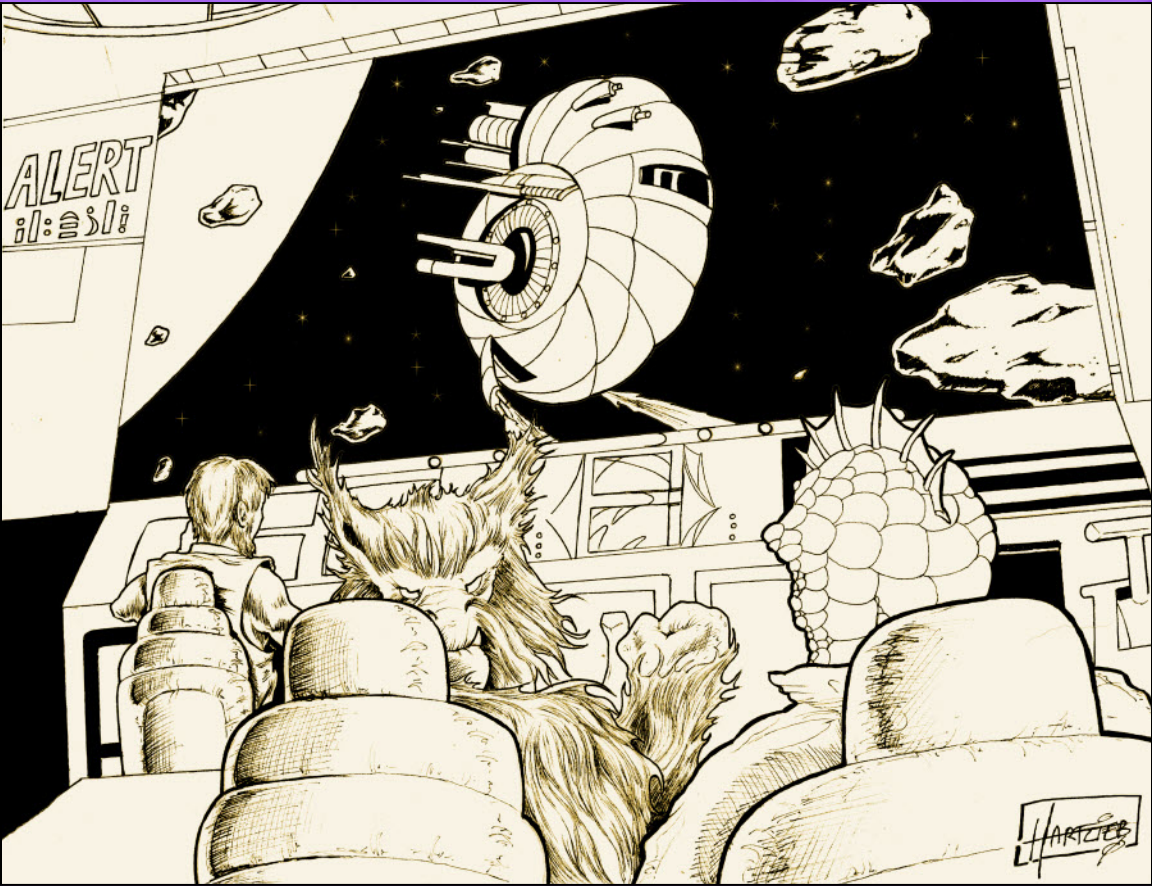




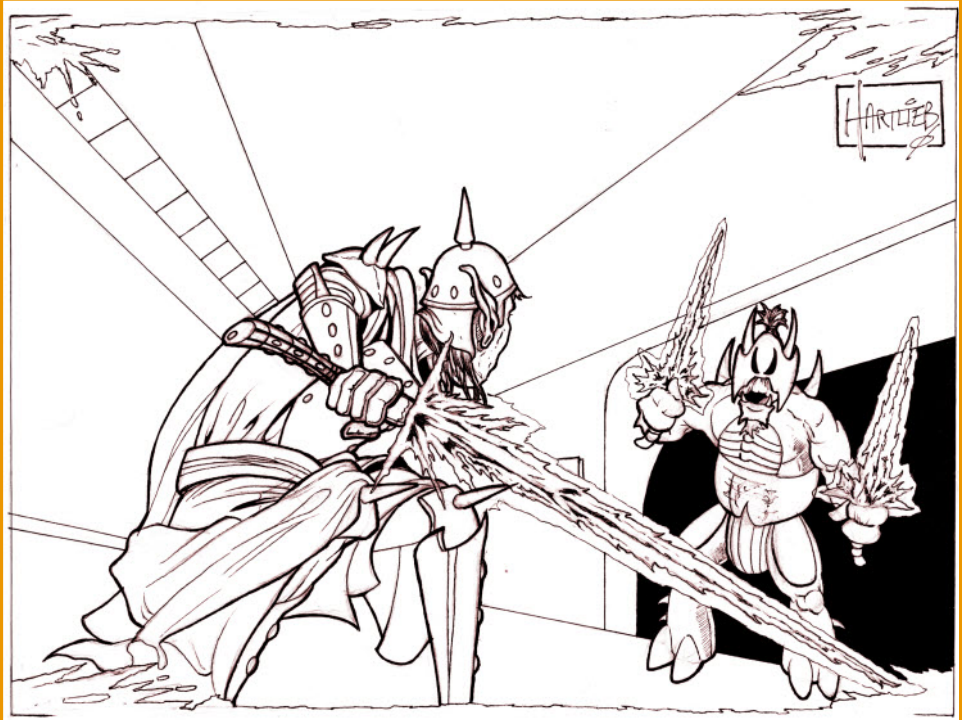
# NEW KHAZAN

## The Quest for Trollstar: Part I BY TOM K. LONEY



# Cloudbusting

# Quest for Trollstar



*Requires the Tunnels & Trolls™ rules published by Flying Buffalo or Fiery Dragon for use.*



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# Cloudbusting

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## **"Cloudbusting"**

First scenario in *the Quest for Troll-Star* campaign for the *Tunnels and Trolls New Khazan* campaign setting.

By Tom K. Loney

During the course of an interstellar diplomatic conference, an excuse for the GM to have various kindred from throughout the 9,000 Worlds assembled together, which is getting nowhere, and taking its time doing so, the PCs will be contacted by Balbus Pewter, a hobb merchant who believes he has discovered a major find of space wreckage and could use some space delvers to secure the item for his company. He would like to hire the assembled walkabouts for a couple days away from the meetings to assist his own team. Additionally, a scholar of ancient history, a goblin named Zag Hilag, the Wise, is coming along in case the ship is worth more than salvage.

The ship is in an erratic orbit around a gas giant, Squibus-7, that is five light years from New Khazan. The fluctuating orbit would explain why it has not been detected until recently. The sensor readings that Balbus Pewter's company has collected indicate that it is one massive piece of spell-ship.

