



The Trouble with Pirates

Blackwheel Company Faction Adventure #4

A One-Round DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® FACTION

Adventure for the XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS™ Campaign

An Adventure for 4th-Level Characters

(Scaled for 4th-7th Levels of Play)

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Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Rich Baker, and Peter Adkison.

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Adventure Background

The Blackwheel Company, acting in desperation, has made a grave pact with the Ebon Siren, a notorious pirate that plagues the seas surrounding Xen'drik. The Company, determined to recover an ancient draconic artifact of immense importance without attracting attention to their involvement, hopes that the pirates will provide the perfect front for their operation. Blackwheel leadership has dangled the perfect carrot before the eyes of the savage pirate—something they were never before able to achieve: the means by which to waylay the swift elemental treasure ships of the elven nation of Aerenal.

The Aereni and the drow of Xen'drik have ever had a tense relationship. The Ebon Siren is a drow activist that believes the Aereni never fulfilled their promise to return to Xen'drik and free those who remained on the lost continent from oppression. As a leader among her people she relishes the opportunity to strike out at the symbols of their wealth, arrogance, and ultimate abandonment. Meanwhile, the Aereni, desirous of both the mysteries of the draconic prophecy and the ancient artifacts of the civilizations of Xen'drik continue to send expeditions to retrieve as much of this wealth and knowledge as possible.

The Blackwheel Company has recently discovered that an Aereni expedition aided by the Crimson Codex has unearthed Sephraman's Scepter, an artifact recently mentioned in updated translations of the Caldyn Fragments. This particular artifact was rumored to play a significant role in the elven rebellion against their former giant masters. This particular artifact is said to have ties to a place steeped in draconic prophecy and recently of great interest to the Blackwheel Company: The Cairn of Stone Hearts. .

Adventure Synopsis

The Adventure sets three very different factions up against each other, interchanging the roles of traitor, conspirator, defender, and assailant as the story progresses. As the adventure opens, the PCs find themselves summoned to Molou's Distillery by a clandestine Company Dispatch. There, they are finally formally introduced to the brutal and calculating General Mach Ogdin of the White Hand Battalion.

General Ogdin carries direct orders for the PC's, asking them to circumvent their typical platoon organization in the Six Paths battalion, and exclude their usual commanding officer, Sgt. Skyne Tragar from the details of this assignment. General Ogdin describes to them their orders: They are to depart by airship immediately for a drop. They'll be executing a ship to ship jump where their primary mission is to disable a ship's elemental so that a group of waiting pirates can interdict the vessel. They'll need to disable the vessel without getting caught, then under the guise of pirates themselves, assist the crew of the Ebon Siren when they arrive.

General Ogdin is part of a sect of the Blackwheel Company that believes the organization should ultimately split from the Dragonmarked Houses. He believes the Company is both wealthy and powerful enough, with vast military resources at its disposal that a clean break from the houses is not only possible, but justified. As such, he is intent upon purifying the Company, and using his status as the head of the intelligence division to do this. Sgt. Skyne Tragar has been branded a staunch loyalist to Mackinnon Maceck and the Dragonmarked Houses. Any pupils of hers, particularly very successful ones, should be eliminated, and sending them on a highly suicidal, yet highly lucrative mission is a win-win opportunity for his cause.

The PC's are to retrieve Sephraman's Scepter and return aboard the Ebon Siren's flagship, *Vulkoor's Requital* to Sorrowdusk Island where they will rendezvous with a waiting Blackwheel Company airship. Of course, no mission is complete without its share of complications. As the PC's encounter a Sahuagin ambush and the potential betrayal of their lethally beautiful captain, they learn that all is not what it seems.

In fact, the cunning pirate queen, the Ebon Siren has designs of her own. She has done her homework on the Blackwheel Company and looks to play on their pride, discipline, and loyalty. She plans to use the opportunity as bait to catch an even bigger prize: an airship. She attempts to play the PC's for all they are worth, hoping to lull them into a false sense of security.

Troubleshooting

Very long read-aloud text: Several sections of the adventure have lengthy read-aloud text. Use changes in your inflection or tone to vary the information. Encourage the PC's to participate in the conversation or instruction, and don't be afraid to improvise when necessary.

