

LEGENDARY ADVENTURE 5



Islands of Plunder:

SPICES AND FLESH



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What You Will Find Inside Islands of Plunder: Spices and Flesh

A life spent at sea is a life of adventure even in the real world, and in a fantasy campaign a voyage beyond the horizon brings dangers and wonders undreamed of by those that never venture out of sight of land. Of course, “Here there be monsters” is more than just a scrawled note on a fragment of map when you sail the seven seas. However, the beauty of a nautical campaign is also the way that every island you visit and every stretch of open water in between can become its own unique location for adventure. You’re not camping out in town and heading down to the local dungeon; you are setting sail on the lookout for long-buried riches, keeping a weather eye on the horizon for the danger you know is coming.

The *Islands of Plunder* series is designed to populate that ocean with adventure! Superstar author Matt Goodall brings you a succession of adventures that you can drop into any seagoing campaign to enliven the action in a way no random encounter ever could. These may serve as ideal side-treks during a longer campaign or can serve as standalone adventures on their own, with innovative encounters and exotic locales that will leave your players relishing the discovery of the next treasure map that might lead them onward toward the horizon. We hope they spice up your nautical campaign with the rich story and background, innovative layout, beautiful aesthetics, and excellence in design that is the hallmark of Legendary Games. We hope you enjoy using it as much as we enjoyed making it. Game on!

by Jason Nelson



Welcome to *Legendary Adventures!*

This adventure is a part of our line of support materials for the Next edition of the world’s most famous roleplaying game! This adventure doesn’t feature any dungeons, nor any dragons for that matter, but it provides an excellent opportunity to enliven any campaign that sails the savage seas. It is an adventure that can easily stand on its own as a chance encounter with a rogue trader who is not quite what he seems, or it can be used as part of a larger published pirate-themed campaign setting or adventure path, such as the second issue of the pirate-themed adventure path (#55-60) from Paizo, Inc.

The all-star team of designers here at Legendary Games is committed to bringing you—the busy GM or player—the absolute best third party support for your 5th edition campaign. To deliver on that commitment, we’ve assembled the best of the best of current gaming authors, designers, artists, and layout experts so that you know that Legendary Games products are always innovative in their ideas, beautiful in their appearance, bursting with the creativity of the best authors in the business and developed with a rich interactive layout that blends form and function, and on top of all of that products that are flat-out fun to play.

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About *Legendary Games*

Legendary Games is an all star team of authors and designers, founded by Clark Peterson of Necromancer Games, Inc. Legendary Games uses a cooperative, team-based approach to bring you, the Paizo fan, the best expansion material for your game. We are gamers and storytellers first, and we believe that passion shows in our products. So check us out, and Make Your Game Legendary!

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Spices and Flesh

Islands of Plunder: Spices and Flesh is an island-based adventure for four 4th-level characters. It fits ideally when the PCs have a ship that they can sail the high seas on, whether they own their own ship or have already gained the use of one from a friendly sea captain.

Adventure background

Recently the seas surrounding the port city of Makemba have been plagued by a pirate ship trying to pass themselves off as merchant vessels in distress and then attacking those who try to render assistance. Ships sailing into and out of the port city have taken to hiring more guards than usual and some have even taken the controversial choice of not rendering aid to vessels they come across.

The Makemban authorities have reacted by offering a 2,000 gp bounty for any pirate or slaver ships found in the region. Those in good standing or those who lodge a 500 gp bond with the Makemban authorities (to be returned in one year's time so long as no complaints of wrongdoing are lodged against the party) have been obtaining a writ from the Makemban authorities. This writ authorizes the bearers to board any vessel flying the flag of Makemba in order to search for evidence of slavery or piracy.

This adventure assumes that the PCs have such a writ and have secured a vessel for the express purpose of finding the pirates. If the PCs are pirates themselves then this adventure can easily be changed to cater to a of pirates who do not care about the plight of the ships sailing into and out of Makemba.

Where is Makemba?

Makemba can be anywhere that you need it to be. Changing the name from Makemba is a nice easy change that allows you to use this adventure wherever your PCs happen to be so long as they are in a coastal region.

Part 1: Easy Pickings

Another vessel appears in the distance. A cargo ship which, from the look of her, has seen much better days. She moves sluggishly along, sitting low in the water, her hull scarred with old scuffs and scratches, her paint worn and faded, and her sails covered in patches. A tarnished nameplate labels her the "*Tamarind*".

