skrag (water troll) or lizard man. The Creature stands 6-feet tall and walks on hind legs, and its hard, stony hide has turned into a mottled gray/black color. As it reaches puberty, its spiked tail has begun to form, but it is not yet serviceable.

PHASE 3: ADULT CREATURE

Creature (Adult): Init +4; Atk bite +3 melee (1d8), claw +2 melee (1d4), and impregnating tail melee (1d3 + DC 14 Fort save or impregnated); AC 16; HD 4d8; hp 30; MV 30', swim 20', climb 20'; Act 3d20; SP demon traits, crit range 19-20 and results in immediate liver extraction (3d10 damage), transmute to oil, regeneration, immune to normal weapons (can be hit with crits), vulnerable to silver, magic weapons (e.g. Alkar's Hammer), immune to *charm* and breathing-based effects; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0; AL C.

Description as Adult: Upon reaching adulthood, the Creature has become the epitome of stalking death. Stealthy and fearsome, it has grown to 9-feet in height, and bulges with demonic, reptilian muscle. Its loathsome tail is now fully mature, and capable of depositing larvae within the victims of its attacks.

Impregnating Tail: a PC struck by the creature's tail must make a DC 14 Fortitude save or become a vessel for an Alkar larvae. The larvae will gestate in the host for 2 days before leeching out of the hosts orifices, causing 2d3 damage as it exits. The Alkar larvae cannot be removed by a simple *lay on hands* but may be removed from a host with a successful *neutralize poison or disease* spell.

Virtually Indestructible: Once fully mature, the Creature can only be damaged by silver, magic weapons (Alkar's Hammer), critical hits, or if the PC burns enough Luck to bring their attack roll to that PC's critical hit range.

APPENDIX B: CREATURE TRACKER

The Creature will always attack if/when the PCs trigger the following events:

- The PCs open all four embryo sacks in the bilge (area B-1).
- The first time a PC descends from the crow's nest (area M-1A).
- Two rounds after the *Bom Homem* throws its grappling hooks unto the *Star of Nostro* (Part 2).

Clues that the creature is nearby and will be attacking next round:

- Scratching sound heard on the hull.
- Thumping from above (or below, depending in which cabin the PCs are in).
- Demonic screech heard from a distance.
- One of the PC's wounds suddenly starts to burn and itch.
- Sharks start swimming nearby.
- If the party has any dwarves, that PC has an uncontrollable sneezing fit.

Part 1 Turns	Creature Tracker
1	--
2	Clue of impending attack
3	Young Creature Attack!
4	--
5	Clue of impending attack
6	Young Creature Attack!
7	--
8	Clue of impending attack
9+ until Part 2	Adolescent Creature Attack!

Part 2 (The Bom Homem)	Creature Attack?
The Bom Homem approaches	Adult Creature

APPENDIX C: SAILOR TATTOOS

Each sailor encountered will have 1d3 tattoos. Roll 1d10 to randomly determine the tattoo that adorns the sailor.

If a PC chooses to get a tattoo during the adventure, have that PC make a Luck check (+2 bonus if the PC inscribing the tattoo has a background occupation of astrologer, artisan, navigator, or something similar). If the Luck check is successful, they are blessed by Pelagia with benefits of the tattoo for the whatever time they have left during the adventure.

1. Giant Beaver: the giant beaver is a fearsome opponent, and the tattoo instills bravery.
2. HOLD and FAST: The letters for HOLD and FAST are tattooed upon the knuckles of each hand granting the sailor increased dexterity in handling sails and lines.
3. The Full Moon: The moon is a symbol of Shul, who watches over sailors as they make long sea voyages.
4. Black Dragon: Symbolizes that the sailor has sailed to the Black Sea of the Aghartan Underworld.
5. Compass Rose: A tattoo of a single, bright star or a compass rose represents the polestar (star that is aligned to a celestial axis of rotation and so does not appear to move in the sky) and brings luck for finding one's way to their destination.
6. Rope Knotted "Bracelet": A knotted rope tattoo wrapping around a sailor's wrist indicates he/she is a deckhand.
7. Sea Turtle: A shellback sea turtle tattoo indicates the sailor has crossed the equator and successfully completed the ritual of Pelagia to become a 'Trusty Shellback' and is likely to bring good luck to other sailors.
8. Treasure Chest: A sailor with a treasure chest tattoo on his or her chest has been a successful member of a boarding party that won plunder. The individual piles of coin and gold tattooed around the chest indicate the number of ships boarded.



9. Kobold and Halfling: Kobolds are fantastic swimmers, and everyone is familiar with the luck of the halfling; both species nearly always survive the sinking of a ship. Thus, tattooing a kobold on the top of one foot and a halfling on the top of the other foot confers good fortune for surviving a shipwreck/sinking in open water.

10. Mermaid: A tattoo of a mermaid on a sailor marks he or she has encountered a mermaid on open waters. While the tattoo is thought to bring good luck from that chance meeting, there is truly a 50/50 chance that the luck is either bad or good.

APPENDIX D: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS

PEOPLE

From the Ship's Ledger of the *Star of Nostro*:

- Captain Kristene de Keradel (Captain, female), missing
- Connant (First Mate, male), missing
- Stone Dahut (Priest of Alkar-Az, female), can be revived in area M-6
- Lowell (Surgeon, male), missing
- Chincho (Ship's Cook, female), dead in area M-3
- McCann (Captain's steward, male): dead on table in area M-5
- Ricori (Master-at-Arms, male), dead in area L-1

- Others: Ship's Carpenter, Boatswain, Ship Master, all missing
- The "Livestock" – all the names of the PCs, about 10 dead passengers, and 9 additional passengers still in the "shroom sleep"

Other characters mentioned/encountered in the adventure:

- Tirrem – the Cultist (on Lys, crushing the chests of sacrifices with his unholy black maul, the *Mael Bennique*).
- Captain Irdy-Es, Ibis Captain of the *Bom Homem* (arrives in Part 2).

PLACES

- Alviz – the poor island nation which is the original home of the PCs.
- Lys – PCs original destination; location of the copper mines and Tirrem.

SHIPS

- The *Star of Nostro* – the ship the adventure takes place on. Crew of 20 and carrying 30 pieces of livestock.
- *The Bom Homem* – the ship commanded by Captain Irdy-Es and his band of Ibis pirate.

DEMON

- Alkar-Az – The Stone Demon worshiped by the officers of the *Star of Nostro* and Tirrem. Also known as "The Stony One" or "The Gatherer".

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DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS HORROR

CREEP, SKRAG, CREEP!

A LEVEL 0 ADVENTURE
BY SPOOKY STEPHEN NEWTON

A level 0 funnel adventure for DCC RPG. The ship is adrift and a crew is dead. When the passengers of the *Star of Nostro* awaken, drugged and bound, and discover the crew is missing, a desperate race for survival begins. The vessel was meant to transport your group of humble villagers to a brighter future. It is now a coffin ship filled with mysterious deaths, dark plots, and a stalking horror which will not stop until it has feasted on every last soul. Will your characters' ingenuity be quick enough to find a means to survive, or will you too fall victim to what creeps in the shadows?



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