A party of pirates: At several points during the adventure the DM will be asked to take control of some pirate NPC's to fight alongside the PC's. The pirates should fight relatively dumb, and take simple actions. They are there for color, and to add depth and volume to the encounter, not to upstage the PC's. Using index cards or having an extra set of their combat statistics can help facilitate the combat. When in doubt, have them take very simple actions, such as attacking the nearest enemy. Some of the encounters will

contain a large number of combatants, having all the like-named creatures act on a single initiative count may also speed the process up.

The ship's map: For the purpose of parsimony, a generic ship map has been used to represent both the Aereni ship the *Dajar Maerenor* and the pirate's *Vulkoor's Requit*. While the map of the *Dajar Maerenor* needs to remain constant, feel free to use your discretion to vary the map of the *Vulkoor's Requit* to suit your tastes.

Colorful Personalities: The personalities of General Mach Ogden and the Ebon Siren are essential to conveying the conflict between the factions in the adventure. Embellish their character or voices as needed to make them stand out. They are both villains and allies in their own particular ways—and should come off as such. Improvising conversations or replies to the PC's query can be an invaluable resource for conveying their personalities.

A Surprise Ending: Many adventures end with the PC's being wildly successful and saving the day. This adventure ends quite differently, as it must to set up a recurrent villain and a large portion of the plot to come. Still, no player likes to walk away with their head down after a really great session of roleplaying. Feel free to convey a sense of optimism at completing the mission and at the chance for revenge in the future. Furthermore, the awarding of story objects provides a great opportunity to praise the PC's for a job well done, even if the outcome isn't what they expect.

Adventure Secret: In this particular adventure you can choose to award one of two adventure secrets at your discretion: 1) The knowledge that General Ogden is likely sending them on a fool's errand, and that his disdain for the mission smacks of the divisiveness within the Company. Furthermore, they know that successfully completing this mission would seriously undermine General Ogden's power. 2) The PC's gain an awareness of the best places to find treasure and to detonate the banishment bomb.

Adventure Start

The adventure begins in a dark alley behind Molou's Distillery in the southern quadrant of Stormreach.

Part One: The Smell of Things to come.

Even the rain in Xen'drik is hot. It does little to relieve the sweltering heat of the evening or to dissipate the pungent haze from the nearby distillery. The overpowering, sickly-sweet scent of kuryeva gin hangs heavy in the air. The clattering of crockery and sounds of conversation can be heard from the distillery's far-too-busy taproom, ensuring, along with the driving rain, that any conversation is likely to go unheard. Of course, you and your fellow hires have no idea what conversation might take place. All you know is that you received a sudden dispatch in the middle of the night that instructed you to meet here on "Company business." It was sealed with a 10-spoked wheel, a rank that only a select few in the Company hold, and came directly from one of the highest ranking White Hand battalion envoys.

As you and the other hires stare listlessly into the rain, a hulking figure suddenly emerges from the darkness. As the large man passes through a slip of light filtered through a soot-covered window from the distillery, a brilliant 10-spoked metallic black wheel flashes on his chest.

"I'm General Ogden," he states plainly, as if you should already know, "glad to see you could finally make it."

General Mach Ogden-- the name is instantly recognizable. The General is the head of the elite White Hand battalion—the Company's espionage and recruitment branch. The General himself stands some six and a half feet and has shoulders like a pair of massive knots on a tree trunk. Bulging over his black trousers, however, is a hefty gut that betrays five or six too many pints every night at the ale house. Emerging from behind the general, occluded by his massive form, are two lizardfolk, clad in the blacks of the Company. No doubt the general's bodyguards and recruits from Salvage, the secret Blackwheel training facility in Q'barra.

A guttural sound begins emanating from the portly general and he suddenly spits a wad of phlegm onto the rain soaked mud at his feet.

"Now, let's get down to business."

"You know that if the Company's sent a General down to speak with a platoon of common hires, they've got something important in mind. Now listen up."

Wordlessly, the lizardfolk hires slip off into the night, likely setting up a perimeter around the conversation. The general beckons you forward and when he speaks again, you can feel his hot, fetid smelling breath on your face, his voice barely above a whisper.

"This mission comes straight from the top. We need an artifact retrieved. After your last drop, you developed quite a reputation as quick studies from an airship. Needless to say, your names came up when we needed some hires that we could count on to get the job done. Now before your heads get too swollen with praise, you'd better focus in on this briefing, because you're going to have to be the best to survive this drop."