At first glance, the *Tamarind* appears to be a cargo ship with a small crew, carrying a load of low to mediocre quality spices. The *Tamarind* looks like the vague description of the pirate ship. However it is not flying the flag of Makemba and so the PCs have no legal authority to board the vessel. If they do not try to follow or board the *Tamarind* then they should find it in the same region within the next day or two. After a couple such sightings the *Tamarind* should definitely raise the suspicion of the PCs. If it becomes clear the PCs are not going to engage the *Tamarind* then the next time they see the ship the crew can be pretending to be in distress so they can then attack any vessel that tries to render assistance. In this case Captain Craw leads the first wave of five pirates with his first mate, Sito, leading five more pirates in the second wave in the following round. 5 crew remain behind on the *Tamarind*. Otherwise the *Tamarind* will try to flee.

Should the PCs approach the *Tamarind* under the guise of friendship, truce, or legitimate circumstances, the *Tamarind's* captain gives the order to heave to without delay, and invites the party aboard.

Her captain, a man named Bartholomew Craw, seems an amiable fellow more interested in parley than battling on the high seas. When the PCs board, they find him to be a cordial and gracious host who hopes to negotiate a peaceful solution over drinks and perhaps a fine meal.

The truth, however, is much different. Captain Craw is actually a vicious slaver and the *Tamarind* has a secret hold, hidden beneath the first, filled with shackled prisoners. While all of Craw's crew are slavers, it is Sito Ripplepott, the ship's gnomish cook, who serves as the captain's main accomplice. Sito is a poisons expert who uses his nefarious craft to keep the sentient cargo docile during the journey.

Ship Chase

If the PCs look threatening in any way or do not declare why they are moving closer to the *Tamarind*, she immediately attempts to flee upon the crew spotting the PCs' ship. If the PCs bring their ship directly behind the *Tamarind*, Captain Crow orders the crew to use the light ballista on board but only for a few shots to hopefully disable some of the PCs' ship's rigging before making escape the primary focus again (+6 attack; 3d10 damage). The PCs' ship can sustain a number of these attacks but if it takes too much damage, the captain will start objecting and talk about pulling back from the chase.

You can handle the ship chase as a series of ability checks. PCs who are proficient in vehicles (water) can add their proficiency bonus to these checks (the *Tamarind's* bonus is equal to +4). The *Tamarind* should begin with a head start (up to 3 successful checks ahead of the PCs) and then make a series of opposed checks. Once the PCs have had a number of successes equal or greater than the *Tamarind*, they have successfully caught up to the *Tamarind* and the crew of the *Tamarind* surrenders. If the chase is dragging on and it becomes apparent to Captain Crow of the *Tamarind* that the PCs aren't going to fall behind then they also surrender and stop trying to get away.

If the PCs communicate to the *Tamarind* that they simply want to board to have a discussion or search for signs of piracy or slavery, then the crew also ceases trying to get away. In this case, skip ahead to the parley section.

Surrender

Upon boarding the *Tamarind*, the PCs find Captain Crow waiting for them on deck. He immediately offers his scimitar to the PCs as an official surrender. Likewise, his crew place their various weapons on the deck. Captain Bartholomew Crow introduces himself, then apologizes for any attempt to flee, and any shots from the *Tamarind's* ballista; he explains that this was because of the rumors of piracy in the region.

The Truth: The surrendered weapons are a distraction. Each crew member of the *Tamarind* has a light melee weapon concealed somewhere on their person, ready to be drawn if they receive the signal to attack. Captain Crow cast *protection from poison* and also drank a *potion of*

Potion of Disguise Self (uncommon). You gain the benefit of the *disguise self* spell for 1 hour.

disguise self just before the PCs boarded, not to change his appearance, but to allow him to conceal his magical scimitar. If the PCs cast *detect magic* and notice an aura of magic around Crow, he smiles ingratiatingly and says that he knows a few minor magic tricks, including one that protects him from attacks in the event that he is boarded. After identifying the auras of abjuration and illusion on Crow, suspicious PCs who attempt to figure out exactly what spell it is can make a DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check to realize that while abjuration makes sense, there should be a visible effect if Crow had a defensive illusion spell.

Parley

Crow is most hospitable and once the PCs are below decks in the galley, Sito serves everyone a stiff drink of heavily spiced grog before returning to his kitchen duties. Crow begins by toasting the PCs before leading them to the hold and expressing his regrets for the low-quality of his cargo. If the PCs are here to inspect Crow's ship, despite not having a Makemban flag, Crow is happy for the PCs to look around. If Crow is under the impression that the PCs are here to take his cargo, he tries to persuade them that while they could take his cargo, it's barely worth the effort of transferring it to the PCs' ship, and will only take up space in their hold that they could fill with much more valuable plunder. Crow attempts to convince the PCs to release his ship instead. To help sway them, Crow offers to help the PCs by putting the PCs in touch with some of his contacts in the black market that could either sell some goods, particularly magic items, with no questions asked or to allow them to potentially purchase some magic items from a limited amount.

