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# RISE OF THE STARBORN



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Rumour has it *Lady Shae*, a wealthy metal merchant in *Crow's Keep*, is looking to hire private investigators to sail to *Arran Isle*. Situated on the eastern shores of *Lake Argos*, *Shae's* son was a navy guard stationed on the island when he went missing. She wants him found ASAP.

The PCs might become involved in this adventure (i) as part of a merchant crew visiting the isle, (ii) independent explorers on an unplanned stopover, or (iii) investigators retained by a wealthy businesswoman to determine why her young son failed to return home for shore leave a week ago.

### The One

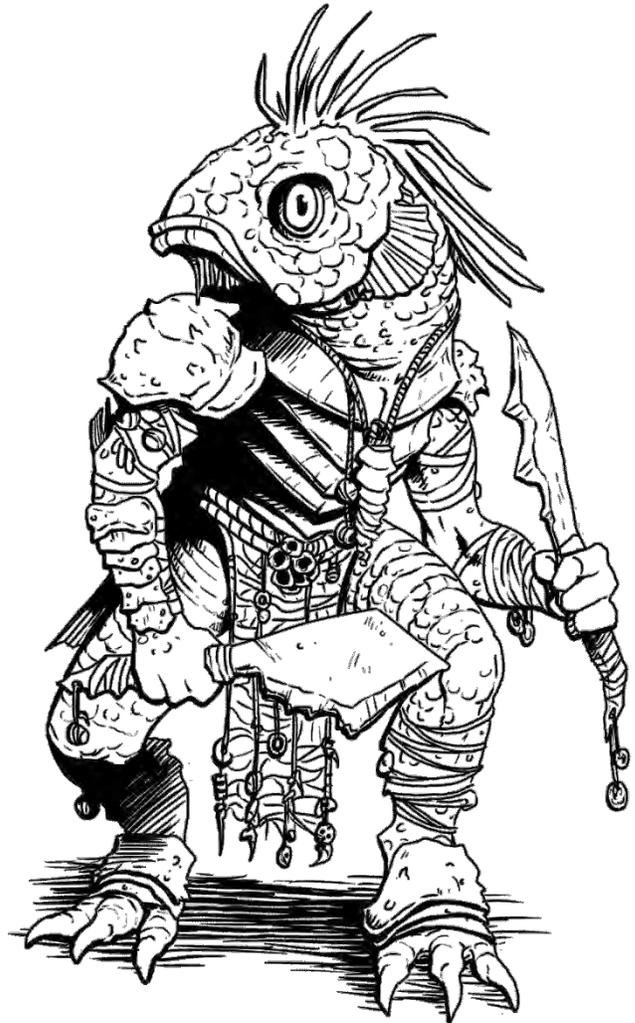
The waters of *Lake Argos* hold many secrets, but few quite so dangerous as the *Aboleth* that has slumbered in her depths since the First Age.

An exile from a distant galaxy, the *One* (as the *aboleth's* thralls refer to it, its real "name" unutterable by humans) is highly intelligent but wholly alien in thought. With a potential lifespan of hundreds of thousands of years, even the elves failed to divine its purpose.

Trapped on the present world, the *aboleth* wants nothing more than to escape banishment and return to the stars. But the celestial alignments required to open a wormhole remain 16,000 years distant, forcing the monstrosity to wait. In the meantime, it regards all terrestrial beings as insignificant blips at best, or momentary vexations are worst.

Having spent the past two Ages asleep beneath the waves, the monster has now entered a period of wakefulness. Rising to the surface for only the second time, the *One* has enslaved the residents of *Arran Isle*, aided by a devoted school of *Fishlings*.

Over the next few weeks, the *aboleth* will feed on the minds of its thralls until sufficiently reinvigorated to resume its dream like reverie. Until then, every waking moment is agony for the *One*, a shameful reminder of its intolerable confinement in this primitive, loathsome realm.



If the latter, *Lady Shae* offers the party 400 gp to find out what has happened to her 18 yr old son, guardsman *Mord Shae*. *Shae* doesn't trust the guard's superior, *Captain Higson*, whom she believes he is "covering up" for *Mord*, and wants independent investigators to make discrete inquiries on her behalf.

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## Sailing to the Isle

The party must arrange their own passage to *Arran Isle*, which is approximately 200 miles northeast of *Crow's Keep*. Assuming the party board a sloop or larger (LFG p.120), the ship might average 100 miles per 24 hours, completing the voyage in two days. Smaller vessels (skiffs, canoes, etc) travel about half as quickly, requiring four days.

Each day on the water requires a roll on the Voyage Events table (LFG p.135) or alternatively roll 1d8 and see below:

1. A particularly shady crew member (*Mortimer*, Rogue 2, Dex 14, dark haired, crooked smile, toothless whistler) attempts to steal a random PC's coin pouch at an opportune moment (ideally when they're asleep, drunk, seasick, or otherwise distracted).

