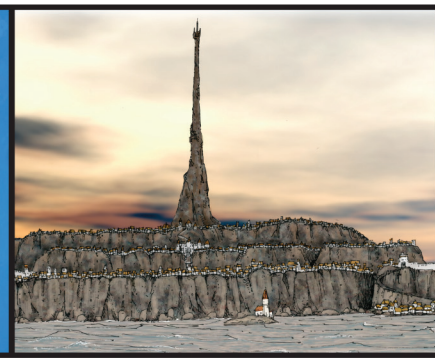The Secrets of

BEACON ISLAND

Home to not one but two lighthouses in the Bay of Ptolus lies Beacon Island, a small, stony place that for centuries has been plagued by tales of hauntings and other mysterious events. Find out more about the island in this special feature written by Monte Cook exclusively for the readers of *Game Trade Magazine*.

BEACON ISLAND

240
241

240. Lighthouse
241. Ruined Lighthouse

To the southwest of the city, rocky shoals make the waters of the harbor treacherous. Amid these rocks lies Beacon Island, the desolate patch of land that is the only island in the Bay of Ptolus. At its widest point, the island measures no more than two hundred yards across. Light vegetation grows in a few spots on Beacon Island, but most of the place is bare, rocky, wet, and cold.

Even before the port of Ptolus was established just over three hundred years ago, Imperial engineers had erected a lighthouse on the island to keep ships away from the rocks and to provide a navigational aid. This lighthouse stands not far from an ancient ruin. The ruin itself obviously was once a lighthouse, too. Though its origin and creators remain unknown, it is clearly of extreme antiquity.

THE NEW LIGHTHOUSE

Referring to the lighthouse on Beacon Island as "new" is true only in a relative sense. The lighthouse is four hundred years old—older than most of the city, in fact; only the fortress of Dalenguard is older. It stands one hundred twenty feet high and measures thirty feet across. The lighthouse keepers live in a small home attached to the lighthouse itself. This ascetic existence offers little contact with the rest of the world and few amenities.

Duty at the lighthouse is not a popular one. This is due in part to the loneliness of the post-

ing, but also due to the proximity of the old lighthouse, which all the keepers believe to be haunted. Each one of them can tell hair-raising tales of ghostly encounters, usually at night. Beyond the ghosts in the ruined lighthouse, they also speak of seeing spectral ships in the distance and strange lights under the surface of the water. They've also spotted humanoid fish-men swimming among the sharks at dusk, but such tales (of sahuagin) are common among sailors in the area as well.

Currently, there are three lighthouse keepers, although no more than two of them are ever present at a given time. They are Glane Vudd (male human expert3/sorcerer1), Niles Krest (male human expert6), and Mora Eddik (female half-orc expert5). Glane is a tall, thin man in his late fifties with a mostly bald head and a hawkish nose. He speaks little and keeps to himself. Niles also has thinning hair, even though he is only thirty-five. He walks with a slight limp and has a severe underbite. Unlike Glane, he loves to chat and, if he must, he talks to himself just to fill the silence. Mora is slight for a half-orc, with the build of a fairly typical human woman. Her unpleasant features reveal her heritage but she is likable to be around, if somewhat ill-mannered. All three read and play games to pass the time, enjoying such favorites as **Knight and Squire, Flipping Frog, Bertrant,** and even **Dragonscales.** Glane writes poetry, but he shares it with no one.

The lighthouse has a pair of rowboats that the keepers use to get to the Docks and back. It is the responsibility of anyone coming back from time off to bring along supplies.

THE OLD LIGHTHOUSE

The ruined lighthouse is mostly an empty shell: a stone cylinder with a diameter of almost sixty feet, open at the top. Stone stairs on the interior spiral up almost to the top, although they seem too large for a human to climb comfortably. Ruined remains around the lighthouse suggest that it once was much taller than it is now—taller than the newer lighthouse, in fact. A few estimate that it might have stood three hundred feet high, although that figure is disputed. The new lighthouse keepers report that they frequently see a trio of glowing spectral forms at the top of the old lighthouse at night.

This lighthouse was created by the Charad titans of days gone by. The titans occupied the area in the distant past, almost five thousand years ago. That the old lighthouse still stands at all today is testament to the titans' prowess with stonecraft and engineering. Beneath their lighthouse lies a hidden passage beyond a secret door (Search check, DC 30) to an undisturbed Charad titan dwelling. Although uninhabited, the historical records and artifacts found there could be worth vast sums (at least 5,000 gp).

The ghosts would never tolerate such a disturbance of the old lighthouse, however.