If the PCs boarded the *Tamarind* under false pretenses, Captain Crow still invites them below—only the conversation is one of friendly small talk, the swapping of the latest news and information, and perhaps an offer to sell some of the *Tamarind's* spices.

The Truth: If the PCs came aboard under false pretenses then Sito's grog is poisoned and each PC who drinks is exposed to a dose of elfbane (Ingested. One minute after

a creature has become subjected to this poison they must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned and unconscious for 1d3 hours). Before the PCs boarded the *Tamarind*, Craw cast *protection from poison*, so he can imbibe the poisoned brew and gain advantage on his saving throw against being poisoned. The rest of the conversation is simply Craw's way of stalling for time to let the poison do its work.

If the PCs boarded and captured the *Tamarind* then Craw expects that the wary PCs are unlikely to fall for the poisoned grog ruse. He still has Sito offer grog (that isn't poisoned) and watches to see if the PCs cast spells on their drinks before imbibing them. When in the cargo hold, Craw pretends to act slightly nervous and his eyes seem to repeatedly wander to a section of the hull on the port side next to the ladder, 10 feet round from the ship's bow. PCs who make a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check notice Captain Craw doing this, but PCs whose check result also beats Craw's opposed Charisma (Deception) check realize that Craw is purposefully acting in this way, deliberately trying to draw their attention to that area rather than unintentionally revealing it. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check while searching that area reveals a small hidden compartment set against the hull. Resting in a nest of straw inside the compartment is a set of three oily clay vials. The vials contain a *potion of hill giant strength*, a *potion of healing*, a *potion of acid resistance*, and a small amount of saffron oil (worth 60 gp). Normally these potions are in Sito's possession and the valuable saffron oil secured away in Craw's sea chest. All the vials are covered in a contact poison version of elfbane; anyone who touches these vials is exposed to the poison. The lid of the vial of saffron oil is loose, making it appear as if it has leaked over the other vials. Craw feigns disappointed when the PCs discover this cache, but secretly hopes the PCs pass these treasures around as they try to identify them. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check (characters proficient in alchemist's supplies may add their proficiency bonus to this check) reveals the toxic nature of the oily coating on the vials. Avoid having the PCs roll saving throws as soon as they touch a poisoned vial. Secretly track which PCs have touched the vials, keeping note of how often each PC is in contact with a vial, as there may be multiple exposures. Have the PCs make saving throws retroactively when they become aware of the poison, or at the end of the 1 minute onset period when some of them may start succumbing to the poison. This curtails any metagaming, and

increases the chances of the vials being passed to different party members.

CLUES

The following suggestions are some ways that the PCs can start to learn that not all onboard the *Tamarind* is as it seems:

- A DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, after seeing the cargo in the hold: the ship is sitting too low in the water for the amount of cargo in the hold. If the PCs mention this, Craw says that he has a large load of ballast to keep the *Tamarind* from capsizing in the frequent storms that strike this area of ocean and that the ship's hull has a multitude of small leaks, meaning the ship usually carries a lot of bilgewater.
- A DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check, after seeing the size of the cargo hold: the cargo hold is small for a ship this size. If questioned about this, Craw simply points out that while the *Tamarind* isn't the most efficiently or elegantly built ship on the ocean, she is very sturdy. Craw says that the ship's extra structural supports means he can't carry quite as much cargo but it does mean the *Tamarind* is a lot more likely to arrive in port in one piece.
- A DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check after watching Sito preparing food in the galley: Ripplepott is making two separate meals. One is a regular ship's dinner while the other is a large pot of simple gruel. If the PCs draw attention to this, Craw mentions that he's a fair but firm captain and one of the more common punishments he metes out for disciplinary infractions is putting crewmembers on gruel rations for at least a week.
- A DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check while examining the spices in the hold: many of the containers of spice in the far corners of the cargo hold are old and dusty. Only those in the easiest to reach places show signs of being new or recently moved. If the PCs call Craw on this, he sighs and goes into a long discourse on his recent string of misfortunes in the spice trade. He confides that he's hoping to sell his cargo as a job lot and get rid of the older spices by mixing them in with his fresher stock.

