



FROG GOD GAMES ADVENTURES

# THE BLACK SPOT

by Gary McBride



SWARDS &  
WIZARDRY  
COMPATIBLE

# THE BLACK SPOT

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ADVENTURES  
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**FROG GOD GAMES**

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# THE BLACK SPOT

BY GARY MCBRIDE

A SWORDS AND WIZARDRY ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO SIX CHARACTERS OF 5TH LEVEL

“Gather round, lads, and listen close, or you’ll have the devil to pay! There are terrors upon the sea worse than breaking waves and lashing winds. Be wary in your wandering and wayfaring that you never travel with a man who bears the black spot upon his flesh, dark as the ace of spades. The tales you’ve been told are false, lads! The black spot does not spell doom to those who bear it. It brings terror and ruin upon whoever sails with the marked . . .”

—Last recorded words of Garis Mather before shipping out on *The Flying Fortune*

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

### THE TALE OF *THE FLYING FORTUNE*

*The Flying Fortune* sailed for Port Shaw with a hold full of common cargo and wine casks. A two-masted brig, shipshape and trim, she was a humble lady of the sea, crewed by a motley collection of sailors from a dozen kingdoms all united in the promise of profit and perhaps a modicum of adventure. However, as soon as the ship left port, bad omens accumulated. The captain brought his luggage aboard in black bags — black, the color of death. He chanced fate by leaving on a Friday, and as soon as the ship left its moorings, cormorants and ravens — death birds — flocked to her rigging. The men might have ignored one of these omens, but all together they heralded unavoidable disaster. Every night the old salts endlessly harangued the green recruits about their coming doom as the candles burned low.

Initially, the cruise defied the portents. The ship cut the waves without incident as her veteran captain, Colthyn Riggs, expertly navigated the Razor Sea. The weather blew fair, if blustery, and the ship made good speed. One day, a lookout even spotted a pod of spinner dolphins frolicking in the ship’s wake. The crew took it as a good omen. Even the most determined of doomsayers began to believe their luck had shifted.

### A TREASURE SPOTTED

One night, with the moon barely a sliver in the sky, a sentry spotted strange glimmers of light off the port bow. Captain Riggs soon appeared on deck and surveyed the dark water with his spyglass. What he saw amazed him. He spied a distant sea ridge barely peeking above the waterline. A smashed sea chest surrounded by gold trade ingots lay atop it, sprayed by the breaking waves and glittering in the faint moonlight — a fortune ripe for the taking.

Captain Riggs beamed at the discovery, and ordered his men to bring the haul aboard their ship. The men cheered their good luck and toasted the captain’s words with an extra ration of grog. All aboard were certain the gods smiled upon them, but they were wrong.

*The Flying Fortune* veered from its course and approached the treacherous extrusion. The captain quickly organized the ship’s two longboats and personally led the party to collect the treasure. From the deck of the ship, the remaining crew waited anxiously. The ship’s mate paced back and forth. He was uncertain about the entire venture, but his lot was to follow orders and await his captain’s return. His fears proved well-founded when a shout of alarm rang out from across the water proclaiming that the captain was injured, followed by the unmistakable sound of splintering wood. Then the lanterns of the longboats went dark.

The first mate rushed to the gunwales and used a borrowed spyglass to peer into the night sea. He saw a broken boat, and a man floating face down in the dark water. He gave the order to bring the ship closer. The men hesitated, uncertain about approaching the mysterious reef. Much of it lay hidden beneath the waves at unknown depths — but still the ship’s mate urged them forward.

### LOYALTY, RESCUE ATTEMPTS, AND DOOM

*The Flying Fortune* approached slowly and cautiously. They dragged the man out of the water and found him horribly lacerated. He was already dead. Suddenly doubt filled the first mate. Something was out there, and both ship’s boats were already launched. Years of nautical experience demanded he pull the ship back to a safe distance and wait for morning’s light, but he could not bring himself to abandon the captain and his mates.

Hesitantly, the acting commander ordered the ship even closer to the exposed reef and then, with a thundering crash, the ship struck the hidden rocks beneath the water. The whole vessel shuttered and lurched. The brig grounded, and *The Flying Fortune*’s fate was sealed. The sound of shattering hull planks followed by horrid screams resonated from below decks — more than merely the sounds of running aground. Something had broken into the ship and was attacking the crew below.

The first mate drew his blade and formed up what was left of the crew. They steeled their courage and waited for whatever nightmare gave birth to the horrid noises below deck to emerge topside. When the creatures finally ventured into the moonlight, the men’s courage broke.

They had never seen such otherworldly monstrosities. The creatures ripped into their faltering ranks and slaughter reigned. A young but literate sailor named Titus was clever enough to flee rather than fight to the last. He slipped into the smuggler’s hold and bit his tongue. As death gurgled right outside his refuge, Titus made a panicked entry in his journal, recounting the terrors of that night.

Outside, the abominations spared no one and hauled what they wanted below the waves. They cared nothing for gold or treasure—only for the fresh flesh of sailors. The luckiest of the crew died swiftly, but a few survived to see the interior of a strange and alien ship. They were to be pitied above all others, as they were dragged to face the vivisectionist’s knife.

Strangely, Captain Riggs survived, but he lost his crew that night — not to mention his eternal soul. An inhuman master now rules the captain. To ensure his loyalty, it placed the black spot on his left hand and returned him to the world of men, there to perform his master’s grim bidding.

## THE BEST LAID PLANS OF EXTRADIMENSIONAL INVADERS

No one in this age of humanity's power believed that creatures from another reality watched this world keenly and closely. They lusted, envied, and desired what they saw. And in their avarice, they built a vessel with only one purpose—to punch a hole into the world of Lloegy, and slip in enough arcane equipment to construct a great portal from where invasion could begin. The portal would not be constructed on dry land where men could easily see and thwart it. Instead, it would be built at the bottom of the ocean. And from there, the doom of this age would begin.

The neh-thalggu known as the Engineer came to Lloegy as part of this dread errand. It travelled with a small crew tasked to create a foothold for invasion by countless more of its alien, merciless ilk. But perhaps the gods do care for mortal men, for the neh-thalggu miscalculated, and their ship materialized within the solid stone of a seamount rather than in open waters.

The alien ship shuddered and wrecked. The crash instantly killed all but one of the brain collector crew. The vessel would never travel again. It would seem the world was saved not by heroic deeds, but by sheer dumb luck. Or perhaps it is simply that everything—even otherworldly magic and mechanisms—runs afoul of the hidden shoals of the Razor Coast.

### NEEDS AS BLACK AS HELL

The alien vessel's sole survivor was the only crewmember who could repair the ship and restore its weird machinery to functionality. Certain the ship was beyond repair, the Engineer could still accomplish its terrible mission, but it needed something to fix its bioarchanic devices—raw material. Living flesh and sentient brains; the more intelligent, the better!

The Engineer worked tirelessly towards its purpose, wasting nothing. Using the corpses of its fellow brain collectors, it constructed gruesome and murderous servants. Where it needed more flesh to complete the work, it captured the sea creatures that thrived among the warm and teeming waters of the seamount. The primitive nervous systems of sea life allowed for only the crudest of repairs. Using the still-functioning arcane technology of its craft, the Engineer created a nightmarish amalgam of sea-creature and neh-thalggu tissue—the vile slashers.

The Engineer also created the illusion that drew *The Flying Fortune* to its doom, and from that raid gained yet more servants and raw material with which to progress repairs. It replenished its own brain collection and even managed to create a new bioarchanic horror. It called this new creation the black leech, a control symbiote perfectly suited to enslaving human minds. It surgically implanted the black leech into the flesh of the captured Captain Riggs, leaving the telltale black spot upon his left hand at the point of incision.

The Engineer next gave Riggs a command: "BRING MORE!" Then it released the captain upon a makeshift raft with a few provisions and a small pouch of diamonds. A passing vessel rescued Riggs and carried him to Port Shaw. Using this wealth, Captain Riggs built a new ship and christened it *The Sealord's Blessing*. *The Blessing* now plies its trade between Port Shaw and more distant coasts. It advertises itself as a humble merchantman, but the truth is far more sinister.

This ship is a passage of the damned. It is a vessel with only one purpose—to fulfill the Engineer's needs. And those needs are black as Hell.



## ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

This is an adventure for four to six characters of 5th level characters compatible with the *Swords & Wizardry* rules.

It is a tale told in four parts, and should provide sufficient adventure for multiple sessions. Though intended for use with *Razor Coast*, this excursion is set on an indeterminate point upon the high seas, so it could take place almost anywhere in the fantasy world of your choosing.

*The Black Spot* is an adventure of exploration and mystery. While traveling with Captain Riggs, the characters discover the wrecked ruin of *The Flying Fortune* and a hoard of gold. Using the allure of this tantalizing treasure, Captain Riggs convinces the characters to accompany him aboard *Fortune* to lay claim to its wealth. Once onboard, the Captain tries to steer the party towards his waiting master; however, characters can unmask his deception by piecing together the clues at hand. They may even deduce Riggs's true purpose. If not, Riggs leads the characters deeper into the bowels of *The Flying Fortune's* shattered hulk until they reach the deck linking the wrecked ship to the Engineer's other-dimensional craft.

## STARTING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure presumes that for some reason, the characters must travel by ship and then choose *The Sealord's Blessing*. Alternatively, the Referee might simply replace the *Blessing* with whichever ship they choose and have it captained by Riggs. Several possible hooks are provided below.

Once aboard and traveling, downplay the journey's beginning. This is just another voyage. At first, there is nothing remarkable about this cruise. Then, the strangeness mounts—odd fires at sea, a wrecked ship, an over-eager captain who is clearly lying about this ship, the missing corpses, signs of vicious attack, and a passage down into darkness. Here are several hooks that could be used to bring the characters aboard *The Sealord's Blessing* at the start of the adventure.

# HOOKS

The characters' time aboard *The Sealord's Blessing* may begin as a business relationship. Experienced characters gain working passage as the ship's security contingent, providing protection against buccaneers and sea beasts. Characters new to the Razor Sea and the *Blessing* may book passage aboard the vessel on their initial journey to Port Shaw. The characters must think themselves fortunate indeed to find a captain so worried about security that he would grant them free passage, board, and modest pay in exchange for a promise to help defend the ship.

Seasoned adventurers out of Port Shaw may book passage aboard the ship en route to perform another mission, perhaps espionage against the Pirate Confederacy or Armada. Maybe they acquired a treasure map to Garr Bloodbane's gold, and luck has it that the *Blessing's* course passes near their intended goal. What good fortune to find a captain so agreeable that he alters his ship's course to deliver them to the isle.

Perhaps this journey is merely a hop to another outpost or village to acquire new wares or seek employment in another locale. *The Sealord's Blessing* trades throughout the Razor Sea. How lucky the characters are to find such inexpensive berths aboard this merchant vessel! The captain seems unusually eager to take on adventurers. Could he be a retired adventurer himself, sympathetic to the wandering life?

Captain Riggs might hire the characters as guards for his merchant activities on and off shore. He weaves a tale of backstabbing trade partners, increasing piracy, and dangerous waters as justification for hiring the characters in this capacity. Without them, his ship is in danger as he conducts business throughout the Razor. The characters are perfect for this duty and will be handsomely paid at journey's end.

# CLUES AND RUMORS

Cautious characters may seek information about the *Blessing* before voyaging aboard her. There is little to give a clue as to its awful purpose. *The Sealord's Blessing* also plies its trade without incident to reinforce its cover. Not every journey of the *Blessing* involves visiting the wreck of the *Fortune*. The brain collector's mission is slow, and there is time to conduct normal voyages to avoid attracting too much attention.

This journey will be the captain's third return to the wreck of *The Flying Fortune* since he received the spot. He is careful to completely change out his crew between each such journey so that no one aboard has ever seen the strange scenario that allows the captain to deliver bodies to the brain collector. Though the captain is a well-respected veteran of the sea, no crewmember has served aboard his ship for more than a few months. None of the rest of the crew is a party to this conspiracy.

# CLUES

The most suspicious thing about the *Blessing* is the captain himself. Captain Riggs has not adapted well to alien mind control. He is a moody ship's master and frequently flies into a fury at the gentlest of slights. His rages do not persist, however, and in a few moments he regains his senses. Then he inevitably sinks into one of his deep depressions and inescapable bouts of melancholy. He sits alone most nights in his cabin drinking large volumes of wine and watered whiskey. He gains a few passing moments of freedom from the relentless symbiote's control in the depths of drunkenness. At these times, all he can do is weep. Such is his sorrow and regret over what he has done and what he must yet do.

Captain Riggs does not wish to sacrifice his entire crew to the brain collector, nor does the brain collector need that many brains and bodies immediately. At this time, the aberration needs only as many as there are characters. The captain knows that the characters are adventurers and is fully aware that those who participate in so dangerous a profession arouse no suspicion when they go missing. In short, they are perfect for his master's needs.

Towards this end, when Captain Riggs first meets the characters he is overly accommodating. He agrees to let them travel free if they promise to serve as the ship's security or perform another duty onboard the ship. He is almost desperate to get them aboard his craft. The party may suspect that the Captain is unduly worried about pirate attack or perhaps hiding some other secret. It should not yet enter their darkest dreams what fate the captain truly plans for them.

# RUMORS

Save for the idiosyncrasies mentioned above, Captain Riggs is a competent enough captain. *The Sealord's Blessing* is a fine vessel, shipshape and lovingly lorded. Captain Riggs has an impeccable reputation about the local ports as a fair and even-handed ship's master (which might arouse some suspicion when his behaviors mentioned above are observed at sea). Captain Riggs and *The Sealord's Blessing* are so nearly synonymous in these waters that few recall that he once commanded *The Flying Fortune*.

If the characters choose to investigate the captain before taking passage aboard his ship or ask questions of the crew or fellow passengers while aboard, they may gather some useful information:

## 1d100 Information

01-65 Captain Riggs is a fine and veteran captain with a good reputation.

66-94 A few dockworkers whisper darkly that the captain is troubled by some unknown affliction. Whatever it is, no one is certain of its nature or true source.

95-00 Captain Riggs is known to have once captained a ship called *The Flying Fortune*. The ship mysteriously disappeared under unknown circumstances, and the captain alone survived. Since that tragedy, Captain Riggs has been a ghost of his former self.

# THE REAL "BLACK SPOT"

The black spot has its origin largely in literature rather than reality. Robert Louis Stevenson invented it for his seminal pirate novel *Treasure Island* (published as a book in 1883) as the symbol of a man marked for death by pirates.

However, some suggest Stevenson based the black spot on the historical practice of Caribbean pirates giving the ace of spades to a traitor or informer. Since the card has only one black spot on it, it was meant to imply that the traitor was put "on the spot."

# PART ONE: SHADOWS UPON A MOONLESS SEA

## SYNOPSIS

The first part encompasses the characters' voyage on *The Sealord's Blessing* en route to *The Flying Fortune*. This journey aboard the ship proves mostly uneventful. With little direct danger, you may wish to skip over this prologue and get quickly to the "meat" of this adventure. However, if your characters desire more roleplay or want to get to the bottom of the captain's melancholy, this is the chance to indulge them.

## SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

If the characters wish to talk to the crew, there are a few colorful characters for them to meet aboard the *Blessing*.

See below for details.

### FIRST MATE BARTON "DANDY" HANDERLY

The first mate is the longest-serving member of the captain's crew, which is not saying much. He has served just a few months aboard the *Blessing*. He is a genuinely friendly man by nature, particularly to any female members of the party. Though the captain barks and snaps at Handerly often, the first mate is the only other man aboard ship that Captain Riggs ever trusts with the wheel.

Mister Handerly has a peculiar fascination with fine clothes. He is always smartly dressed. Sailing is dirty work, and yet somehow Handerly is always finely attired and immaculately appointed. One of the reasons for this is that Handerly actually knows a tiny bit of magic. Before he became a sailor, he apprenticed under a wizard. Though he has no real talent for magic he did learn a couple of magical means of making sure his clothes are always neat and in fine shape. He is careful to never cast a spell in sight of the crew for fear of inflaming their superstitions.

**Barton Handerly (Ftr4):** HP 28; AC 6 [13]; **Atk** long sword (1d8) or dagger (1d4) or heavy crossbow (1d6+1); **Move** 9; **Save** 11; **AL** L; **CL/XP** 4/120; **Special:** none.

**Equipment:** leather armor, shield, long sword, dagger, heavy crossbow, 20 bolts, 2 *potions of healing*, silver holy symbol (of Quell, the Sea Lord), 24 gp

### GUSTAV "GLOOMY GUS" EIDESPRECHER, ABLE SEAMAN

At first glance, Gustav must seem to be the unhappiest member of the crew. Gustav is a walking encyclopedia of portents and omens — all of them bad. Still, if one gets past his gloomy disposition, Gustav is a competent sailor and a stalwart friend to those to whom he takes a shine. Though relatively new to the *Blessing*, Gustav has been a sailor since he was a little boy more than 40 years ago!

Gustav is a thick, rough, balding man with enormous red mutton chop sideburns and a moustache. He always wears green and considers it a lucky color. If asked why, he matter-of-factly replies that it is the same color as the land. Though the superstition may sound ridiculous, in his 40 years at sea he shipwrecked twice and obviously survived both times.

**Gustav "Gloomy Gus" Eidesprecher:** HP 4; AC 9 [10]; **Atk** dagger (1d4); **Save** 18; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 1/15;

**Special:** none.

**Equipment:** dagger, snuff box (shaped like a clam), 16 gp.

### CARLTON "PREACH" RASKERS, QUARTERMASTER

At first glance, "Preach" looks like the ship's resident parson. He dresses modestly and frequently quotes from the holy text of the sea god Quell, which he claims to have committed to memory. He always wears a humble, hand-carved wooden holy symbol. All these affectations only serve to obfuscate the fact that he is the most mercenary and amoral member of the crew.

"Preach" is a walking, talking black market. He does his shipboard job competently enough. The *Blessing* is well supplied and its crew well fed. However, "Preach" supplements his income by smuggling illegal goods from one port to the next and by selling vices to the crew. He keeps about a quarter of the *Blessing's* complement well supplied with dragonsmoke.

If the characters try to use his services, "Preach" has a few potions and poisons he is willing to sell. He has six doses of sleep poison (save or fall unconscious for 2d4 hours; save negates) he is only too happy to relinquish for 80 gp a dose. He will not say exactly where it came from other than to claim that Quell's bounty provides.

**Carlton "Preach" Raskers, Ship's Quartermaster (Thf3):** HP 9; AC 9 [10]; **Atk** short sword (1d6) or dagger (1d4); **Save** 13; **AL** C; **CL/XP** 3/60; **Special:** back stab (x2), +2 save vs. traps, thieving skills.

**Thieving Skills:** Climb 87%, Traps/Tasks 25%, Hear 4 in 6, Hide 20%, Silent 30%, Locks 20.

**Equipment:** leather armor, short sword, 4 vials of sleep poison, thieves' tools.

### PUNAWAI, ABLE SEAMAN

The first thing that strikes observers about Punawai is that he is big and blue. His fingers are webbed, and his eyes protruding and fishlike. His skin is lightly scaled and covered in jagged tribal iconography, the ink of the tattoos such a deep blue they appear to run black. He is strong and muscular, and wears little save for tattered pantaloons and a fine sharkskin hide shirt adorned with teeth, spines, and barbs from a dozen different types of sea beasts.

Punawai is an undine, an outcast Tulita whose human blood mingles with the children of the sea. By all appearances, he is a savage. His tribe expelled him for no crime other than his heritage. The "more civilized peoples" of the Razor treat him like a freak show escapee. He should be a monster, but Punawai is anything but. He is a stoic observer of the world, an old soul who hears the whispering wisdom of the sea with every wave. Only in battle, when the frenzy of the fight swirls all about him, does Punawai let go and become the monster he appears.

Punawai has little time for those who judge him because of his blood. If they annoy him greatly, he pushes the offenders overboard.

**Punawai (Ftr2):** HP 15; AC 6[13]; **Atk** +1 *war club* (1d6+2) or throwing axe (1d6+1); **Move** 12 (swim 9); **Save** 13; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 2/30; **Special:** darkvision 60 ft., resist cold (+1 saves vs. cold).

**Equipment:** +1 *war club*, 3 throwing axes, 3 gp, lucky seashell

**Notes:** Punawai is a straightforward combatant. He attacks with his war club until his foes are smashed. He is a reckless warrior, and does not stop fighting until he is dead or victorious.

# ENCOUNTERS

## IN SEARCH OF THE *FLYING FORTUNE*

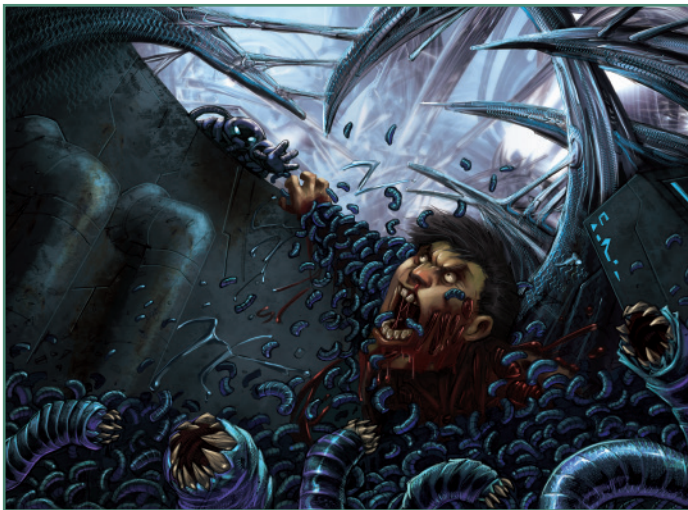
### BACKGROUND

The characters arrive on the docks of Port Shaw in preparation for their voyage aboard *The Sealord's Blessing*. Captain Riggs is not available to greet them, but the other members of the crew — most notably First Mate Barton Handerly — are present to welcome them aboard and address the necessities: showing them to their quarters, introducing them to life aboard ship, and other preliminary matters. After this brief indoctrination, the ship is prepared for the high seas.

### ACTION

The captain is drunk, as described below, but if the party does nothing in response to being told that they are greeted by the first mate, then the ship will depart on schedule, with Barton Handerly at the wheel, and the captain privately drinking away the vestiges of his humanity:

*The Sealord's Blessing* leaves port with the dawn tide. A fair breeze fills the mainsail and soon land is but a memory lost in the morning mist. First Mate Barton Handerly has the wheel but, with so constant a wind, finds little to do but make sure the morning shift does not slack their duties. A handsome sailor with a friendly smile — though perhaps a little overdressed in his fine burgundy waistcoat — Handerly seems a personable sort. He even takes a moment to instruct some of the younger sailors on how to use the gunwales and rigging to maneuver the ship's deck until they get their sea legs. "It's a fine day for sailing! The wind is good and steady. If this holds we'll shave a day off our journey easy," he says with a laugh. The journey has begun...



### DEVELOPMENT

*The Sealord's Blessing* is now on course for *The Flying Fortune*. The first leg of the journey is uneventful, as the characters get their bearings aboard the ship. During this portion of the journey, the characters are free to interact with the ship's crew, as Captain Riggs remains in his quarters and laments the actions he is about to undertake. To numb his pain, Captain Riggs turns to his old friend, a nonjudgmental bottle of alcohol.

He keeps his cabin door locked and refuses to leave his quarters. Unlocking the cabin is an unwanted intrusion that elicits a fiery reaction from the melancholy captain. He rants and raves for several minutes about the sanctity of privacy before he finally calms down. Once he does, Captain Riggs profusely apologizes for his outburst and returns to his quarters where he remains until midday.

When midday arrives, the Referee may read or paraphrase the following.

Captain Riggs emerges from his cabin at midday. He is a grim man dressed in a faded captain's jacket and heavy duelist's gloves with a rapier at his side. Despite the fair weather, he wears not even the hint of a smile. "Report, Handerly!" growls the captain.

"The cruise goes well, sir. We couldn't pray to the Sea Lord for better weather. A pity you missed the morning launch. I've rarely seen the sea so calm and..."

"Save your poetry for the whores back in port, Handerly!" the Captain snaps. "The Razor is no place to let your guard down, and we're a long way from home yet."

The first officer only nods. The Captain's mood seems to soften a bit. "Anyway," he continues, "you did a fine job getting us out of port. I'll take the helm for a while, Mister Handerly. You can relieve me in the evening."

The captain lets out a loud bark to his crew. "Trim the foresail to port, men! Let's see how much open water we can cover while the wind lasts!"

Soon, under the captain's expert hand, the *Blessing* splits the waves like an arrow through the wind. A fine salt spray mists over the forward decks, and sailors scamper to and fro to obey the captain's bellowed commands.

### WRAP-UP

Characters approaching Captain Riggs encounter a moody man whose demeanor changes at the drop of a hat. One minute, he is honest and forthcoming, and the next evasive and confrontational. He speaks in vague generalities and avoids answering questions, especially when they delve into sore topics such as *The Flying Fortune's* fate. If the characters press Captain Riggs about such matters, he feigns ignorance.

## FIRES IN THE FOG

Referees should run this encounter when they are ready to end the first part of the adventure.

### SYNOPSIS

*The Sealord's Blessing* approaches *The Flying Fortune's* wreckage. It is important to remember that Captain Riggs is aware of what is about to transpire, but he is also an unwilling participant. Captain Riggs is not feigning ignorance; he just wants to forget.



## ABOUT *THE SEALORD'S BLESSING*

*The Sealord's Blessing* is a 90-foot-long caravel with two masts and a complement of 45-plus sailors. The main sail is large and square. The mizzen is triangular (or lateen). Further, a foresail juts from the ship's bow off an angled foremast (or bowsprit as it is sometimes called). It is a fast ship, hampered only by a large hold, designed to carry as much cargo as possible for a vessel of this size. With an empty hold, her draft rides shallow and could theoretically navigate many rivers, though it has never been used for this purpose.

It has one weapon, a ballista, mounted on the quarterdeck near the rear of the ship. The ballista is intended as a defensive weapon and can fire flaming bolts designed to set the rigging of pursuers alight long enough for this fleet ship to escape. Notably, the custom-made ballista bolts have trident points.

The most unusual feature of the craft is its many distinctive adornments from which the ship draws its name. The ship is covered in carvings and holy etchings dedicated to Quell, God of the Seas. It is almost as if the ship's builder believed it would be less prone to mishap if every flat surface honored the Sea Lord.

The ship's figurehead is a nude mermaid reaching out as if to make an offering to the sea. The door to the captain's cabin is covered with a scene of a great bearded merman spearing a kraken that has its tentacles tangled in the ironwork hinges. The deck planks are studded with graven shells bearing reverent sea-elven inscriptions singing the praises of the King Beneath the Waves. Dolphins and tritons frolic along the length of the ship's gunwales. Even the humble belaying pins are adorned with stylized images of the mighty Sea Lord.

### ACTION

Midnight passes uneventfully on *The Sealord's Blessing*, but shortly thereafter, the ship's watch notices something strange in the distance. The Referee may read or paraphrase the following.

It is already after midnight when a thick fog rolls in and quickly shrouds the ship in mist. Visibility drops to nothing. Small gusts of wind stir and roil the mist and bring with them a slight chill unusual for these warm, tropical waters.

And then the peace and quiet of the ship shatters.

The sentry calls out. "Fire! Fire on the starboard bow!" The call is loud enough to awaken even the deepest sleeper.

### DEVELOPMENT

The sentry's alarm rouses the crew and most likely the characters too. It takes a sleeping characters a few rounds to make it on deck amid the confusion. The party can take precautions during the commotion or run headlong into the fray. Once up top, it quickly becomes apparent that there is no fire and that the sentry is actually calling out about a fire on the water some distance away. The Referee can read or paraphrase the following to describe the scene.

Sailors mill about topside, uncertain of what needs to be done. The captain is quickly on deck as well, still buttoning his faded jacket as he moves to see the cause of this alarm.

"Fire?! Where? I see no flame!" demands the Captain.

"Not on the ship, sir. Off the starboard bow!" explains the sailor.

"What? Where?" says the surprised Captain Riggs.

The sailor points emphatically. The captain opens his spyglass, a finely made item adorned with a stylized golden eagle, and scans the horizon.

"I see nothing," he pronounces.

"It was there, Captain. I swear it! A fire in the mist, clear as morning," exclaims the agitated sentry.

"Calm down, my lad. I believe you. Well, whatever it was, it appears to be gone now..."

### THE FLYING FORTUNE'S APPEARANCE

At this point, characters have a 20% chance to spot the faint outline of the mist-shrouded Fortune stranded atop a reef some distance away. At this range, they can make out few details — it's a ship sitting high above the waterline, unmoving in the mist. If no one sees *The Flying Fortune*, then Captain Riggs claims to see it and points out the wreck. (Captain Riggs does not need to roll; he knows it's there.)

As *The Sealord's Blessing* moves in for a closer look, observers notice that the ship sits high on its the waterline, as if it ran aground against a jutting object. Signal lanterns and calls offering aid elicit no response from the wreck. No nameplate graces its bow. After some debate among the crew and perhaps the characters, Captain Riggs announces that he wants to draw alongside the ship to investigate the strange nameless ship further. The Referee may read or paraphrase the following.

Captain Riggs assesses the situation and announces his intended course of action. "Hmmm ... there may be survivors aboard. We should investigate. This is not part of the usual duty, men, so I'll take volunteers. The volunteers will split any salvage we find. I'll lead the party personally.

"I'll not lie. This could be dangerous. Who knows what you'll find aboard a wrecked ship here in the Razor? Mister Handerly, you'll have command while I'm gone. So, who will join me, lads?"

The sailors look down at their shoes. An old salt everyone calls Gloomy Gus mutters something about bad omens. It seems that tonight the Captain is desperately short on volunteers...

Hopefully the mention of both a heroic rescue and the allure of treasure prompt the characters to eagerly volunteer for the mission. Certainly none of the superstitious sailors step forward. More cautious adventurers may try to convince the captain to wait until morning. Captain Riggs is hesitant to wait and makes a case for immediate action. He pleads that the morning tide may drag the ship beneath the surface, and any survivors will need immediate assistance. If these arguments fail to sway the characters, he even resorts to subtly questioning their courage.

