

# The Scarlet Straits

This chapter of the journey begins in Sornhill where the PCs are requested by Hazeraz Skullsplitter and Lord Carthen Relaster, Sea-Eagle and Commander of the Sornhill Squadron of the Free State Navy to serve aboard *Resplendent* to augment the ship's complement of Free State Marines.

Lord Relaster will explain that the town of Longbridge has been under relentless naval attack from the ships of the Scarlet Brotherhood. The only way that Longbridge can be protected from the raiders is to send a ship from Sornhill around the Dragonshead, through the Brotherhood-held Straits of Gearnat. Duchess Saielma has offered her war galley *The Resplendent* for this dangerous mission, as a gesture of solidarity with Duke Cadwalle of Longbridge.

The *Resplendent* sets sail after dark that evening, to avoid the prying eyes of Brotherhood agents. The following day, the ship spots a small longboat full of Palish Knights-Militant adrift on the sea. The ship bringing them to Onnwal was sunk by *The Scarlet Scourge*, a Scarlet Brotherhood galley. The *Scourge* has a secret weapon allows it to become invisible. It lies in wait a few hundred yards away from the drifting longboat, waiting for a Free State vessel to stop and rescue it. If the *Resplendent* stops to pick up the survivors, *The Scarlet Scourge* opens fire with spells, bows and ballistae. The PCs must decide if they want to save the Pholtans or not.

Regardless *The Scarlet Scourge* pursues relentlessly, forcing *The Resplendent* to plunge straight into a squall to escape. The galley is battered by the squall and any PCs on deck are in danger of being washed overboard.

Losing *The Scourge* the crew disguise *Resplendent* as a Brotherhood vessel, running up scarlet sails and the hated ensign of the Brotherhood in an attempt to slip past the Brotherhood blockade of the Straits of Gearnat. The PCs spot a Keoish merchantman attempting to run the blockade only to suffer a devastating

magical attack. To their horror they will discover that the Scarlet Brotherhood vessel is none other than *The Scarlet Scourge*. Regardless of whether they blow their cover to rescue the Keolanders or not the *Scourge* sees through the ruse and resumes its pursuit.

As *Resplendent* speeds south, a sea creature summoned by the Brotherhood mages at Obelstone attacks the ship. The PCs must fight off the creature to allow *Resplendent* to make its escape before *The Scarlet Scourge* gets to within spell and missile range. If the PCs are successful, their ship can get away. However, the sea monster's attack has badly damaged *Resplendent*, forcing her to put into one of the freeports of the Hezarin Isles for repairs.

This chapter ends with *The Resplendent* putting into the port of Pelorbay, shadowed by *The Scarlet Scourge* and uncertain of ever leaving port again.

## Meeting In Sornhill

The PCs have been summoned to speak with Hazeraz Skullsplitter and Lord Carthen Relaster, a cousin of the Duchess and commander of the Sornhill Squadron of the Free State Navy.

Hazeraz is clad as usual in his well-worn studded leather jerkin, his broadsword girthed at his hip. Lord Carthan is dressed in a well-made tunic, trews and a short cape. Across his chest is an azure sash, upon which is pinned a golden pendant in the form of a bird of prey diving to strike - the insignia of office of a Sea-Eagle - one of Onnwal's admirals of the fleet.

**Hazeraz speaks first, "Ye've been asked t'undertake a difficult task, but one, which, if successful, will greatly bolster the security o'the Free State. Ye've been chosen because of your heroic actions in the past in the name of the Szek and Onnwal and it is our hope that you will perform this duty with similar skill and gallantry."**

# The Scarlet Straits

*"As you might be aware," says Lord Relaster, "the port of Longbridge has been without a naval presence practically since it was liberated 6 years ago. As a result it has been subject to persistent raiding by vessels of both the Scarlet Brotherhood fleet and their allies, the Lordship of the Isles. Duke Gellen has formally requested assistance from the Szek and the Free State Navy. We therefore need to project a naval presence from Longbridge. What we propose to do therefore is to send a vessel from Sornhill around the Dragonshead Peninsula to Longbridge, by running the Brotherhood blockade of the Straits of Gearnat."*

You can deal with the PCs likely questions as follows:-

What has this to do with us?

*Carthen says, "You have been requested to augment the ship's company. It is felt that your skills and prowess will greatly increase the mission's chances of success."*

What type of ship are we talking about?

*Carthen says, "The Resplendent, a war-galley given to us by the King of Nyronnd. It is now in service to the Free State Navy and crewed by privateers paid by the king's own purse."*

*Hazeraz coughs, "They're a bit rough but they're good lads, especially Gremag, the cap'n."*

How many crew does she have?

*Carthen says, "Resplendant's company is 150 now, all told."*

How are we going to get through the blockade?

*Carthen says, "We plan to disguise Resplendent as a Brotherhood ship - with scarlet sails and pennants. It's not likely to hold up to close scrutiny, but if you managed to avoid close contact with the enemy, you should be able to slip through undetected."*

When do we leave?