The Squibus system is fairly well charted, but besides some mining settlements on the inner planets, it is uninhabited. The first three planets are too close to the yellow star to have anything but infernal climates. The fourth through sixth planets are about the size of Earth or Mars, but too cold and airless to be comfortable for most forms of known life, except maybe green trolls. Squibus-7 is a medium sized gas giant, barely larger than our Neptune, and mostly comprised of red and blue clouds, and has fourteen moons. There is an eighth planet which is a larger gas giant with thirty satellites.

### **The Hunt for the Mystery Ship.**

Finding the spell-ship will be fraught with dangers. Even in the upper atmosphere of Squibus-7 it is stormy and turbulent and the planets gravity will make navigation very hard. This means a 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl SR on DEX by pilot every 24 hours to avoid a mishap to be determined by the GM. The kremm waves of the planet will make ship scanning devices almost useless, meaning that most of the hunting will have to be done by eye. A 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl SR on LK must be made by only one PC per day to spot a faint glimmer of metal in the buffeting skies around the explorers.

Once spotted, it will only require a 1<sup>st</sup> lvl SR on Dex to pilot the ship close enough to the drifting vessel to get a good look at it.

### **And What a Big Ship It Is.**

This spell-ship before the delvers is massive, about as big as any of the battle-station/ships of the empires of known space, and resembles a snail

more than anything else. Its own kremm field will be powerful enough to actually draw the discovering ship into its orbit and steady it from the gravity pull of Squibus-7. If the PCs do not think to ask, a 1<sup>st</sup> lvl SR on INT will tell the players that the vessel does not have enough Whizz for an Upsidaisy Grapple to work as a tow cord.

