

PIRATES OF DRINAX:

GODS  
OF  
MARDUK



TRAVELLER

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## CREDITS

### CLASSIC TRAVELLER

Marc Miller

Loren Wiseman, John Harshman, Frank Chadwick, Darryl Hany, Winston Hamilton, Tony Svajlenka, Scott Renner, Doug Poe, David MacDonald, Wayne Roth, Paul R. Banner.

### MONGOOSE TRAVELLER

#### Author

Martin J. Dougherty

#### Editor

Matthew Sprange

#### Layout, Graphic Design

Will Chapman, Amy Perrett

#### Interior Illustrations

Amy Perret

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# T R A V E L L E R INTRODUCTION

The Travellers are hired by an eminent anthropologist to prove that local legends of 'sea gods' are true. This requires a descent into the depths of the world's oceans as well as an investigation of what seems to be a mysterious ancient temple. Along the way, the Travellers much contend with hostile islanders and harsh weather before deciding whether their conclusions should be released at all.

## THE SETTING

Marduk is a habitable world with a breathable atmosphere whose civilisation was comprehensively wrecked during the latter days of the Sindalian Empire. Its continents are thought to be uninhabited, but enclaves survive on many of the world's island groups. These have all regressed back to a primitive level and lost the capability to create ocean-going ships. Isolated from one another, the islanders have developed a variety of cultures and dialects.

However, most enclaves have legends of sea gods who dwell in the deep oceans. Thought to be colossal squid-like creatures, these gods feature as benefactors in some stories, enemies in others, and uncaring but wonderful creatures in a few. Anthropologist Maris Enar has travelled extensively among the survivor populations and collected many tales. A proportion are contradictory, but there are enough similarities that he has become convinced these gods exist.

Marduk's only haven of civilisation is its downport, constructed on an artificial island well away from the indigenous populations. It has a large fishing fleet which provides much of the port's food requirements, and this fleet sometimes recruits locals from the closer island groups. As a result, some garbled versions of the sea gods tales have entered local popular culture, and there are many who are superstitious – both positively and negatively – about deep water.

## THE PATRON

Maris Enar is a bit of a fringe figure as far as serious anthropology goes. He is the sort of expert who gets interviewed on popular vid channels about his controversial new theory, or is invited to comment on some mildly unusual happening that can be made far more interesting with a bit of imagination. This is not to say that he is a liar or crank; Maris Enar is a real scientist whose work has – mainly – withstood the peer-review process. He does, however, operate at the far end of the serious-science continuum from most university-backed academics.

Maris is funded by an investment programme known as Furtherance, which is dedicated to pushing the boundaries of knowledge in all areas and exploring ideas that mainstream science considers not worth the effort. The Furtherance funding process treads a fine line between out-there ideas and genuinely crank theories, but generally puts money behind people who undertake proper research. Maris Enar is one of those who has been funded for several projects, most of which have produced useful knowledge.

Maris is prone to become distracted by big what-if questions rather than concentrating on the details of how to get things done. However, he is aware of this tendency and tries to hire personnel who can make his projects work on a day-to-day basis while he ponders the big questions. He is loyal to those who impress him with their competence, and tries to play fair by everyone. He would not willingly put other people at risk for the sake of discovery, though he can fail to spot obvious hazards and might accidentally wander into a highly dangerous situation.

## HIRING ON

The Travellers might be hired through a third party and make their way to Marduk Downport, or they may be approached as they pass through the world. Either way, the deal they are offered is of the simple-yet-interesting kind.

Anthropologist Maris Enar needs a crew for his submarine, technicians to look after it and an assortment of clever and/or handy people to carry out a range of tasks in his expedition. He has hired a local fishing vessel (quite a big one) and intends to use it to transport his research submarine to a suitable location. There, he will undertake a series of deep dives to search for evidence of Marduk's sea gods. These are thought to be giant squid-like creatures that live in very deep water. They feature in various tales told by the local population but have never been observed.

Maris does not think it will be too difficult to find them, and is not concerned that the sea gods have not been proven to exist. The only part of Marduk inhabited by advanced humans is the starport, built on an artificial island close to one of the continents. Since the sea gods live in deep water, it stands to reason that they have not been sighted – it is not as if anyone has gone looking until now.