The general pulls out a small scroll case and swiftly snaps the 13-spoked wax seal on it. Tiny golden sparks flutter off from the broken wax as it falls from the case. The general unfurls a tiny bit of paper, a silvery sheen emanating from the text, illuminating his portly face.

"Sephraman's Scepter is a relic from the elven rebellion in Xen'drik, and apparently somehow directly related to the draconic prophecy. It's related to something called the Cairn of Stone Hearts, some kind of ruins that are mentioned in Caldyn's crazy ramblings. We've learned that a Crimson Codex expedition helped a group of royal Aereni lore seekers, or as I like to call them, 'treasure hunters' find a number of items related to this Cairn place. The elves routinely make pillaging expeditions back to their former homeland—swiping whatever magic they can to keep it from falling into the hands of the 'savages' that remain. Looks like this scepter is the item they're sending you out to get."

The general crumples the paper in one hand and as he works it into a tiny ball, it flashes with silver light and disintegrates. He spits again, wipes his mouth, and continues,

"Here's the deal we've arranged. You'll be going undercover as crew of the infamous corsair, the Ebon Siren. We've worked out a uh... mutually beneficial arrangement. The Ebon Siren is an angry drow woman, who does not look kindly on her stuck-up cousins plundering the relics her ancestors spilled their 'savage' blood for. She and her fleet prey almost exclusively on Aereni sea traffic. Only trouble is, she can't waylay the really important treasure ships because the pale-skinned elves reserve their elemental galleons for those trips. She's got a heavily modified elven wingship, Vulkoor's Requit, and even that stallion can't catch an elemental wind galleon."

*"So... we've made arrangements to give them what they can't get on their own: A chance to sack a royal treasure ship. Naturally, we're not going to want to get our hands bloody in the affairs of the Undying Court, particularly not for a treasure ship out of Pylas Talaeor. But we **must** have that artifact. An attack by a well known pirate will provide just the cover to do what needs to be done."*

"You'll be engaging in a ship-to-ship drop, one of the most dangerous maneuvers a group of hires like yourselves will ever be likely to get the privilege of pulling off. We're going to cloak you as much as we can, and use airborne insertion to land a small strike team on that elemental ship. Airship's the only thing fast enough to catch her. Once you're aboard, the artificer corps over at the Arclight Battalion have developed a little device that ought to knock the elemental out of commission for long enough for the Ebon Siren and her crew of ...uh... noble... privateers to catch them."

"Stay hidden until the fighting starts. From there we've arranged for you to 'help' the Siren's crew by lending some muscle. Don't work too hard though, but don't embarrass the Company either—I won't have our combat skills shown up by a bunch of ragtag pirates. Make it look good, and don't blow your cover as part of the crew. She rarely leaves survivors, but a small handful just might survive this time to make our alibi airtight. She's not happy about leaving the pale-skins alive, but you just make sure a couple of them get away to tell the story. Spare some innocent life and all..."

The general chuckles to himself and rolls his eyes, apparently amused by his own joke.

"Once you've snagged the artifact, the Siren and her crew are going to plunder the rest. Now you didn't hear this from me, but that galleon will be loaded to the gills with artifacts. Your orders only say to grab the Scepter, I suppose that means anything else you happen to find is a bonus. And you do know how the artificer corps at Arclight love to play with new artifacts... Anyhow, the Siren has orders to scuttle the elemental galleon, it's a shame really, and she's not happy to be letting that prize go, but I want it burned

into the sea. Leave no trace of what happened there other than the vague, terrified stories of a crazed survivor or two."

"They have orders to sail you directly to Sorrowdusk Island on the western side of the peninsula. We'll have our own airship there waiting to retrieve you."

"The three most important things to remember are: Get the scepter; Don't blow your cover; and Don't get embarrassed by those pirates—my men have a reputation to uphold. Now this Ebon Siren has quite a reputation herself, and is rumored to be an incredibly comely lass, so just watch your step around her. I'm sure if she had things her way she'd turn the entire Thunder Sea as red as her hair. You just remember your training, and act like the soldiers you are."

The hulking officer levels his gaze upon you, his nostrils flaring, as if becoming extraordinarily serious for a moment,

"Make no mistake of it, this mission is of the most secretive status the Blackwheel Company can assign. You are to speak to no one about your objectives or any aspect of the mission. That includes your flea-ridden mutt of a C.O., Skyne Tragar. We're giving out information on a 'need-to-know-basis' and as of now, the Company has determined that she does not need to know. We will explain to her that you'll be off on Company business, we expect you to keep every aspect of this mission discrete and confidential."