## WRAP UP

The captain does not board the wreck alone. Ultimately, if the characters stand their ground and demand the delay, he acquiesces. He lets out a heavy sigh and acts as if he came around to their line of thinking. He invents a logical explanation for inaction and grudgingly waits. By morning, the fog grows thicker and the ship — once visible as a shadow — fades into utter obscurity. The overcast day appears to be doing little to burn off the fog, and it even begins to sprinkle a soft rain. At this juncture, Captain Riggs grows impatient and once again pleads his case for taking action. If the characters agreed to act as the ship's security contingent, Captain Riggs appeals to their sense of honor and duty to defend their employer against danger — and he is heading over! Captain Riggs refuses to accept no for an answer, and he pulls out all stops to convince the characters to accompany him on a small dinghy and head out into the mist towards the shadowy wreck. Adventure waits!

## THE CAPTAIN'S TREACHERY

This adventure turns on the characters exploring the wreck with an unwilling traitor in their midst. Always keep in mind that the captain is trying to lure them to their doom at the hands of the Engineer. The captain's black spot is not visible — he always wears gloves. The Captain accompanies the characters through much of the ship, so the following encounter actually unfolds across the course of exploring *The Flying Fortune's* wreckage.

### SET UP

At first, Captain Riggs tries to take command and lead the expedition to board the *Fortune*. He offers them equal shares of the salvage. Experienced sailors find the Captain's offer rather odd. Traditionally, the Captain gets at least a double share of any salvage recovered by his vessel. If the characters question the Captain's generosity, he concocts an explanation for his unusual offer by claiming that once they disembark from *The Sealord's Blessing*, they are all equals.

As a rule, the Captain tries to deflect concern away from himself at every turn. He issues dire warnings to be prepared for anything, and implores the characters to keep their wits at all times. Captain Riggs pretends to be the characters' ally as he lures them to their deaths or to enslavement at the hands of his alien master.

### BACKGROUND

Riggs knows nothing of the current dangers aboard *The Flying Fortune*. He knows nothing about the gryphs who've made the crow's nest their roost, or the rotting upper deck. And he certainly does not know that a sailor named Titus trapped himself in the smuggler's hold that fateful day, long ago.

### ACTION

Captain Riggs desires to keep the actual search of *The Flying Fortune* to a minimum and get down to the lower hold as soon as possible. He is afraid that any amount of time spent searching the ship will lead to his ruse coming undone. He wants to get his victims onto the brain collector's craft, so they can be captured and processed.

Wary or suspicious characters who carefully watch the Captain may get the feeling something is amiss. They may wonder why the Captain seems very familiar with the ship, despite his words about exploring this "strange vessel." When called out on this discrepancy, the Captain lies by claiming that his first command was aboard a ship almost identical to this one. This is a blatant lie.

The captain is under alien mind control, but he is no fool. He realizes that the characters are dangerous, and would rather not face them all at once. Given the chance, he tries to arrange situations where the characters can be taken on one or two at a time. In his mind, the best solution would be to not face them at all and to let the Engineer dispose of them.

## DEVELOPMENT

### *A Time to Poison*

The brain collector also provided the Captain with a very unusual poison that could come in handy. This powerful paralytic shuts down the body while leaving the mind active and undamaged. Captain Riggs has coated his blade with this poison. Ideally, the Captain waits until the characters are fighting either the strange weeds in **Area P-2** or the vile slashers in the Engineer's craft. While the characters are absorbed with battle, he stabs his victim with his poisoned blade.

### *Liar, Liar*

Of course, there are numerous opportunities for the characters to realize that the Captain is lying to them. First, there are handkerchiefs monogrammed with the captain's initials within the captain's quarters (**Area 4**). He dismisses such evidence as a coincidence, but if the characters become belligerent or demand he disarm, he attacks instead.

Second, the characters can confront Captain Riggs if they find the smuggler's hold (**Area 19**) and discover Titus' journal that explicitly names the captain as the master of *The Flying Fortune*. Once again, Captain Riggs attacks once his story falls apart.

Third, the captain is not a perfect liar. He sometimes tells the characters a bald-faced, direct lie. They may become suspicious about his changing stories, or even believe that the captain is under an enchantment of some sort, although the enchantment blocks him from discussing this fact. In fact, the captain does nothing to encourage the suspicion that an alien mind controls him.

If the characters detect the mental control (the black leech, for example, is magical) and challenge him on these matters, he attacks. Similarly, attempts to free him from the brain collector's mental control — for example, by casting remove curse on him, see **Area C-8** for more detail — provoke Captain Riggs to attack.

If the Captain falls below 0 hit points, the black leech crawls out of his left hand, leaving behind a trail of black mucus and coagulated blood. Once the black leech leaves his body, Riggs is no longer under the Engineer's control. Before he dies, Captain Riggs immediately breaks into tears. He is almost mad from the terrible things he was forced to do and the horrors that he witnessed. He begs the characters to slay him and see that he gets a proper burial far away from this cursed place.

He can relate a few pieces of useful information before expiring. He shares the story of *The Flying Fortune* and how he came to be the Engineer's slave. He can also draw a crude sketch of the ship's layout. He knows that the brain collector is a bizarre and powerful abomination, though he is unsure of what it is. He also knows that the Engineer can cast convincing illusions. He has seen the vile slashers in action and knows how vicious they can be.

## EDITOR'S NOTE: WHAT ABOUT MAGIC?

### *Thought-Detection Magic*

Reading Captain Riggs's mind will not differentiate the alien controller's voice from Riggs's own thoughts, but depending on what the outside circumstances are, the mind-reader might hear a monologue in which the thoughts jump around a lot. The important thing is that the mind-reader will not hear a voice giving orders to Riggs, he will hear Riggs thinking the orders himself, as if they stem from Riggs's own mind. The potential clue is that Riggs could appear to be changing his mind a lot, and without any reason behind it. His thoughts will seem to be disjointed and arbitrary if the alien mind-control is affecting him at the time.

Deciphering the Engineer's "voice" from the captain's own thoughts is an impossible task.

### *Breaking Enchantments*

The black leech implanted in the captain's brain is the Engineer's masterpiece of bioarchaic mind control, inserted into his brain during a long and painful surgical procedure.

A remove curse spell has a 2% chance per caster level of killing the leech and severing the link between Captain Riggs' mind and the Engineer. Dispel magic and an anti-magic field stop the leech from receiving any of the Engineer's new commands, but these spells do not expel the leech, nor do they stop it from forcing the captain to obey those commands it already passed on to him.

**Captain Colthyn Riggs, Captain of *The Sealord's Blessing* (Thf6):** HD 6; HP 22 (6 current); AC 4 [15]; Atk +1 rapier (1d6+2 plus poison); Move 12; Save 8; AL C; CL/XP 6/400; **Special:** back stab (x3), black leech implant (+2 bonus to saves, immune to ESP and charm-related spells), +2 save vs. traps, thieving skills.

**Thieving Skills:** Climb 90%, Traps/Tasks 40%, Hear 4 in 6, Hide 35%, Silent 45%, Locks 35%.

**Equipment:** +1 leather armor, +1 rapier (named *Alessandra*), 2 potions of healing, ring of protection +2, two doses of neh-thalggu poison (save or paralysis for 2d4 hours; save avoids), bull's-eye lantern, spyglass (adorned with a golden eagle), thieves' tools, 22 gp, 1 diamond worth 400 gp.

Before emerging upon the deck of his ship to see the fire in the mist, the captain poisoned his rapier with the Engineer's toxin. The captain is a competent backstabber, and with his poisoned blade he believes he has a good chance of taking down an enemy with a sharp stroke.

Therefore, his preferred method of dealing with the party is to divide them, ambush a single character, and then drag the still-living victim down the hole to his master. If for any reason he is forced into a stand up fight, he strikes once and then flees, hoping to lure his pursuers down into the alien craft. He willingly engages in protracted battle only within the confines of the alien vessel. Remember that the captain's mind is not his own. The Engineer controls the captain, and would gladly sacrifice this servant to achieve its own ends.

### WRAP UP

If the characters are captured and processed, Captain Riggs returns to *The Sealord's Blessing* alone and in a panic. He spins wild stories of sea monsters (describing the monsters as being shark-men) and then orders the ship to flee. At the next few ports, he'll rotate out the crew. Once he has a fresh batch, he takes on new passengers and repeats the deadly ruse.

## HELP FROM THE SHIP?

It is possible that the characters, especially if they've been beaten back or had a party member captured, return to *The Sealord's Blessing* without Captain Riggs. Run this encounter with Barton Handerly in that eventuality.

### ACTION

First Mate Barton Handerly is suspicious but if persuaded (either through an impassioned plea or an outright lie) he may agree to send a party to accompany the characters back to the ship. He is particularly susceptible to pleas to aid the captain.

If persuaded, Mister Handerly handpicks a small contingent of six of the "stouter lads" led by Punawai (the undead warrior) to aid the party. These armed sailors accompany the adventurers into battle. Though brave, these sailors are not fanatics. If half of these sailors fall, the rest flee for their lives. First Mate Handerly refuses to go himself, unless magically compelled. No coward, but a man of responsibility, he was ordered to stay with the ship and he intends to follow that order. If the characters compel Handerly, he proves a competent enough combatant.

**Sailors (Ftr2) (6):** HD 2; HP 12 each; AC 7 [12]; Atk short sword (1d6) or short bow x2 (1d6); Move 12; Save 13; AL N; CL/XP 2/30; **Special:** none.

**Equipment:** leather armor, shield, short sword, short bow, 20 arrows.

# PART TWO:

## THE FLYING FORTUNE

This part covers the *Fortune* herself and is designed to be both a mystery to determine *The Flying Fortune's* fate and a scene of horror as it becomes all too evident that something monstrous happened aboard this ship. *The Flying Fortune* is devoid of much real danger. Instead, this section of the adventure should focus on establishing an eerie mood and foreshadowing the true horrors to come.

As the party explores the wreck of *The Flying Fortune*, play this up. Try to keep the players on edge. Doors squeak loudly when opened. Decks creak and bend. When a character reaches to investigate something a small crab leaps out and scuttles away. These small starts presage the true horrors that lurk in the lower hold and even further below.

## PEARLS OF THE SEAMOUNT

This sea-covered mount has no name amongst the terrestrial folk, but tribes of locathah once named the mount Zarna Vestria, which roughly translates to the Trident of the Sea King. The Trident is an accurate name, for the mount has not one peak but three, and together they form a dangerous navigational hazard.

Though dangerous to ships, sea life thrives here. Coral festoons the mountain slopes — stag horn, brain, and pillar — forming an atoll, a great ring that circles the peak and makes navigation even more treacherous. Fish teem in the millions — a riot of color and diversity schooling and shoaling all about the crusted seamount.

Rays, eels, squids, octopi, shrimp, crabs and mollusks of all sorts are also common sights amongst the reefs. Native to the Trident is a great population of blue clawless spiny lobsters. Almost unknown elsewhere, they infest the slopes of the mount. These lobsters are delicious and would fetch a high price in port (5 gp per lobster). But the true wealth of the Trident is not in lobster meat. Instead, at the base of the seamount lives a population of ancient giant oysters. Within their shells lie 30 of the finest black pearls in all the Razor Sea. These especially fine specimens are worth 300 gp each.

Alas, harvesting the pearls is dangerous indeed. The venerable oysters themselves are no threat, however, another common resident of the Trident is the ravenous **blood snapper**. These small, cantankerous fish congregate in vast swarms. Their preferred prey is other sea life, of course, but they also have grown accustomed to devouring sea birds that sometimes perch when the mount's peak is exposed. As a result, they have learned that when something falls in the water, it means food. Thus, anyone diving into the water has a 25% of attracting 1d6 swarms of these beasts.

**Blood Snapper School (1d6):** HD 4; HP 18 each; AC 7 [12]; Atk swarm (1d6); Move 0 (swim 24); Save 13; AL N; CL/XP 4/120; **Special:** none. See the **Appendix** for more details.

The characters have, in this adventure, no reason to pursue this trove or even a hint of its existence. A pearl diving expedition braving blood snappers, the Kane-moni (see below) and other aquatic terrors could make a fine side quest for Referees inclined to expand upon it.

### OPTIONAL ENCOUNTER:

## LORD OF THE MOUNT

### BACKGROUND

The largest hunter on the submerged mount is a massive sea predator that appears in a small number of Tulita legends as the **Kane-moni** (literally the “Man Swallower”). The locathah of the Coral Kingdom named it the Aranalima (the “King Snapper”). Whatever the preferred name, this creature is a massive predator greater than 30 feet long and weighing almost 4 tons.

This legendary fish is a great bony monster with a blunt head, a snapping jaw and tough armored scales as strong as plate mail. The beast is utterly fearless and attacks anything smaller than itself without hesitation. The armor of its massive ram-plate of a skull is covered with scars from the countless prey that have met their end in its maw.

### SETUP

During the day, the Lord of the Mount descends into the depths and haunts the lower reaches of the sea mount feeding on eel and squid. At night when the moon shines, it emerges from the depths to feed on the fish that swarm in the shallows. It does not purposefully seek out surface dwellers to consume, but it's not picky. Anything in the path of this eating machine is fair game.

### ACTION

If the characters row directly to the wreck of *The Flying Fortune* and never enter the water, it is unlikely they attract the attention of this prehistoric predator. However, an ill-fated path might send their boat directly into the side of the creature as it surfaces to feed. In that event, it immediately attacks the presumptuous offender. Alternately, the characters may spot it approaching slightly off a direct collision course. If they do nothing,

it simply swims past, content to eat what flows into its mouth, though it comes within a few feet of their boat. However, what party traveling in a dinghy at night and faced with a monstrous fish on a near collision course simply does nothing? The Kane-moni attacks anyone who attacks it first.

**Kane-moni:** HD 10; HP 52; AC 0 [19]; Atk bite (2d8+2); Move 0 (swim 12); Save 5; AL N; CL/XP 12/2,000; **Special:** swallow whole. See the **Appendix** for more details.

### DEVELOPMENT

There is only a 25% chance to encounter the giant fish over the course of the entire adventure, and if it is encountered, there is a 25% chance that it is hungry enough to have any immediate interest in the characters as food.

However, once the giant predator has spotted a potential food source, it will lurk nearby for 1d3 days, looking for an opportunity and getting hungrier. On each of those 1d3 days, it has a 1in6 chance of getting the urge for a snack.

If all of these die rolls result in no encounter, that's fine. During the period of time when the fish is lurking, if it spots what it considers to be (in its fish brain) a significant weakness in its prey, it will attack regardless of the die rolls.

# The Flying Fortune

1 square - 10 feet

## Level 1: Upper Decks



## Level 2: Amidships



## Level 3: Lower Holds



# THE SEAMOUNT

*The Flying Fortune* sits atop the tip of a seamount in the open waters. As the characters approach the wreck, the Referee may read or paraphrase the following. This description assumes that the characters approach at night. If the characters approach by day or have darkvision, Referees should modify the description to indicate there appear to be holes in the hull below the waterline. See **Area 20**, below, for additional information on this underwater way to enter and leave the ship.