*Carthen says, "In two night's time. You'll slip out of Notxia Bay under cover of darkness to avoid your departure being spotted by Brotherhood spies."*

What's in it for us?

*Carthen says, "If easing the suffering of your fellow countrymen is not reward enough for you, then know this, upon completion of your mission I intended to write each of you a personal draft for a sum of money, which you would receive. I am also sure that His Grace Duke Gellen will be willing to bestow upon you whatever rewards he considers appropriate."*

How long will the journey take?

*Carthen says, "'Twill take less than a fortnight, all going well."*

When the PCs have no more questions, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

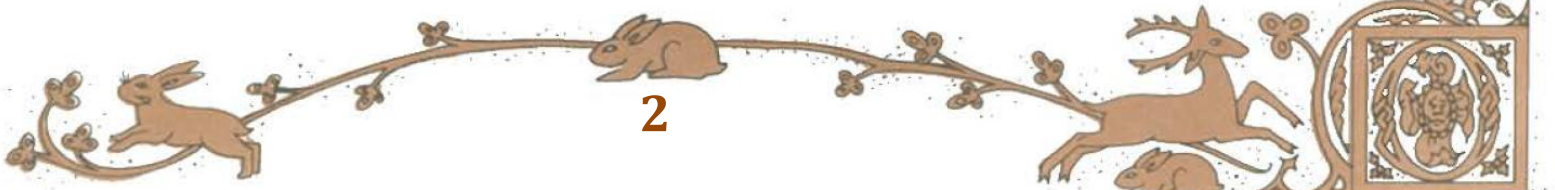
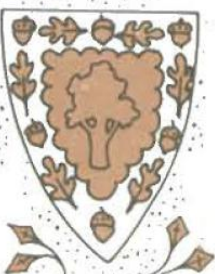
*Hazeraz looks serious for a moment, and speaks, "Your mission will be perilous in the extreme - but unless it is attempted, Longbridge will continue to suffer. You have our thanks for attempting this..."*

If the PCs did not enrage him by demanding payment he shakes each of their hands firmly and gestures for them to leave, saying they shall be well rewarded for their efforts. If the PCs were "mercenary" they are simply dismissed.

*Of the whole conversation, the thing that most stands out in your mind is the look that the Skullsplitter and the Sea-Eagle exchanged as you left. Something in it sent a chill up your spine. Though you are uncertain why, you are sure that this voyage will not be uneventful.*

Read aloud or paraphrase the following:-

*It is a fine summer's night in Sornhill. Luna, the great moon, has yet to rise. The waning crescent of Celene already sits high in the heavens, its cold aquamarine light transforming the*





# The Scarlet Straits

waters of Notxia Bay into a shield of burnished blue steel.

Waves lap softly against the bow of the longboat. Ahead looms the long black bulk of a large warship - your home for the next several weeks. The longboat bumps gently against the hull of the larger vessel. You clamber up a rope ladder to the deck, where a squat barrel-chested man greets you.

"Welcome aboard the Resplendent," he says, in a Nyrondese accent, "I am Gremag o'the Nesser, the master of this fine vessel.

"You'll have to excuse me - we must be off before the Great Moon rises and the Strawhairs can spy us slipping out of here. Your quarters are in the fo'castle," Gremag says before striding off towards the stern of the ship, snapping orders to sailors busily hauling on ropes and lines. There is a rattle of oars in oarlocks, the splash of oar blades through water and, as the ship begins to move slowly forward, a slow steady drumbeat begins below you. Slowly the lights of Sornhill vanish from sight as the dark encircling arms of the Volanots release you into the wide dark expanse of the open sea.

Listening to the steady beat of the pace drum, you recall the words of Hazeraz Skullsplitter in Red Tower of Sornhill, all but two days ago:

"Your mission will be perilous in the extreme - but unless it is attempted, Longbridge will continue to suffer."

## Exploring the ship

Read the following:-

A gentle drizzle of rain interrupts your thoughts of your conversation in the Red Tower as the Captain, "Come out of it lads and lasses, we've a long journey ahead of us. I'll expect you on the bridge tomorrow morn wit' me to advise me on what to do -this is a strange land to me, being from Nyrond, so I am relying on ye. But for now, look around milady, and meet her crew..."

## He gestures to the deck of the ship.

This introduction should be freeform, simply allow the PCs to roleplay interacting with the crew for the first two days. Once this is done, proceed to Pholtan and Jetsom.

You should assume the PCs are on-deck with Gremag for the most of this part of the module, but for now let them explore...

## The Resplendent

The *Resplendent* is a galley - as per the DMG pp 151. It is 190 feet long and 75 feet wide, with three masts and two banks of 70 rowers on either side for propulsion. She carries typically a crew of 200 in total, 140 manning the oars and 60 manning the sails, rigging and ballistae. Currently though a harried skeleton crew operates her of 150.