Though the ship's orbit is changing, there is very little that would indicate that it is in distress. Occasional jets of gas will expel from valves, as if the ship is self-adjusting. Scans will indicate no life forms and no doors, windows, or openings of any sort, except for the exhaust ports.

As the delvers watch "The Shell," a pet name that Zag Hilag will bestow upon it, they will see that it floats upwards for a few hours, and then releases massive amounts of gasses before it starts descending again. After a few minutes of falling, the external valves open to draw in gasses around it, which will slow the descent to a gradual lifting again.

If no one else says anything Zag Hilag will state, "It's bobbing in the surf, happy as a clam."

## And Now What?

While the delvers can always go back and get together the dozens of ships required for towing the vessel out of Squibus-7's orbit back to New Khazan and Balbus Pewter's Salvage Yards, there are more than a few reasons why not to. There are the logistics of all those ships, and the cost would cut heavily into any profits. Zag Hilag will state that the ship looks like it will require years of study and should not be salvaged at all. He will also warn that the ship in front of them, for whatever reason, might not want to go, and it looks big enough to make all sorts of trouble. It should dawn on the group that further exploration of the Shell is the best course of action here.

There is one single "door" made for PC-sized kin to enter and it is at the far end of the outer hull of the Shell, where the snail like pattern closes in on itself. While specifically maneuvering the search vessel there, only a 7<sup>th</sup> lvl SR on LK will help the PCs find it. Once at the door, a Knock Knock Spell or device capable of it will do the trick to open the airlock's outer door.

Another way to gain access is to go through the intake/exhaust vents. Suited up PCs can be sucked into the ship's open valves and into the fuel intake to end up in the "Boiler Room," and quite literally into the Boiler itself.

PCs must make a 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl SR on SP to avoid 2d worth of damage from being banged about on the way, if not aided by a (what?) See "the Boiler Room" for more details.

A quick note about moving about the ship: A lot of the ship has artificial gravity plating, so the rising and falling of the craft is compensated for. Still, there will be frequent moments of weights shifting and a bit of a wobble. The GM should roll two d3 at the top of every hour of play to pre-determine how many "Slip Checks" he will require the explorers to make. A "slip

check" requires a 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl SR on SP to avoid falling sideways as the floor shifts, a critical failure indicating the PC takes d3 damage.

## The Outermost Bay.

This room is massive. Just beyond the airlock, the PCs will step into a place that would make three or four sports stadiums seem small. It starts out a few meters wide and continues to widen to where the walls are not actually visible from each other. Fourteen orbs glowing with what appears to be radiant sunlight provide this room with the effect of a sunny day, which is helpful as there is a massive forest growing throughout it.

There is plenty of air and heat in this chamber. There is insect life and many of the plants will move casually about the place. Once in a while one of the plants will chomp on a passing insect. The sloping floor of the chamber will be covered with a hand's length of dark rich soil. Along the walls veins of what appears to be Ysgril root conveys the atmosphere and moisture to other parts of the ship.

It shouldn't surprise the group that the plants are carnivorous. Hopefully the party is wearing space suits as the plants cannot get through their armor, and after some initial probing they will cease the unrewarding activity. PCs without a helmet will require a 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl SR on DX to get the helmet back on before a random vine does d6 damage tasting him. Someone without a suit will be fighting **2d MR30 Carnivorous Plants** in about thirty seconds as they smell the meat. The number of attacking plants will increase by 2d every ten minutes that unprotected flesh is available.

After one hundred points of damage are inflicted on the hungry forest, one of the little suns will move closer and start throwing 8d balls of fire to stop the harmful invaders. These **Little Suns** are **MR1000**, each fireblast takes away from its MR overall, but it will be impervious to most attacks that the PCs can make (what attacks will work?). When one of the suns drops below 50% of its MR, the other suns will move in to help it.

Throughout the forest are hollow rocks that resemble Styrofoam structures, which contain colonies of the insects that have been feeding the plants. Though these insects fly, they are more akin to termites than anything else and will only creep out any squeamish PCs.

At the far end of the bay, after about a mile and a half of trekking, the PCs will find another airlock passage.

## The Village

About half the size of the outermost bay, this area is still massive, three-quarters of a mile worth of what appears to have been crew quarters. Situated along two avenues of passageways, there are twenty stories of compartments, accessible by thousands of stairwells, and what appears to have been fully operational lifts in transparent tubes. Each level's balcony

and stairwell is constructed of latticed metal parts that allows for maximum air flow. The rooms vary in size and furniture, indicating that the crew of the Shell was as varied in Kindred as most of the more populated worlds of the 9KW.