When ready to describe the Seamount and *The Flying Fortune*, Referees may read or paraphrase the following:

The sea is calm and black, like a great dark mirror. All around, a dense fog swirls. Every stroke of the paddle stirs the mist, creating small wisps and eddies that tremble and die away in the all-enshrouding bank. Pushing through, the ship soon comes into view.

It's a brig by the look of it, two hundred feet long at least, and in rough shape. The sails are so tattered and torn as to be scarcely there. The rigging is frayed and rotten. The main mast still stands straight and tall, bearing a rugged crow's nest, but the mizzen has snapped and collapsed across the broken quarterdeck. The quarterdeck itself is obscured by the tangle of debris.

The summit of a great stone peak lifted the ship out of the water. Beneath it a seamount extends down into the black depths, almost as if some massive giant used the submerged mountaintop to impale the vessel.

As the dinghy comes close enough to board her, there are no signs of life. There are not even corpses; it is as if the entire crew simply vanished.

Upon the bow, this doomed ship's nameplate is conspicuously absent — whether removed by the whims of nature or the intentions of others remains to be seen. Rocky protrusions brace her sides offering access to the top deck.

## EFFECTS OF WIND AND WAVES

Age, rot, and water have taken their toll on *The Flying Fortune's* infrastructure. The ship's doors are all simple wooden doors stuck from swelling.

### 1. ENTRY POINT

Perched above the main deck in the crow's nest (**Area 3**), **4 gryphs** patrol for intruders or a meal. They have darkvision and keen eyes, and they likely spot intruders making their way onto the craft.

**Gryph (4): HD 2; HP 11, 10, 8, 6; AC 7 [12]; Atk 2 claws (grab), bite (1d6); Move 9 (fly 15); Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 3/60; Special:** darkvision 60 ft., grab, implant eggs. See the **Appendix** for more details.

### 2. MAIN DECK

The upper deck of *The Flying Fortune* is a shambles. Wind, rain, and salt corrosion have turned what was once a fine vessel into a debris-strewn wreck. Fallen and tangled rigging, splintered masts, broken beams, and rotten wood create a natural obstacle course. The entire deck is difficult to cross easily.

#### ACTION

There is some peril to moving about the deck. A portion of wooden planking on *The Flying Fortune's* main deck is rotted through. (This is marked by dotted lines on the map.) It creaks and strains if any character walks upon it. It only collapses, however, if two characters walk upon the weakened wood. Once it gives way, anyone standing on it falls through the equally rotten middle deck and slams into the hull of the lower hold (**Area 18**), taking 3d6 points of damage from the fall (save for half).

#### DEVELOPMENT

If any character falls through the rotten deck, the subsequent crash makes a tremendous amount of noise, alerting both the gryphs in the crow's nest and the jade bats within the lower passage (**Area P-3**). The gryphs eagerly attack, especially if the characters have been separated, wounded, or cast into disarray. On the other hand, the jade bats watch and record what they observe before reporting their findings to their master.

#### WRAP-UP

Keen observers can garner additional information among the mess. **No Danger of Sinking**

Characters moving about the decks can see that though the ship is in poor shape, it has not been submerged. The captain's voiced concerns about the ship being eventually submerged are unfounded. This wreck is stranded high and dry.

#### Nothing New

Characters should also realize quickly that this is not a recent shipwreck. This ship has been here at least a few years. The Trident is not exactly a common place to visit, but trade ships occasionally come near enough to see this phenomenon. Yet the blatantly obvious wreck has remained unexplored all this time. The answer to this enigma is actually quite simple: anyone who investigates this ship encounters its guardians — both above and below. So far, there have been no survivors.

#### A Great Battle was Fought Here

Characters may also discover that a savage battle took place here. There are crossbow bolt heads scattered about the debris. Wood shafts and feather fletching are largely rotted or blown away. There are a few broken blades and splintered spear shafts amongst the jumble as well.

## THE FLYING FORTUNE LEVEL I:

### UPPER DECKS

The easiest way to get up onto the deck of the ship is to climb the small seamount peak — the central point of the Trident — where it emerges. The seamount's protruding summit is easy to reach from a dinghy. The seamount with its gentle slope and many handholds has become a natural ladder onto the upper decks.

Thanks to the wind, it is also surprisingly dry and devoid of slick algae. As long as the climbers move carefully, they reach *The Flying Fortune*. Once atop the summit, they emerge on the upper deck at **Area 1**.

Suspicious characters may try to board the ship some other way. There is nothing to stop them; however, the two lesser seamount peaks are much steeper and do not reach all the way to the deck. The ship's hull is fragile in places and may not support the full weight of climbers. The easiest alternate way is to somehow tie a line to the back of the quarterdeck (**Area 5**) and climb up. Of course, magical methods, such as *fly* or *levitate*, are an option for some parties. However, delaying the characters boarding the *Fortune* only delays the adventure, so this task works best if Referees grant access readily.

### Down Below

The tarp which once covered the cargo hold is long gone. From there, characters can look down and see **Area 12**. Anyone investigating the mainmast notices claw marks and impaled spearheads sunk deep into the wood. A ruined ballista at **Area 5**, allows that character to deduce that the crew desperately fired a ballista bolt and pinned an enemy to the main mast with a single powerful blow. The pinned creature freed itself from the impalement and continued its brutal rampage. Whatever attacked this ship was monstrous.

## 2A. MIZZENMAST

This small stub of wood is all that remains of the ship's second sail. The bulk of the mast fell into the sea, partially crushing the railing of the quarterdeck, **Area 5**. If anyone bothers to closely examine the broken pole, they find that this mast was not cut down or collapsed from age, but was instead blasted apart by a lightning bolt. This was the Engineer's doing.

## 3. THE CROW'S NEST

A small family of **4 gryphs** roosts up in the crow's nest. These four-legged wicked avians resemble large black crows the size of eagles and have four legs instead of the usual two. They usually settle for fish, crabs, or whatever carrion the sea disgorges, but are particularly anxious to supplement their diet with the fresh, bleeding flesh of humanoids.

### SET UP

The crow's nest is a large wooden platform atop the main mast, surrounded by a wooden palisade. Two men could comfortably stand on this platform and keep watch over the ship and its surroundings. There used to be ladder up to the crow's nest, but it broke off some time ago and is nowhere to be seen.

Climbing up is therefore challenging without some sort of aid. The crow's nest is almost 60 feet off the deck.

### ACTION

Though they are only animals, the gryphs are cunning, and wait for the right moment to attack. They peek through breaks in the crow's nest fencing and remain perfectly still while spying on the characters. If the characters separate, fall through the floor, or otherwise make a disturbance while investigating the upper decks, the gryphs seize that moment and attack. These hungry predators are impatient. If the characters spend ten minutes on deck without triggering any of the preceding conditions, they attack anyway. The taste of man-flesh is just too delicious to resist.

The gryphs are ambush predators. However, once battle is joined they employ only one tactic: swoop, attach and implant. If reduced to 5 hit points or less, a gryph flees back to the nest. If the nest is then assaulted, they flee from the ship and the seamount.

## 4. CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

This massive compartment once served as the captain's private suite, the officer's dining room, and as weapon storage. At first glance, the large ransacked cabin seems empty of anything but broken furniture degraded by 7 years of exposure to the elements. There are signs of a great struggle everywhere — broken furniture, gouges in the wood, and stains of long-dried blood. There is a broken full-length mirror along with a busted sea chest and the tattered remains of what was once a fine wardrobe.

### ACTION

If the clothes are examined, there is still an intact set of monogrammed silk handkerchiefs. They are soiled and tattered in places, but the letters "C.R." are visibly embroidered on the handkerchiefs. Attentive characters may note that these are Captain Colthyn Riggs' initials. If confronted with this "evidence," the captain cocks an eyebrow and scoffs. The Referee may read or paraphrase the following:

"And what does that prove? C.R. are common enough initials. In fact, there is another sailor aboard the *Blessing* — Carlton Raskers — with the same initials. Christopher Robinson is no longer with the crew, alas. There was a fine sailor. He retired to Port Shaw. Perhaps he's missing his hankies..."

Scattered near the busted sea chest there is a pile of gold coins — 312 gp altogether. Whoever or whatever raided this ship was not interested in gold.

## 5. QUARTER DECK

The quarterdeck of *The Flying Fortune* was once the heart of both defending and controlling the ship. There were two ballistae mounted on swivels as well as the great wheel that turned the rudder. Now the wheel is simply gone, slashed off its mount and rolled into the sea. Both ballistae are ruined — one destroyed so completely it is virtually unrecognizable. The second is simply wrecked and points down toward the main mast, where the evidence of its last fired missile still resides.

There are signs of battle everywhere, but what is completely lacking is even a single corpse. Perhaps that is understandable. Years of exposure, the carrion feeders, the beating sun, and the caustic salt could have reduced it all to nothing. It is, however, eerie to realize that the characters stand in the very spot where at least a dozen men died, and there are no traces of it save for the occasional crossbow head and a few links of battered chainmail.

## 6. CREW'S MESS

The battle seems to have been largely over before it got to this compartment of the ship. Further, the walls and ceiling are comparatively intact. As a result, this room is not in terrible shape. A couple of tables are intact, and the chairs still sit upright. A few broken wine bottles and scattered cards reveal what at least some crewmembers were doing before something called them to battle. There are also 4d6 gold pieces scattered atop the tables and on the floor.

Two unlocked hatches in the floor of this chamber open to reveal stairs that connect the crew's mess to the crew quarters. The stairs are detailed below as **Areas 9 and 10**.

## 7. GALLEY

This was once the ship's galley. There are several breaks in the wall and deck boards above. Time, salt, and spray have not been kind to this abandoned kitchen and now it is in utter shambles. Any food that may have once been stored here has completely moldered away long ago.

### SETUP

There remains one additional item of interest here. On a previous journey to the *Fortune*, the captain ambushed a victim and knocked the poor lad cold. The captain's victim now numbers among the brine zombies in the craft beneath. However, when the victim fell, he dropped a belaying pin he took from the *Blessing* to use as an improvised weapon. That belaying pin is still in the galley underneath the only intact table.

The belaying pin is one of the distinctive items from the *Blessing*. The handle is carved with a stylized version of the Sealord (a bearded elderly merman holding a trident). This small club is proof that someone from the *Blessing* has been aboard the *Fortune* before.

### DEVELOPMENT

If confronted with this pin, the captain acts shocked. He disputes that the belaying pin originated on the *Blessing*. He attempts to dismiss it as a strange coincidence, or attributes the belaying pin to the *Blessing's* sister ship, which is a fabrication.

The Captain stammers for answers to this riddle, but the more he talks, the more likely he trips himself up. Should the characters catch him in a lie, the flustered captain shrugs his shoulders and provides no further commentary about the belaying pin. This item is not proof of treachery, but it should make alert characters suspicious that not all is as it seems. Likewise if they recognize the name of the ship as being the one he was previously captain of, he merely states that their information is faulty and remains tight-lipped about it even if caught in a lie.

## 8. FORE DECK

The top deck of the ship thrust high into the air after the wreck. The angle here is steep enough that debris has not accumulated. However, there is nothing here of any interest, value, or danger.

# THE FLYING FORTUNE LEVEL II:

## AMIDSHIPS

A fair portion of this middle level of the ship has rotted away, and now lies in a great heap in the lower hold. Still, there are a few points of interest.

## 9. WATERLOGGED STAIRS

These stairs are rotted and waterlogged. Beneath them lies a shallow tide pool collected in a rock depression in the seamount, home to a great nest of spiny sea urchins. The urchins feed on the algae that grow in the pool.

The urchins have effectively created a **pit trap** onto poison spikes. There is no way to disable this trap. It is best avoided. Anyone falling through stairs takes 2d6 points of damage from the fall onto sea urchin spines (save or paralyzed for 1d4 hours; save avoids).

## 10. SAFE STAIRS

This sturdy set of stairs has mostly avoided the worst of the weather and is still stout enough to support several people at once. They groan and creak a little, but they hold.

## 11. CREW QUARTERS

This large compartment is empty save for a few tattered hammocks, deep gouges cut in the floor, and a few spots of old dried blood. Two stairs lead up to hatches in the overhead. (See **Areas 9** and **10** for more details.) A single door leads to the amidships hold. Though there was obviously a great slaughter here, there is surprisingly little remaining evidence. The location is sheltered enough from the rain and winds to expect at least some remains, but there is nothing — not even a single bone.

## 12. AMIDSHIPS HOLD

This large open space was once used to hold excess cargo that could not be stowed in the lower hold. It was also used for extra bunk space if that was ever needed. Now it is a rotten place. Untold amounts of seawater have seeped through. However, unlike the upper deck where the floor has grown treacherous, here the floor has given way. The map marks a large section of the floor that is simply gone. The cargo hatch to the lower decks is still present, but warped and rotten.

Two hatches in the deck lead to ladders that descend to the lower deck. The ladders are still sturdily mounted to the ship's hull.

## 13. SHIP'S STORES

There is actually a tarnished nameplate with the words “Ship's Stores” still held to the door by a single resolute nail. Something tore the door open, breaking the lock that once secured this chamber. It hangs only slightly open, still attached to the frame by its battered hinges.

Inside, this room is a jumble of boxes, hundreds of feet of rope, a spilt bag of nails, a leaking barrel of pitch and many less identifiable moldering items of uncertain age. Water has leaked through the battered hull and done a lot of damage. However, a sound 100-ft. rope still hangs in great coils from hooks on the wall.

### ADDITIONAL TREASURE

There is a small crate pushed in the corner that contains a dozen still-sealed brown glass bottles without labels. The bottles hold high quality cognac shipped as a special order. Without labels, the liquor is still worth 10 gp a bottle. If the characters somehow identify the vintage, this is a case of collectible triple-distilled brandy worth 50 gp a bottle to the right buyer.

## 14. CABIN

This is a small cabin, empty save for a few broken pieces of barely recognizable furniture.

## 15. CABIN

This is another small cabin. There is a minor breach only a few inches across in the northern bulkhead that has allowed water to seep in and form a pool on the floor. The time spent moldering in this salt pool means that very little is left.

## 16. CABIN

This is the most intact of the three small cabins. The bunk in this cabin is completely intact, having been spared both weather and monster attack. It is tightly made and looks usable.

### ADDITIONAL TREASURE

A passenger stashed a small bag of coins a passenger stashed under the bed. It contains 12 pp and a small silver butterfly pendant (value 120 gp) bearing the inscription “for Rutherin.”

## 17. NAVIGATOR'S CABIN

The door to this cabin has been ripped from its hinges, and the frame splintered by something large and heavy. The navigator's cabin served as both his quarters and the ship's chart room. Like the rest of the ship, it is now a wreck.

When the navigator heard the breach in the lower hold, he did not flee to the upper deck. Instead, he began to gather his precious charts and prized golden sextant hoping to salvage them. That delay allowed a vile slasher to corner him in this cabin. A few telltale signs of that grisly struggle are all that remains today. The slasher ripped the door off its hinges demonstrating that an extremely strong and incredibly large creature several times wider than a man tore through this room.

