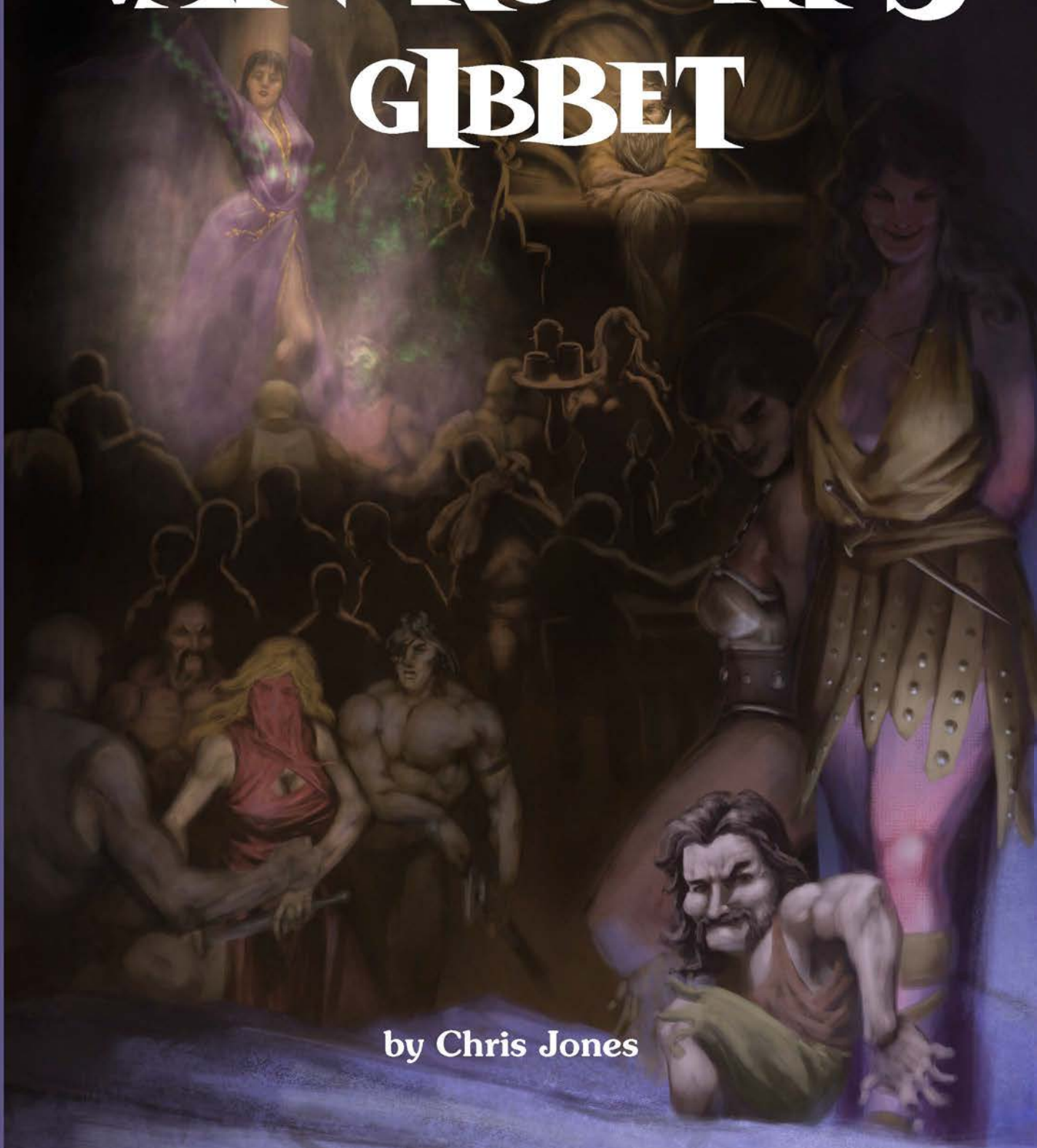




FROG GOD GAMES ADVENTURES

The Book of Taverns:
**VAIN ROBERT'S
GIBBET**



by Chris Jones



5TH EDITION
COMPATIBLE

The Book of Taverns: VAIN ROBERT'S GIBBET

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The Book of Taverns: Vain Robert's Gibbet

Most nights, one can find all manner of sailors in the dock-side pub known as Vain Robert's Gibbet, named after the pirate whose body was strung from the eponymous gibbet just outside the pub's front entrance. This is a loud, seedy establishment catering to the lowest common denominator. Those who let their guard down during their visit quickly become the predator's prey, while those who back their words with sufficiently impressive action get begrudgingly accepted into the pub's violent, dog-eat-dog microcosm. On the surface, the Gibbet seems to be a smuggler's outlet for stolen goods and property, with its owner, Elisabeth Talbot, leading the fencing ring.