The rooms are archaic in their fixtures, with hand-pumps for water, and oil lamps for lighting. Dust about two fingers deep coats almost everything. All notes and data are kept on papyrus that crumbles when anything gets within two steps of it.

A few empty insect hives are near the Outermost entrance but they have long since eaten any wood and died off. Throughout the structures Ysgril root winds along the nooks and crannies providing air circulation and warmth.

Characters may want to take off their helmets, but the dust and staleness of the air may be very unpleasant. Along the far wall the group will find three entrances to the next section.

## **The Factories Massive**

There are three distinct sections to this portion of the ship. All three corridors narrow steadily along their quarter mile length to a single airlock passage way at the far end. This airlock is actually big enough to drive large trucks through.

While there is a mist in the area, there is actually very little air, and it is quite cold, just above freezing. While stained and crusted over Will-O-Wisp bulbs are still functioning enough to provide illumination here and there, it is very dark and shadowy. Ysgril root has started to creep in from the previous section but barely enough to handle the atmosphere in these arrays of machines and other technologies.

First Entrance: This corridor is fifteen stories high and filled with rusted over Huffer-Puffers. Every now and then a shut down Bot reclines where it was last functioning.

Tearing into these dead Bots will provide plenty of pillage, including a strange device with a small crank handle and wires attached to a Pink Krestle crystal. This is actually a jump starter for smaller crystals in the dormant state, though it will not recharge a spent Krestle piece.

A 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl SR on IN will allow a party member to recharge the kremmbatteries of the Bots. It will squawk unintelligible noises then get back working on the machine that it is next to. If ten or more of these Bots get up and running, enough Huffer-Puffers will start functioning to start cleaning up the air and warming things up throughout the entire section in about an hour. Taking off their helmets, the PCs will be able to breathe fresh air without any adverse effects. In a few days the working Huffer-Puffers will clean up the Village area as well.

Second Entrance: As many stories as the first corridor, this avenue has a

much more varied array of machines, for many, many different purposes. Most of the machines are fashioned after statues of various Kindred types, each holding different tools or other items. This is basically the machine shop of the vessel. There are only a few Bots here and there as most of the machines are actually Living Golems, awaiting a single charge of WIZ discharge as a signal to awaken and begin interactions with the outside world.

These living statues will speak in the "Common Language" of Trollworld, a language not spoken for at least four thousand years. Characters equipped with Ear Shells will have to spend three times the amount of WIZ to translate the speech. Zag Hilag and any other PC with a linguistic or other applicable Talent can attempt to figure out what is being said with a 4 lvl SR. Failing to translate, the Living statues will busy themselves with some work that they have left around the place before going dormant after pointing to the far end of the chamber.

Third Entrance: This is an enormous lake of fresh water, which has been cleaned by the thick walls of Ysgril root running throughout the area. The colder temperatures have been keeping the plant near dormant and not fully functioning.

Any PCs moving into the water will be attacked by giant **Algae Wombats MR d6 x 10** each hungry for new organic matter.

At the far end of the corridor there will be three dozen specialized water-skimming Bots that are programmed to hunt down Algae Wombats. Though right now, even all of them awakened will be too outnumbered to do the job effectively.

### Docking Bay

About the same size as the Factories Massive, just slightly smaller, by a kilometer or three, is an area which contains almost a thousand bay doors, undetectable from the outside of the ship, of various shapes and sizes. These ports could house dozens of average sized spell-ships, and a few hundred smaller sizes as well. To move through the area there are passages, some very wide, some only catwalks, leading to docking areas and suspended rooms. Off of these passageways there is no gravity, and a PC moving, or falling, off of one must make a 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl SR on SP to catch a securing line and avoid a whole slew of free-fall acrobatics to get back to a passage way.

Specialized Bots are harnessed at each of the docks and in a dormant state. They can be awakened, but unless the PC has a ship to be repaired, it will just float in front of the party and make unintelligible squawks.

Making their way along the gangplanks and walkways from the edge of the Bay to the far end will require four 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl SR on LK or INT to avoid



running into dead ends.