If caught out, *Mortimer* offers secret information about a lost ruin or treasure, or introductions to his thieves' guild back in *Crow's Keep*, if the target doesn't do him in (GM determines details). If reported, the captain keel hauls him as punishment (terribly lacerated, but lives).

2. *Octavia* (dark skinned Nydissian, braided hair, curvy) a quasi bard/tale teller, breaks out a ghost story about a pair of *Argosan Stranglers* (Midlands) that crawled aboard the *Nightingale* two weeks earlier, killing ten men before the crew cut out one monster's eye, driving them back into the lake! Later that night, there is a 50% chance two *Argosan Stranglers* attack the ship, one missing an eye...
3. Turns out one of the ale barrels is off, tainted with some kind of foul sickness, the origin of which is unknown (a rival captain, *Chi Lhau*, paid one of the crew (*Millie*, cabin girl, whip thin, steely eyed

with a chip on her shoulder) to sabotage the barrel with a vial of tainted liquid (since thrown overboard). Anyone who has partaken of the ship's ale must make a *Luck* (Con) save or contract a random disease (LFG p.123).

4. The weather turns merciless, whipping up a freak storm in a matter of hours. A *Group Luck* save is required for the boat to avoid being wrecked on a hidden reef. If failed, the crew must resort to the lifeboats, which only hold 8 men each (GM determines how many boats, based on the mother ship).

Assuming the ship avoids becoming a wreck, a single Stormraven takes the opportunity to attack when the winds are favourable.

**Stormraven** AC 14, HD 8+2, Bite 2d6 and 2 x Claws 1d10, 19: the stormraven unleashes a shocking blast, causing 3d6 lightning damage (no save), S19 D12 C14 I2 P13 W15 Ch8 L10, Mv 180 ft flying. A stormraven rides the lightning to attack their target in the initial ambush (usually auto surprise, and bonus 4d6 lightning damage). When slain, the raven calls a final lightning bolt to strike the killer (*Luck* (Dex) save or 8d6 damage and lose next action). Immune to lightning and cold damage.

*Stormravens* are massive, raven like avians with 30 ft wingspans, yellow head crests and thunder like cries. Roused from hibernation during thunderstorms, these aerial predators favour deer, horses, and oblivious humanoids. Intrinsicly bound to tempests and squalls, stormravens act as natural lightning rods, attracting and directing electrical blasts in concert with their attacks.

5. Drifting cargo (branded with *Shenzu* markings) is spotted near the horizon. Retrieving the goods garners 1 x Valuables

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worth of rare silks, sealed spices, woven rugs, etc).

6. A Varnori longship raider (4d6 + 30 crew) appears from behind a nearby inlet to attack. They might be appeased with an offering of special loot.
7. A 40 ft *Kronosaurus* surfaces from the deep waters at least 16 hours travel from *Crow's Keep*. It attempts to break the ship apart and eat half the crew before swimming away. The ship might be able to outrun it (treat as a Chase) or scare it off with artillery.
8. A pod of 3d6 hungry *Waterwings* launch from beneath the water, seeing to knock anyone above board into the lake.

**Waterwing** AC 10, HD 1, Bite 1d8, 19: special, S13 D12 C9 I3 P10 W8 Ch5 LA, Mv 90 ft swim or 50 ft leap. If the target is in the water, the beast wraps its wings and hooked tail about the victim, immobilising them (Str contest at disadvantage to break free, drowning rules apply). If the victim is struggling, the beast will also attempt to bite them. Attacking a *waterwing* that has wrapped its target has a 50% chance of also damaging the victim.

*Waterwings* are 5 ft sea serpents with 9 ft membranous wings that also act as fins. They are meat eating marine hunters, generally content with fish, but are able to launch themselves 50 ft out of water to snag birds, above deck sailors, etc. Some *waterwings* have learnt that ships offer tasty humanoids, provided the target can be snatched and swiftly drowned beneath the waves. A *waterwing* stranded on land for more than two minutes dies of oxygen starvation.



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## Arran Isle

This small rocky islet ranges approximately half a mile end to end, located in the lake's eastern archipelago, colloquially known as the *Belt of Crowns*.

Protected by a fortified keep and stone walls, the isle acts as the Argosan navy's staging point for patrols of the eastern lake, as well as a friendly stopover for fisherman, and rare trading vessels.

By the time the PCs arrive, the *aboleth* has spent the last two weeks devouring about half of the original residents, leaving many domiciles empty (which may tip off curious PCs). All remaining residents are thralls (excepting *Mertin* in Area 8 and *Sir Franco* in Area 10) under the *One's* charm effect (see Area 15). Most residents have not seen the *aboleth* directly (see Area 15; the guards use the curtain) and assume their new overseer is human. Thralls act and appear normal, going about their daily routine. They radiate a charm aura if studied with *Pierce the Veil*. PCs that spend time to sense magic (LFG p.83) confirm its presence within 30 ft of a thrall.