Maris is offering Cr5000 each plus a small expenses account for a three-week contract with his expedition. Everyone on the core personnel roster is entitled to bonuses if the expedition turns up something saleable, and Maris points out that his staff have often been invited to appear on vid shows to discuss their adventures. That can command a very decent fee and might open other doors if the Travellers play their cards right.

Maris has secured the services of the *Marduk Lightfoot*, a large and mostly-automated industrial trawler whose machinery is well suited to winching his research submarine in and out of the water. When not diving into the depths, the submarine (imaginatively named *Maris' Submarine*) will rest on a cradle in the trawler's well deck. This is normally used to store large amounts of fish, and stinks to high heaven.

The trawler is quite a large boat, but requires a crew of only four: the ship's master/navigator, an engine technician and two deck hands who normally operate the ship's machinery as well as carrying out odd maintenance jobs. The *Marduk Lightfoot* is a family business; her master is Elayn Kirellie, whose husband Mitchell and son Jayce handle most of the heavy work on deck. Jayce is engaged to the ship's technician, Eugenie.

The crew are competent and work well together, but are a bit baffled by what Maris is trying to do. They have no objections to serving as a base ship for his expedition; the fee they were offered more than covers lost fishing time. Three of them really do not see the point, but are quite happy to get paid to do something unusual for a few days.

Eugenie has misgivings about the mission however. Her family can trace their origins to islander stock, and she was raised on tales of malevolent sea creatures. She does not really believe in the sea gods but is still uncomfortable about looking for them. However, her loyalty to the crew is such that she will do her not inconsiderable best to make the mission a success despite her own reservations.

# FURTHERANCE

PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF KNOWLEDGE

# GODS OF MARDUK

The first challenge after meeting Maris and the crew of *Marduk Lightfoot* is to ready the ship for its mission. This involves setting up a cradle for the submarine and a harness for winching it in and out of the water. Maris has assembled a fair amount of steel, components and cables but actually translating this into a workable rig is beyond his capabilities.

A Difficult (10+) Mechanics check (INT, 1D hours) would be suitable, and other Travellers can join in with the hard labour or create an appropriate task chain.

The crew could give it a go but they would be working on a best-guess basis beyond their field of knowledge. They are capable people, but the task is more complex than expected and will take some time to accomplish. If the Travellers can figure it out, they not only have a chance to get the ship to sea a few days earlier but also to win the respect of the locals, who admire competence and the ability to solve problems with materials at hand.

The referee can make as much or as little of the fitting-out as seems desirable. There are opportunities for complex bargaining with officials at the maritime port, evenings in a local fisherfolk bar and interactions with the crew of the *Marduk Lightfoot* which might lead to a deeper understanding of how some of the locals view the sea gods. As with any other part of the adventure, the referee should judge how to proceed by how much fun the Travellers are having. In theory, converting the fishing vessel and carousing with the locals could provide fodder for several sessions of gaming. Once the Travellers are ready to move on with the adventure, the referee should let them.

Once the ship is ready, Maris decides to spend a couple of days conducting trials. This is a fairly tedious business, involving winching the submarine slowly out of the cradle and over the side, freeing it from the cables and moving around a little, then doing it all in reverse. Maris is keen to get on with the expedition, but he is not an idiot and knows this stage of the mission is extremely important. He will not be able to help being a bit impatient, and may snap at people but will then take pains to explain he is not upset with anyone for this stage taking time. He is just keen to get going...

The submarine is designed to carry up to six personnel including its pilot, and Maris wants to use this time to get everyone who is likely to be carrying out any task

aboard the sub familiarised with underwater operations. He will offer anyone who wants it at least a brief dive in the sub. Eugenie is visibly uncomfortable with the idea but gives it a go anyway, if only to have something to tell her grandkids about.

The seas around the starport region, where the initial trials are undertaken, are shallow and not prone to bad weather. Travellers who are interested can undertake a series of dives in the research submarine, and will get a chance to practice with its sample-collection equipment. This takes the form of a set of tool-equipped arms on the submarine's nose plus several remotely operated vehicles. There are two fairly large ones (about half the size of a human) which can collect samples and bring them back to the sub, and several small ones which serve mainly as remote camera and light platforms.

The submarine also has a pair of deep-diving suits aboard, and an airlock for delivering them into the water. These can be operated – albeit not with great agility – by anyone who has the Vacc Suit skill. Maris is not particularly keen to let people he has just met loose with his suits, but Travellers who demonstrate their competence will be able to convince him that a few forays in the suits should be built into the mission plan.