### 1. The Main Deck

The main deck is 80 feet long and 30 feet wide. The ship's three masts are set 20 feet apart along the midline. The fore and aft masts are 80 feet high, with the main mast topping these by a further 20 feet (100 feet total). The main mast has a small platform set atop it for the lookout. The sails are square rigged and suitable only for running with the wind.

Between the fore and aft of the main mast, two ten foot square and six foot high raised platforms stand against the gunwhales on both port and starboard sides. Upon each a ballista is set on a fixed mount (i.e. it cannot swivel). Each ballista is manned by a crew of three, although only one is required as a minimum to fire each one. A pair of hatches to the rowing decks are set between the main mast and the fore and aft masts.

**Ballista:** Dam: 3d6/x3; Range Increment: 120ft; Min Crew: 1; Takes 3 full round actions to reload alone or 1 round for three people using their full round actions. **Note:** Attack roll is unmodified except by range.

# The Scarlet Straits

## 2. The Fo'castle

The fo'castle is 20 feet long and 30 feet wide and raised ten feet above the level of the main deck. A pair of ballistae are set on a fixed mount overlooking the prow, upon which is carved the effigy of a beautiful woman clad in a flowing silver gown. Each ballista is manned by a crew of three, although only one is required as a minimum to fire each one. Behind the ballistae is the capstan or winch for raising the ship's anchor. A set of stairs leads down to the main deck. On either side of the stairs, doors lead into the crew quarters and down into the forward cargo hold. The PCs are billeted with the crew. The quarters are crowded with sleeping bunks, hammocks and possessions being packed tightly into the low ceilinged spaces. The odour of unwashed bodies is quite strong here. The hold is packed with food (dried fruit, salted/smoked/dried fish and meat and hard tack (dried wheat and oat meal biscuits) and casks of fresh water sufficient for a month's voyage.

**Ballista:** Dam: 3d6/x3; Range Increment: 120ft; Min Crew: 1; Takes 3 full round actions to reload alone or 1 round for three people using their full round actions. **Note:** Attack roll is unmodified except by range.

## 3. The Sterncastle

The sterncastle is 30 feet long and 30 feet wide and raised 15 feet above the level of the main deck. A pair of ballistae are set on a fixed mount looking aft. Each ballista is manned by a crew of three, although only one is required as a minimum to fire each one. Between them is the rudder, which is permanently manned. In the centre of the main castle a six foot high platform (10 feet square) carries a light catapult. Manned by a crew of 2 and round stones (50 stones max) stored beneath the platform, the catapult can only fire aft as firing forward risks hitting the rigging and masts. Two sets of stairs lead down to the main deck, one to port and starboard.

Between the stairs, A door leads into the mates' and captain's staterooms and down into the aft cargo hold. The hold is packed with food including dried fruit, salted, smoked or dried fish and meat and hard tack (dried wheat and oat meal biscuits) and casks of fresh water sufficient for a month's voyage. Gremag is most often to be found here, surveying his vessel.

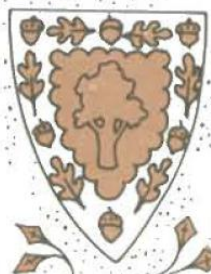
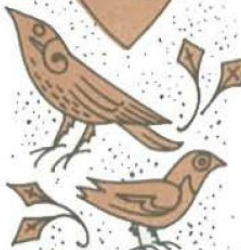
**Ballista:** Dam: 3d6/x3; Range Increment: 120ft; Min Crew: 1; Takes 3 full round actions to reload alone or 1 round for three people using their full round actions. **Note:** Attack roll is unmodified except by range.

Catapult, Light: Dam: 3d6; Range Increment: 150ft (minimum range: 100ft); To fire make a Profession (Siege Engineer) check (DC 20). If successful, where the missile lands is determined by rolling 1d12 and consulting the Deviation (10ft to 16 ft) Diagram in p68 of the DMG, setting the desired target as the centre. If the check fails, roll the result behind the screen and use the same diagram with the result being the point where the catapult is actually aimed and therefore the centre for the next Deviation roll, rather than the desired target.

The catapult can be loaded and prepared in 5 full round actions by a crew of 2, while it takes 5 minutes (50 rounds) to aim (or re-aim). It takes three times this time for 1 person to do the above.

## 4. The Rowing Decks

The rowing deck takes up the entire space under the main deck between the fo'castle/forward cargo hold and the sterncastle/aft cargo hold (80 feet long by 30 feet wide by 20 feet high). Two tiers of rowing benches line the entire length of the area. Each bench is 6 feet long and 2 feet wide, set about foot apart. The oarsmen on each side sit staggered, to avoid bumping into the rower in front of them. The upper tier is set 10 feet above the lower. The centre of the deck is taken up with casks of water, with which the





# The Scarlet Straits

rowers slake their thirst and the oarsmen's sleeping pallets. Gulgak, the second mate and pace man has a drum at the aft end of the space with which he sets the pace of the oar stokes. Except in times of emergency or when the ship is becalmed or running against the wind, only half of the oars men row at any one time, the other half taking the chance to eat, rest or sleep.