In truth, the Gibbet is actually much more than it appears: It is home to a unit of elite seafarers dedicated to eradicating a growing evil out in the ocean's farthest reaches, deep below its surface.

Background

Fifty years before the pub was built, Vain Robert — the dread pirate of the seven seas, the scourge of common decency, and the terror of the 10 tides — was hung by his neck for crimes committed. He swung from the rope until he was good and dead. It took him two days to die, they say. He supposedly had a bull's neck, thick with tendons and muscles that were impossible to snap even under his own formidable body weight. Two days of hanging there, and he eventually asphyxiated, though not for lack of trying. The story goes that he fell asleep and inadvertently let his muscles relax. When the physicians confirmed the man indeed breathed no more, the city militia wrapped his body in iron chains and hoops, dragged him through the city streets to the docks, and strung him up from a gibbet where he dangled until the ravens picked every scrap of flesh from his bones. He was a warning to others, visible to all ships entering the harbor: Do not even consider following in Vain Robert's wake or you will suffer the same fate.

Nearly six months to the day of Vain Robert's hanging, the dock wardens arrived to cut down his bones and give them a proper burial at sea (the man may have been an extraordinary scoundrel, but he was also a child of Mother Ocean). The pirate's shade materialized out of thin air, decrying his fate and commanding that they leave his bones alone. He also vowed to get revenge, come hell or high water. The dock wardens fled. Afterward, no one had the courage to risk their immortal souls by retrieving Robert's bones.

Late at night, sailors could hear Robert's groans and his



chains clanging all the way out past the harbor walls, so the stories say. On nights when the fog rose so thick that it blinded men, captains used the shade's agony to guide them into port. Some even claimed Robert's old ship, the *Lady Killer*, which had been scuttled after his hanging in accordance with the law, patrolled the sea beyond the harbor walls, preying on those who participated in Robert's capture with blazing ghostly catapult and harpoon. Finally, the harbormaster hired a famous cleric from a neighboring city to at last exorcise the pirate's ghost. The pirate's memory was turning the docks into a ghost town, driving away privateers and trade ships alike. Even the pirates avoided the docks. The cleric, whom the stories name Harold the Sin-Eater, wrangled with the shade over the course of two weeks before he finally banished it to hell. The grateful harbormaster took up a collection amounting to 10,000 gp and paid the man off. From that day onward, the docks were no longer haunted. Vain Robert was gone for good, it seemed.

Naturally, no one knows if any of the story is remotely true beyond the fact that the pirate was hanged and his body displayed from the gibbet. Nonetheless, the gibbet has stood for 50 years, and none among the harbormaster, the dock wardens, or the local residents have felt inclined to tear it down. Because dock space is at a premium, the lot on which the gibbet stood was eventually purchased by the grain merchant's guild. They built a tall silo to store incoming and outgoing grain, though they left the gibbet intact. A decade ago, the grain merchant's guild collapsed in the aftermath of a trade war with another city, and the silo was abandoned. Elisbeth Talbot purchased it from the man whose name appeared on the lease — for a pittance, actually — and converted it into a popular dockside pub frequented by sailors. Despite being an extremely low-class establishment, the pub offers a very good place to go for information, as someone there is always bound to be “in the know” (albeit only insofar as said information concerns the docks, trade, or the high seas).

Dramatis Personae

Vain Robert's Gibbet is owned and operated by **Elisbeth Talbot**, a capable ex-navy captain who, for all intents and appearances, runs a large fencing operation out of the pub's third floor. She also lives on the third floor along with her twin daughters **Emma** and **Erin Talbot**. She frequently lets her mysterious and deadly friends — called the **Sea Dogs** by those in the know — stay there when they need a place. Three serving maids work in the pub's common room, except during midweek when business is slow.

Elisbeth Talbot

In her youth, Elisbeth Talbot (CG female human **bandit captain**, except armed with a brace of hand crossbows) was the proverbial “terror of the high seas.” A merchant, a privateer, and pirate, Elisbeth is a keen negotiator, a savvy diplomat, and a skillful swordswoman. Every sailor worth his salt in this region knows her name. Those who do not soon regret the oversight, for in her pub — Vain Robert's Gibbet — all manner of information can be obtained, and all manner of goods can be fenced through her copious contacts.