In addition to the thralls, a school of *Fishlings* has arrived to worship (and serve) the *aboleth*. The *fishlings* mostly lurk in nearby waters (see Areas 1 and 16), but may venture onto land for short periods. The guard thralls are in league with the *fishlings*, but other thralls consider them monsters. The *One* prohibits any interference with the fish men, so most residents simply avoid them.

**Fishling** AC 11, HD 1d4 hp, Bite 1d4 + special or knife 1d4, 19: the fishling vomits spawn eggs over the target (*Luck* (Con) save or be infected with *Finfusing* disease, see below), S7 D14 C10 I6 P9 W9 Ch6 L3, Mv 20 ft or 30 ft swimming.

*Fishlings* are 2 ft piscine humanoids, with oversized fish heads and scaled bodies. They are marine based predators but may spend up to an hour on land before dying of oxygen starvation.

*Fishlings* are not unintelligent, communicating with dolphin like calls, and often craft tools and other basic gear. They generally subsist on krill, insects, crustaceans and sea worms, but will sometimes seize the opportunity to eat a human if presented with such (a party would feed a whole *fishling* school for a week).

*Fishlings* are asexual and if left to their own devices will multiply at an astounding rate. There is a 50% chance a fishling carries the terrifying *Finfusing* disease (if bitten, *Luck* (Con) save to resist). Infected humans or similar suffer a piscine mutation in 1d8 days (roll 1d6 and see below). An apothecary with the right medicines and surgery techniques can reverse the effect over 1d4 weeks (Int (Apothecary) check is required, if failed, the mutation is permanent).

- (i) Random arm (below the elbow) or leg (below the knee) turns into a fin,
- (ii) Grows gills and may breathe water as well as air,
- (iii) Round, unblinking fish eyes (lose 1d3 Cha),
- (iv) Scale like flesh granting +1 AC,
- (v) Loses power of speech, instead makes dolphin noises, or
- (vi) Turns asexual, and next time the PC is submerged in a lake, river or sea, they die, and 2d6 infant *fishlings* are spawned (no save, they feast on the corpse and depart).

From time to time, particularly a night, *fishlings* might be spotted skittering about in the shadows of the outpost, primarily visiting to worship the *One* in Area 15. They are able to discern thralls from other humans by scent within 30 ft (all thralls exude a faint odour the piscines can detect). If taken by surprise by a non-thrall, the fishling will attempt to flee. If captured and brought to the

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attention of *Captain Higson* (Area 13) or *Sergeant Gibbot* (Area 4), they thank the PCs for their help with the “fishling menace”, then secretly return the creatures to the lake.

## Isle Encounters

Once the PCs arrive on the isle, a timeline begins to run. Within 36 hours, 2d6 + 20 guards attempt to arrest the PCs and take them before the *aboleth* (either to be charmed or devoured; maybe both). If the guards are defeated or avoided, the PCs become fugitives as the remaining forces (guards & *fishlings*) attempt to locate them. If the party manages to kill the *aboleth*, its charm is broken (see Aftermath).

Every 1d10 hours (or other time at the GM’s option) the party has an encounter on the street (or possibly in a building). Roll 1d8:

1. 3d6 guards emerge from a nearby building or around a corner. If they recognise the PCs as outsiders, they will investigate further, asking for weapons licences, the nature of their business here, etc.
2. *Mertin* in Area 8 or *Sir Franco* in Area 10 is nearby (depending on where the PCs are), studying the PCs, and/or considering how best to make contact with them.
3. *Weesa* the baker (female, dark hair, kind, rambling) takes a shine to one of the male PCs (highest Cha), offering them a fresh roll. She inquires whether they’ll be at the *Lamp* later tonight?
4. *Captain Higson* (Area 13) is walking down the street, taking his much loathed (but doctor’s orders) daily constitutional. He seems a little puffed. And parched.
5. 2d6 *Fishlings* are hiding nearby, hoping to stay out of sight of the PCs whom they spotted moments earlier. A Perc (Detection) vs Dex 14 contest notices them. They flee for the nearest wall or

storm drain in an attempt to scurry back to the lake (possible chase).

6. 2d6+4 drunks abuse the party, accusing them of “*taking the isle’s women*”, “*making the place smell bad*” and “*sticking their noses in where they don’t belong*”. They attempt to grab hold of the party and march them to Area 15 (if they manage to get as far as Area 13, *Captain Higson* turns them away, obviously upset at their idiocy).
  7. *Yernig* the beggar (shabby clothes, tangled beard, dirty nails) pesters the party for alms, asking “the *One*” for forgiveness and fortitude. *Yernig* is one of few residents who has seen the *aboleth*. If asked (and given a handful of coins), he describes it as a “*huge, friendly fish*.”
  8. The *Aboleth* (Area 15) somehow “senses” that the party have intruded into its domain. Inexplicably, one random PC has “mindwaves” that are irresistible to the *One*, which savours the hunt as it tracks them down personally.
- During the night, the monster emerges onto the streets to locate its target (10% cumulative chance each hour after dusk). If battle ensues, and goes poorly, the *One* summons its thralls to aid it (at the end of each round, roll 1d100: 40% 2d6 residents, 30% 1d8 guardsmen, 20% 2d4 *fishlings*).