## The Crew of the Resplendent

**Gremag, Captain of the Resplendent:** male human Ftr6.

*Appearance:* Gremag's strong boned features of his face dominate a weathered and tanned face. He has narrow eyes and thin goatee make him seem to be constantly measuring whatever he looks at.

*Personality:* Gremag is a native of the city of Beetu. He grew up on barges and galleys plying the Nesser, Franz and Nyr Dyv. He runs a tight ship and brooks no challenges to his authority either from crew or passengers. He is the absolute



ruler - and he is not afraid to break heads to enforce it. Usually though, he is quite an affable chap, but is willing to defer to any

PC's advice on Onnwalish affairs - he is a foreigner after all.

**Slenpar, First Mate:** male human Rog3.

*Appearance:* Slenpar is a slim wild-haired man, but his rough bestial features are not improved by a mouthful of shattered and chipped yellow teeth, a large scar that stretches from brow to chin or his missing right eye.

*Character:* Slenpar is a native of Trigol. He learned his trade on the docks of the town and lost his teeth and right eye while mixing with the wrong sort of trader. Slenpar prudently took ship north, ending up eventually in Gremag's service. His experiences have given him a very pessimistic outlook on life and he has a fine talent of pointing out the cloud to every silver lining. His area of responsibility is the main decks, sails and rigging, though he has no head for heights and therefore tends to direct from the safety of the deck.

**Gulgak, Paceman and Second Mate:** half-orc Brd2.

*Appearance:* Gulgak wears a thick wild bristly beard, while his wiry hair is kept in check by a tarred ponytail. He is rarely seen without his drumsticks, which double as weapons on occasion.

*Personality:* Originally from the foothills of the Rakers, Gulgak took to the life of the sailor like a dragon turtle to water. He is a simple enough soul. His pleasures in life are smashing the heads of disobedient crewmen, drinking staggering amounts of ale when in port and of course beating the pace drum to keep the oarsmen in time. He has a fondness for red-haired women, and will relentlessly pester any PC of this ilk.

The rest of the crew are mainly oarsmen. Like the captain and mates, they are all privateers from the Urnst States, Nyrond and even Greyhawk and the Wild Coast. They are a boisterous bunch and respect strength and toughness. Characters that they perceive to be weaker than them will

# The Scarlet Straits

earn their contempt and scorn. They will pester any women unless or until they prove themselves worthy of being left alone (this is usually by punching one or more of them).

## Pholtan and Jetsam

On the second day out of port the following event occurs. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

*The first two days have passed uneventfully. You have watched the craggy hills and cliffs of the Storm Coast slipping past the port side of the ship. Just as you are beginning to think that your fears about the voyage might have been unfounded, a cry comes from the crow's nest atop the main mast:*

*"Ship ahoy - longboat off the starboard bow!"*

*Following the lookout's pointing finger, you can just make out a small longboat bobbing up and down on the swell. As you look you see a figure sit up in the boat. It begins to wave its arms and more figures sit up, waving scraps of white cloth.*

*Gremag orders the helm over to approach the longboat. Drawing closer you can see that there are about a dozen people crammed into the small boat. Across the waves come the strains of voices raised in song:*

*"Oh Blinding Light, look out for me!  
Oh Blinding Light I cannot see!"*

The longboat is filled with Knights-Militant from the Theocracy of the Pale. They were part of a cohort sent by the Theocrat to aid Purcennnd Kerondas, the Onnwalon High-Priest of Pholtus, in his work in Onnwal. The vessel taking them from Nyronnd was sunk the previous day by *The Scarlet Scourge*, a Scarlet Brotherhood patrol vessel. The contents of the boat are the only survivors of a ship's company numbering eighty, consisting of crew and refugees returning from exile in Nyronnd who are now lost to the sea.

The *Scourge* however, has not departed. It has shadowed the longboat

since the sinking, thanks to magical means that render the ship invisible. As *Resplendent* moves to pick up the survivors, *The Scarlet Scourge* is preparing to attack. Observant PCs will notice something amiss - a large, unnatural, depression in the water fifty yards to starboard of *The Resplendent* (Spot Roll - DC 20).

As soon as either the PCs raise an alert or *The Resplendent* draws alongside the longboat, *The Scourge* will unleash a hail of missiles and spells. Only those PCs who spotted the depression can act in the Surprise round.

*The Scarlet Scourge* will become visible after the first volley. It is but 30 feet from the *Resplendent*.

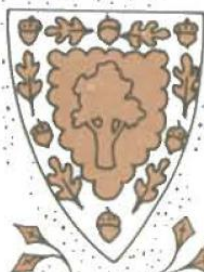
*Tactics:* The archers will concentrate on those returning fire and any overt spellcasters. The ballista will concentrate on taking out anyone attempting to get the ship underway or particularly puissant opposition. Once a crewman manning one of the missile weapons is killed, he will not be replaced for the duration of the combat.