### ADDITIONAL TREASURE

The shredded charts are stained with gore and arterial spray. They have largely rotted away from the rain and weather that now leak through the broken portholes.

However, the golden sextant (worth 520 gp) lies hidden among the refuse. The charts and writing would be valuable, but they have all been ruined by wind and exposure.



# THE FLYING FORTUNE LEVEL III:

## THE LOWER HOLDS

This part of the ship is wrack and ruin. The lower holds join *The Flying Fortune* to the Engineer's vile craft.

### 18. LOWER HOLD

When the vile slashers penetrated the vessel, they rampaged through this hold, destroying everything in their path. This hold was full of common trade goods and carefully wrapped wine bottles set in wooden racks. Now there is only devastation — bent metal and broken glass. However, one intact item of some value hides amidst the debris.

If the characters search through the rubble, they may find a small iron strongbox buried under the debris. It takes 6 minutes of work to reach the box. The loud racket may attract the interest of a jade bat (see **P-3** below) during one of its routine sweeps of the passage. The bat does not attack, but instead hides and records the characters' activities before reporting back to the Engineer.

If the box is recovered, the characters find it locked with a stout padlock. The padded strong box holds five carefully packed bottles of wine. They are a rare '75 Vyrathea vintage. The Vyrathea Vineyards are famed for including rare healing herbs in their wine. As a result, each full glass of this wine is treated as a *potion of healing*. However, given their age, the alcohol is more potent and one glass of Vyrathea counts as three for purposes of determining whether the imbibor becomes intoxicated (-1 to attacks for 1d4 hours; save avoids). There are four glasses of this healing wine per bottle and each bottle is worth 225 gp.

### 19. SMUGGLER'S HOLD

*The Flying Fortune* was not just an honest merchantman but also a part-time smuggling vessel. The hold is small, as smuggling was never the *Fortune's* primary business. But if the duties on a few luxury or exotic items were deemed unreasonable, they could be stowed here away from the eyes of the harbormaster.

The smuggler's hold is not empty. It contains a skeleton dressed in tattered rags holding a short sword and a tied black leather book. It wears a gold ring on its bony finger adorned with a stylized eagle (worth 5 gp). A spilled bottle of ink, a melted candle, and a rotted feather quill sit beside him. This is all that remains of Titus Weatherby.

#### BACKGROUND

Titus was with the first officer on deck when the sailors made their last stand. By sheer luck, he survived the first rush of the vile slashers and managed to dive through the cargo netting. He didn't escape unscathed. One of the slashers gave him a nice gash along his leg. He limped to the lowest hold as he listened to the slaughter unfolding above him. He knew the secret of the hold and secured himself inside, intent on waiting out the monsters and then making a break for land.

He survived his immediate injuries, and stopped the bleeding by using his own shirt as a bandage. The sounds of combat died down, and there was no doubt in his mind who had won the day. He could hear the monsters prowling the ship looking for survivors. One of them even came close enough to scrape one of their blades across the wood of the hidden hold. They never found him, though, and after a few hours he was certain they had returned to the hell from whence they came.

Only then did Titus realize a terrible truth. There was no way to open the smuggler's hold from the inside. It was never intended to carry passengers. He tried to force it open, but his wounds and dehydration sapped his strength. After hours of vain effort, he passed out from exhaustion and died of thirst several days later. But at least he escaped the horrors of the brain collector's vessel.

#### SETUP

By design, these holds are not easy to find. A wooden knothole must be carefully pressed to open the panels and gain access. If one does not know what to look for, it can be tricky to locate the exact knothole.

#### ACTION

A roll of 1 on 1d6 spots the knothole. It is a testament to how well the mechanism was made that even though time and moisture have taken their toll on the rest of the ship, it still functions perfectly.

If the characters discover the hold, they find the remains of Titus Weatherby, along with his journal. If they turn to the last entry in it, read or paraphrase the following:

It is certain then. After hours of trying, this hold is stuck fast, and I'm at the very end of my strength. It was never made for passengers, only for smuggling. I was clever enough to hide from the foul beasts, but not clever enough to secure water and provisions. What are the chances that someone finds the *Fortune* before thirst and the bleeding from my opened leg claim me? Not good, I think.

It's a hard thing to look death in the face, but I reckon I must. My only regret is that my mother will never know my fate. If anyone finds this, please see that Caroline Weatherby in Sander's Landing receives this journal. She'll want it, and it's of no real value to anyone else.

I guess I should be angry at the captain. It was his greed that drew us to this place. When he spied the treasure through his eagle-glass, he went mad for it. But I can't. Old Riggs was a good man. Still is, I hope. And he was only doing what was right by us. The gold was a trap. Aye, I see it now. A trap to lure us into the arms of these devilish creatures.

I don't know what they are or where they came from. I don't know what they want. They didn't look entirely alive to me. They lumbered like I've heard that the walking dead do. Maybe that's what they were. But in those stories, the undead always have a master. I wonder who is the master of those vile slashers?

I'll never know, I guess. And in the end what does it matter? I can only pray to whatever gods may be listening that someday, in some manner, proper vengeance will answer the carnage brought upon the *Fortune's* crew today.

Keep me, Lords of the Sea.

— Titus Weatherby

#### DEVELOPMENT

##### *Confront Captain Riggs with the Journal*

The journal reveals some interesting facts. A captain named Riggs, owner of a fine spyglass decorated with an eagle, commanded *The Flying Fortune*. The ship was lured onto the rocks by the sight of treasure, and boarded from below by beasts Titus dubs the vile slashers. This is fairly damning evidence that Captain Riggs is somehow involved in this conspiracy. If the characters confront Captain Riggs with this revelation and demand an explanation, the captain has no answer. Instead, Riggs attacks with his poisoned blade and tries to make a break for the *neh-thalggu* ship hoping to lure the characters down to their deaths. See **Part One** for more details about the captain's treachery and how it might play out.

### Confront Captain Riggs with the Ring

If the characters are subtle, they can actually learn a thing or two from the captain. If they show him Titus' ring, the captain immediately recognizes it. Captain Riggs considered Titus to be almost like a son. He never saw his body amongst the dead, and always hoped that somehow against all odds the lad escaped. Even in his enthralled state, the captain is briefly visibly rattled if such definite proof of Titus' death is presented to him.

His emotions get the better of him. His eyes briefly mist with tears. His countenance grows more grim than usual, though a strange blankness quickly reasserts itself. No attentive character can miss the strangeness of the moment.

### WRAP-UP

#### *Fulfill a Lost Boy's Dying Wish*

Titus was an unusual sailor. He was literate, and the son of a successful merchant. His mother made him promise before he went to sea that he would practice his letters and keep a journal of all his travels so that he could tell her about them when he returned. In a frail and dying hand, Titus paused from trying to escape to keep his promise to the mother he would never again see. He made one last entry in his journal in the darkness of this hold using a scavenged candle and the ink and pen he always kept with him.

Titus wrote the entry hoping that it would someday make its way back to his mother. She still lives in a small fishing village on the mainland of Akados. She would be eternally grateful to learn the fate of her boy, though the stingy woman offers little in the way of reward.

#### *Become a Publisher*

Anyone who takes the time to actually read the journal in full learns something else of interest. Titus was a very bright boy, and a competent writer. Detailed in this book is the tale of a young man's life of adventure on the high sea. It is a poignant story of coming of age upon the Razor Sea and the eventual tragedy of a death by matters utterly beyond his control. It would actually make a fine novel, if anyone were so inclined to expand upon it and publish it.

## 20. FLOODED HOLD

The back sixth of the lower hold is actually beneath the water line and flooded. This seawater wreaked destruction on the integrity of the ship, and a substantial portion of the hold's decking is missing. Therefore, this is another way to enter or exit *The Flying Fortune* if the characters don't mind a little swimming.

### ACTION

The flooded portion of the hold also holds a deadly surprise. A nearly intact, barnacle-encrusted sea chest sits in about five feet of water. In fact, this is one of the Engineer's more amusing projects. Using its dark sciences and the flesh of a polymorphous sea slug found in local reefs, the Engineer created an **aquatic mimic**. Worse, the tissues of the creatures the Engineer used regenerate with terrifying speed.

This unique aberration lurks in flooded hold and feeds off the crabs and small fish that seek refuge here. An adhesive pseudopod attacks anyone who approaches or tries to retrieve the sea chest. Once the killer sea chest grabs a victim it retreats to deeper water and tries to drown the hapless victim. The beast has nothing of value.

**Mimic (Aquatic):** HD 7; HP 35; AC 6[13]; Atk smash (2d6);

**Move** 2; **Save** 9; **AL** C; **CL/XP** 8/800; **Special:** glue, mimicry.

## 21. THE BREACH

This is a hole in the bottom of *The Flying Fortune*. It was made 7 years ago when the vile slashers burst up through the hull of the floundering ship and began their murderous work. It is not flooded and leads down into darkness within the seamount itself.

# PART THREE: DOWN INTO DARKNESS

## SYNOPSIS

This brief section covers the passage that connects the *Fortune* to the neh-thalggu craft. The dread and mystery of the wreck above start to be replaced with otherworldly strangeness and weird horror.

## P-1. TOP OF THE PASSAGE

The lowest hold of *The Flying Fortune* contains the breach where the so-called "vile slashers" first entered that doomed ship 7 years ago. Past the breach is a wide tunnel that leads down into the solid rock of the Trident. When the neh-thalggu ship materialized upon this plane, it did so within the solid stone of the seamount. Not only did this cause tremendous damage to the vessel, it also embedded the craft within the seamount. The Engineer jury-rigged a repair to a damaged *five-barbed stave* (a neh-thalggu wand capable of burrowing through stone). He used the device to burrow to the top and create the illusion that lured *The Flying Fortune* to its doom. That passage still remains and is the only way to access the neh-thalggu craft.

### ACTION

If Captain Riggs is still with the characters, he feigns ignorance about the tunnel. He claims that it looks like a lava tunnel and seems eager to convince the characters to venture down. The tunnel walls are relatively smooth and too precise to have been formed naturally. Captain Riggs is hiding something about his knowledge of the passage.

The passage at the top is completely lightless and very wet. Water seeps through the walls, making them quite slick. Fortunately, handholds are plentiful. There are plenty of anchor points at the top, and a secured rope makes the descent much easier. Algae and tangles of tough seaweed grow everywhere. If the characters are short of rope, there is some in the ship's stores amidstships.

The passage descends about 220 feet into the very heart of the mountain.

## P-2. WELCOME GARDEN

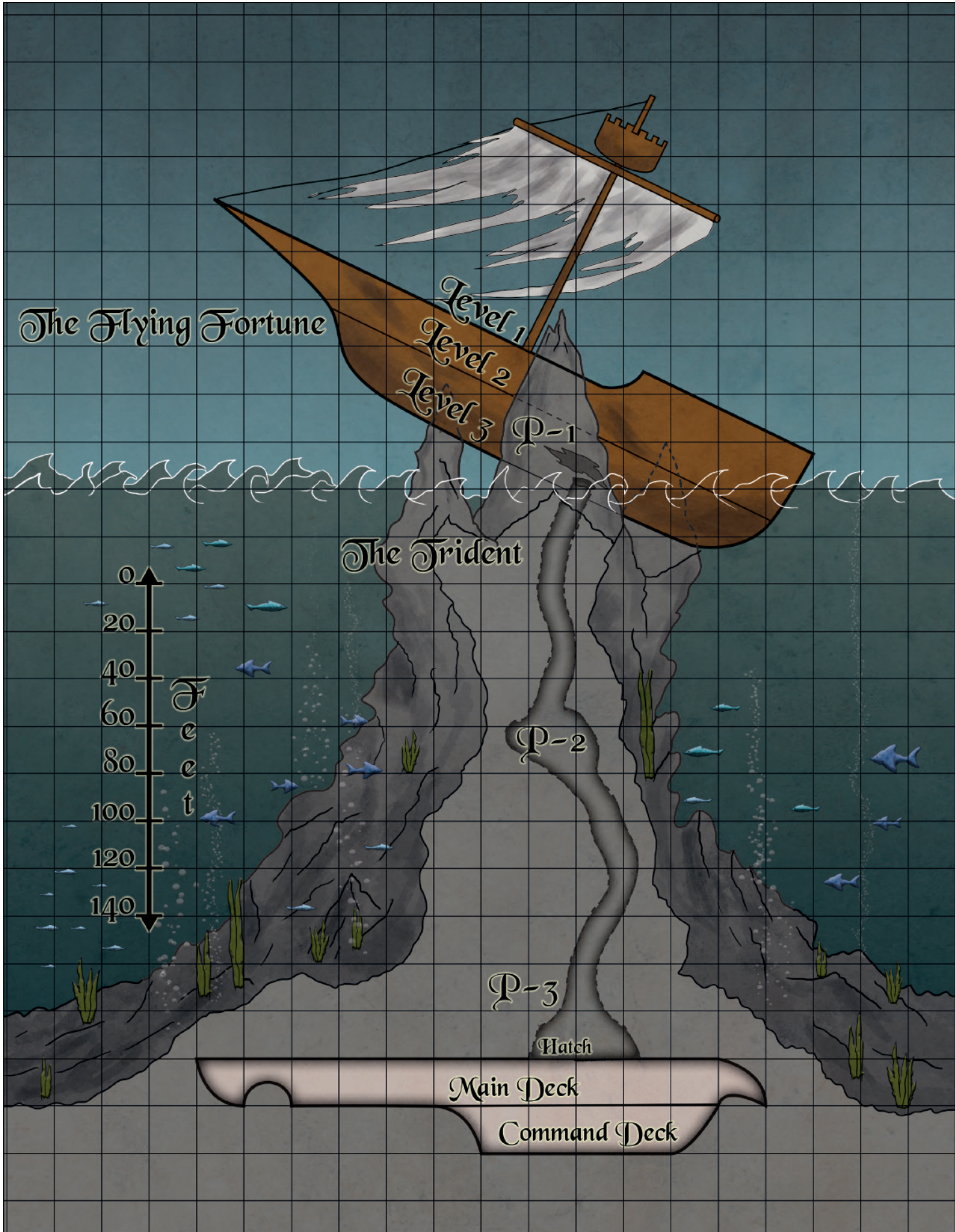
Roughly in the middle of the passage is a wide spot choked with seaweed and other bizarre aquatic growth. This is no natural formation. The Engineer purposefully widened the passage here and cultivated **2 plots of alien strangle weed** to capture intruders. There are patches on either side of the tunnel.

### ACTION

The strangle weeds do not attack the captain since he bears the black spot. However, they eagerly entangle anyone else who enters their 20-foot reach. Once per day the Engineer sends his jade bats (see **Area P-3** for additional details) to see if the strangle weeds caught anything.

Strangle weed is not a versatile combatant. It attacks and tries to constrict its foe to death. The weed has one oddity. When it reduces a victim to zero hit points, it wraps them in fronds and injects them with special spines keeping the victim alive. The strangle weed fights to the death, continuing to attack and take more prisoners until it is destroyed.

**Strangle Weeds (2):** HD 4; HP 17, 23; AC 5 [14]; Atk fronds (1d6); **Save** 13; **Move** 3; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 5/240; **Special:** camouflage, constriction, surprise on roll of 1-4 on 1d6, resistance to fire (50%). See *The Tome of Horrors Complete* for more details.