## Isle Trinkets

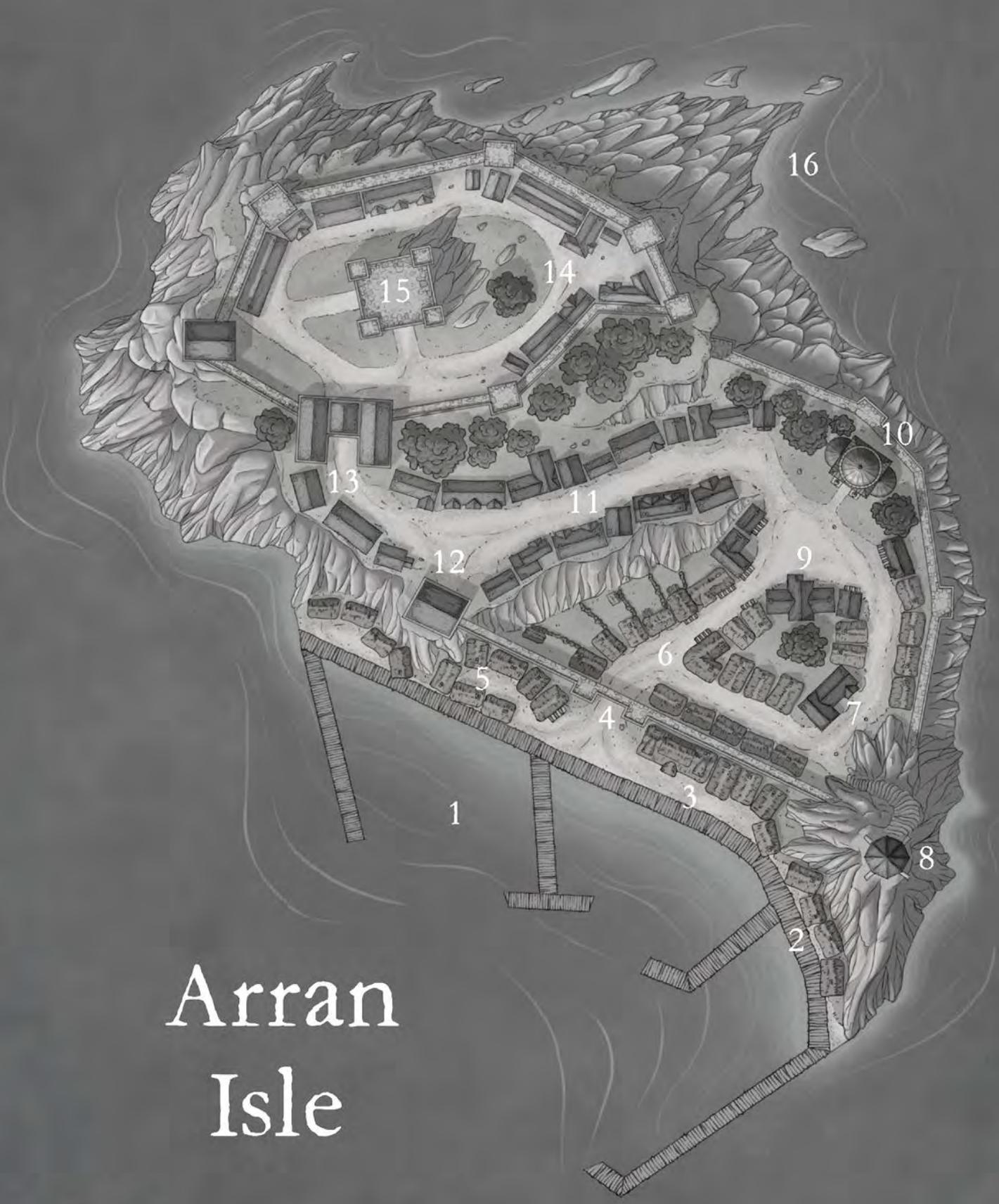
For more “isle flavour” when looting residents’ bodies, or searching their abandoned domiciles, the GM might substitute a 1d12 roll on the below table instead of the usual Carry Loot/Trinkets & Curios:

- (i) A leather journal of daily affairs. The last week records how worried the author was about her lover who went



- missing 5 days earlier. The guards were reluctant to help.
- (ii) The severed hand of a *fishling*, several days old.
  - (iii) A 25 gp silver brooch with a kraken motif (the *Deep One*, tyrant god of the northern Varnori).
  - (iv) A beautiful spiral shell on a leather thong. If worn, the talisman increases the user's maximum *Luck* by 1. If the shell ever breaks, the *Luck* bonus is lost, and the owner rolls on the *Dark & Dangerous Magic* table.
  - (v) A copper pirate skull ring (8 gp).
  - (vi) Holy scriptures of *Graxus, the Iron God*, tied up with prayer beads (5 gp).
  - (vii) A leather satchel containing salted fish fillets wrapped in gauze.
  - (viii) A tarnished, *silvered* hook hand (80 gp).
  - (ix) A compact, extendable spyglass of fine construction, ornately decorated with a wind and sea motif (130 gp).
  - (x) 1d12 gp inside a black bandana.
  - (xi) A locked mahogany case. Inside is a map to a hidden temple of *Shennog* in the *Ulgoth Foothills* (Adventure Framework #10).
  - (xii) A dark leather pirate's hat (tricorn), with a moon & cutlass icon. The hat once belonged to *Captain Semper* of the *Argonaut* (a notorious reaver fifty years earlier).