The test period concludes with a 'full dress rehearsal', with the sub descending into a deeper area of water surrounded by its drones. This armada of lights descending into the ocean, with all the platforms filming one another, is tremendously dramatic when played back at the shipboard party that night. Afterward, Maris declares the mission is a go.

## AT SEA

The voyage to Maris' intended operational area takes three days, during which the weather remains fine despite an occasional gusty wind. With preparations fully made there is relatively little for the Travellers to do except lounge about on deck and check over the equipment just one more time.

The referee should use this section of the adventure and the previous one to establish relationships that may be important later. Who likes whom, who is seen as behaving a bit suspiciously, who might have an ulterior motive... groundless suspicions or friendships beginning at this stage might influence the outcome of the adventure as a whole.

Travellers can learn more or less all there is to know about *Marduk Lightfoot*. The vessel has six rather small crew cabins and, with two couples making up her crew, that leaves four for the Travellers and Maris. Personnel who cannot be squeezed into these cabins will end up improvising somewhere to sleep. The crew cabins, a tiny common area and galley, and some equipment stowage are all located forward, under the deck house that contains the control room ('bridge' is a rather grand term for it). Engine spaces are aft, along with heavy spares such as nets, cables and the like. Between the two is the main well deck, which is normally full of fish. Cranes (normally used to handle nets) line the flanks of the well deck.

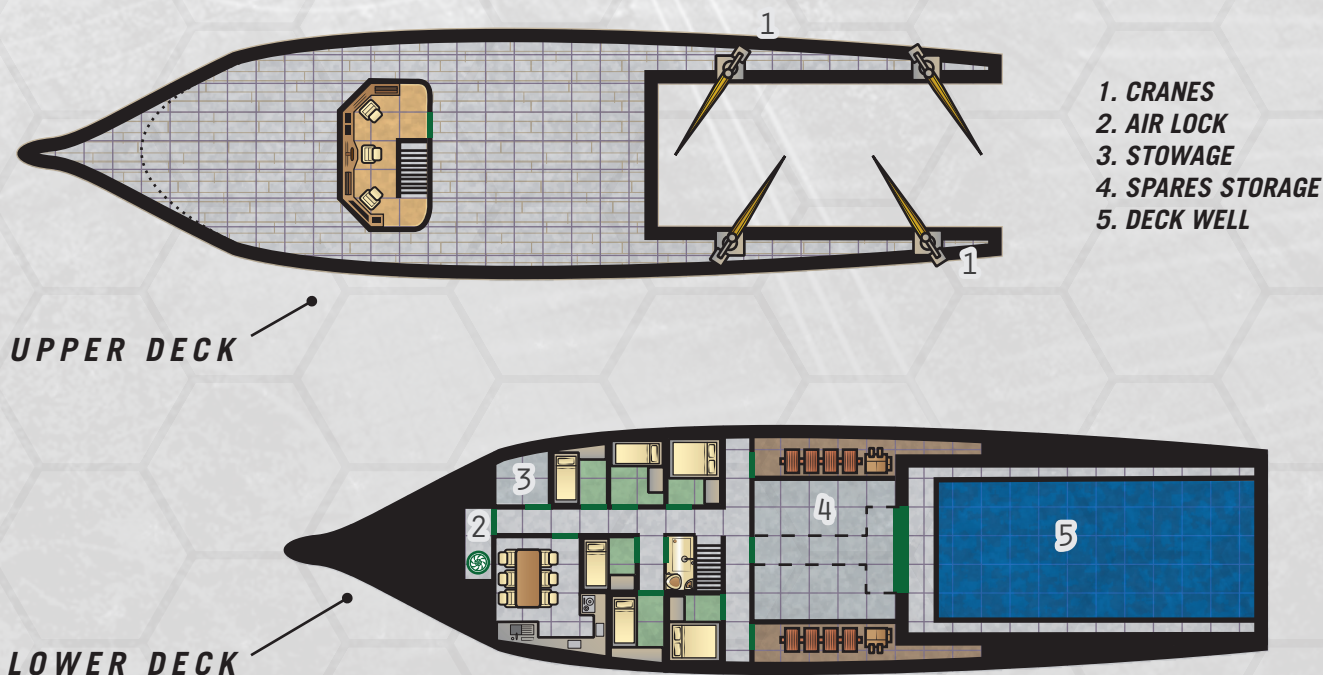
This is a fairly small world to be wandering around for days on end. It is possible to be out of sight of everyone else, but rarely for long. Anyone managing it would either be engaged in working in some awkward space or else deliberately avoiding contact. If suspicions are aroused, there can be few plausible explanations for where anyone was at the time no-one else could see them.