Standing just under 5 feet tall in her stocking feet, Elisbeth prefers to wear high-heeled, knee-high boots to give herself more stature and, by virtue, more authority. Her black hair, thick with natural curls, hangs down her back to her waist. Her eyes are brown. While not a beauty queen, she is certainly not uncomely, especially when compared to the courtesans working the common room each night (Elisbeth, at least, still has a full complement of teeth). She favors puffy silk shirts and tight, thigh-hugging pantaloons. On most nights, she is visibly unarmed, but she straps on a rapier and a couple of hand crossbows as a warning if patrons become too rowdy or obnoxious. Should a situation get utterly out of control in the pub, she feels no reticence using said weapons ... as many sailors have learned to their detriment. Gold bangles jangle around her wrists, and numerous gold hoop earrings swing from each ear. All she really needs to complete the quintessential pirate's image is an eyepatch and a peg leg. She even has a parrot — a late one nailed to the quarterdeck wall with its equally late owner's hook. Both serve as a signal to patrons, human and fowl alike, not to get fresh with the proprietor.

Elisbeth's background is typical for the town. Her father was a sailor and her mother worked in the dockside warehouses hauling cargo. She was a

solid woman, stronger than the men with whom she worked, but her father liked his women husky — and bawdy. The city had never seen the likes of Helen before. Curses flew from her lips in steady, unending streams of pure vitriol capable of shaming the foulest, most unrepentant criminals into redfaced embarrassment. Tall tales of ribald derring-do, both personal and secondhand hearsay, put many a fireside bard into early retirement. To Elisbeth's father, it was a match made in heaven. He was one of those immensely large human giants who stood well over seven feet tall. Like his wife, he enjoyed the courser side of life, though he was gentle in his own way. For instance, he would never knowingly hurt another man through deed or word unless he himself was slandered or injured first. When his hackles were raised, however, the entire dock district knew better than to get in his way. It came as a tremendous shock then when Elisbeth's mother announced her pregnancy. Who would have thought those two had parenting in them? Well, they did, and Elisbeth, despite being raised a dock brat, grew into an articulate, intelligent woman.

Having spent her entire childhood on the docks, Elisbeth learned everything she could about seafaring from the sailors, the shipwrights, the carpenters, and the sail makers. On her 12th birthday, she signed on with Captain Elijah Hood, a privateer in the king's employ famous for repeatedly routing the empire's enemies and stealing their bullion. Like every other dock brat who dreamt of someday captaining her own ship, she lied about her age and everyone knew it. No matter, Hood took her on and sent her straight to the ship's kitchen. She expected no less. Years passed, and she survived (a feat in and of itself, when the average lifespan of an apprentice shipman was two years). Not only that, she excelled, becoming a boatswain by her 18th year.

Ten more years on the high seas, and Elisbeth became the captain of the *HMS Fancy Merchant*, a dilapidated wreck with more battles than most ships her age. Elisbeth bought the ship and her letters of marque for next to nothing from Walter Silverhand, its aging and infirm captain. Within six months, she had the ship back in excellent condition and managed to hire a relatively capable crew. Her second-in-command was a wickedly scarred, heavily tattooed half-orc from the east named Sugo Irondirk. Where Elisbeth tempered her anger with reason, he fueled his with hatred and loathing for everyone around him. Yet he was an excellent first mate, able to keep the men in line with a glance or well-timed sneer. He served his captain well. She learned to see past his seemingly unapologetic evil exterior, finding an iron-willed, bitterly determined man who managed to find the strength to survive the genocide wrought against his people by an enemy empire. As Elisbeth grew closer to Sugo, she coaxed out a less hateful side of him. He, on the other hand, taught her the virtue of backing her words with force — not indiscriminately, but strategically. Reason rarely works with the pathologically unreasonable, and so one must often resort to calculated violence to make an impression. Together, they ran a tight ship and ruled the high seas for almost a decade, running down the enemies of the empire and defeating pirates at every turn (sometimes becoming pirates themselves). Their personalities complemented one another well, balancing the two different extremes they leaned toward. In the end, while not becoming lovers exactly, they were best friends and, to hear some tell it, soulmates despite their refusal to commit fully to a relationship.

Elisbeth became pregnant with Sugo's twin girls two months before he fell overboard and disappeared from her life. More distraught than she believed could be possible, she sold the *HMS Fancy Merchant* and her crew's work papers to a rival captain in the royal navy and retired to land. She bought an old grain silo — with the sole distinction of sitting on the spot where the corpse of Vain Robert was strung from a gibbet — and turned it into a pub. The girls were born, and Elisbeth told no one who their father was because in the end it never really mattered. Besides, it was no one's business.

While not entirely suited to a boring land-locked lifestyle, she has managed to get by. Fortunately, the regional governor came to her two years ago with an offer that made her life more interesting: Lead a group of ex-pirates, rangers, and rogues who informally call themselves the Sea Dogs and who are dedicated to tracking down the minions of the decidedly evil Witch-Queen of Hell Deep. She mostly coordinates the group's activities, though every occasionally she joins them on missions. She leaves her children with their grandparents, who retired to a quiet life in the aristocratic ward (much to the aristocrats' horror) using monies given to them by their daughter. As Elisbeth learns more about the Witch-

Queen, an abiding sense of dread grows deeper within her, making her unusually quiet and morose.