# Arran Isle

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## Area 1 – Docks

On approach to the Isle, a single navy carrack (the *Vigilant*) is docked for repairs (unmanned but for 2d6 shipwrights, the warship is armed with onagers on the bow and stern, ballistae port and starboard). If at night, the light house beacon is lit (Area 8).

Anyone breaking away from the main boat to approach the island stealthily has a 50% chance of being attacked by 3d8 *fishlings*. Characters that are overcome are taken to the *aboleth* in Area 15.

Otherwise the PCs are met by *Dockmaster Lynch* (6' 5", thin, bored look, monotone voice) and asked to sign the visitor register (he carries a number of scrolls with him, one is the visitor register). *Lynch* advises the party that taking weapons into the fort (beyond the walls of Area 4) incurs a 2 gp fee.

## Area 2 – Domiciles

This collection of thatched roof buildings house some of the local dock workers (1d6 in each), although approximately half are now empty. Ferreting through the abandoned quarters reveals 1 x Carry Loot.

**Resident** AC 10, HD 1d6 hp, Knife 1d4, 19: as weapon, S11 D10 C10 I10 P10 W10 Ch10 L3, Mv 30 ft.

## Area 3 – Warehouses

This area includes the main warehouse, and three smaller storage buildings. The warehouses are double padlocked, with multiple patrols of 1d3+2 guards. *Dockmaster Lynch's* office is here, along with his many ledgers and weighing scales. Each warehouse contains scores of crates/barrels (foodstuffs, textiles, tools, etc) worth at least 1 x Valuables each (GM's call).

## Area 4 – Low Gate

The 12 ft high gatehouse is manned by 2d6 guardsmen. *Sergeant Gibbot* (6'2", heavy set, stubble, *cold iron* mace) decides who enters,

inquiring about the party's business. Unless openly hostile, the party will be allowed in (getting out is another matter). Weapon licences are required (see Area 1). Asking about guardsman *Mord Shae* receives a vague response (he's on leave, but still on the island somewhere (not in the barracks)).

**Guardsman** AC 14, HD 1, Sword 1d8+1, 19: as weapon, S13 D10 C12 I10 P12 W10 Ch10 L4, Mv 30 ft. Armed with swords and chainmail.

**Sergeant Gibbot** AC 17, HD 3, Sword 1d8+1, 19: disarm, S14 D10 C12 I12 P12 W10 Ch13 L6, Mv 30 ft. Has the Fighter *Charger* ability. *Cold iron* mace, half plate, may use his shield to negate a single directional attack.

## Area 5 – Fishing Quarter

Most of the port's fishermen live and work along the southwestern wharf. About half of the homes are now vacant (victims of the *Aboleth*), their salted barrels beginning to reek. Up to 1d6 fishermen live in each of the remaining buildings. If asked about the empty homes, the fisherman suggest the inhabitants returned to the mainland.

## Area 6 – Food Market

This large wooden hall is the isle's food market, with many kinds of vegetables, fruits, meats, pies, pastries, spices, etc for sale. 4d6 residents are here at any one time, vendors and customers alike. There are quite a few empty stalls. If queried about this, vendors will suggest their colleagues are taking some time off, very ill, dealing with a family crisis, etc).

## Area 7 – Cataline's Supplies

*Cataline* (5' albino Karok with silver hair, sly smile, uses her hands when she talks) owns the general store. She stocks 2d6 pieces of most common gear, and 1d3 pieces of uncommon gear. Rare items are a 50% chance (single piece).

*Cataline* is one of the *aboleth's* primary informers, as many sailors visit her store to restock on supplies. She will ask the party questions about

their purpose on the isle, and show interest about their professions and past deeds. Any unusual information will be reported back to the *One*.



### Area 8 - Lighthouse

The lighthouse is a massive signal beacon at the top of a 50 ft tower, lit each night by one of the guards. The old keeper *Heyman* was one of the *aboleth*'s first victims. When he was taken away, *Mertin* (dark haired teen, daring, slight limp) understood something terrible was happening, and hid in a secret cellar (concealed under a rug). Having only arrived on the island the day before, the young teen was missed in the guards' round up of residents.