- A DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check by a character with ranks in the skill after seeing the galley: many of Ripplepott's bottles and equipment in the galley are for crafting alchemical items rather than food. If the check result beats the DC by 10 or more, then the PC recognizes tools and materials for poison-making.
- A DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check against crew members other than Captain Craw or Sito Ripplepott: gives the sense that they are very uncomfortable about the PCs being onboard.
- A DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check while in the hold: beneath the strong scent of spices in the cargo hold is the distinct smell of feces and sweat. Any PC within 5 feet of the trap door leading to the secret hold gets advantage on this check.
- A successful opposed Wisdom (Perception) check by a PC contested against a crewmember's Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check while closely observing or searching a crew member: notices the presence of a hidden weapon on that crewmember.

Attack!

Captain Craw's plan of attack depends on how well the poison works against the party. If none of the PCs succumb and they remain unaware of the attempt, Craw keeps up the ruse, perhaps offering the PCs a fine meal if they look weak or divided and he believes a second attempt at poisoning might work. Otherwise, Craw simply lets the PCs take the spices and leave. He also chooses this option if the PCs and their crew obviously outnumber and outmatch his. Depending on their negotiations, the PCs may encounter Craw again and make use of his services before learning his true nature (if they ever do).

If some of the PCs succumb, or if none do but the PCs become aware of the poisoning attempt, then Craw initiates combat. The Captain signals his crew to draw their hidden weapons and attack the PCs' crew. Sito Ripplepott appears and harasses the party at range while Craw himself wades into battle. If the PCs find the hidden trap door to the secret hold before Craw has a chance to spring his trap, he lets one or two PCs go down before attempting to separate the PCs by slamming the hatch shut and signaling the attack. If the party won't split, he signals the attack immediately.

If all the PCs fall unconscious from the poison, they later wake to find themselves stripped of gear and chained in the secret hold with the rest of the slaves. They learn the truth of the *Tamarind* from a visit by Sito, who brings gruel and water, and from Craw himself, who reveals his true colors. They can also learn the fate of their ship and crew. Perhaps a less trustworthy member of the PCs' crew saw the opportunity to become captain, or maybe Craw forced the PCs' crew to withdraw by threatening to kill the PCs, and their ship is still sailing nearby. Ultimately, how the party escapes from this predicament is up to the players' ingenuity and your discretion as GM.

ABOVE DECK

1. Upper Main Deck: This area rises just over 4 feet above the main deck. It holds the ship's steering wheel and its only armament—a light ballista mounted off the stern. Two ladders, one on either side, connect the platform with the main deck. On the main deck next to the port-side ladder is a small door that leads to a storage space under the platform that holds oars, spare planks, sails, tools, and other supplies.

2. Main Deck: The main deck of the *Tamarind* has a simple layout. The mast is at the center of the ship and forward of it are large loading doors that lead into the cargo hold below. A ladder near the mast and another near the cargo hold both lead below deck.

3. Crow's Nest: At the top of the mast is a simple, 5-foot square platform that serves as a lookout point for the ship.

BELOW DECK

4. Captain's Quarters: The private bunk of Captain Craw also serves as his chart room and office. A comfortable cot and nightstand are in one corner and maps, charts, and other navigational tools cover the walls. There is also a small writing desk containing numerous logs and record books detailing the captain's dealings—in both spices and slaves. A thorough search of the cabin finds a weathered piece of parchment that potentially leads to further adventure (see **Part 2** below). Beside the bed is a sea chest that contains his personal belongings. The door to this room is always locked and Captain Craw carries the key with him at all times.

5. Cabin/Galley: This main cabin is both the eating and sleeping area for the rest of the crew. A large stained and



dirty table with matching benches takes up the center of the space while old hammocks and personal effects are strung all around in a haphazard manner. On the starboard side, a narrow section holds a small galley. Foodstuffs and kitchen utensils mix seamlessly with Ripplepott's alchemical tools and belongings in a bizarre-looking mess.

6. Cargo Hold: Crates, barrels, and sacks of various spices partially fill the ship's hold. The dusty air is thick with the heavy odor of spices. One of the large crates in the southeast section rests on top of a secret trap door leading down into the secret hold below. Finding this trap door requires the searching character to make a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check.

7. Secret Hold: This space is only tall enough for a Medium-sized creature to stand hunched over. Dozens of people lie chained to the floor and walls with thick, iron manacles. Most are unconscious and the few who are awake are torpid. They are all in poor health and show all the signs of being malnourished. The stench of sweat and human waste is overpowering, made all the worse by the stale air.

Captain of the Tamarind

Bartholomew Crow is a paunchy, heavy-set man wearing the dirty and threadbare outfit of a merchant sea captain. His shaved head is ruddily-sunburned and his squinting, deep-set eyes are dark brown. A scraggly, dull-red beard only serves to make his wide smile, full of yellowed teeth, all the more noticeable.