"You'll be flying with Captain Wrynth and Drop Officer Crash on the Cloud Ray again. They've got the only ship fast, light, and quiet enough to get the job done. They're also the only ones with enough MAAD experience to make a ship-to-ship drop safely. They'll be berthing along side the Glory Road in a couple of hours. You'll leave at dawn's first light, seeing as how that galleon will be halfway to Aerenal by now. In the meantime I'd locate quartermaster Gridd and see about getting into character. It's time to go be pirates."

Suddenly, the pair of lizardfolk materialize from out of the pelting rain and take their place at General Ogdin's flank. The general sniffs the air for a moment, inhaling deeply the aroma of the Kuryeva, and smiles.

"Well, I must be going now. Important Company business to attend to. Try not to die. And if you do, make damned sure your carcass ends up at the bottom of the Thunder Sea where it leaves no trace."

With that he turns and stalks off in the direction of Molou's taproom.

General Ogdin is rarely in a mood for questions, and tonight, in the pouring rain, surrounded by lowly, idiot hires, is no exception. He's acerbic, cocky, and—in general—just a terse, rough-around-the-edges character. While he may answer a mission-critical question or two, he's a legendary fighter and won't hesitate to use intimidation or the threat of rank to shut down any annoying questioning from the PC's. He tolerates no insubordination, and any hint of dissention immediately incurs his wrath, along with a promise to strip rank, title, and pay as soon as he returns to the Field Marshal.

The General is particularly hard to read at any time, much less after he's been drinking. Nevertheless, a Sense Motive (DC 20) check reveals that while he seems to take this mission seriously he knows more than he may be letting on. He, of course, denies this if confronted. Still, PC's that succeed on the Sense Motive check may regard him suspiciously in the future and certainly may be cautious about the mission. If the PC's attempt to use flattery by way of Bluff or Diplomacy (DC 18) he will reveal to the PC's a rumor that the Ebon Siren is a bit of an overzealous social/political activist and that she wields a drow scorpion chain made of blood glass that is rumored to change color with her mood.

When the conversation ends it's estimated to be between 12 and 1 in the morning, giving the PC's plenty of time to locate Quartermaster Gridd aboard the Glory Road or to Gather Information around Stormreach. A successful Gather Information check (DC 15) reveals 1d4 random items from the rumor list included with this adventure.

Gather Information Rumor List

Check Result for General Ogdin

DC 15—The General is rumored to be a drunk, but is one of the most deadly warriors ever to serve the Company. His original connection as an employee of Mackinnon Maceck allows him to keep his position despite his personality.

DC 18—The General had to be "reassigned" from the Six Paths battalion because of "safety concerns" related to General Pilgrim, the warforged that heads up that battalion.

DC 21—The General believes that the Blackwheel Company would be better off separating from the bickering Dragonmarked Houses, and has a small following of believers within the Company.

Check Result for Aereni or Drow Elves

DC 15—The Aereni are descended from the drow, who were once sacrificial slaves to the giants that ruled Xen'drik.

DC 18—The rebellion that freed the people that would become the Aereni was brutal, and resulted in the fracturing of many bloodlines. The elves that were able to escape Xen'drik fled to the land of Aerenal. Those that remained hid below ground and became the drow.

DC 21—The Aereni are strangely transfixed with Xen'drik, perhaps because of the strength of the draconic prophecy in the land. While they routinely send exploratory missions to collect artifacts and dragonshards, they tend to look down upon the drow, who they consider savages. The drow care little for the Aereni, but recently have become more involved in international politics as it relates to the resources of their land.

Check Result for Ebon Siren or Ebon Pirates

DC 15—Piracy is common in the Thunder Sea, and the Ebon pirates are perhaps one of the most feared groups, headed by a drow captain.

DC 18—The Ebon Siren's crew are highly trained and disciplined, and often strike pre-selected targets. They most often prey upon Aereni ships, but have hit merchant and private vessels of all types.

DC21—The Ebon Siren's crew has long expressed frustration at their inability to capture faster elemental ships, and have recently begun looking for a way to speed up their fleet to make some higher-priority strikes.

Part Two: Yeargh!