Jorva the sorceress, having precast what protective spells she has before the Surprise rounds, will unleash her most devastating spell on the aft'castle in the surprise and first rounds. In the second round she will hold her action if possible with *Dispel Magic* ready to counterspell any offensive dweomers cast at *The Scarlet Scourge*.

The rules for catching fire are on p 86 of the DMG. See also the rules in the appendix section of this mini-module.

The rails of both of ships provide 1/2 cover for both the PCs and their enemies (+4 AC bonus; +2 Reflex bonus - though this Reflex bonus does not apply to burst effects that are centred on the deck behind them).

After the first volley of fire - Gremag will immediately order that the ship gets under way. If any of the PCs can manipulate the winds, he will demand that they fill his sails with a breeze. Unaided in such a fashion, *Resplendent* can put 50 feet





# The Scarlet Straits

between it and *The Scarlet Scourge* per round after the first. With a *Gust of Wind* or other such spell it can make 100 feet per round. The Brotherhood sailors will continue firing until their quarry is out of range.

Unless the PCs actively act to help the Knights-Militant clamber aboard they will be left behind to their fate. The PCs must first secure the longboat to the galley (Rope Use DC 12 - full round action). This must be done in two rounds or the longboat will be left behind as the galley moves off. If the PCs fail to this they can still try to throw a line to the Palish but only in the next two rounds (Rounds 3 and 4 of combat). This will require a Rope Use roll DC 20. Once secured to the galley, one Pholtan can clamber aboard per round. Failing to even attempt to save the Palish will have dire consequences for the PCs (see Part 3 for details).

## White Squall

Though *Resplendent* has managed to escape the ambush, *The Scarlet Scourge* is in hot pursuit and for the rest of the day dogs the galley's wake, occasionally getting close enough to fire missiles.

Read aloud or paraphrase the following:-

*As you tend the wounded, the beat of the pace drum keeps up its relentless rhythm, urging the oars to greater efforts to keep your ship ahead of her tormentor. All day the scarlet sails of the Brotherhood ship mar the view aft, keeping pace with the even the best efforts of the rowers and a half-favourable breeze.*

*Late in the afternoon, the sun is swallowed up by a black mountain of cloud standing directly in your path. Gremag stands on the aft'castle staring grimly at the storm clouds as a forked tongue of lightening flicks down into the leaden sea below.*

*"Rudder - steer us directly into the squall ahead," he shouts to the helmsman.*

*"Cap'n?" the man says with shock and amazement.*

*"You heard me, mister. Hold course for the storm - it's the only way we'll lose those accursed strawhairs. Brace for heavy weather, men!" Gremag bellows over the peal of thunder that rolls ominously over the waves.*

True to his word, Gremag steers directly into one of the storms for which the Sea of Gearnat is justly famed and feared. Any PC on deck during the storm stands must make a Reflex Check (DC 15) or lose his footing. A second Reflex check (DC 20) is then required to prevent him from being washed overboard. If PCs are lashed to something solid by a rope - this gives them a +2 circumstance bonus to these checks. It is probably worthwhile revising the Drowning and Swimming rules in the DMG at this point. For the purposes of Swim Checks, remember that the conditions are stormy and the seas extremely rough.

PCs below deck should make Reflex checks (DC 10) to prevent themselves being thrown about the cabin/hold for 1d6 points of subdual damage. If PCs are lashed to something solid by a rope this gives them a +2 circumstance bonus to these checks. Have the PCs make 2-3 of these rolls if they are just sitting tight and for every round they are doing anything other than clinging on to something for dear life.

All PCs should make a Fortitude roll (DC12) to avoid being seasick. Seasickness will cause nausea for 1D6 hours, incurring a -2 penalty to all attack, skill and saves checks.

Having resolved all these matters, read aloud or paraphrase the following:-

*You are battered by the wind and waves for what seems an eternity. At some point in the ordeal, sleep mercifully overcomes you, the roar of the tempest and the tortured creaking of the ship's timbers merging into the background of many troubling dreams.*

*You are woken not by a noise - but rather its absence. The relentless din of*

# The Scarlet Straits

*the storm is gone, and there is only the reassuring beat of the pace drum and the rattle of the oars in locks in its place. Emerging on deck, you are almost blinded by a bright sun blazing in a dome of blue overhead. Like the sky, the sea is a sheet of azure and you wonder for a moment if the storm was nothing but a bad dream.*

*Gremag grins at you from the aftcastle.*

*"Lost the buggers," he says with some satisfaction and no little pride.*

*True to his word there is no sign of scarlet sails anywhere on the horizon.*

## What of the Pholtans?

If the PCs succeeded in picking up the Pholtan Knights-Militant, their leader, one Dasmius of Wintershiven, will now approach them and thank them for saving himself and his men. He will promise to return the favour at some time in the future. Even if the PCs subsequently clash with Dasmius or the Church of Pholtus, he will honour this debt, being true to his word.