## P-3. THE VIRIDIAN PORTAL

The passage terminates at a hemispherical cavern that is far too regular in shape to be natural. In the center of the cave, set into the floor, is a portal that looks as if it is made of jade or perhaps green glass. Though it seems like it should be quite fragile, the portal turns out to be as hard as steel.

### SETUP

This is the hatch into the neh-thalggu craft. It has a very strange alien lock on it that can be picked by a thief at –15%

penalty. However, if Captain Riggs is with the party or if any of the jade bats have reported back, the door simply opens automatically at the party's approach. This is the Engineer's doing. The neh-thalggu has not gone to all the trouble to get these victims to its lair only to lock them out. It is only too eager to invite these "guests" inside its craft. In other words, the spider welcomes the flies.

When the portal opens, the entryway is still not entirely clear. A hazy green miasma covers the circular hatch. It is completely transparent and does nothing to harm the characters. In fact, anyone who passes through the miasma immediately benefits from having a *cure disease* cast upon them. This miasma has also been attuned so it blocks seawater from entering, thus preventing the craft from flooding. The miasma disappears if the portal is completely wrecked or the craft is powered down (see Room C–7 below).

Passing through the miasma gives the Engineer an exact count of the people who enter its vessel. Destroying the miasma lets it know that someone is at its door. Either way, it activates the trap in C–1 immediately.

### ACTION

If the characters haven't encountered them before, there are 3 strange constructs hanging from the hemispherical cavern. These bat-like beings appear to have been carved from fine jade. Strange writing covers their bodies, and instead of eyes they have one cyclopean lens crafted from faintly glowing green glass. The bats are almost completely transparent, and thus blend in beautifully with their surroundings. They can also fly through the viridian portal as though it is intangible, even when it is closed.

The 3 jade bats hide and begin recording the moment the characters pass through the portal. Once the characters pass on, they fly to the Engineer and report. They attack only if discovered.

**Jade Bats (3):** HD 3; HP 13, 15, 10; AC 5 [14]; Atk bite (1d3 plus 1d6 electricity); Save 14; Move 9 (fly 12); AL N; CL/XP 5/240; **Special:** acid spit, camouflage, darkvision 60 ft., holographic recording, self-destruct, resists cold and fire, vulnerable to electricity. See the **Appendix** for more details.

# PART FOUR: NOT OF THIS WORLD SYNOPSIS

At last, the characters enter the brain collector's craft. In the upper levels, this adventure was a mystery requiring investigation. Uncertainty as to what foul fate befell *The Flying Fortune* drove the characters forward. As the characters take their first step into the neh-thalggu craft, matters shift into the realm of weird horror. Each chamber of the obviously otherworldly craft reveals new perils and new strangeness. Referees are encouraged to accentuate the weird. Remember that nothing aboard this craft was intended for use by any race native to this world. Even the doors, which unless sealed and locked by the Engineer, slide open on the approach of any sizable biomass, should seem strange and disturbing to the party. How much more so the Engineer's extradimensional technology...or the Engineer itself?

## LEVEL I: MAIN DECK ENCOUNTERS

### C-1. COLLECTION CHAMBER

Located directly below the Viridian Portal (P–3), this ovoid chamber is nothing more than a trap. The chamber is 20 feet tall and a beam of light shines from the Viridian portal down to the floor below. The chamber itself is made of what looks like brass with regular braces that curve up towards the portal in the center of the ceiling. There is a circular door far larger than any human would need in the southwest portion of the chamber. In the center of the eastern wall, there is what looks like a column of liquid glass banded with clockwork brazen fittings.

### SETUP

The Engineer has rigged this chamber to be a non-lethal trap. After all, he wants to collect his specimens alive for unspeakable experiments. Anyone stepping into the beam of light floats gently to the floor.

### ACTION

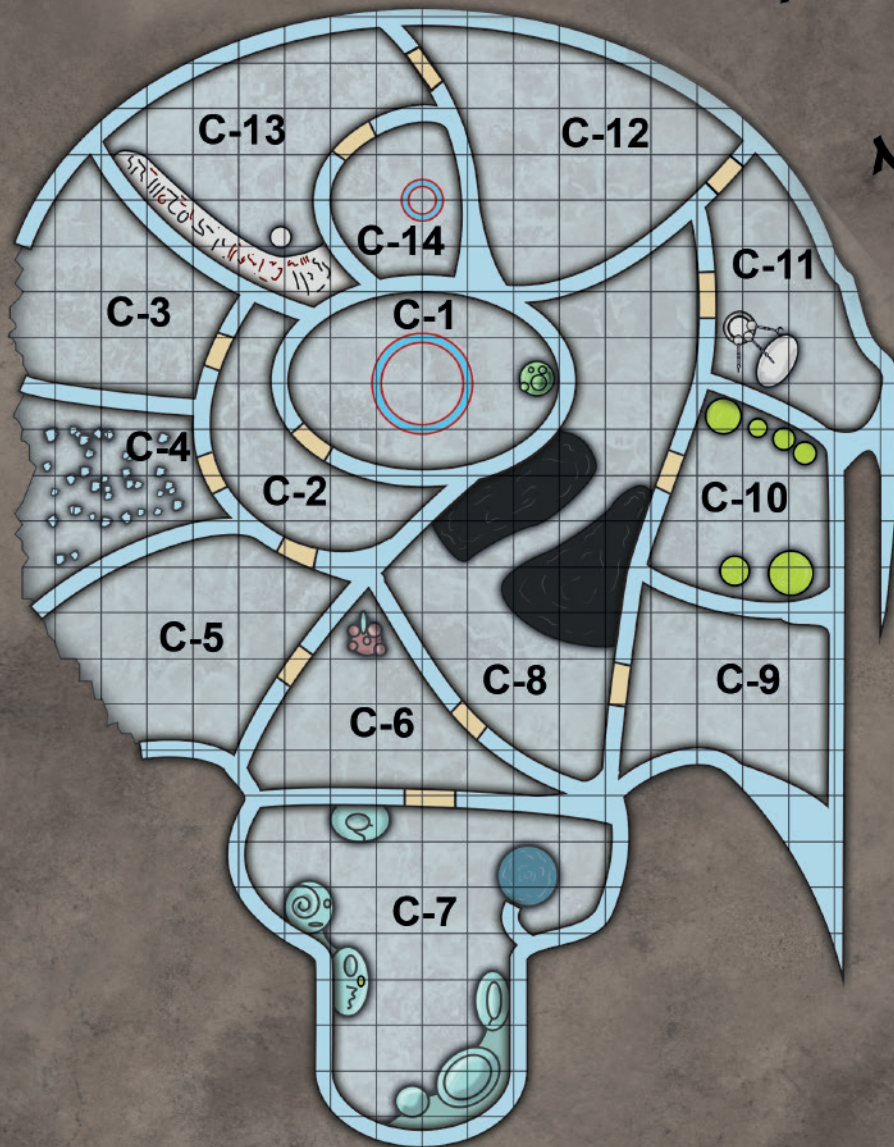
As soon as the first character lands on the floor, the column begins to hum with purpose and bubbles circulate through the liquid glass. One round later it begins leaking a thin gray poison gas that causes anyone failing a saving throw to fall unconscious for 1d3 hours. The poison does not affect jade bats, zombies, anyone implanted with a black leech — though the captain feigns being affected — or the neh-thalggu. The door to the southwest is sealed, but it unseals once the trap finishes discharging.

The trap's flaw stems from the Engineer's arrogance and disdain for humans. The Engineer did nothing to hide or protect the trap. It sits on the eastern wall of the collection chamber, completely unconcealed. It clicks, whirrs, and bubbles as it begins to function, thus giving the characters a chance to disarm it. The Engineer did not bother to hide the device because it believes the inhabitants of this world are too stupid to be able to do anything about its powerful and advanced technology. The fact that there might be a thief in the party clever enough to simply shut it off did not occur to the Engineer's self-perceived superior intellect. Disarming the trap requires a thief to make a Traps/Tasks check with a –20% penalty. If the trap is defeated, the Engineer takes the characters' potential threat more seriously.

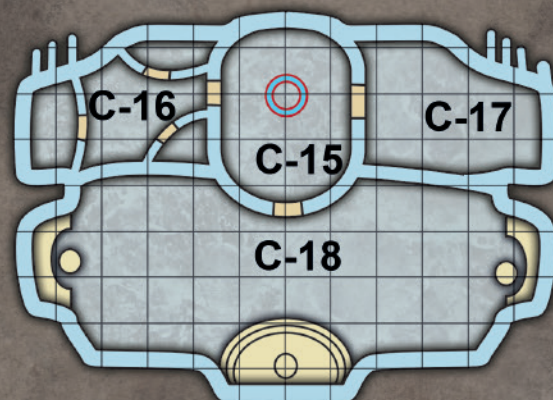
If the characters linger too long in this chamber after disabling or avoiding the trap, the vile slashers in C–5 storm this chamber. From this point forward, the Engineer is no longer trying to take prisoners.

# The Neh-Thalggu Craft

1 square - 10 feet



Main Deck



Command Deck

## THE MIND OF THE ENEMY

The Engineer is not a passive opponent. The neh-thalguu knows the characters are coming to visit thanks to a weak telepathic link to the characters through the black leech. While the range is limited, the Engineer has been in broken communication with the captain since the *Blessing* drew within a few miles of the seamount. It has prepared its bizarre vessel for intruders, positioning minions at key points throughout the ship.

The Engineer is not omniscient, however. It only knows exactly what the characters are doing if it has a jade bat recording their whereabouts. It also knows if a portal is opened or if any of its various sensors are activated. The text notes when the characters encounter sensors that feed information to the Engineer.

If the Engineer has a weakness, it is overconfidence. The characters are not the first group to be lured to the vessel. Between the strangle weeds, its jade bat spies, the enslaved captain, the collection chamber (**Area C-1**), and the so-called vile slashers, defeating visitors to its craft always proved easy. Until the characters defeat or bypass those measures, the Engineer observes, but only feels eager for new brains to enter its grasp.

However, once the adventurers enter **Area C-6**, the Engineer abruptly realizes things have gone horribly awry. Though the characters don't realize it, they now have access to the Engine room (**Area C-7**). If they smash the lightning columns in that chamber, the Engineer loses the ability to use its workshop — which requires power — and also loses its personal defenses, rendering it starkly vulnerable. It also means the Engineer is unable to complete its mission. If they smash the lightning columns in **Area C-7** then through random violence they may have accidentally saved the world from a brain collector invasion.

To avoid this catastrophe, the Engineer tries to lure the adventurers away from **C-7**. After the characters enter **Area C-6**, it seals the portal into that chamber and places a lightning field over it. These fields are costly.

They drain massive amounts of energy and resources, but the Engineer has no choice. It must protect the engine room. It then orders the brine zombies in **Area C-9** to immediately attack the characters. It is also willing to sacrifice one of its precious jade bats to lure them into **Area C-8**, hoping to drop the party into the leech tanks.

If these ploys fail, the Engineer's game grows desperate. It is luring the characters deeper and deeper into the ship, closer to itself. Every piece of gear in this vessel is irreplaceable and precious, and yet it sacrifices them all one by one to destroy these invaders. After the characters defeat the vile slashers, tables turn and now the adventurers become the invaders. They are no longer victims being lured to their deaths, but have launched an assault that the Engineer must stop at all costs.

### DEVELOPMENT

It is possible that the gas trap in the collection chamber actually works. If the characters fail to defuse it, everyone could fall unconscious. If so, the adventurers are in grave danger, and it becomes unlikely that all of them survive.

The Engineer sends the vile slashers to collect the victims, strips them of all their possessions, and deposits the naked characters into individual holding cells in **Area C-16**. It waits until the characters regain consciousness (the knockout gas interferes with its tissue processing procedure) and then selects a random character 1 hour later. The vile slashers drag the chosen character into the vivisection laboratory and restrain him or her. The process of metabolizing the character into every component the Engineer requires takes hours, removing 2 points of constitution every hour. The screams echo throughout the craft. The processing ends when the victim dies (constitution reaches 0). After finishing off one character, the Engineer sends its lackey to fetch another until it “processes” them all.

## C-2. VAULT OF MANY DOORS

This is a curving hallway with four circular doors. It is made of the same brass material as **Area C-1**. There is nothing here of any danger or value. However, if the vile slashers from **Area C-5** are dispatched from the collection chamber, they must pass through here first.

## C-3. MEAT LOCKER

This chamber is a gallery of nightmares. The ceiling is adorned with several dozen bent iron hooks. Close examination reveals that they were manufactured from common items taken from *The Flying Fortune*. A corpse hangs from almost every hook. There are several dolphins, a tiger shark, a manta ray, and a large deep-water squid as tall as a man. Right alongside hang a merman, two tattooed Tulita fishermen, and what must be — judging from the bones — a dwarf. There are less identifiable chunks of flesh, bone, and meat dangling alongside the identifiable bodies. All of these corpses show evidence of delicate surgery.

All are missing their brains. Most of these creatures were vivisected — the surgery performed upon them while they were still alive.

This room is cold. Ichors from dozens of corpses coagulate on the brazen floor. In the back of the chamber, the room is twisted. Sharp jagged needles of stone and brass jut out, evidence of the devastation inflicted upon the ship when it materialized inside the seamount.

## C-4. SHOOTING GALLERY

This chamber is a wreck. The jagged stone ripping through the ship's brass superstructure that appeared in only one corner of the adjoining meat locker dominates the entire western wall (see **Area C-4** for identifying the ship's means of arrival). Debris covers the floor and minute, sharp spines of jagged stone pierce every flat surface. Traces of long-dried, blue-green ichor. This is neh-thalguu blood from where the Engineer's kin died. Any trace of what this chamber's original function was is no longer evident.

## C-5. CAVERN OF BLADES

This large, empty, cavernous compartment is a guardroom housing the reanimated remains of the Engineer's crewmates, now his personal shock troops, called the “vile slashers” in Titus' journal from **Area 19**. When not on duty, they sit motionless waiting for the Engineer's commands.

### BACKGROUND

To create these **3 vile slashers**, amalgams of dead neh-thalguu tissue and sea creatures, the Engineer patched missing chunks of flesh with sharkskin and sea urchin spines. It replaced missing claws with the rending pincers of the giant crab. It drove a jade spike, which functions as the control rod, into each of their central heads. The spike animates them and makes them obedient to the Engineer. The technology of this rod is far beyond anything of this world and do not function beyond the confines of the ship, but each 8-inch-long piece is worth 300 gp for its precious stone and odd crafting.

## ACTION

The spike allows the Engineer to see and speak through these monstrous vessels of dead flesh. If the characters have been particularly destructive and have already discovered that the captain is under alien control, the Engineer may use the slashers to speak with them. The slasher speaks in Common with a whispering raspy voice. The Referee may read or paraphrase the following statements made by the Engineer:

“Wait. I am the Engineer. This is my ship. There is no need for us to war. I was attacked by the outsiders without provocation. We are from different worlds, you and I, and so our ways are strange. I mean you no harm. Go and never return. Soon I will repair my ship and leave your world forever. Soon we will be only memories to each other. Please go.”