BARTHOLOMEW CROW

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (studded leather)

Hit Points 98 (13d8+39)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 11 (+0)	DEX 20 (+5)	CON 17 (+3)
INT 8 (-1)	WIS 19 (+4)	CHA 13 (+1)

Saving Throws Strength +2, Dexterity +7

Skills Deception +3

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Gnoll, Infernal

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Colossus Slayer. Craw deals an extra 1d8 damage against a target that has already taken damage. Craw cannot deal this extra damage more than once per turn.

Magic Scimitar. Craw and his fellow pirates cannot be surprised while Craw is wearing his magic scimitar.

Dueling Fighting Style. Craw has a +2 bonus to damage rolls when wielding a melee weapon with one hand and no other weapons. This is already factored into the scimitar damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. As an action Bartholomew can make two magic scimitar attacks.

Magic Scimitar Attack. melee 5 ft., 1 target. +7 to hit, 1d6+7 (10) slashing damage.

Spellcasting. Craw is a 5th level caster. His spellcasting ability score is Wisdom (DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks).

1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds, detect magic, hunter's mark*

2nd level (2 slots): *protection from poison*

Development: Bartholomew Craw surrenders if reduced to 10 hit points or less. However, if he believes he will be hanged as a slaver he fights to the death.

Treasure. Craw has a scimitar of warning.

Ship's Cook

With a hunch that makes him seem shorter than he already is, this gnome dresses in simple clothes and a leather apron covered in grease and other stains. His slick hair is the color of moss and his beady eyes are a quiet gray. Slung around his waist is a bandolier of flasks and cooking utensils.

SITO RIDDLEPOT

Medium humanoid (gnome), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (leather)

Hit Points 90 (12d8+36)

Speed 25 ft.

STR 8 (-1) **DEX** 18 (+4) **CON** 16 (+3)

INT 16 (+3) **WIS** 11 (+0) **CHA** 10 (+0)

Skills Poisoner's Kit +6, Disguise Kit +2, Perception +4

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Gnome



Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Cunning Action. As a bonus action Sito can dash, disengage or hide.

Sneak Attack. Sito deals an extra 2d6 damage when he makes an attack with a dagger, light crossbow or has advantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. As an action Bartholomew can make two magic dagger attacks.

Dagger Attack. melee 5 ft., 1 target. +6 to hit, 1d4+4 (6) piercing damage.

Light Crossbow Attack. ranged 80 ft., 1 target. +4 to hit, 1d8+4 (8) piercing damage.

Tamarind Crew

SAILORS (15)

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 39 (6d8+2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 13 (+1) **DEX** 14 (+2) **CON** 12 (+1)

INT 10 (+0) **WIS** 10 (+0) **CHA** 10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

ACTIONS

Dagger: ranged or melee, 1 target, +4 to hit, range 20 ft./60 ft. or 5 ft., 1d4+2 (4) piercing damage.

Pirates should present little trouble, but can be limited to 5 pirates at a time with 2 to 3 rounds between waves.

Part 2: Delivering the Cargo

Among the papers in Captain Craw's cabin, the PCs find a piece of weathered parchment containing a curious message and rough map. The message contains an order for a consignment of slaves and instructions for delivery of this shipment. The map marks the delivery location as a point in the open ocean, with the nearest island over 20 miles away. Scrawled on the parchment in Craw's handwriting is the following: "This be an odd trade run if ever there were one. I guess there'll be a ship waiting out there, but why not make the trade at an island instead? Would have been much easier. Still if the pay is as good as that down payment of pearls it'll make the trip well worthwhile, even if it means the risk of sailing through pirate-infested waters." The only other clue is in Craw's ledgers from over 2 months ago. A note next to an entry paying off a large debt reads, "Those pearls did the trick, that'll keep the legbreakers off me. It was good of old Jarkus the drunkard to put me onto this deal. I don't know why the ancient poxy lubber kept muttering about it being "Shayonna's debt". I don't give a damn about the name of whoever he gets any of these jobs from. Getting more of those lustrous pearls is what I care about."

While there is enough food and water to feed the rescued slaves for the trip to the Islet and back, the rescued slaves would rather return to port. If the PCs also sail back to port they risk missing the rendezvous time. They could try to put the pirates to work (although face potential mutiny) or sail themselves (in which case you can simply hand wave it or run the PCs through a series of ability checks varying from DC 5 to DC 15).

The Legend of Shayonna

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check reveals the name 'Shayonna' is part of a tragic ghost story told by sailors in many ports. The tale tells of an amoral charlatan called Bren Taylee who owned a local tavern. A charismatic and bald-faced liar, Taylee became rich swindling wealthy investors by selling off unseen parcels of land on a nearby island. He also fell madly in love with his barmaid and married her, an innocent redheaded beauty named Shayonna. When one of the more intrepid investors discovered the 'rich farmland' was, in fact, a swamp (or a waterway, depending on the version of the story), Taylee was forced to flee.