## The Library

Much smaller than any chamber seen yet, this massive sprawling collection of magically-preserved parchments is only as wide and long as sixteen soccer fields, and fifteen stories high. Unless the Huffer-Puffers in the Factories Massive section of the ship are functioning fully, the area will be airless and quite cold. There are active Bots running around the place whose job it is to keep plants from taking root or spreading spores. Many more of the robots have broken down and are now in fairly neat piles here and there in-between the "bookshelves." All have been cannibalized of essential parts by the Bots that are still active. While a PC is free to dig through these piles, most of the valuable stuff, like Krestle bits, have been removed.

Approaching any of the stacks of scrolls will trigger a Porta-Vision spell revealing the visage of a troll that looks a whole lot like Grimtooth (a description may be better here, not every player will know who Grimtooth is!). He will be smiling and speaking Trollworld Kharrgish, "Troll Speak," not the Common Language, and this will require six times the amount of WIZ for an Ear Shell to translate. A 9<sup>th</sup> lvl SR is required on any linguistic attempts to figure out what he's saying.

What's the troll is saying is:

*"These might not be yours to look at.  
But don't let that stop you dear chap.  
Because you are welcome to try.  
Though it might make you cry.*

*Each of these little cases  
Could just blow up in your faces.  
Because we star-farers know our stuff.  
And not just full of floating fluff."*

What the players have discovered is the sum total of all the knowledge of Trollworld, preserved for the appropriate users, and protected by a vast array of spells. This means that any spell in any T&T rules book or supplement, or really any bit of knowledge in any T&T publication, or hints for future GM adventures can be found here with an appropriate SR on LK or INT. But one can't just walk up and take a scroll out and start reading.

If a PC tries to approach any of the towers of scrolls without the Ship-Key, they are asked, in Kharrgish, various riddles. If the approaching character cannot answer in Trollworld Common or the language of the question being asked, a TTYF equal to his, or her, INT will strike them. If the delver tries a second time, the spell is a minimum level Hellbomb Burst

spell.

Someone may try to cast a Dis-Spell, but unless he can do so at 15<sup>th</sup> level, it will be ineffective.

## The Boiler Room

This "room" is actually a few hundred rooms, each about the size of a swimming pool, where various tubes from vents on the surface of the ship feed to. These rooms are irregularly placed throughout a section of the ship that is a mere fourteen hundred meters by two thousand meters by six hundred meters. Connected by scaffolding and gangplanks, as in the Docking Bay section, the only gravity is along these gangplanks. This area of the ship draws in essential gasses from the atmosphere around it and ignites them with something called "fuzion". This process is used to power up its anti-gravity hull plating and remain aloft when in a gravity well.

As noted before, it is possible for characters to enter the ship through one of these networks of ducts. *If a delver or delvers has entered the ship this way...*

From Inside a Boiler: When the PCs come to rest, after the ship's inhalation cycle is finished, they will note that they are in a large area filled with red mist. A successful 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl SR on LK by anyone in the party is required to find what appears to be the door.

Above the door are 10 blue, glowing dots. As the PCs watch, the 10 dots will turn to 9 dots, and turn a little greener in color. One dot will disappear roughly every three seconds, and the remaining dots will be turning to warmer colors, yellow, then orange and so on. At five dots, the remaining dots will be red. If the PCs haven't tried to release the door in front of them by pulling both handles inward (1<sup>st</sup> lvl SR on STR), they will notice the mist is starting to glow.

At four dots remaining, the dots will start to glow red, as the rest of the room starts to turn golden-white. The PCs, even in environmental suits, will notice the temperature rising.

At three dots, all visibility in the room will be replaced by a blinding white light. Any character looking at another PC will see the shadows of that person's skeleton. All characters will suffer 3 points damage, armor inapplicable.

At two dots, this is the last chance for someone to open the door, although the fuzion of the room will spill out into the greater chamber beyond. Characters will suffer 3 more points of damage of armor ignoring "fuzion raydiation," as well as the kinetic force of pressure building up and releasing 2d more damage, armor applicable in this case.

At one dot, it will turn black, the only thing visible to the unfortunate PCs. Trying the door will be impossible. The characters will feel a sudden rush of cold, as their nerve endings vaporize and all their blood boils into

nothingness. Each PC will take one million points of damage.

If the PCs all fail their LK saving roll to find the door, they will find the door at five dots.

Various Bots adapted for free-fall maneuvering are still operational to fix any damage to the outlying structure.