This statement is full of lies. If the characters read Titus’ journal, they know that the Engineer lured the *Fortune* onto the rocks without provocation. If they saw the corpses in the meat locker, they know this thing has no regard for human life. And from the horrid slaughter perpetrated upon the crew of the *Fortune* and subsequent visitors, they know this monster is not misunderstood.

The only reason the Engineer makes this statement is because it fears the adventurers may have the upper hand. If the characters go now, the Engineer lets them leave.

But soon afterward, they hear more tales about ships disappearing near the Trident. The Engineer will never leave until its grim and disastrous work is completed — or until someone kills it.

If the characters confront the Engineer with these lies, the Engineer does not argue. The Referee may read or paraphrase the Engineer’s reply.

“If you will not leave, then you will die. And know this... I will use your still living flesh to craft my masterpiece. You will all be part of the gate. And as your mind boils away in slow agony, your last pain-mad thought will be the realization that you helped make your world mine forever...”

And with that, the **slashers** attack. They employ only one tactic, charge and kill. They fight to the bitter end. The monsters assault everything that enters this chamber except for the jade bats, the Engineer, and anyone implanted with a black leech.

**Vile Slashers (3):** HD 10; HP 36, 29, 51; AC 6 [13]; Atk 2 claws (1d6+2), slam (1d8+2), bite (1d8+2); Save 5; Move 6 (fly 12); AL N; CL/XP 11/1,700; **Special:** immune to sleep and charm spells. See the **Appendix** for more details.

## C-6. ALTAR OF THE BRAIN GOD

This triangular chamber has three doors. The doors on the east and west wall are unlocked. However, the southern door buzzes and hums with a protective field. In the northern corner, a large brass column covered with strange writing and topped by a massive dome displays the image of a brain. There are strange projections and what looks like a small niche at the bottom of the column.

This area does not serve a religious function; however, characters may mistakenly come to the conclusion that this is an altar to the brain collector’s deity and that it places offerings in the niche. The truth is that the ship’s vending machine has been unplugged for some time, and it is completely out of neh-thalggu snacks.

## ACTION

The southern exit from this chamber is locked, sealed, and electrified with a humming protective field. This alone should pique the characters’ interest. When a creature touches the entryway receives an electrical shock that does 4d6 points of damage (save for half).

Mounted on the wall to the left of the door, about 6 feet off the ground is a plain golden circle about a foot across. This object is not electrified. This bioarcanic lock lowers the field and opens the door. This lock can be opened with the *golden control stave* found in **Area C-11**.

## DEVELOPMENT

As the characters breach this chamber, the Engineer grows genuinely worried. The intruders were never supposed to get this far into the craft. The time has come to take desperate measures. If the captain is still with the characters when they enter here, he tries to sneak attack a spellcaster with his poisoned blade while the characters are engaged in disarming the trap.

## C-7. CHAMBER OF THE CEASELESS STORM

When the characters gain access, they find a dazzling variety of incomprehensible alien machinery on the other side of the door. Great columns of glass and brass writhe with lightning that seems almost alive. The energy creeps up and down the columns like serpents of liquid energy. Strange crystals pulsate and move. Incomprehensible writing hovers in front of the columns like ghosts.

Everything here is so strange and unfamiliar that it defies explanation or comprehension. To the characters’ eyes, this chamber must appear as the heart of a great lightning storm that never ceases.

However, the characters can easily understand one thing. At the very back of the chamber in a small glass cage sits a single blue sapphire (worth 5,000 gp) of remarkable size and purity. This is the entire chamber’s control crystal, and it ensures that this machinery functions.

## ACTION

Coursing through the weird machinery of this chamber are three balls of living lightning. These are the living embodiment of the quasi-sentient energy that powers this ship. If the characters attempt to touch, damage or steal anything here, the **3 living lightning** creatures attack.

**Lightning Quasi-Elemental (3):** HD 6; HP 29, 18, 32; AC 1[18]; Atk slam (1d6); Move 0 (fly 24); Save 11; AL N; CL/XP 9/1,100; **Special:** electricity, globe, immune to electricity, resists fire, vulnerable to water, weapon resistance (50%). See *The Tome of Horrors Complete* for more details.

## WRAP-UP

If the control crystal is removed, the ship powers down. Lights turn off. The circular levitation columns shut down. Portals no longer automatically open. A moment later pale green emergency lightning comes on bathing the entire place in a phosphorescent twilight.

Removing the control crystal only temporarily powers down the vessel. If the sapphire is returned, the power comes back on and the living lightning creatures spawn anew within 24 hours. However, once the sapphire is removed, the characters can smash the very fragile machinery without danger. Turning the machinery into a heap of scrap metal permanently destroys the power generator.

If a wand touches one of the glowing columns, it may recharge it. If this is done, the wand regains 2d12 charges. A wand cannot be overcharged this way, and only one wand can be recharged per day using this equipment. At the Referee’s discretion, other magic items that use charges may also be recharged using this equipment.

## C-8. LEECH TANKS

The portal into this chamber is unlocked. This large compartment is dominated by a large vat of inky black liquid set into the floor. A curving path traverses over the liquid,

which roils as if is stirred by some unseen agent. It is in this path that the Engineer has bred thousands of black leeches in order to create an army of servants like Captain Riggs.

### SET UP

The Engineer monitors this chamber via a jade jewel-eye set in the northernmost corner of this irregular chamber.

The jewel-eye resembles a small jade sphere mounted into the wall. The eye can be easily destroyed. There are also three portals in this room along the eastern wall. They are all unlocked.

### ACTION

As long as the jewel-eye is functional, the Engineer can cast phantasmal force through the sensor. After the brine zombies from **Area C-9** attack, the image of the Engineer appears on the other side of the vat. It emerges from the northernmost portal and begins to act, as if it is casting a spell. The hope is to draw its enemies into charging across the bridge.

As soon as a few characters are on the bridge, the Engineer activates the actual **trap** and the bridge suddenly melts away, dumping anyone on the structure into the leech tanks. **Two black leech swarms** within the viscous black fluid swarm the victims and begin to drain their life away. Anyone in the middle of the bridge gets no save to avoid taking a splash. Others can make a saving throw to jump to the nearest edge.

If more than one character ends up in the tank, the Engineer's illusion lets out a wicked rasping laugh and taunts their predicament.

"You should have fled when you had the chance."

This taunting hopefully causes the characters to attack the illusory Engineer with spells, thus wasting their resources.

**Black Leech Swarm (2):** HD 6; HP 31, 25; AC 5[14]; Atk swarm (2d6 plus poison); Move 6 (swim 9); Save 11; AL C; CL/XP 6/400; **Special:** curse of the black spot, poison, vulnerable to salt.

### DEVELOPMENT

If the Engineer does ever gain control of a character, the abomination's first priority will be to get as many of the invaders as possible out of its vessel. Once this is done or if this proves impossible, the controlled character immediately turns upon his comrades, attacking until slain or subdued.

## C-9. ENGINEER'S PROJECT

This storage chamber holds one of the Engineer's more charming side projects. It keeps **6 brine zombies** here created from the corpses of the crew of *The Flying Fortune*. The mindless undead immediately attack any who enter.

**Brine Zombies (6):** HD 4; HP 18, 11 (x2), 12, 20, 23; AC 6[13]; Atk cutlass (1d6) or fist (1d4); Move 12 (swim 12); Save 13; AL C; CL/XP 4/120; **Special:** resist fire (50%). See *The Tome of Horrors Complete* for more details.

## C-10. GLOWING GROTTO

These are the ship's food banks — strange cylinders and tubes of brass and steel. It is here that the neh-thalggu transforms captured fish and algae into the nutrient paste it needs to survive. Raw protein is fed into the food banks and converted into **living bio-organic slime**.

Unfortunately for the characters, they too contain all the necessary food components the nutrient paste desires. If anyone steps within 5 feet of these glowing food banks, the slime leaps at them. The slime does no damage to neh-thalggu, the vile slashers, or the jade bats. It is more than happy to dissolve the captain into mush, however.

**Living Bio-organic Slime:** HD 4; HP 26; AC 7[12]; Atk slam (2d6); Move 12; Save 13; AL N; CL/XP 6/240;

**Special:** devour flesh, immune to acid, leap, vulnerable to cold and fire. See the **Appendix** for more details.

## C-11. VIVISECTION LABORATORY

The portal into this chamber is unlocked, and weird machinery beyond the knowledge or science of this world fills the room. Here the Engineer reanimated its dead companions and implanted the black leech into Captain Riggs. He also processed the crew of *The Flying Fortune*, using the Vivisectionist, the cruel device that dominates this chamber.

The Vivisectionist looks like a strange sort of metal snake. This creature has three metal tails that form a tripod at its base. The snake then narrows, where it is covered with strange tubes and wires before finally reaching the head almost 10 feet above the ground. The head is more like a giant claw with two scything talons. It is a slow beast, ponderously lumbering about on its three short tails.

### BACKGROUND

The **Vivisectionist** is an automaton that the Engineer uses to torture victims that fall into its clutches. With this machine and its own dark sciences, the neh-thalggu extracts living brains intact and places them within its own sacs.

Victims are tied down on the great ovoid bed and dissected alive. It is as sure a torture as anything that the minds of the wicked have ever conceived.

The Vivisectionist is a precious and irreplaceable piece of technology to the Brain Collector. It never intended to use this as a combatant, but it may be the Engineer's last line of defense.

### ACTION

The Engineer orders the bizarre automaton to attack anyone who enters this chamber, and the automaton performs its duty with brutal precision.

**The Vivisectionist:** HD 5; HP 22; AC 1[18]; Atk 2 blades (1d8+2 plus persistent wounds); Move 6; Save 12; AL C; CL/XP 7/600; **Special:** immune to cold, magic weapons required to hit, persistent wounds. See the **Appendix** for more details.

### WRAP-UP

In its haste to arrange for the characters' capture, the Engineer made a blundering mistake. The last time it used the Vivisectionist to create a brine zombie, the Engineer left its *golden control stave* sitting on one of the side tables.

In addition, the characters can loot a small collection of onyx gems (worth 600 gp) from the Vivisectionist's body. These gems radiate a faint aura of necromancy magic,

but this is residue from their use in the past; they are not magical.



## C-12. EMPTY CHAMBER

At first glance, this chamber seems entirely empty save for two doors. However, there is a small glowing pad with a ruby set into it. It is affixed to the wall near the western door.

Touching the ruby (value 135 gp) while the ship is powered prompts strange circular furniture to rise out of the floor.

This was the ship's dining and meeting room. There are six twisted and bent seats around a large ovoid table. If anyone tries to pry out the ruby while the ship's power is on, they take 4d6 points of electrical damage (save for half). The trap deals no damage if the ship's power is off, during which time the ruby can be removed with minimal effort.

## C-13. THE AMETHYST HARMONIUM

This strange chamber has two unsealed portals and a single great machine that spans the full length of the southern wall. The bizarre artifice looks like a great piano or harmonium adorned with countless crystalline keys made of amethyst.

### BACKGROUND

The Engineer spends a great deal of time here when it is not busy with its many projects. It sits in front of the Harmonium rapidly pressing buttons, as strange holographic images dance about and weird noises fill the room. The images' meaning is beyond the ken of humanity, but these strange sights and sounds soothe the Engineer.

### ACTION

If anyone tries to smash the device while the ship's power is on, they receive a nasty shock. The machine is highly electrified, and any damage causes a savage backlash. The offender takes 4d6 electricity damage (save for half).

### WRAP-UP

The extremely fragile Harmonium can be looted and smashed without danger once the power is off. The characters can collect 4,200 gp in amethysts and platinum wire. This, of course, irrevocably ruins the contraption and both sorrows and enrages the Engineer.

## C-14. PILLAR OF LIGHT

This chamber is locked. However, the bioarchaic lock can be defeated with an Open Locks roll at -20%. The squishy quasi-living material can also be bludgeoned to a pulp.

Normally, this shimmering beam of light levitates anyone stepping into it down to C-15 on the command deck. However, the Engineer is watching the characters via a small jewel-eye in the southeastern corner of the compartment. As soon as anyone steps in the beam of light, the beam shuts off. Any creature in the beam abruptly plummets 20 feet down to the next level. The fall deals 2d6 points of damage. The Engineer knows that this nasty little trick won't stop the characters at this point, but anything to soften them up is welcome.

Once the Engineer extinguishes the beam, the characters must climb down to the next level through the open hole in the floor.

### DEVELOPMENT

The jewel-eye resembles a small jade sphere mounted into the wall and can be easily smashed. If the characters smash the eye before standing in the beam of light, the Engineer turns off the beam of light 2 rounds later hoping to catch a character using it.

The Engineer only reactivates the light pillar under special circumstances, as the pillar is a transport device, not a weapon. It is designed to be safe. The Engineer disabled the safeguards to turn it into a pit trap. It requires 5 rounds to reset the safeguards and return the light pillar to normal operation.

However, if by chance the party abandons an unconscious character in the shaft, the the neh-thalggu will slowly repower the pillar, raise the victims back up, and repeatedly drop them again and again until they are quite dead.

## LEVEL II: COMMAND DECK

## C-15. LANDING PAD

This is where the pillar of light from Area C-14 deposits its passengers. This room is empty save for three portals in the south, east and west walls. Unless the characters have shut down the power for the ship, the southern portal hums with a blue variation of a *wall of force*. This wall functions like the spell, however, the characters can destroy it with brute force (dealing 100 hp damage to the field negates it for 1d6 rounds). If the characters removed the control crystal from the engine room (Area C-7) and powered down the ship, this portal is deactivated when they arrive.

### WALL OF FORCE

**Spell Level:** Magic-user, 5th level

**Range:** 60 feet

**Duration:** 1 round/level

Creates an invisible wall of force up to 100 square feet in size. A wall of force is immune to all forms of damage save the *disintegrate* spell, which destroys it.

### DEVELOPMENT

There is another way to bypass the field, but it is dangerous. Anyone who wields the golden control stave (found in Area C-11) can phase through the portal. As a standard action, the character must touch the stave to the wall and hold it there to turn off the field. The door itself is not locked.

The danger here is that the Engineer can reactivate the field and possibly divide the party as they face the most dangerous opponent on the vessel.

See Area C-18 for details on battling the Engineer.

## C-16. HOLDING CELLS

This unlocked portal opens into a chamber featuring three transparent walls with small doors. These are holding cells where the Engineer keeps living prisoners until they are ready to be experimented upon and vivisected. The cells are empty unless the Engineer captured a character or a crewmember. They can only be opened from the outside or can be battered open from within. There is a small jewel-eye in this room above the door. It is otherwise identical to the sensor in Area C-14.

## C-17. VARICOLORED GARDEN

This is the Engineer's workshop. The room is filled with tables full of strange tools and devices. There are several large clear tanks of water and countless jellyfish. The Engineer uses these tanks to grow various poisonous compounds, including the poison smeared on the captain's sword.

Among the other equipment is an unfinished fourth jade bat. A spell caster has a 2% chance per level to finish the jade bat and bind it to a new master (a 6th level Magic-User has a 12% chance of success, for example). Regardless, the construct's jade components are worth 400 gp.