Emma & Erin Talbot

Elisbeth's twin daughters are six years old. While they share the same features, they could not possibly be more dissimilar in temperament. Emma is quiet and shy; Erin is obnoxious and needs constant attention. Of the two, Emma is more intelligent and cunning; yet because Erin is always the center of attention, she gets in trouble the most (usually as the result of Emma's pranks, some of which are incredibly clever). Both girls have lustrous black hair and eyes, taking after their mother. The rest they inherited from their father, unfortunately. They don't have his surly disposition, or at least it has not yet appeared.

The Sea Dogs

Many years ago, the earth many months out of port rocked. Tsunamis formed, laying waste to all naval traffic in the region; the weather turned foul and black and remained so for almost a full year. No ships could get near the 1,000-square-mile area without attracting giant, mutated sea creatures that promptly capsized and swallowed the ships whole. Sailors dubbed this area the Black Sea and updated their maps with the notation, "Here be certain death."

Eventually, the Black Sea calmed. The weather returned to normal, the constant earthquakes and subsequent tsunamis ceased altogether, and the alien creatures inhabiting the region disappeared. It is widely thought that the famous privateer Jeremiah Blake led a small fleet to the eye of the storm and put its source, the Witch-Queen of Hell Deep, permanently to rest. She is stirring once again, however. Her formerly vast and glorious aquatic empire is rebuilding, reclaiming the miles-deep canyon on the ocean floor where their capital city, Martyr's Rest, was originally built. The king, fearful of the Witch-Queen's wrath and her growing might, commissioned the formation of 16 elite units of sailors, rogues, and soldiers to intercept her minions at every turn, to sabotage her efforts at expansion and rebuilding, and generally to make life very difficult for her and her people. The units are collectively known as "The Sea Dogs," its members coming from all strata of seafarer society.

The unit under Elisbeth Talbot's control is the smallest, but also the best. Because the Witch-Queen's minions are expert infiltrators, Elisbeth's Sea Dogs (CN or G, all sexes and races, **bandits**) operate in absolute secrecy and undercover, some working as pirates, others for the royal navy, and yet others as privateers. When they get furlough, they come to the Gibbet to report to her and receive new orders. Many patrons who have obviously noticed the comings and goings to and from the third floor think the woman and her "friends" are black marketeers fencing stolen goods. Elisbeth does not dissuade such rumors, as they keep people from guessing the Dogs' true purpose. If word reaches those minions whom they are hunting (and those still unrevealed to them), then the Dogs lose their advantage in the shadow war against the Witch-Queen. In fact, Elisbeth does earn part of the unit's operating expenses by fencing goods, though truth be told she finds the practice distasteful and dishonorable. The regional governor knows of the Dogs' mission, and so lets her black-market activities go unpunished. He understands as well as she does the need for keeping their cover intact.

The members of her unit come primarily from the ranks of seafaring rangers and rogues. They tend to possess the knowledge and cunning required to wage a secret war, more so than fighters or spellcasters. Exceptions have been made in the past, and even today Elisbeth is not above making them if the candidate is worthy. Some of her men were once thought to be the worst of the worst, but her exceptional leadership and discipline has managed to keep them solidly in line and make them unquestionably loyal to her. Their fundamental nature has

not changed, though, so when patrons encounter them in the pub downstairs, they get a clear berth.

This unit of Sea Dogs has two ships in its "fleet": *The Dark Warrior* and *Queen Astrid*. Only one ship is used full-time, with the other in dry dock receiving repairs and improvements. Both ships operate under the pretense of being privateers, with letters of marque allowing them to engage the kingdom's enemies (which is mostly true — the ships are used exclusively in the Dogs' war against Hell Deep, though they can be used against the kingdom's more conventional enemies should the need arise).

Serving Maids

Three girls (N female human **commoners**) work the common room, serving ale and other alcohol and the occasional bowl of taupe-colored fish stew. They are all local, having grown up on the docks, and are not strangers to the gruff, rough demeanor most sailors exhibit. Anyone whose hand strays is prone to having it pinned to the table with a razor-sharp dagger swiftly drawn from a girl's bodice laces. The serving maids are savvy enough to know when the sailors are just being themselves and when they are really being lecherous, so most of the banter directed at the girls is tolerated, unless it comes from outlanders, obvious land-lovers, or both.