He left his wife Shayonna behind, abandoning her to face the furious investors and a large debt from the tavern. The tales say that Shayonna stowed away on the same ship Taylee fled on to escape the angry mob and that a drunken sailor on deck one night claimed to have seen Taylee with his hands locked around a young woman's throat (or possibly even throwing her limp body overboard). Whatever the truth, neither Taylee or Shayonna were ever seen or heard from again. However, infrequent sightings of Shay-

Making Deadly Dramatic!

Normally, a writer using up valuable word count on an NPC's background that the PCs may never learn isn't a good idea. However, the Gaunt is a deadly sea hag. Even in a short adventure like this one, the PCs should be aware that they face something ominous and terrifying. If the PCs defeat her and live to tell the tale, they automatically gain renown with the other sailors in the area when they next make port and speak of this deed. If you are using *inspiration* in your campaign you should award one inspiration to all of the PCs that actively participated in the defeat of Shayonna. If some of the PCs were particularly heroic but already have inspiration (the usual maximum), you might want to consider a one off temporary suspension of this limit and award them an inspiration to temporarily give them a total of two inspiration. Once one of these two inspirations is used the maximum reverts to the usual one inspiration.

onna's drowned ghostly spirit are reported to this day, in or around the harbors of a number of port cities.

Whatever the truth of this legend, Shayonna does exist. Whether it was as the tales describe, and Shayonna's outrage at her husband's betrayal kept her from succumbing to death and drove her to become what she is today or whether there was always the blackest evil in her heart and it was she who seduced Taylee, foully murdered him, and stole his fortune, no-one knows. But Shayonna lives and has become the powerful and villainous hag known as "the Gaunt". At present, the wicked sea hag seeks a shipment of slaves to work her foul witchcraft upon, and transmogrify into a horde of monstrous and slavishly obedient servitors.

The Islet

Assuming the account of the valuable pearls strikes the PCs' interest, it takes less than a week of travel to reach the location marked on the map. It is a tiny islet, sandy and barren, surrounded by a large coral reef. The shallow waters and jagged reefs around this speck of land mean that the PCs' ship needs to moor at least 300 feet away to avoid damage to the hull. There is, however, no one on the isle and no other ships in sight.

Reception

Creatures: Shortly after the PCs land on the islet, a pair of hulking, brutish things put their heads above the surface of the sea nearby and warily wade toward the PCs. These are a **pair of merrow (as described in the official manual of monsters for 5th Edition)**, the unholy offspring of the legendary sea hag, Shayonna the Gaunt. They approach the islet from the east, using the shallow water for cover and, providing the PCs don't attack, slowly emerging from the water. Both creatures have the waterlogged remnants of sailor's outfits still clinging to their gross forms. One of them speaks in gurgling, barely understandable Common asking why the PCs have come. If the PCs provide a believable reason to be here, such as to sell slaves, the merrows nod and one dives into the water to convey this information to Shayonna. Shayonna is already aware of the presence of the PCs' ship and has sent her minions to ascertain their intentions if a party comes ashore.

The remaining merrow has a deep scar across the right side of its face that cuts off the lower half of its right ear. The curious thing is a piece of silver jewelry crafted to resemble the missing piece of flesh dangles from two earrings in the upper half of this ear. PCs can recognize this unusual jewelry and its owner with a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. It belongs to a knavish scallywag named Gamin 'half-ear' Crystos, a womanizing half-elven pirate, popular in many local ports for his willingness to spread his plunder around. Gamin lost his ear from a close call with an imperial ballista bolt. If any of the PCs have ever actually seen Gamin, the merrow bears a warped, monstrous resemblance to the man. If addressed by name, the merrow stares blankly at the PCs before a flicker of recognition crosses the creature's face and it burbles three words in Giant, "please kill me". The grotesque thing that was once a man then stiffens and comprehension fades from its eyes, leaving only brutish hostility.

Treasure: Gamin's earring is only worth 50 gp, but it grants the PC advantage if they use it as part of a Charisma (Persuade) check on a nautical NPC. The ring can only be used in this way once until it is old news and no longer impresses sailors.