*Mertin*'s only concern is to get off the island. A competent and well armed party might spur him to make contact, hoping to leave with them. Otherwise he attempts to remain hidden (opposed Perc (Detection) vs Dex 14 contest). If the PCs coax information from him, *Mertin* knows the following:

- (i) During the last week, those who enter the **Keep** do not re-emerge (excluding guards),

- (ii) Residents are acting odd, as if unconcerned with their missing neighbours, and

- (iii) Visitors are eventually rounded up and taken to the **Keep**; no-one who makes it past *Low Gate* (Area 4) is allowed to leave.

### Area 9 - The Lucky Lamprey

The *Lamprey* (the "*Lamp*" to locals) is a large, single storey stone inn and taphouse, with a handful of rooms for let (large, with key locks). The original owner was eaten by the *aboleth* six days earlier, and the business taken over by the cook *Kerlack* (30s, Varnori, medium build, long blonde beard, jovial fellow but unaccustomed to the finer details of running an inn).

The common room is spacious, smoke addled and poorly lit, with a large stuffed shark hanging from the rafters. *Norton* (20s, sandy haired male, missing a digit on one hand) serves the patrons (2d6 at any one time).

There is an 80% chance *Old Ribba* is in (elderly lady, crooked back, gap toothed). The silver haired washerwoman is a thrall like the rest, but in the early stages of dementia. As a result, she might drop hints about their "*new overseer*" and how "*strange the One is, how wondrous. Such a strange and wondrous One.*" Other patrons fob *Ribba* off as crazy. After this encounter, the old woman is never seen again.

The *Lamp*'s best brew (well, memorable at least) is *Chugwuggit's Cheesebreaker* (black and bitter with an overpowering aftertaste of regret). Specials this week are:

- Choice Squid & Mash
- Leek Soup with Grub Float
- Salted Shank with Badishes<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bad Radishes. Best not to ask questions.

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## Area 10 – Temple of the Iron God

This bronze capped temple is dedicated to *Graxus* (god of war, courage, struggle, glory), overseen by *Sir Franco* (80s, elderly *Knight of the Iron God*, cloudy eyes, seemingly always parched and in need of water). The worship chamber houses a small iron altar imprinted with a skull, behind which are brackets to hold a sword (empty). By the time the adventurers arrive, *Franco's* acolytes have been devoured, leaving only the retired knight to maintain the shrine.

Once a formidable warrior, *Franco's* fighting days are long gone, but his sermons of courage and tenacity are stronger than ever. Much beloved, *Franco* still wears his burnished plate during ceremonies, but otherwise gets about in a grey smock and sheathed sword.

Unbeknownst to the thralls and *fishlings*, the winter knight has managed to break the aboleth's enchantment care of his magical blade (see below). He is not certain what evil lurks in the Keep (it was screened off from him behind the curtain when he was taken to the Great Hall), but is fixed in his determination to end it. *Franco* has been waiting for a band of brave travellers to aid him in his quest. Assuming the PCs fit the bill, he will reveal:

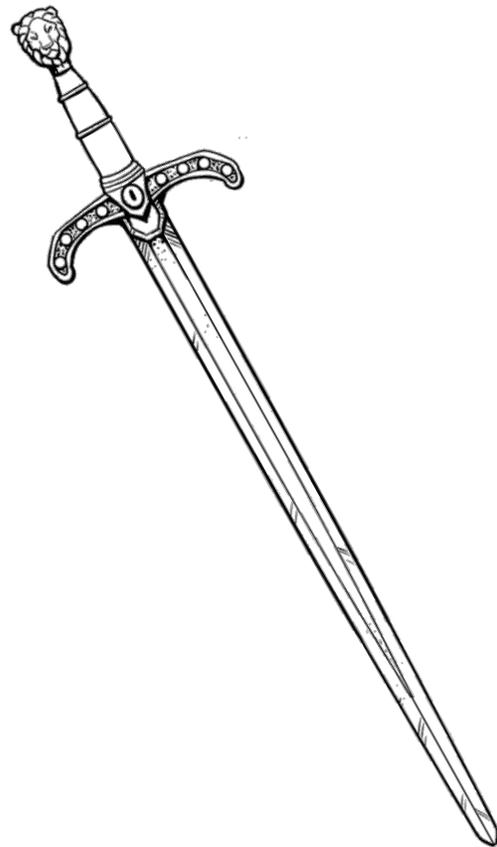
- (i) Residents are an “evil charm” caused by some manner of evil beast living in the Keep.
- (ii) His acolytes (and other residents) were rounded up and taken to the Keep, never to return.
- (iii) The guards are in league with the *fishlings*.

**Sir Franco** AC 14, HD 1 (6 hp), Sword 1d8+1, 19: disarm, S7(9) D7 C10 I14 P10 W14 Ch15 L7, Mv 20 ft. *Sir Franco* wears ancient half plate emblazoned with an iron fist. He wields his sword in both hands.