Men, especially inebriated men, think that buying drinks for the girls will earn their favor; they could not be more wrong. Yet Elisbeth gives the girls 30% of the price of drinks bought for them as a tip. As such, the girls are more than happy to take drinks — particularly expensive liquors, not ales — from generous patrons, watering them down with tea and honey so as not to get so drunk that they cannot work (which, of course, they never tell the patrons). When business is slight, the girls often resort to heavy flirting, stroking the men's egos to ply as many drinks from them as possible to earn greater tips.

Patrons & Possibilities

The following table includes some interesting patrons and events to be found in Vain Robert's Gibbet. Roll randomly or select one of the unique individuals to fill out the nightly clientele. Rumors can be sprinkled into conversations as needed.

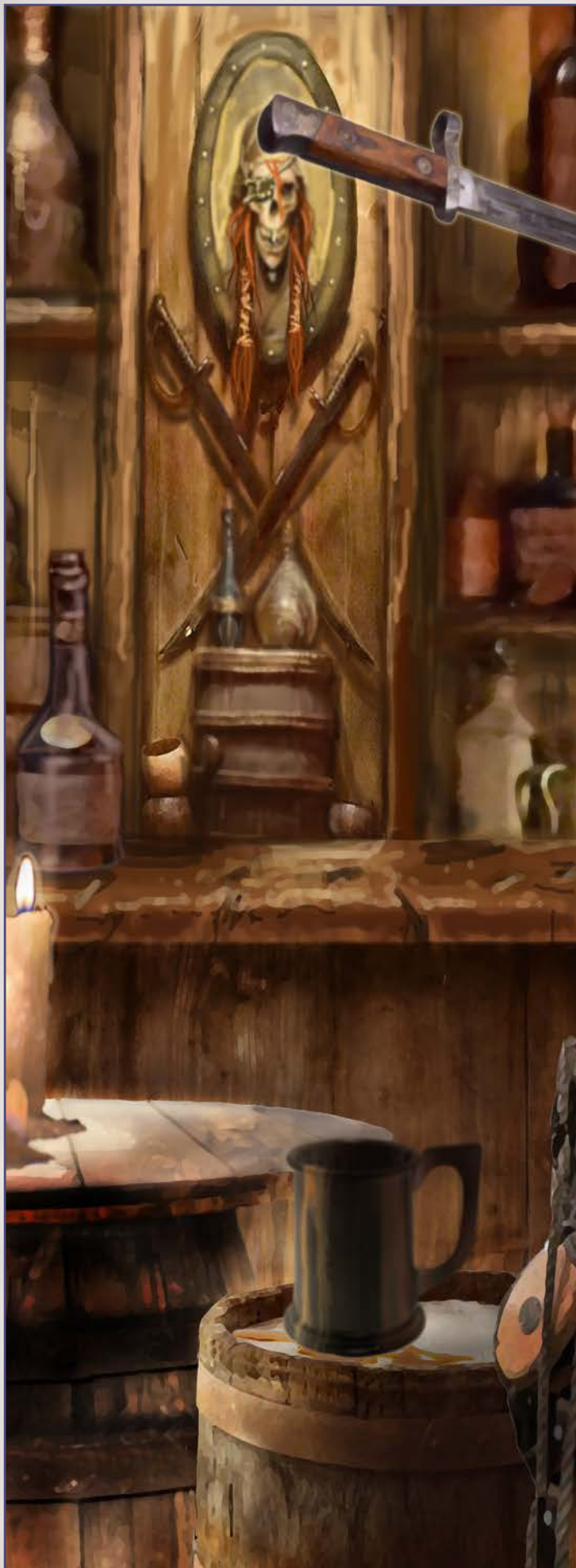
1d6 Patron or Event

1 A warrior stumbles into the tavern, his legs failing him as he falls into table after table, spilling drinks and annoying the other patrons. If helped, he says his name is **Roysh Shaw** and claims he was attacked by a group of ruffians at the dock. He asks for help stopping them, as they stole his favorite blade. Any characters who accompany him to docks find out the truth as he pushes them into the sea — to feed the sharks that follow him as pets.

2 **Captain Ikas Storn**, a retired pirate, is making a farewell visit through the bars of his past before he settles down in retirement. Unfortunately, a few of the bars remember his original visit — and the speed with which he ran out on them. But just recently, Captain Storn has been rethinking his retirement, at least for a while. He's heard rumors about a lost treasure in the sea-serpent infested Skullridge Breakwaters; he just needs enterprising crewmembers to sail with him.

3 An emaciated seaman dressed in dark leathers stands in the middle of the common room and announces loudly that this property now belongs to the infamous Gray Otter! He is met with gales of laughter from the sailors. They've all heard tales of the Gray Otter, but he's mostly a mythical bogeyman used to scare the wee ones. Except the old sailor is indeed the first mate on the Gray Otter's vessel, which even now is sliding into the harbor. Soon after, hordes of skeletal pirates burst into the bar, ready to stake their claim to the place.