Dasmius presents himself to the captain with due pomp. He thanks him and any of the PCs that saved his men, saying they are truly the instruments of the One True Path. He then demands that he and his men be taken immediately to Sornhill. Gremag tells Dasmius that if he wishes to go to Sornhill that the Pholtans can swim there, with the aid of a kick in the backside over the rails if needs be. As Dasmius waxes wrathful, calling down the displeasure of Pholtus on Gremag's head, the captain orders Dasmius remove, an order his men are eager to comply with, if the PCs are not.

The remainder of the Knights-Militant will draw weapons if they see their commander manhandled by anyone - and it will require a calm head and some careful diplomacy to defuse the situation. The Knights are heavily armed and armoured, superbly trained and have fanatical devotion to their cause. The PCs should realise that they make better allies

(however temporary) than enemies. You may adjudicate this roleplaying encounter at your discretion.

**Dasmius of Pholtus, male human Ftr6/Clr2:** see Appendix.

*Appearance:* Dasmius is a handsome and charismatic young man in his mid-twenties. He has an olive complexion and black curly hair. On board ship he and his men will dispense with their plate mail and instead wear their underjerkins and white tabards bearing the symbols of Pholtus and the Theocracy of the Pale.

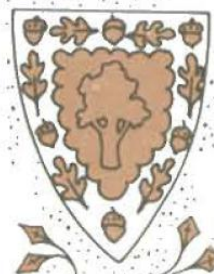
*Personality:* Dasmius is a typical Palish Pholtine. He has been brought up in the Church of Pholtus in the Pale and believes unswervingly in its dogmas. He passionately believes it is his mission to save the souls of heretics and to defend the faithful and the creed of the Blinding Light. Though he is literate and by no means unintelligent his upbringing has left him ignorant of other faiths and cultures and he is dismissive of anything new as it is clearly foreign to the One True Path. He is proud and valiant to the point of foolhardiness and has no love of mages, sorcerers or priests of faiths other than Pholtus.

**Knight Militant, male human Ftr3 (9):** see Appendix.

*Character:* These men are all drawn from the hinterlands of Wintershiven and are fanatically devoted to Pholtus. They are incredibly sincere and direct - if somewhat humourless. They are fiercely loyal to their leader Dasmius.

## Argument Resolved

If this fracas is settled without bloodshed, the Palish will withdraw to the cabin in the fo'castle (which they share with the PCs) to talk and pray. The Palish will during the remainder of the voyage make frequent attempt to convert the PCs and members of the crew - "saving them from heresy, delusion and the damnation of eternal darkness". Every day at dawn, noon and dusk they will hold a service on deck, singing their hymn to Pholtus - "Oh





# The Scarlet Straits

Blinking Light!" The charismatic Dasmius spends hours at time on deck, preaching the salvation of the One True Path and will even manage to convert a small number of the crew over the next few days.

Regardless proceed with the next section once the conflict is resolved.

## The Scarlet Straits

Read aloud or paraphrase the following:-

*The following day, the crew busy themselves with running up scarlet sails and pennants. Seeing the symbol of the Scarlet Sign snapping at the mast head sends a shiver though you, but you know there is good reason for it. The long march of the cliffs of the Storm Coast comes to an end as the coast curves away to the south. You look upon Cape Obelstone, the westernmost point in the Dragonshead Peninsula. Just beyond the cape, the sinister spires and towers of Obelstone Keep crouch atop a huge spire of rock rearing hundreds of feet out of the sea. A shadow seems to hang over the fortress-prison, as if the bright summer sun was unable (or unwilling) to touch it. You try to put the many terrible tales and rumours you have heard told about this place out of your mind. However, you cannot help the unnerving feeling of countless pairs of hostile eyes boring into you, as if the Keep itself were and huge terrible creature that had suddenly turned its baleful gaze upon you.*

Despite the PCs fears, the ruse appears to be working, as *Resplendent* rounds the cape and passes into the Straits of Gearnat unmolested. After several hours, the last of Obelstone's spires slips beneath the horizon.

Read aloud or paraphrase the following:-

*For the rest of the day, you catch sight of several scarlet sailed ships, though none comes close to Resplendent. The atmosphere on the ship grows tense as the hours seem to crawl past. However,*

*for the moment the Resplendent's luck appears to be holding.*

*Suddenly the ship's lookout cries out, "Ship ablaze to starboard! She's flying the colours of Keoland!"*

*Along with those of the crew above decks you gather on the starboard rail. Out across the sea you see a large merchantman, the sable lion rampant of Keoland streaming from her mastheads. She is being attacked by a scarlet sailed ship. Flaming arrows and bolts of magical energy rip into the side of the Keolander and her sails and main mast are suddenly consumed in a sheet of flame. Crewmen desperately fling themselves overboard to escape the inferno.*

*Gremag turns to you, "My friends - what do we do? Can we stand idle why those who oppose the Scarlet Sign are cut like wheat?"*

Gremag is uncertain as to what to do, he knows the mission is important, but he is not an Onnwaloner. In his gut he feels cannot with a clear conscience leave fellow sailors to their fate. However he would prefer to leave the final decision to the PCs - do they leave the Keolanders or do they go ahead with a rescue?