## OBJECTIVE REACHED

Eventually, the *Marduk Lightfoot* reaches her operational area. A few mountaintops, part of the Reinich Archipelago, can be seen in the distance. Maris intends to go ashore there and 'have a look around, maybe talk to the locals' – he has visited the area before and can communicate reasonably well in the local dialect. Eugenie does not like this idea very much; her family came from another archipelago and she still harbours some mistrust of other islanders. The rest of the crew have no strong opinions, but warn that some of the islander populations can be hostile for reasons that may not make sense to outsiders.

The seabed shelves very suddenly east of the Reinich Archipelago, with deep water for hundreds of kilometres before the next archipelago. It is here, announces Maris, that the sea gods will be found. The mission proper will begin with a dive in the coastal waters to create an accurate map of the seabed and nutrient-bearing currents running from the islands and shallow waters over the edge of the deep. This will create a region where there is plenty of food, which will surely attract prey for larger sea creatures such as the gods of Marduk.

## MARDUK LIGHTFOOT



In the meantime, the *Marduk Lightfoot* sights several local fishing boats. These are much smaller than the industrial trawlers of the port region, and more primitive. There is no real friction between local fishermen and the port-based fleet; Marduk's population is too low for fish stocks to become depleted. Nor is there much in the way of contact; the locals just go about their business in the distance and ignore the larger vessel operating just off their coast.

## THE FIRST DIVE

The first dive is an exciting business, not least because no matter how many times the crew have practiced winching the submarine, doing it under field conditions inevitably presents a host of new problems. None are particularly major, though there are a few alarming sways and a creak or two from the cranes. Soon, however, the submarine is in the water and ready to begin an exploration of the coastal region.

Maris spreads the remotely operated vehicles out wide as the submarine cruises parallel to the shoreline. Data pours in, concerning water temperature, current direction, salinity, organic particles present and all manner of other information. Meanwhile, a map of the seabed is produced. Among the things that stand out are shallows caused by sediment washed from the islands, with a steady spill over the edge and into the deep water. This is exactly what Maris was looking for. He states that the first deep dive will be between the two largest spills.

There are some unusual returns on the seabed map, however. One curious shallow area is very jagged where the rest of the seabed is smooth. It is close to the shore, but the water is deep enough to permit the submarine to investigate. Maris insists upon doing so.

The tumbled area is overgrown with seaweed, but is unmistakably the remains of several maritime ships. Most seem to be big freighters, which were apparently all sunk at roughly the same time. Their arrangement is curious too. It is as if the vessels were proceeding in two parallel lines astern when they were overcome by some disaster. Enemy action is the obvious first thought; civilisation on Marduk died hard when the Sindalian Empire bombarded the world.

Further investigation suggests this was not the case. There are no signs of blast damage on the ships, and no obvious holes in the hull in most cases. Indeed, it seems as if the vessels were filled with building materials and then deliberately sunk to create a breakwater. No

part of any ship protrudes above the surface, but the two regions of suddenly very shallow water they create would cause large waves to break well short of the coast. It would seem that someone took steps to defend this stretch of coast from danger – or there may be an alternative explanation. What if the ships were sunk to fence some living thing away from the coast?

Either way, Maris is keen to investigate the coastline. It is heavily overgrown and very rocky, and he is fairly sure there are no humans living on the nearest islands. None has a good natural harbour – indeed, the *Marduk Lightfoot* will not be able to approach the coastline even if it could find a way to get within the ring of ships. Local fishing boats might land with some difficulty, but there are easier and more sheltered places to set up a port. The small inflatable boats carried by the *Marduk Lightfoot* should be able to get ashore without undue difficulty.

Maris spends an excited evening speculating on what might be found ashore, and orders an expedition for the next day. He notes this particular island is the closest to the deep ocean and would be worst hit by a tsunami or bad storm. He is not sure how that is significant, but feels sure that it is... somehow.

## EXPLORATION ASHORE

Going ashore is a little tricky, since there are jagged rocks in places and forest right down to the shoreline in others. However, with a little skilful boat handling – a Difficult (10+) Seafarer (personal) check (DEX) – it is possible to find a suitable spot.