4 The beleaguered **Captain Cor Balt** and his crew sweep into the tavern and rush the bar. They demand food and drink as quickly as possible and bustle about the place with a growing sense of unease. Many look out the windows at the harbor where the *Helene's Grace* floats at the dock. Every ripple in the waves brings a gasp from the assembled sailors. Something is following them, and they'll need to move on quickly. Any who might want to go with them need to make up their minds — and settle their affairs — quickly.



1d6 Patron or Event

5 An old sailor named **Elijah** sips at his whiskey but is eager to tell his story. He sailed with the famed Captain Melvilic (may he rest peacefully under the waves in the belly of the leviathan) and has many stories to share of the Razor Coast and even the Reaping Sea.

6 An assassin named **Kareon Blackblade** is on the run, wrongfully blamed for the death of an Alantyr family nobleman in Bargarsport. She is a capable killer, but knows she is overmatched by the men searching for her. She is looking for protection, a thought that until now would never have been an option. But strange times make strange bedfellows, and she is willing to throw her lot in with any adventurers powerful enough to keep her alive (although she'll dish out as good as she gets to anyone who comes after her).

The Establishment

Vain Robert's Gibbet is a three-story octagonal structure, the legacy of originally being a dockside grain silo. Windows are all shuttered and hollow, kept closed during all but the summer months to keep out the wind and chill drifting in from the harbor. Its slates and floorboards are severely weathered. The gibbet out front, with its jangling chains constantly swaying in the breeze, is well maintained since it represents the establishment's claim to fame. The pub's location right on the docks makes it the ideal place for sailors to visit when they get shore leave or some spare time. The clientele is therefore appropriately unpolished.

Unless otherwise noted, the pub's stats are as follows:

Doors: 1-in. thick wood (AC 15, 18 [4d8] HP, DC 13 Strength check to break open)

Walls (Outer and Inner): 6-in. thick wood (AC 15, 27 [4d8] HP)

1. Gibbet and Chains

This is a tall, inverted L-shaped pole and beam with chains dangling from it. Vain Robert the Pirate was strung up here after being hanged for his crimes as a warning to all who would follow in his footsteps. The gibbet and chains were placed here originally because incoming ships could see them from the harbor mouth. Nowadays, the harbor's break walls lie farther out, and so the gibbet is no longer visible until the ships drift in closer. During the winter months when the fog rises like a thick blanket of wool, Elisbeth hangs bright orange lanterns from the gibbet to make it easier for her patrons to find the pub. The lights also keep them from accidentally falling off the docks into the cold waters below, especially when they are drunk and doing the traditional, nightly wintertide pub crawl.

2. Common Room

The entire first floor is called the common room, but it is split into two parts: the ground floor and the quarterdeck. The ground floor is very large and crowded with numerous tables (most of which are nothing more than converted barrels), stools (again, converted barrels, albeit of a smaller variety), and chairs. Embedded in the south wall is a great hearth worthy of a king's parlor — the fire blazing within does an admirable job of warming the room, especially during the icy winter months. Stewpots hang from iron rods in the hearth's corners. When she can manage it, Elisbeth hires bards and troubadours to perform, giving them the prized hearthside spots. Her patrons tend to be a very rowdy bunch, so she won't begrudge the performers any concession. While the crowd is a tough one to please, those bards with the fortitude to withstand the verbal (and occasionally physical) abuse can make good coin from Elisbeth.

The walls of the common room are decorated with trophy fish (and a few other strange sea creatures), tattered nets, a bent trident or two, whaling spears, pieces of masts taken (supposedly) from famous ships, narwhale horns, and other similar "works of art" of interest solely to seafaring folks.

3. Quarterdeck

The quarterdeck is the elevated section of the common room and is built four feet off the floor. A railing runs the length of it, terminating at each step. At the far west end, steep stairs climb up to the second level, which is popularly known as the Crow's Nest. As with the ground floor, tables and chairs crowd the quarterdeck. A plain door set in the short, waist-high wall supporting the floor opens into a hollow space beneath it, which is used strictly for storage. Spare ale barrels and goods are kept here.

4. Ale Magazine

This section of the common room contains all the ale barrels, liquor bottles, and miscellaneous bric-a-brac (such as empty stewpots, flagons, wooden bowls and spoons, and so on). To the west of the big barrels is a wobbly table on which ingredients for the stew are prepared. One serving maid always works in the ale magazine, tapping barrels, making fresh stew, and generally keeping the patrons from swiping free samples.