## Franco's Sword

*Franco's* sword is perfectly balanced and ever sharp, with a gold plated hilt and lion head pommel. Normally hung behind the altar, the old knight currently carries it. The weapon's origin is unknown, but some say it was forged by one of the first knights to defeat the vile sorceress *Tetrasinae*.

Attunement takes 1d4 days, except by Fighters or followers of the Argosan pantheon who require 1d4 rounds. Once attuned, the user develops a strong sense of justice, so much so that the GM may call for an occasional Will check to resist taking action in the face of overt injustice.



Attunement benefits are as follows:

1. Whilst in possession of the sword, the user's Str increases by 2 (max 19), and they are immune to adverse mind effects including charm, fear, madness, etc.

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2. Once every 1d4 days, the user may drive the blade into the ground with both hands, causing a blast wave in a 20 ft radius. Man sized or smaller targets are automatically knocked prone and must make a *Luck* (Con) save or lose their next action. Larger than man size creatures are unaffected.
  3. Once per month, the user may throw the sword, transforming it into a metal (gold) lion (requires an action, treat as *Tiger*, but AC 17, 28 hp, with *Golem* traits). The lion lasts up to 1d6 x 10 minutes, or until slain, when it reverts back to sword form.

### Area 11 - Main Strip

Winding up the hill are a mix of stone domiciles (1d10 residents in most, although some are empty) and services. Some store fronts are empty (eg: tanner, herbalist, weaver) but others are open, including:

- *Bannon* the Apothecary (6'6", solid build, booming voice, rascal).
- *Vindra* the Smithy (6', athletic, pale skinned northerner, a kind pessimist).
- *Hussett* the Stone Mason (bald, wide shouldered, greedy and flirtatious).
- *Paglen* the Carpenter (5'10", dark wispy hair, repeats himself).
- *Valentia* the Potter (5'6", dark skinned Nydissian with cropped hair, remarkable green eyes, likes to spin a tale).
- *Madame Yelma* (dark haired, lithe, warm smile) runs the brothel, which is missing a few workers.

### Area 12 - Watch Tower

This 25 ft high tower adjoins the lower wall, with a rampart allowing access to Area 4. The walkways

are patrolled by 2d4 guardsmen, while another 4d6 are on duty within (training, maintaining equipment, going on patrols, etc). 2d6 crossbowmen on the upper level have fire arcs in all directions.

The watch tower includes a small armoury (locked) of excess gear, namely twelve swords, three spears, 1d6 firepots, two shields, and two quivers of 20 bolts. The soldiers here are under orders from *Sergeant Gibbot* (Area 4).

**Crossbowmen** AC 11, HD 1, Light Crossbow 2d4+1, 19: as weapon, S13 D10 C12 I10 P12 W10 Ch10 L4, Mv 30 ft. Armed with light crossbows, 10 bolts, shortswords, and chainmail.

### Area 13 - High Gate

High Gate consists of two reinforced iron portcullises, flanked by 25 ft stone fortifications, including burning oil and arrow slits (effectively providing full cover to the soldiers within, but allowing up to 12 soldiers to shoot out). Twin winches on the both sides of the gates (located on the upper levels) raise the gates.

*Captain Higson* (5'10", solid build, dark moustache, often on his warhorse *Ned*) oversees the gate and 4d6 soldiers. At present, no-one is allowed entry other than soldiers or known informants (such as *Cataline*, Area 7). Whilst under the *aboleth's* charm, *Higson* is resistant to bribes (disadvantage on such attempts).

*Higson* manages the guards' rosters and knows that soldier *Mord Shae* is dead (eaten by the *One*). He fobs off any inquiries from the PCs, stating that *Shae* departed the isle a day ago (if PCs check with *Dockmaster Lynch* in Area 1, there is no record of *Shae* leaving).

Trying to fight one's way through the gate house would be a bad idea. Many of the guards carry horns, and Area 14 houses scores of navy soldiers ready to assist. The armoury includes thirteen heavy crossbows, 2d6 fire pots, and three

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cauldrons of burning oil (10 ft area, causes 3d6 fire damage, *Luck* (Dex) save for half).

**Captain Higson** AC 15, HD 2, Sword 1d8+1, 19: prone, S14 D11 C9 I10 P11 W11 Ch9 L7, Mv 30 ft. *Higson* wears platemail and carries a sword. It's been a long time since he's had to use it.

**Ned, Warhorse** AC 15, HD 3, Hoof 1d6, 19: trample double damage and prone, S19 D13 C16 I2 P10 W13 Ch6 L5, Mv 60 ft. Ned wears plate barding.



### Area 14 - Main Barracks

The various buildings surrounding the Keep are primarily barracks for the isle's rotating navy crew, including mess hall, sleeping quarters, a brig, common room, small tap house, etc. Six 20 ft watch towers break up the 15 ft stone walls that surround the interior (each is manned by 1d4+1 guards).

Scouting might reveal small groups of *fishlings* (1d4+1) passing through the courtyards from time to time (reporting on boat movements, or come to worship). They emerge from a large grated sewer

drain near the northern most tower, then into the Keep (and vice versa).