Parley

If the PCs wait, after several minutes Shayonna the Gaunt (see area 4) rises up out of the ocean. She has used a disguise to conceal her horrific form, appearing as a youthful aquatic humanoid, similar to a merfolk, but with legs instead of a tail. Even in this unassuming form, there is something palpably sinister in her manner. The ocean itself seems to recoil from her and as she steps onto the sand; her blood-red hair is dry. Flanked by her two merrows, Shayonna approaches the PCs and asks what they have brought her. Shayonna cagily negotiates for the consignment of slaves and shrewdly asks why the PCs are making this delivery rather than the Captain Craw. Shayonna demands the PCs bring a sample selection of slaves ashore for her to examine. She haggles over the price and the quality of the merchandise but is prepared to pay up to 2,800 gp in pearls for all the *Tamarind's* slaves, regardless of their condition, which is an exceptionally good price.

If the PCs sell the slaves, these poor wretches are brought ashore where they huddle together on the tiny islet. Each day at dawn, shells full of brackish water and raw

THE DESOLATE ISLET



1 square = 5 ft.



1

2

3

4

fish are left on the shore to sustain them, and each night one of the doomed slaves vanishes, as the unfortunate is dragged below the waves to a ghastly fate. After completing such a despicable bargain, the PCs had best be gone quickly and never return, for when Shayonna has at least **six merrows** in total under her control, she avariciously boards any nearby vessel to gain additional minions.

1. UNDERWATER PASSAGE

Just to the south of the islet is an underwater tunnel into the coral reef that leads through to Shayonna's lair. The tunnel is marked with a darker outline on the map; the other lighter areas are simply gaps between the colonies of coral surrounding the islet. The thick coral over the tunnel makes it impossible to spot from above and a steep overhang above the tunnel entrance conceals it from the view of anyone on the island. The passage slopes down from a depth of 5 feet at the northern end to 25 feet at the southern end where it opens out into area 3. Scattered sunlight filters in during the day, providing dim illumination; at night, the tunnel is in darkness. The Large-sized merrows need to squeeze through this tunnel which slows them significantly.

2. CORALLINE TUNNEL

Coral Flensing Trap. At the entrance of the Coralline tunnel is a magical trap that triggers the second anyone that is of Small size or larger, other than Shayonna or a merrow, passes through this area.

A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check to spot the Coralline Flensing trap and another DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check to disable it. When the trap triggers a torrent of water attempts to slam the creature into the razor sharp corals that line the passage, dealing 1d8 piercing damage. This trap automatically resets and can trigger once per round.

3. URCHIN CLUSTER

The coralline tunnel opens out into an underwater clearing. Multicolored corals grow in profusion all around this open area, but there are gaps in coral branches overhead, allowing more light through from above (giving this area the same illumination level as above the waves) and providing Medium or smaller creatures with a way up to

Claw of the Briny Depths (uncommon). The thick webbed membranes between the withered digits of this severed claw hint at the subaquatic origins of the thalassic thing it was once a part of. On command, the claw animates as a clawing claw (as described in the official manual of monsters for 5th Edition) with a swim speed of 20 foot instead of a climb speed. This crawling claw is under the control of the creature who animated it and lasts for 3 minutes before decomposing into a foul nonmagical slurry of festering tissue and bones.

the surface. The area is 10 feet high and the seafloor is 25 feet below the surface.

The passage to the south narrows to a small shaft that leads up to the outside of the reef. It requires a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check for Small- or Medium-sized creatures to squeeze along this shaft, larger creatures can't fit at all, and smaller creatures can move through without restriction.

Creatures: While there are tiny fish swimming among the coral and aquatic plant life, the main danger here is a large number of predatory ravenous sea urchins. These spiny marine creatures are under Shayonna's sway and don't attack her or her merrows, but hungrily surge over intruders.

RAVENOUS URCHIN SWARM (3)

Medium swarm of Tiny beasts, unaligned

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 72 (16d8)

Speed 0 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR 1 (-5) **DEX** 12 (+1) **CON** 10 (+0)

INT 4 (-3) **WIS** 13 (+1) **CHA** 9 (-1)

Senses passive Perception 11

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Jet. While underwater, a ravenous urchin swarm can dash as a bonus action and does not provoke opportunity attacks while jetting.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy someone else's space and vice versa. The swarm can fit into any space large enough for a tiny urchin to squeeze through and can use a reaction to attack any creature that leaves its square with an attack of opportunity.

ACTIONS

Bites. melee 0 ft., 1 target. +3 to hit, 1d4+1 (3) piercing damage and 2d6 (7) poison damage and the creature becomes poisoned (DC 13 Constitution save on the creature's turn ends this) and while poisoned have their speed reduced to 10 ft.

4. SEA HAG'S GROTTO (CR 6)

A carpet of pale bones litters the seabed in this grotto of dead skeletal coral. Sharp spikes of lifeless coral jut from the walls and opposite the entrance, glistening pearls rest in several large seashells. Curtains of lifeless blackened seaweed hang from the walls.