The pub favorite — though not by consensus as much as by availability — is a brand of ale called Forecastle that is brought in on the weekly trade ships and brewed by a former naval captain whose distinguished service to the throne brought him much fame and fortune. Both varieties of the ale — the lighter, golden pilsner and the thicker, heartier stout — are always in stock. The other drinks are only intermittently available on any given night, depending on the whether the ale merchants supplying the pub received any that week from their brewers. Gutochek's Blood Mead originates from a drow recipe and is made, as its name implies, with blood (though whose blood is unknown); it has a very dense, coppery flavor. Lusty Mermaid is popular, selling out faster than the others, as it is inexpensive and very easy to drink. In fact, one patron claims it is the "brew with the taste for food," because people who drink it get really hungry afterward. Smuggler's Gold is a rich ale, more expensive than the others and well worth the price according to its aficionados. The pub also offers a nice selection of liquors, but they cost much more than the ales. As such, only the well-to-do or those trying to make an impression by showing off tend to order them. The sailors patronizing the pub usually view people who order such fancy drinks to be "hoity-toity," land-loving bluebloods — or naval officers. Of course, if the drink is intended for a beautiful lady-friend, then all is forgiven.

5. Crow's Nest

The "second-floor" consists of nothing more than a balcony overlooking the common room. The great hearth opens onto it, providing light and warmth. The Crow's Nest affords some privacy since the majority of the patrons prefer the ground floor. As such, the majority of the courtesans ply their trade up here when not plying it at the nearby inns.

6. Ladder

At the northeastern end of the Crow's Nest, this flimsy wooden ladder ascends to the third floor through a narrow trapdoor in the ceiling. Most times, the ladder is raised, and the trapdoor shut to prevent access to the third floor. The average patron is categorically not welcome up there, so those who get the idea in their heads to climb the ladder find themselves tossed over the railing by those patrons in the know.

Trapdoor: 2-in. thick wood (AC 15, 3 [1d6] HP)

7. Poker Dogs' Quarters

This open space used to serve as spare storage, but in recent years it has been converted into a gambling den affectionately called the Poker Dogs' Quarters. Two octagonal poker tables and their chairs are placed here. On most nights, pipe-smoking gamblers, all close friends of Elisbeth Talbot, occupy at least one of the tables. Uninvited guests who poke their heads up through the trapdoor in the floor get a swift kick and a stern warning: "Piss off and die, and we bloody well mean it, you sodding stupid bastard!" or something similar. The wide shuttered window in the northeastern wall also has a pulley, a winch, and three stories' worth of thick rope, all of which are used for hauling furniture and other goods up from outside.

8. Hearth Room

This is a very comfortable room. Expensive embroidered rugs cover the floors. Fancy tapestries adorn its walls. The furniture is very opulent,

made from exotic hardwoods, stained leathers riveted with polished brass tacks, and generously cushioned. Tall bookshelves stand on the east and west sides of the room, while a great hearth occupies the southern wall. Books, scrolls, maps, brass compasses, an ancient telescope, and a globe displaying the known world may be found here.

Elisbeth uses the room as a private study and a meeting place when her Sea Dogs are in port. An ornate locked chest (which can be picked with thieves' tools and a DC 13 Dexterity check) sits next to the hearth, containing 6,000 gp, 735 gp in jewelry, 120 gp in gems, a tarnished silver hook, a pearl-handled adamantite dagger, and 12 sheaves of encoded correspondence from the regional governor. A successful DC 18 Intelligence check reveals the truth about Elisbeth and the Sea Dogs, and reveals details about their most recent covert operations.

9. Sea Dogs' Quarters

These two rooms are empty except for four pairs of bunks beds, their associated linens, and chamber pots. The Sea Dogs use these rooms for their quarters when they are in port. Otherwise, they typically remain empty unless a close, trusted friend of Elisbeth's comes for a visit.

10. Talbot's Quarters

Elisbeth Talbot and her twin daughters reside here. Like the Hearth Room, it is very well appointed. She sleeps in a comfortable double bed, while her girls share a nice pair of bunk beds. A wardrobe contains all their clothes. On one side of it is a very ornate, gold-trimmed mahogany writing desk and chair, while on the other side is a dressing table and silver mirror. Toys are scattered all over the floor, which is covered in a wall-to-wall rug custom tailored for the room. The relics from Elisbeth's days as captain of the *HMS Fancy Merchant* hang from the walls: a high-quality rapier, two dwarven handaxes, an elven stiletto, and her captain's hat and coat, the latter decorated with insignias of rank and medals for valor, courage, and conduct.