Once ashore, the Travellers and Maris can begin to explore. The area is a little spooky, with jagged black volcanic rocks and thick tree cover almost right down to the water's edge. There are plenty of little distractions, such as edible fruits, clear streams of icy-cold pure water and small creatures that jump from branch to branch among the trees.

After a while, someone finally stumbles upon something... different. What appears to be a rocky outcrop from even a short distance is suddenly revealed as a carved rockface. Examining it, Maris almost explodes with excitement. It depicts humans apparently in trouble in the water, some of them on the shore and some in boats, with giant tentacles rising from the deep. These apparently menace the boats, tipping them over. Here and there a human is in the grasp of the tentacles, while others stand on the shore making arm gestures that might be construed as worship, terror or even cheering.





The carvings are beautifully done, though very weathered. They look like the work of advanced tools – the rock is polished and might have been cut with an energy device rather than worked with chisels. There are gaps, cleverly concealed by shadow and curvature, which lead into an open space within the rocks. Bound on all sides by tall carved faces of black rock, shadowed by their height, and with the sea rising and falling in a pool at the centre (it is linked to the open sea by an underwater channel), the space is distinctly eerie.

Maris scrambles about all over the place, repeatedly all but falling into the pool as he attempts to see everything at once. His explanation of the carvings on the interior, if it can be called that, is incoherent and at times little more than a babble. The gist of it is that someone carved a lot of images of tentacles coming out of the sea on this rock face, and there are parallels with carving styles seen elsewhere, as well as ideas found in other cultures. This is a temple, he declares, but whether the gods are good or bad he cannot say. They certainly seem scary and powerful.

Between the noise of the surf and Maris' excited commentary, it is more than likely that nobody sees the stranger entering the temple. When they do, there is a moment where everything is still. The stranger is human, but clad in animal skins and armed with a stone-tipped spear. He has an animal look about him, staring around like a creature of the forest rather than a member of civilised society. After a few seconds the stranger lets out a weird screeching yell and darts out of the temple.

If anyone follows, they are in time to see the stranger vanish into the treeline at speed. He is not fleeing in terror though; he moves fast but purposefully and with care. In seconds he is lost to sight. Attempting to follow would be hard; the stranger seems to have left no tracks when he entered the forest. However, he is not gone long.

After a few moments, weird yells can be heard from various points nearby and a spear suddenly flies from among the trees. It strikes very close to one of the Travellers, after which the thrower steps out where she can be seen – a different person – and points to her arm, the spear, the narrowly-missed Traveller and her chest. The message she is trying to communicate is 'Warning shot. Next one will be lethal'.

The Travellers may or may not get this, and might respond with violence. If they injure any of the primitives, they will be attacked with a volley of spears thrown with lethal intent by people adept at hiding among the trees. If they withdraw, there is a chance to later establish more friendly contact.

The best possible outcome here is for Maris and the Travellers to head back to their boats and depart. If this happens, Maris will be excited and pleased, and begins planning an expedition to make friendly contact. He will be deeply upset if any of the islanders are killed, even if it is in necessary self-defence.

## Islanders

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE	
Human		-		-	
STR	9	INT	7	SKILLS	
DEX	8	EDU	3	Athletics (endurance) 1, Gun	
END	8	SOC	6	Combat (archaic) 1, Melee (blade) 2, Navigation 0, Recon 1, Stealth 1, Survival 2	
EQUIPMENT		Spear (2D)			



## Referee's Note

These primitives are the descendants of an islander community isolated from the rest of the archipelago. They have evolved a basic hunter-gatherer culture and regressed to barbarism, but are not fools. They are, however, frightened of outsiders – especially those who have intruded into their temple. The primitives worship the temple, though they do not really know what it means. They have a language of their own, which is heavily corrupted and very different from the dialects spoken elsewhere on Marduk. They do have a vague concept of the 'destruction of the world' and believe their island was the only one saved from bad things that happened. All they really want is to be left alone to worship their sea gods and live their simple lives.

The primitives are not really a violent people, and will content themselves with scaring the Travellers off if they start to retreat. This could be comical, with the primitives making a big show of giving chase and hurling spears that are clearly not intended to come anywhere close to the target. They get rapidly more accurate if the Travellers do not retreat, however.