## Rescuing the Keolanders

Read aloud the following:-

*"Helm - hard about to starboard and take us into to those longboats!" Gremag roars. "Prepare to take aboard the survivors."*

Gremag will steer the ship to within a few hundreds yards of the blazing merchantman, keeping as far as possible away from the Scarlet Brotherhood ship. He will then launch a longboat to pick up what survivors they can. The PCs may wish to go aboard the rescue boat.

The survivors are mostly in shock or injured too weak to resist what they imagine to be their new captors. Several are injured though none critically - all of the badly wounded have already drowned.

# The Scarlet Straits

The Scarlet Brotherhood ship, *the Scarlet Scourge* again, will move in to begin picking up survivors as well - they will get a good bounty for captives. Allow the PCs a spot roll DC 12 to notice to their horror that the enemy ship is none other than *The Scarlet Scourge*.

As they move closer it is only a matter of time before the men from *Resplendent* are spotted for what they are. The Brotherhood lookout has Spot 4 make a Spot check every round, DC 15. There are five survivors within easy reach of *Resplendent's* longboat and it will take a round per man to pick them up and another five rounds to row back to the ship. Go to the Chase below.

## Leaving the Keolandars

Ironically the Scarlet Sign, the vessel that attacked the Keoish galleon, puts ashore a longboat to begin picking up survivors as well - they will get a good bounty for captives. Allow the PCs a spot roll DC 12 to notice to their horror that the enemy ship is none other than *The Scarlet Scourge*.

They loudly invite the PCs to do the same, after all there should be plenty of meat for everyone, but if the PCs insist on leaving, the Scourge watches suspiciously as the last of the survivors are taken aboard, where Arkoone (see below) is swiftly executed.

The *Resplendent* are spotted for what they are. The Brotherhood lookout has Spot +4 make a Spot check every round, DC 15. Go to the Chase below.

## The Chase

When the Brotherhood spot what is going on, the *Scourge* will open up with missile fire the following round, concentrating on the longboat (as it is closer). Use the missile stats from the earlier encounter - but not the spells - the ship's mage has exhausted her spells on the unfortunate merchantman. The *Scourge* is 300 feet away from the long boat and 400 feet away from the *Resplendent*.

If the Brotherhood look-outs do not spot the deception before the longboat

makes it back - it will begin signalling with flags towards *Resplendent*. When *Resplendent* is unable to return the signal, captain of the *Scourge* will see through the ruse and order his vessel to close and attack.

Gremag will immediately order full speed away from the *Scourge* and having been ready to make such a quick getaway, *Resplendent's* crew gain a vital lead over their pursuer, pulling away at the rate of 50 feet per round.

## The Survivors

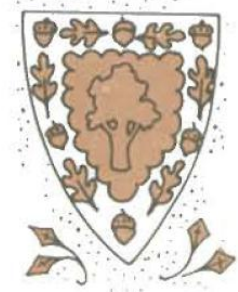
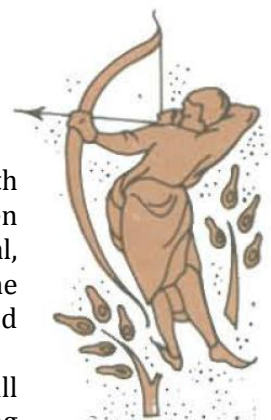
The survivors of the Keoish vessel (*The Springs of the Sheldomar*), if they were rescued, are almost all Keoish sailors hailing from Gradsul. As such they are all of mainly Suel blood - and this have blonde hair and pale complexions. Their simple sailor's garb is bloodied, charred and tattered.

Almost all bear some sort of injury - generally burns of some sort. One man is in an serious condition - with a large burn covering most of his torso and a crossbow bolt protruding from his abdomen. He is at -5 hit points and will die unless stabilised by the PCs. His name is Aroone Kerikos and he is an Onnwalion priest of Zilchus who, through round about means, managed to end up on the Keoish galleon bound to meet a contact within the court of Duke Luschan VIII of Rhola, Duke of Gradsul, a powerful Keoish nobleman. Aroone is on a diplomatic mission for Onnwal, though he won't say this in the presence of the crew, and is happy to be put ashore at Longbridge, though his mission is clearly a failure. When he recovers, Aroone will solemnly swear the PC that saves his life that he, and his temple in Killdeer is in the PC's debt.