The thick coral blocks any light from the surface leaving the area in darkness.

Creature: This dark grotto is the lair of Shayonna the Gaunt. Her merrow minions have likely already alerted her to the approach of the PCs' ship. Shayonna lurks here, patiently waiting for the PCs to bring her the slaves she needs to complete her foul ministrations.

If she retreats here to her grotto after a fight on shore, she animates her *claw of the briny depths* and waits for the PCs to arrive.

SHAYONNA THE GAUNT

Medium fey, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 145 (17d10+68)

Speed 30 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR 20 (+5) **DEX** 16 (+3) **CON** 18 (+4)

INT 12 (+1) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 13 (+1)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., fog sense, passive Perception 11

Languages Aquan, Common, Sylvan

Challenge 5 (2,900 XP)

Horrific Appearance. The sight of a sea hag is so revolting that anyone within 30 feet (other than another hag) and can see what the hag truly looks like must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. A creature may make a new saving throw at the end of each turn, ending

the effect on a success. If the saving throw succeeds the creature becomes immune to this effect for 24 hours. A creature may avert their eyes from the Sea Hag unless they are surprised by the form. A creature gains disadvantage on attack rolls against the hag until the start of their next turn if they avert their eyes

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Shayonna can make two claw attacks as an action.

Claws. melee 10 ft., 1 target. +8 to hit, 2d6+5 (13) slashing damage. If the creature is medium or smaller than they are grappled (DC 15 to escape) and restrained until the grapple ends. Jorunea has two claws and can grapple a single creature in each claw.

Salt Wife's Glare. As an action against Shayonna can target a single creature that is within 30 feet and frightened of her. They must pass a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw against this magical effect or be reduced to 0 HP. A creature affected by this



ability becomes doesn't make death saving throws and gains the ability to breathe underwater. While underwater the creature cannot regain HP. After spending a day submersed in water the creature must succeed at a DC 10 Constitution save or be transformed into a merrow and regain their HP. If transformed into a merrow they regard Shayonna as their beloved mistress. She gains advantage on Charisma (Deception) checks when interacting with the merrow she transforms, and they in turn become immune to her horrific appearance. This transformation cannot be dispelled but can be reversed with *remove curse*. This effect becomes permanent after seven days have passed.

Illusory Appearance. *Shayonna* can make herself appear as a medium female humanoid. Creatures that touch *Shayonna* or make a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check can successfully see through the disguise.

RAVENOUS URCHIN SWARM (3)

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 52 (8d8+16)

Speed 0 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR 16 (-5)	DEX 3 (-4)	CON 14 (+2)
INT 4 (-3)	WIS 11 (+0)	CHA 2 (-4)

Senses passive Perception 10

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

ACTIONS

Tongue. melee 10 ft., 1 target. +5 to hit, 1d6+3 (6) bludgeoning damage and the creature is pulled closer by 5 feet..

Spikes. melee 5 ft., 1 target. +3 to hit, take 1d4 piercing and the creature is poisoned. The creature may make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw each round to end the poisoned effect.

Treasure: The piles of silvery pearls are worth 3,200 gp in total.

Conclusion

Once the PCs have dealt with the *Tamarind* and *Shayonna* the Gaunt in one way or another, and likely gained a rich prize of pearls, they are free to continue on with their adventures. If *Shayonna* the Gaunt survives, PCs may encounter her again, perhaps as the captain of a ship of her own crewed by a horde of monstrous merrows.



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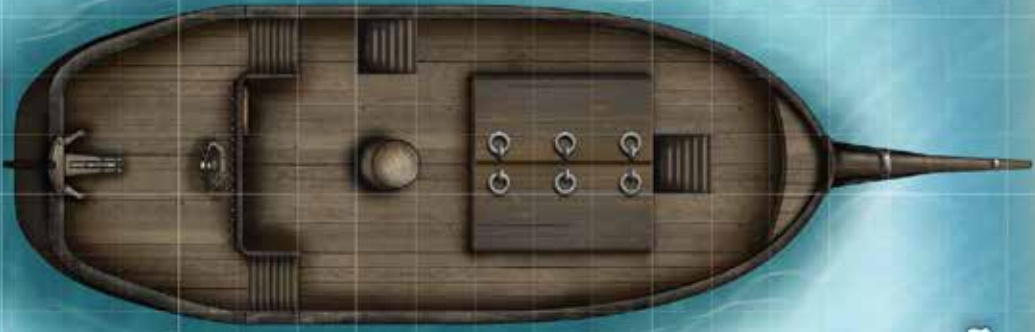
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THE TAMARIND



1 square = 5 ft





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