Maris urges the Travellers to make a show of fleeing and not to fight back, hoping to return and meet these people more amicably some day. He knows there is little chance of this if a fight develops, and if the Travellers have a lot of weapons it is possible that this potentially fascinating isolated culture might be entirely wiped out. He will do as much as he can to prevent this.

The primitives' existence is not known to the people living on the rest of the Archipelago, since they mostly stay in the forest. There are only about a hundred of them, heavily inbred and suffering from various disorders as a result. Within two or three generations they may die out completely, a process that could be sped up by trigger-happy Travellers.

The Travellers may never find out the truth about the primitives, but they are in fact the descendants of people who took refuge on the island during the final bombardment of Marduk. The ships sunk to create a breakwater were already there at the time – this island was a holy place to some of the people of Marduk, and the temple dates back hundreds, possibly thousands, of years. It was thus a natural place to seek sanctuary when the world was under attack.

The carvings do not represent people being attacked by tentacles from under the water; quite the opposite. They are a hopeful representation of the sea gods as rescuers of those in danger upon the sea, based upon an ancient folk-tale of a ship rescued and its crew plucked to safety upon this very island. As subsequent events may show, that tale is actually true.

## THE DEEP DIVE

Whatever the outcome on the island, there is little that can be done there at present and Maris is keen to get on with the mission at hand, especially now the existence of the sea gods has been 'confirmed' by finding the temple. He cannot wait for first light the following day, pacing around the edge of the deck in the pre-dawn. When it is finally light enough, he impatiently oversees the launching of the submarine.

Astute Travellers might note that a couple of things are not quite right. The air smells different today, and the wind is fresher. Dark clouds are gathering over the deep water, and the local fishing boats sighted previously are nowhere in sight. Maris insists on going ahead anyway.

The dive is an incredible experience for those aboard the submarine and anyone watching the monitors set up in the *Marduk Lightfoot's* deck house. Powerful lights illuminate the seabed as the submarine glides towards the edge of the abyss, then below it there is nothing but darkness. Maris makes his descent quite close to the cliff-like edge of the archipelago's continental shelf, recording footage of the changing rocks as the submarine descends.

The ocean is a couple of kilometres deep here, though only about half that at the foot of the shelf. After this, it descends steeply but gradually, over a seabed fed by falling sediment from above. Life is abundant in the dark water, including luminous jellyfish-like creatures and strange blobby things that gloop about in the seabed vegetation. There are fish, too, but nothing that resembles a sea god.

The dive is intended for several hours, but the crew of the *Marduk Lightfoot* are increasingly uneasy about the weather. A storm seems to be coming in from the open ocean, and with a lee shore behind them they might have to move their vessel out of position. Recovering the submarine will be impossible if the ship is rolling heavily. Elayn urges Maris to come back up, but he keeps stalling and trying to bargain for 'just another fifteen minutes', despite the fact that returning will take quite some time and the weather is worsening.

Then, something is sighted in the seabed silt. For a moment, Maris is convinced it is a sea god, but it is not, merely a disturbance in the silt caused by underwater currents. He takes the submarine closer to investigate, and suddenly the navigational sonar goes berserk. Something is closing with the submarine at high speed, possibly on a collision course. The submarine is bounced sideways by contact with... something large and squid-like. Only a fleeting impression is possible, of a long body with multiple tentacles. Then it is gone and the submarine is in desperate trouble.

The collision has driven the nose of the submarine down, causing it to jam in the seabed mud. Damage alarms indicate various systems are malfunctioning, though at least the hull is not leaking. Well, not much.

Backing the screw fails to pull the submarine out of the mud. The sonar contact comes around again, flashing close by the hull as Maris tries to free his vessel. There is a second collision, then another, as giant tentacles grip the submarine. Another collision rocks the boat, and suddenly it is free. The screw is damaged and propulsion is erratic, but the ballast tanks will allow a controlled rise to the surface. It would be unwise to go too fast, since the changing pressure could split the hull, but with several sea gods in the water below, apparently intent in bashing the submarine to pieces, the Travellers might want to take the risk.

By the time the submarine reaches the surface, the storm has arrived. The *Marduk Lightfoot* pounds gallantly into a head sea to try to reach the stricken research vessel, which is rolling sickeningly as the waves pound it. The submarine's engines are intended for gentle movement in deep water, not fighting a storm on the surface. It is clear that the submarine cannot survive for long, but getting the crew out and aboard the *Marduk Lightfoot* – or somehow bringing it aboard – is going to be a difficult business.