A lockbox (which can be picked with thieves' tools and a DC 15

Vain Robert's Gibbet Menu

Ale & Mead	Cost
Forecastle Pilsner	1 cp
Forecastle Stout	1 cp
Gutochek's Blood Mead	3 cp
Pegleg's Lusty Mermaid Pale Ale	2 cp
Smuggler's Gold	4 cp

Other Beverages	Cost
Five Stanzas of Lust & Beauty	2 sp
Harrington's 10-Year Whiskey	3 sp
Harrington's 20-Year Whiskey	9 gp
Harrington's 30-Year Whiskey	27 gp
One-Eyed George	5 sp
Spiced apple brandy	6 cp
The Queen's White Bloomers	1 gp

Food	Cost
Fish stew	1 cp
Bread, day old	1 cp

Other Services	Cost
Courtesan, low-ranking	3 sp
Message running	5 sp

Dexterity check) beneath the bed contains 48 letters written on fine parchment with black and gold ink and scented with expensive cologne. The last letter is dated two months ago. In addition, the chest also contains an elegant gold medallion and chain worth 82 gp, emblazoned with the royal seal on one side and her family crest on the other.

Goods & Services

Vain Robert's Gibbet is a pub and nothing more. It serves ale, mead, and other liquors but really is not equipped for serving food or hiring out rooms. If patrons want something other than the pub's meager comestible fare, then they can go outside and purchase it from the vendors and hawkers roaming the docks. Elisbeth allows some courtesans to work in the pub, collecting 70% of their take in exchange for use of the Crow's Nest and a warm place from which to work (walking the docks during most seasons can be very uncomfortable — and dangerous — to say the least). Higher-class courtesans would not be caught dead in the establishment, so patrons must go out and find them.

Adventure Seeds

The following ideas can be used as seeds for adventures set in or around Vain Robert's Gibbet:

The Witch-Queen's Wrath: One night while the adventurers are in the Gibbet, someone reports hearing muffled thumps coming from the third floor. Elisbeth and her "friends" have been gone for the past week, with only three remaining behind to watch over the tavern (her children were sent to their grandparents' house across town). Upon investigating, the trapdoor entrance leading to the third floor is sealed with magic and the men stationed upstairs unresponsive. Should anyone manage to get in (perhaps through a window from the roof), they find a minion of the Witch-Queen named Razorfin Jackspike performing a horrid ritual of sacrifice on the last surviving Sea Dog. The priest intends to summon doppelgangers to replace the men. The other two Sea Dogs have already been eviscerated by the proto-doppelgangers clawing their way from the men's chest cavities as the adventurers arrive. Can they put a stop to Jackspike or will they become victims of his infernal magic?

The Reaping Spirit: The latest shipment of Gutochek's Blood Mead arrives infected with a nefarious fungus known as reaper moss. Everyone in the pub who drinks the mead must succeed at a DC 13 Constitution save or end up dead. The victims are not an everyday ordinary sort of dead, however. Rather, their corpses slip into a kind of ice-cold torpor and their spirits become disassociated from them. In essence, they become ghosts. In the incorporeal world the ghosts now inhabit, the shade of Vain Robert still exists and still craves vengeance. Once he discovers the new ghosts, he stops at nothing to eradicate them, feeding on their souls (subsequently killing them for good) in order to gain more spiritual might. When Vain Robert feeds on at least five souls, he manifests in the corporeal world and causes untold havoc. Reaper ghosts (those created by the reaper moss) are bound to the area immediately within 300 yards in all directions of the pub.

Murder in the Air: The harbormaster comes to the tavern to confer with Elisbeth Talbot about the fencing of smuggled goods. Ten dock wardens — burly, bull-necked young men eager for a fight — accompany him. During his conversation with Elisbeth in the Crow's Nest, a bolt of blue flame materializes out of thin air and strikes the man dead. The chief dock warden, Gregor Zurdanov, orders the pub's doors sealed. No one may leave until he and his nine thugs find the murderer. If this means cracking a few heads in the process, then they are more than happy to do so. Their primary suspects are Elisbeth and her friends. In truth, Gregor hired a sorcerer named Jarlene Frostkell to kill the harbormaster that night so he could pin the crime on Elisbeth, whom he absolutely detests, and inherit the job. He wants more than anything to shut down her operation and hang her cold, dead corpse from the gibbet outside.

Taking out the Vermin: Wererats have built a nest in the storage space below the pub's Quarterdeck. Late at night, when the pub is empty and locked up tight, they come out to steal food (such as it is) and drink. Elisbeth has neither the time nor the energy to deal with the vermin, so she hires the adventurers to take care of them, through hook or crook, bribery, force, she does not care. She just wants them gone. None of her Sea Dogs are in port; otherwise, she would assign them to the relatively simple task. Making an enemy of the wererats could conceivably be very bad for business if their society in the city is fairly well developed and cohesive. Killing those living under the Gibbet could inadvertently start a small war.

VAIN ROBERT'S GIBBET

1 Square - 5 Feet



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