THE GHOSTS

The ghosts that haunt the ruined lighthouse are the spirits of sailors who died near the island. The three ghosts are active most nights, roaming about the old lighthouse and usually spending a great deal of time at the top. They all clearly were once human sailors, although their dress and ethnic backgrounds differ. They died at very different times over the last three centuries. None were Ptolus locals.

The ghosts are not evil and do not wish others harm. In fact, they show respect and gratitude for the work of the lighthouse keepers and would never willingly hurt them. The ghosts do not like to be disturbed, however, and wish no contact with the living. Explorers who spend too much time poking around the old lighthouse—even during the day—risk angering the ghosts and encouraging an attack.

Nydalidani and Adreican
Male human ghosts (Neutral)
Incorporeal undead
Expert5   **CR6**
Init +2   **Speed** 30 feet
HD 5d12   **hp** 42
AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10
BAB/Grapple +2/+2
Attack/Full Attack +4 touch (Nydalidani: 1d6, corrupting touch; Adreican: 1d4 points drained from one ability score)

SA (Nydalidani) Manifest, malevolence (CL 10th, touch attack, Will save DC 18), and corrupting touch
SA (Adreican) Manifest and draining touch (each drain heals ghost 5 hp)
SQ Darkvision 60 feet, undead traits, and turn resistance +4
Fort +1 **Ref** +3 **Will** +5
Str 11, **Dex** 14, **Con** 0, **Int** 13, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 16
Crucial Skills: Hide +12, Listen +14, Spot +18.
Other Skills: Knowledge (nature) +4, Profession (sailor) +8, Use Rope +4, Search +10.
Crucial Feats: N/A
Other Feats: Alertness, Lightning Reflexes, Simple Weapon Proficiency.
Possessions: None (Nydalidani); *+1 ring of protection* (Adreican adds +1 to AC)

Essim
Male human ghost (Chaotic Neutral)
Incorporeal undead
Expert5/warrior3   **CR8**
Init +3   **Speed** 30 feet
HD 8d12   **hp** 73
AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10 (AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13 on Ethereal Plane)
BAB/Grapple +5/+8
Attack/Full Attack Ethereal Plane only: +9 melee (1d6+5/18–20, rapier)
SA Manifest, corrupting gaze (30-foot range, Fort save DC 16 or suffer 2d10 points of damage and 1d4 points of Charisma damage), and telekinesis (CL 12th)
SQ Darkvision 60 feet, undead traits, and turn resistance +4
Fort +4 **Ref** +5 **Will** +8
Str 16, **Dex** 16, **Con** 0, **Int** 14, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 16
Crucial Skills: Hide +15, Intimidate +6, Jump +8, Listen +19, Spot +19.
Other Skills: Profession (sailor) +9, Search +14, Sense Motive +10, Swim +5, Use Rope +5.
Crucial Feats: Combat Expertise.
Other Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Martial Weapon Proficiency.
**Possessions:** *+1 studded leather armor, +1 rapier.*

Putting the Ghosts to Rest

The ghosts must be defeated in combat. If this happens, an observant PC (Spot check, DC 20) notices that an incorporeal "spark" flies from where each defeated ghost stood to a particular loose stone in the ruin. Before twenty-four hours elapses, this stone must be brought to the city. These sailors all died without ever reaching their destination, so their journey must be completed for them to rest. A "hunch" (Sense Motive check, DC 20) can suggest this solution after an initial encounter with the ghosts. Characters who make a Diplomacy check (DC 20) and do not attack the ghosts can also learn that the sailors are all "forever trapped en route." Although many characters assume this is a reference to the metaphysical, the ghosts mean this statement far more literally. Even with a series of great Diplomacy checks, however, a character cannot get the ghosts to stay around and talk for long before they attack or fade away.

The Ghosts' Tactics
These ghosts have learned to work together well and always appear together. Adreican uses his draining touch to attack a foe's Charisma score, adding to Essim's gaze attack. Nydalidani uses his malevolence to encourage intruders to run away, usually off into the sea. Their overall goal is almost always to drive off opponents. If foes aren't sent scurrying easily, the ghosts may retreat to the Ethereal Plane. They return to harass the living again a minute, ten minutes, or an hour later.
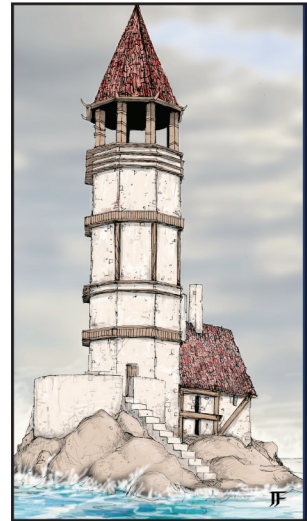
The only way the Commissar can keep the lighthouse staffed is to promise the keepers rotating shifts rather than requiring the position to be full time.