### ACTION

There is a small jewel-eye in this room above the door. It is otherwise identical to the sensor in Area C-14. Using the jewel, the Engineer observes the characters and waits until they are in this chamber. It then seals the door. The tanks rupture and flood the chamber to a depth of about 3 feet.

The deadly **jellyfish swarm** is now free and immediately attacks the characters.

This is the Engineer's last desperate attempt to slay the characters. It pains the neh-thalggu to damage its own workshop, but the sacrifice is worth it if the poisonous jellyfish slay these relentless intruders.

**Jellyfish Swarm:** **HD** 10; **HP** 47; **AC** 6[13]; **Atk** swarm (3d6 plus poison); **Move** 0 (swim 6); **Save** 5; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 11/240; **Special:** poison (lose 1d4 points of Dexterity; save avoids).

## C-18. THRONE OF THE ENGINEER

Inside the room is the only living neh-thalggu aboard this craft — the **Engineer**. It sits on a great rotating command chair on top of a raised dais. Strange crystalline controls surround it and hazy holographic images of any rooms that still have intact jewel-eyes float in the air around it.

There are two other command consoles on the ship where other crewmembers would normally sit when the craft pierced the veil of worlds. Those consoles are now shut down, and all control is routed to the Engineer's throne.

The neh-thalggu itself is a strange aberration. It possesses a large bulk of green flesh that scuttles around on six insectoid legs. Two surprisingly prehensile claws emerge from its central mass and a great ring of razor teeth hiss and rasp. It has countless eyes on the fore of its body, each black and pupil-less. Bulging semi-transparent brain sacs adorn the back of its bulk. Every one of them is currently occupied by a pulsing human brain vivisectioned from a sailor the Engineer lured to its doom on the rocks of the Trident.

This neh-thalggu also has a small piece of jade surgically implanted within its own flesh along the crown of its central mass. This strange implant allows it to remotely control and receive messages from its jewel-eyes and black leeches.

It snarls at the characters as they enter the throne room and speaks in a raspy whisper that they should know well by now. The Referee may read or paraphrase the following:

“So this is what you want, eh? You seek the honor of being killed by me personally? You shall have it!”

And with that, the battle begins. If the captain is somehow still with the characters and under the Engineer's control, he also joins in, defending his true master to the last of his strength.

### ACTION

The Engineer sitting upon the throne is an illusion created by *phantasmal force*. The actual brain collector is invisible, in the northwestern corner of the room. It allows the characters to spend a round hopefully discharging their most powerful spells and magic items at its empty throne and then reveals itself by unleashing a *lightning bolt* that catches as many of them in its area as possible.

**The Engineer, Neh-Thalggu Crash Survivor:** **HD** 10; **HP** 72; **AC** 0 [19]; **Atk** bite (1d10 plus poison), 2 claws (1d8); **Move** 9; **Save** 5; **AL** C; **CL/XP** 14/2,600; **Special:** poison bite, spells (5/4/3/1), *telepathy* 100ft.

**Spells:** at will — *detect magic*, *read magic*; 1st — *magic missile* (3d4+3) (x3), *shield* (x2); 2nd — *invisibility* (x2), *phantasmal force* (x2); 3rd — *lightning bolt* (x3); 4th — *polymorph self*.

**Equipment:** *five-barbed stave* (13 charges, capable of burrowing through stone; usable by anyone), gill symbiote (allows the neh-thalggu to breathe underwater; does not function for anyone else)

Once the Engineer is revealed it does everything possible to keep from being flanked by these little insects. After its first lightning bolt, it will try to again become invisible, flying away to another corner of the chamber.

However, if the Engineer realizes the characters can detect it, it abandons invisibility and instead focuses on damage output, burning through its *lightning bolts* with reckless abandon. Once they are expended, it will turn to its vicious, poisonous arsenal of melee attacks, rending its victims

into a gory mess. It will pause from this violence only if it believes a *magic missile* might weaken a particularly

effective melee combatant allow it to have hope against an otherwise overwhelming foe. The Engineer has nowhere else to run. Cornered, it fights to the death.

## PART FIVE: CONCLUSION

This act covers everything that happens after the Engineer's death. With its defeat, the Engineer tries to gain vengeance through one last act of desperation — it detonates the ship. As the characters flee, they realize that they have defeated a great evil and ensured that one small corner of the Razor Sea is no longer choked with nightmares.

### SELF DESTRUCT IN T-MINUS...

As the Engineer falls defeated, it speaks. The voice it projects is half in a distorted version of the Common tongue and half telepathic. It reverberates with raw, pure anger at this affront. It is laden with a driving need for revenge. The message is brief. It rasps:

“You have won... nothing.”

This is the Engineer's parting gift to a world it has worked tirelessly to destroy. It could not destroy all of civilization, so this alien terror must content itself with only blowing up the Trident. The Engineer has rigged a dead-man switch that if it is ever slain, the vessel would unleash its power core and explode with tremendous force. No matter what the characters destroyed onboard the ship, the power core remains intact. It lies deep beneath the deck surrounded by the seamount's stone.

Once activated, the Engineer's throne pulsates and glows. Angry violet light flashes as ear-splitting claxons ring out. The Engineer has initiated the process to unleash the living lightning in full. In just a few moments, this craft will vaporize. In the language of the beast bizarre warnings are given.

Bio-fulminatory manumission countdown initiated. Manumission executed in seventy-seven meggon-fractals.

The gist of this requires no understanding of the strange language of the control system. The Engineer has rigged the ship to blow. Clever players likely realize their peril and flee for the exit with no further prompting.

This event is not meant to result in a total party kill, and the particular countdown used by the neh-thalggu is slow enough (long enough to allow a crew of neh-thalggu to enter lifeboats) that the party will have time to escape unless they disregard or disbelieve the warning. So, as long as the characters flee the craft without delay, they have no difficulty escaping before the entire seamount erupts in a great plume of rock, coral, and boiling seawater.

However, the Referee should still convey the tension. Parts of the ship spew arcs of violet electricity near the characters. Great beams of the hull's superstructure begin to collapse and buckle. Weird machinery is crushed and leaks out green and violet fluids, that begin to mix and bubble furiously. A strange modulated voice makes regular announcements in a language no one speaks and yet everyone understands.

Clearly, it is now time to leave.

### ALIEN INVASION AVERTED

With the Engineer's death, the characters have eradicated this threat to the Razor once and forever. The explosion is so titanic it even collapses a good portion of the upper seamount, which removes a navigational hazard. The tip of the Trident has been forever blunted. Of course, the shattered remains of *The Flying Fortune* also sink beneath the waves.

Even more importantly, with the loss of their scout, the aliens turn their attention to other worlds and other atrocities. The characters likely never know how close their home world came to calamity. Perhaps, if one of our accidental heroes is a devout follower of a deity, that person learns the truth in vague visions and portentous dreams. Perhaps it is enough that the adventures have slain these obviously alien aberrations and looted their craft.

### CAPTAIN HANDERLY AND *THE SEALORD'S BLESSING*

*The Sealord's Blessing* witnesses the fireworks and quickly appears on the scene to pick up survivors. The characters have no trouble convincing the first mate that Captain Riggs perished in the explosion. In fact, First Mate Handerly is amazed that anyone survived. He greets wild stories of submerged vessels and extradimensional horrors with a fair portion of initial skepticism and disbelief. But still, he is a superstitious sailor and can likely be convinced of almost anything given time and a modicum of proof.

Proof, of course, is something the characters almost certainly have if they care to show the first mate any strange collection of jewels they recovered from the craft. Handerly looks upon these items with wonder and inquires about them no further. He only remarks that the world is full of strange wonders beyond count.

Regardless of what the characters share, Handerly takes possession of *The Sealord's Blessing* in Captain Riggs' absence, becomes Captain Handerly, and perhaps gains a good measure of respect for the bravery of the characters. At the Referee's discretion, Captain Barton Handerly could become a useful contact and ally in Port Shaw. At the very least, he is a skilled sailor in possession of a fine ship. Since it is unlikely that the characters have their own ship by this point in their careers, this makes him a valuable friend indeed.

Whatever treasure the characters collected from the wreckage is theirs to keep. Neither Handerly nor any of the sailors want anything to do with such unusual and possibly cursed wealth. The only exception might be the captain's spyglass. If Handerly sees that our heroes possess that distinctive item, he asks for it so that he may return it to the captain's widow in Port Shaw — a lady by the name of Marlena.

If the characters refuse, Handerly does not fight them, but he loses a great deal of respect for them and considers them little better than petty thieves. If the characters give up the glass, he is impressed with their sense of honor. He may even allow the characters to return it to the widow Marlena themselves. The captain's widow has no use for the spyglass and so offers it to the characters, but only if they help her with this one errand...

### THE WIDOW'S ERRAND

The nature of the widow's errand is left entirely up to the Referee and may serve as a fitting way to entangle the characters in another adventure either in the Razor Coast saga.

### CAPTAIN RIGGS AND THE BIRTH OF A LEGEND

The voyage back to Port Shaw is uneventful, but one of the older sailors a few nights later shares tales of Captain Riggs. He ends with the following words, which the Referee may read or paraphrase.

"So here's to poor old Captain Riggs, as fine a sailor as you'll ever meet. He was a fine gentleman of fortune who, alas, the gods saw fit to consign to a terrible fate. Mourn him, lads, aye mourn him. But take some comfort in this. We were fortunate indeed not to share in his misfortune. For I saw it myself when I was delivering wine to his cabin during one of his binges. Upon his left hand — the black spot!"

### THE REDEMPTION OF CAPTAIN RIGGS

If the characters spare the captain, remove his black leech and do not honor his request for an easy death, Riggs may survive the adventure. If the characters deliver the captain back to his wife in Port Shaw, the Captain eventually recovers from the Black Spot. He rediscovers his sanity in time with the help of his beloved Marlena and eventually returns to command the *Blessing*.

In this possible set of events, Captain Riggs is forever in the debt of the brave heroes who spared his life and won his redemption. They always sail for free aboard the *Blessing*, and he even surrenders the use of the captain's cabin to them. But even more importantly, they find that they have no more loyal friend in Port Shaw than the newly restored Captain Riggs. He knows that every breath he draws, every day he enjoys, it is because of the characters.

Captain Riggs can gather information and look out for characters in Port Shaw. Exactly how useful he is or what he discovers for our heroes is up to the Referee, but Riggs makes an excellent way to introduce new adventure hooks to the party.

Even more than Riggs himself, they also gain the friendship of his wife Marlena. Marlena has little use for boats and is a permanent resident of Port Shaw. Instead, she prefers to make her fortune as a brilliant alchemist. She has no interest in being an adventurer, but she is able to help the characters, creating potions for them from time to time at cost and providing valuable information in arcane matters and from her contacts among the alchemists of Port Shaw.

Marlena is particularly pleased to have the old Colthyn Riggs back. Since the wreck of *The Flying Fortune*, he's been cold and distant. But after losing the Black Spot, Captain Riggs is back to being the man Marlena fell in love with all those years ago. She heals his wounds and sets him once more about a fine course. And in all of Port Shaw, there is likely not a happier couple.

## TROUBLESHOOTING

There are always things that can go wrong in an adventure. Here are a few suggestions that might help resolve those problems.

***My characters figured out immediately that Captain Riggs is an infiltrator.***

This is not a problem. It simply means they are a clever or perhaps paranoid band of characters. After the captain is defeated — whether he is slain or not — the black leech can wriggle out of his glove and slither towards a new host. The fact that the captain was not a bandit, but somehow being controlled should appeal to character curiosity. What is going on here? What happened to *The Flying Fortune*? Use the mystery to move the adventure forward.

***My characters ended up with X piece of world changing alien technology.***

Not to worry; nothing works more than a few hundred feet outside the craft. The strange, semi-sentient energy force that surges through the neh-thalgu ship powers it all. Outside, the technology is simply a broken curiosity. A collector might pay a few gold for it, and a clever wizard or alchemist might be able to salvage a few useable parts. But other than that, it is junk.

***My characters have flooded the alien craft. Do all the monsters drown?***

No. Remember that the Viridian Portal (P-3 above) has a special field that keeps seawater from entering the craft in any substantial quantity. The monsters don't drown. If your characters somehow destroy or defeat this field, then fine— let them flood the craft. This can actually be a very unique way to explore the dungeon.

Still, none of the creatures in it drown. The Engineer dons his gill symbiote and now functions perfectly well underwater. The jellyfish and black leech swarms are now free to roam the ship. The zombies, the vile slashers, and the Vivisectionist never needed to breathe in the first place. And the engine room (the Chamber of Ceaseless Storms) has its own protective field that keeps sea water out.

***My characters somehow convinced the first mate to send lots of sailors instead of just a few.***

Perhaps, if charmed, Handerly could be coerced into sending as many as two dozen sailors and even himself. Ultimately, the sailors are more of a hindrance than they are an aid. Down in the tight quarters of the craft, they are slaughtered by strangle weed, poison gas, vile slashers, and worse. Mostly they make a lot of noise, get in the way and flee in terror when confronted by true monsters. Bringing a large compliment of sailors, honestly, does little to make the characters lives any easier.

***My characters refuse to take the hint and aren't fleeing the ship after the Engineer's death! Is this really a total party kill?***

The author has occasionally been accused of being a nice Referee. I would give them two more warnings. Have the ship lurch violently, doing 2d6 points of damage to anyone who fails a saving throw. If they're still not running for the exit, then have the ship electrify as the reactor core is breached and semi-sentient lightning floods the vessel. Everyone must make another saving throw or take another 3d6 points of electrical damage.

After you warned them three times that the ship is about to explode and they still haven't fled ... yeah, even I am not that nice. This is a total party kill. Maybe the next adventurers are better able to take a hint.

***My characters want to take over The Sealord's Blessing. They forced the Captain to sign an order just before he died or plan to take it by force.***

There is always the option that if the characters come up with a clever way to take the ship, you should let them. Remember that they are stealing a ship. There are likely plenty of people in port who know who the rightful owner of the *Blessing* should be. That makes for a rich source of adventure and could even lead to the character's turning pirate. But if you feel it is yet too early for the characters to have their own vessel, there are ways to keep the ship out of their hands.

The crew of the ship does not stand for such a takeover.

They have been well treated by Riggs and Handerly and have no desire to set sail under the command of reckless adventurers who are likely to get them all killed. They mutiny, and even if the characters win, this leaves them with a ship they likely have little ability to sail. *The Sealord's Blessing* most likely drifts at sea until it is hit by a freak storm that wrecks it upon a nearby island.

And what is on that island? That is up to you...

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# THE BLACK SPOT

by Gary McBride

The first mate drew his blade and formed up what was left of the crew. They steeled their courage and waited for whatever nightmare gave birth to the horrid noises below deck to emerge topside. When the creatures finally ventured into the moonlight, the men's courage broke. They had never seen such otherworldly monstrosities.

The creatures ripped into their faltering ranks and slaughter reigned.

A young but literate sailor named Titus was clever enough to flee...

The Black Spot is an adventure for four to six characters of 5th level. It is a tale told in four parts and should provide sufficient adventure for multiple sessions. This adventure can be used as an excursion anywhere upon the high seas, so it could take place almost anywhere in the fantasy world of your choosing.



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