## Death From Below

Read aloud or paraphrase the following adjusting if the PCs are not with Gremag:-

***The beat of the pace drum matches the surging pulse of blood in your ears. The scarlet sails to aft are the focus of***





# The Scarlet Straits

everyone's thoughts and fears. Your pursuer and tormentor sticks stubbornly behind you through many long oars of rowing. Below the backs of the oarsmen are lathered in sweat. Several crewmen go constantly between the benches doling out fresh water to the toiling rowers.

Suddenly the entire ship is shaken by a massive jolt. Crewmen are sent flying. The three masts quiver like sapling trees in a gale. From below comes the awful, terrifying sound of splintering wood. Voices cry out in dismay, and rowers scatter onto the decks.

Golgak, abandoning his drum, dashes up on deck. "Cap'n! Beast hole us in the rowing deck! We taking water!"

Gremag looks to you, "I think it is time you proved yourself. We'll try to keep her afloat, you slay the beast quickly!"

The *Resplendent* has been attacked by a sea creature summoned by the Brotherhood Mages of Obelstone Keep.

2 Scrag, see Monster Manual Appendix.

**Tactics:** The Scrag burst through the bottom of ship and start slaughtering rowers. The *Resplendent* has a supply of pitch that could be used to set fire to the beasts, but this will also set the hold ablaze and may result in the sinking of the galley. Acid will burn through the hull in 10 rounds. Throwing parts of the Scrag

overboard will only allow them to regenerate and they will attack once more after they have fully regenerated. The Hold is beginning to flood with sea-water and parts of the Scrag that fall into this can regenerate, though it is too shallow to allow upright Scrag to do so.

If the creatures are defeated, Gremag makes a rapid assessment of the damage to the ship's hull. The *Resplendent* is taking water and it is inevitable that she will eventually sink. Non-stop bailing can only keep her afloat only so long, and the hole is too large to *mend* (though it is not so large as the ship will sink instantly) – and *warping wood* etc. will only delay the vessel's sinking, but there is no way that the vessel can make Longbridge before the sea overcomes the strength of the PCs and crew. The only way to save the ship is to put into port for repairs. The only ports that the *Resplendent* can reach before going down are the Brotherhood held ports of Obelton. Scant, Halmarn or Gullhaven, and the Free Port of Pelorbay on the remote Hezarin Isles. While Gremag is sure that the Brotherhood ports have ship-wrights, he has no idea if Pelorbay even has the facilities to make the necessary repairs. Nonetheless, as capture or drowning are the only other alternatives, Gremag has little choice but to set course for the Hezarins.

## That Sinking Feeling

If *The Resplendent* sinks, the PCs will have





# The Scarlet Straits

to either swim to shore (which will take about an hour), get in a longboat or cling to a fragment of the ship and try to paddle themselves ashore. The PCs stand a strong chance of being picked up by *The Scarlet Scourge* and either being killed (if they resist - in which case the ship will stand off, while the PCs are peppered with crossbow bolts) or captured.

Give the PCs opposed Hide or Bluff rolls versus the Brotherhood crews Spot (Spot: 4 ranks) check if they are for example hiding among the debris of the ship or playing dead. PCs that evade the *Scourge's* sweep of the area can then either swim or drift to shore - taking about a day to get ashore. PCs that are captured are taken to Scant and imprisoned. In either case, their mission has ended in failure.

## Set A Course For Hell!

Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

*The next two days are forever marked in your memories as a time of unrelenting toil and pain. When not aiding the crew to bail out the flooding hold, you spend hours at a time on the rowing benches, straining to keep up to Gulgak's relentless beat, with the water rising all the time around your feet and ankles, despite the heroic efforts of the bailers. Your twin tormentors, the sea and The Scarlet Scourge give you no respite. The Brotherhood vessel shadows your crippled craft night and day.*

*It is a measure of your desperate straits that it is with relief, rather than the more usual dread that you that you greet the sight of two ominous plumes of black smoke on the southern horizon. Slowly a chain of five steep-sided mountainous islands rises out of the south. The three larger isles belch fire, smoke and steam into the sky. It is not heard to see how they got their name - for Hezarin in the Old Oeridian means hell - and you are glad to see Gremag order that they be given a wide berth. As you draw closer you can see that the steep mountain slopes of the two*

*smaller isles - Gedden and Berel - are clothed in thick vegetation, though there is little sign of habitation at first.*

*The sun is a huge ball of red fire hanging low over the fiery islands to the west before you round a headland and catch sight of Pelorbay. The port huddles in the shadow of the rearing mass of Gedden's single huge peak - a meagre collection of houses built from wood and black volcanic stone at the end of a long narrow bay. As you draw up at the quay, people peer from windows and doors with curiosity - or is that hostility? In the evening shadows it is hard to say. Their eyes look out to sea and following their gaze you see with dread the last rays of the sun lighting up the blood red sails of The Scarlet Scourge, as she glides slowly up the bay towards you.*

*Though you have made it safely to Pelorbay, you wonder if you will ever leave again.*