To find either airlock to other sections, it will require a 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl SR on LK or INT by any party member to navigate the maze of passages.

## **Backup Control Section**

This area resembles more of a room than what the exploring characters have seen in most of the ship so far. It is only the width and length of a football field but still around twenty stories tall. There are various consoles and seats along the floor levels, while elevated platforms above the characters' heads seem to contain even more consoles, as well as what would appear to be private offices.

The platforms are connected by the same gangplanks and stairs that are prevalent throughout the ship. The gravity of the room is quite low, and PCs can jump as many yards in height as they have SP points, though a 1<sup>st</sup> lvl SR on SP is required for them to land gracefully and where they want.

The consoles themselves are totally unintelligible to the PCs or any of their spell items. Here and there a Bot remains dormant, since they haven't had any repair work in a few millennia. At the very top of the section there is a platform with a single seat, which is pointed to watch the chamber's ceiling. Should one of the PCs sit in the chair, a shaft of light will encompass the sitter's head area, and the PC will look like they are having a seizure. After a few seconds this light will stop. This is a tutor chair, with a 4<sup>th</sup> lvl SR on INT, a single player who sits in it will start to learn Trollworld Common. The PC will take one d6 damage, armor not applicable, but 2d will be added to the INT of the injured, and the person will not remember the incident.

The airlock leading to the next section is visible from the first airlock. It is at the center of the far wall, about 10 stories up, with stairs leading to it.

## **The Center of Everything**

Upon opening this last airlock the explorers will find themselves standing at the center of a shaft that extends ten stories down and ten stories up. About twenty meters out is a platform containing a floating, rotating, ten meter tall disc with a human-like face emblazoned on it. As the PCs stare at this, the spinning will stop to where the face is looking directly at them. The eyes will open to reveal normal eyes, though they're bigger than most

kindred's heads.

"I am 4 of 5." It will say in a strange, mechanical voice. "I have been studying your language as you've made your way through me."

In this encounter the party will find out that the ship, that Zag Hilag calls "the Shell," is not really up for being salvaged. If anyone insists, 4 of 5 will simply state that it is not its wish at this time and that it has the means to protect itself. The spell-computer/living statue that is the mind of the massive ship, if allowed, will state the following:

"I am 4 of 5, the fourth of five colony ships sent forth from Ralph, which is what Trollworld calls itself. At the point in time when the kindred that were sent forth make contact with me again, I am to return to Trollworld and re-establish contact. You are the first of such descendants to have made their way to me. I am now charged with returning to my place of origin.

There is a problem though. I am not accessing any known location of the Trollstar in my files."

Zag Hilag will ask if there is a problem with the machine's memory or spell-files. The machine will respond that he can find no corruption of the information.

Now at this point, the PCs may be wondering what to do. If they try to attack 4 of 5, which will also respond to the goblin scholar's nickname for it, "Shell", they will find that it is protected as the shelves in the Library, and can call upon 3d worth of Little Suns to help out as well. Every functional Bot on the ship will start moving to attack the party as well, hampering any retreat.

If a PC offers to help Shell find Trollstar, or at least a map to it, the automaton will be quite pleased. It will even present each group member with a Ship-Key, a shell shaped piece of mithril on a necklace that will allow access to all areas of the ship, including the library. The GM should keep things limited, as the ship is just now waking up, and the characters need to do a lot more research before they can start to get an idea of how to properly utilize the ships systems, or even what to look for.

Any holder of a Ship-Key can Wizard Speech to another holder instantaneously wherever they are, unless otherwise noted or decreed by the GM.

## **That's A Wrap**

Zag Hilag will insist on remaining aboard Shell to continue assessing things for his employer. Pewter's team will want to get back to Hub and report the group's findings. Once Balbus hears of Shell's desire to find the Trollstar, he will be all for it. Most denizens of the 9,000 Worlds look to the

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near mythical Trollworld very similar to how many earth cultures view the Garden of Eden. And if this entrepreneur could be the first to find the "Homeworld" who knows what riches that would bring his "small, little outfit."

If the PCs are willing, he will contract them into service and provide them with a spell-ship and crew, a Void Sloop, which they can name themselves. He will even provide them with an operating budget, but a financial adviser of his will be the only one with access to the ship's vault.

The explorers can then get leads for the following adventures in this set by contacting Zag Hilag, still aboard the Shell.