Whilst many soldiers have been eaten by the *aboleth*, 5d10 + 80 thralls still remain, plus *Commander Moorback* (40s, 6' female with dark ponytail, strong build, glaring gaze) going about their daily duties, including lake and isle patrols.

*Arran Isle* is one of Argosa's primary navy training grounds, and there are large proportion of "green" recruits. Many spare uniforms including boots and cloaks may be found in chests in the domiciles. Training drills are run regularly in the courtyards.

**Green Recruits** AC 11, HD 1, Spear 1d6+1, 19: as weapon, S11 D10 C10 I10 P10 W10 Ch10 L4, Mv 30 ft. Leather armour and spear (10 ft reach).

**Commander Moorback** AC 17, HD 4, Sword 1d8+2, 19: special, S15 D13 C12 I12 P12 W10 Ch13 L6, Mv 30 ft. May choose from the following *Fighter Adaptable* abilities three times/combat: *Charger*, *Two Hander*, *Protector*, *Opportunist*. Longsword, *Adamantine Half Plate* (turns critical hits into normal hits), may use her shield to negate a single directional attack. *Moorback* has *Minor Exploit Protection* and *Off Turn Attacks*. On 19-20 attack rolls, *Moorback* lands a critical hit and disarms her foe.

### Area 15 - The Keep

The Keep stands on a steep rise, with an iron portcullis and thick wooden gates. Four 20 ft towers provide wide ranging cover fire reaching almost all of the interior. Inside, a series of rooms are occupied by approximately 4d6 guards (some have been eaten). The Grand Hall has been mostly cleared of tables, chairs, etc, the back half taken up by a newly dug pool of murky lake water. Two massive curtains divides the hall in half, concealing the *aboleth* if desired.

For the most part, the *One* dozes in the 20 ft diameter pool, conserving energy for beguiling or devouring thralls. Each morning and night, the

---

guards deliver a resident for eating (the *One* peels away the victim's skull, siphons their "thought energy" from the exposed cerebral matter, then swallows them whole). Witnessing this gruesome ritual requires a *Luck* (Will) save to avoid a minor madness.

**Aboleth**, AC 15, HD 16+3, 4 x Tentacles 1d6 + 1d3 Will drain, and Bite 3d6, 19: psychic scream; all enemies within 50 ft lose their next action (*Luck* (Will) save resists), S19 D7 C20 I15 P15 W22 Ch8 L15, Mv 30 ft or swim 60 ft. *Major Exploit Protection, Off Turn Attacks, Stronger Luck*, and may use following spell like effects at will: *Strange Joining, Waking Dream, Monstrous Subjugation* (but the charm renders victims obedient thralls, and is permanent), *Delusions of Dark Recall* and *Wave of Obedience*.

The *One* dominates the whole of the island; residents are obedient thralls (excluding *Mertin* hidden in Area 8, and *Sir Franco* in Area 10), and the *fishlings* devoted worshippers. As far as the *aboleth* is concerned, people are food and the *fishlings* barely sentient insects. After another week, when the alien is replenished, it vanish back into the depths, ne'er to return.

Although the *aboleth* has no treasure per se, the Keep's vault (lower ground level, double high quality locks requiring great successes to open) contains 1 x 6 HD Lair Treasure. At the GM's option, one of the vault chests is trapped (random Simple Trap LFG p.231). Additionally, if the *aboleth* is slain, it's internal organs are worth 2d4 x 500 gp to the right buyer (herbalists, alchemists, etc).

## Area 16 - Northern Waters

The northern shoals conceal the underwater den of a school of 3d6 + 30 *Fishlings*, obedient worshippers of the *aboleth* since its arrival. The small marine creatures scout nearby waters for possible treasures that might please the *One* (shiny coral, sunken junk, etc), and report on any suspicious vessels loitering in the area.

The *fishlings* gain access to the Keep via a large storm drain that empties onto the northern rocks (see Area 14). Quietly scaling the slippery drain is difficult (Party Challenge, moderate: 5 successes, focusing on Str, Dex, Con, Athletics, Acrobatics, Perception, General Lore, Stealth). On a fail, guards in the courtyard of Area 14 hear something other than *fishlings* approaching, and prepare boiling oil (3d6 damage, *Luck* (Dex) save for half).

Investigating the *fishlings*' coral den reveals 1 x Carry Loot, 1 x Valuables, and an ancient scroll sealed in a waterproof tube (*Gift of the Fiery Furnace* and *Sever Arcanum*).

## Aftermath

If the *aboleth* is slain, its charm is broken and the people thank the PCs as heroes, throwing them a parade and offering 1 x 5 HD Lair Treasure as a reward (including at least one magic scroll and/or potion). If *Sir Franco* died in the exchange, they insist the PCs keep his sword.

If the *aboleth* lives, and the PCs escape the island, it finishes up eating the remainder of the residents within 48 hours. Then it slips back into the depths to sleep for another 16,000 years.



## CREDITS

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