## THE STORM

The storm is bad enough that the *Marduk Lightfoot* is in real danger. The submarine cannot possibly survive on the surface, and is too badly damaged to dive deep enough to get below the surface turbulence. The only answer seems to be to get the submarine back aboard the *Marduk Lightfoot* or take off its crew. It might also be possible to run the submarine ashore on the island, though that means passing over the sunken vessels in a very turbulent sea... and maybe having to deal with the locals as well.

The crew of the *Marduk Lightfoot* have fought seas like this before, but never tried to bring anything aboard during a storm. Their inclination is to abandon the submarine after getting the crew off somehow. That might be possible for a brave crew in a small boat, but it is certainly not a task to be taken lightly.

What the crew will not do is abandon anyone unless the situation is hopeless. You just do not leave people to die at sea – unless they have done something to deserve it. Thus, if the Travellers decide to do something bull-headedly stupid, the crew of the *Marduk Lightfoot* might cut and leave them to it... but even then, they are more likely to get killed trying to save the idiots from their self-inflicted fate.



Inventive Travellers might come up with all manner of solutions. Whatever they decide to do, the rescue of the submarine's crew will be a dangerous business, fraught with danger. In all likelihood, the scene will be one of Travellers clinging to safety lines while struggling to keep their footing amid mountainous seas. The submarine will bash against the side of the ship, causing damage to both, if it is brought alongside or lifted aboard. The damage might be survivable, but leaks are unlikely to be welcome in the present conditions.

The battle against the storm will be dramatic and dangerous even after the submarine's crew are rescued. It may be that the *Marduk Lightfoot* is driven aground, in which case a new encounter with the islanders is likely. The ship's engines or screws might become damaged, or equipment could come loose and injure people. In short, the referee should throw all manner of hazards and difficult choices at the Travellers. Should they try to jury-rig the disabled engine, or save Elayn from being washed overboard? Try to circle the island and get into its shelter, or run ashore and ground the vessel to prevent it sinking?

Anyone who goes overboard in a storm like this is dead... under normal circumstances. However, today is different. A Traveller or crewmember whose safety line breaks (an entirely likely occurrence) will more than likely end up in the water, pounded by giant waves and certain to drown despite a lifejacket. And then there are the tentacles....

The sea gods will come to the rescue of humans struggling in the water, depositing the terrified and half-drowned survivor inside the ring of sunken ships where the waves will carry him ashore, close to the temple. This is a dangerous and painful experience, but survivable. Comrades might well think the Traveller was killed, of course, and then there are the locals....

The locals' attitude to anyone washed ashore after such a rescue is rather different. Assuming the Travellers did not engage in a massacre earlier on, the locals will approach close enough to be seen, and deposit food and water on the ground before darting back into the forest. They will even be amenable to friendly contact,

if handled gently, once they have seen that their gods favour the survivors, as they favoured the islanders in their time of need. This raises all manner of possibilities, but those are beyond the scope of this adventure.

For now, it is enough for the Travellers to weather the storm and survive. In the morning they might begin to comprehend the importance of what has happened here. Maris has proven the existence of the sea gods of Marduk... and they seem to be benevolent.

## EXPLANATIONS

Maris has a few ideas about what happened, though he is pretty confused and more or less guessing. He thinks the submarine's sonar and lights must have confused one of the sea gods, causing the original collision when it came to investigate the newcomer into its deep-water world. Far from attacking the submarine, the sea god (he really wants a better name for them) then tried to help by freeing it from the seabed silt. Repeated bashing worked, though it was alarming to the crew and damaging to the submarine.

The sea gods are clearly able to communicate with one another – at least one additional creature came to assist the first one in its rescue attempt – and would appear to be well-disposed towards humans. Does this mean the sea gods are intelligent? Maris thinks so, but is not sure how smart they are. Are they psionic? There is no indication of this, other than the fact that they seem to be attracted to distressed people in the water and want to help them. He puts the idea forward that they might be telepathic or at least empathic to some extent. And why do the sea gods help people? Maris has no idea about that one, but clearly it is a trait that has been repeated.

Perhaps the islanders have some answers. Maris starts talking about an expedition to live among them and study their culture, perhaps even discovering their interpretation of the carvings at the temple. But that is a story for another day.... In the meantime, the Travellers and Maris will have to consider whether the world should be told about the islanders and their mysterious offshore gods.