Quartermaster Gridd

The loping, too tall, jovial half-orc is easy to find, and predictably, is awake even at this hour of the morning. The quartermaster's quarters, as they were, are only a short distance from the ship's main entryway. As you near, the half-orc greets you with a toothy smile as he looks up from a long sheet of black fabric he's trimming.

"Just in time I see! I've got the material just about ready. I've no idea what sort of foolishness you may be about to undertake, but I have to imagine it's going to be fun. Eyepatches, sails worth of black cloth, bandannas, feathers, strips of random leather, waistcoats, scarves, sashes, these strange three-pointed hats, doublets, paint and pigments of every color, charcoal, costume jewelry, and cloaks. It's all here, assembled at a moment's notice by your loving and talented quartermaster."

"Now if I didn't know better, I'd say you lot will be heading to the Stormreach Masquerade ball dressed as pirates. But Gridd don't know nothing—all I know is that I had half a dozen hires scouring ever corner of the city for the better part of the day hunting down this... finery."

The half-orc gives a hearty laugh and rises to his feet.

"I also got strict orders to 'leave you to it' and not to stick my nose into whatever this 'priority' assignment might be. So here's me, leaving you all to do whatever it is you need here."

Gridd is happy to answer any questions before he goes, though he knows nothing about their current mission. He refuses to pry into their situation, as he's been warned to steer clear of any questions by the same White Hand envoy that brought the PC's the original message summoning them to meet with General Ogdin. Gridd is happy to read down the list of the items present again, or to "fetch" any additional relatively mundane items the PC's require.

Contained in the stash are any relatively mundane items the PC's might require to outfit themselves in relatively pirate-like garb. Encourage them to use their creativity and sense of style to outfit themselves however they see fit. Make sure each PC notes how they're outfitting themselves. Grant all PC's that choose to decorate themselves a +2 bonus to their Disguise checks. Feel free to grant up to a +6 circumstance bonus for particularly unique or interesting costumes.

"Oh, and before I forget," Gridd nods to a large metal box in the corner.

"That is for you, courtesy of the White Hand battalion. I'll be taking my leave now."

The box contains up to six suits of specially crafted, deep crimson suits of magical sharkskin armor. The sharkskin counts as light armor grants a +4 armor bonus, a +7 maximum Dex bonus, weighs 8lbs, has no

armor check penalty, and carries a 5% chance of arcane spell failure. These suits of armor have a +1 enchantment bonus and also make the wearer float in water provided they are at a medium load or less. There is a letter at the top of the box that reads as follows:

*Hires, you'll be needing these. They're on loan from the Ebon Siren's crew. I've made sure that they're your exact size. These are essential pieces to making you fit in with the crew should you be caught early or when you join combat later. Besides, jumping ship-to-ship in medium or heavy armor is absolute suicide. After all, if you miss your jump from one moving target to another, you're likely to end up square in the middle of the Thunder Sea, thousands of miles from any other ships or landmasses. Which would you rather have, 50lb plate mail, or a suit of armor that floats? Now you know why the pirate crew wears them. Feel free to take your own armor, if you can bear the burden, but until you've dispatched or dismissed the crew of the elemental galleon, you keep these suits on. Don't blow your cover, the entire reputation of the Company could depend on it. We don't want to start any wars here, remember, no trace of our presence, no medals, no rank insignias. You **are** pirates. Oh, and give them back before you board our rescue ship on the island, you wouldn't want to make **her** mad. .*

*Don't Die,
General Ogdin.*

Many players may be reluctant to leave their armor behind or to don strange armor, particularly if they're not proficient. Remind them that going "undercover" has been a big part of their Blackwheel Company training. It's particularly understandable if players don't want to go adventuring without their armor, but continue to remind them that special missions sometimes require special sacrifices, their armor will be just fine, and that the Blackwheel Company wouldn't send them into harm's way without the equipment and skills to handle the situation. This is what they have been trained for. At the very least they can take the armor off as soon as they dispatch the last of the Elven crew.

The Cloud Ray

Captain Wrynth and the Cloud Ray are as simple to find as always. The sleek, agile airship is berthed directly alongside the Glory Road, high atop the docking spires of Stormreach. The grey-haired half-elf spies you right away as you approach. Hopping off the starboard rail of the Glory Road, he leaps to his feet to greet you.

"About time! Come along there crew, we've to a ship to catch!" He shouts with excitement as he darts across the force bridge connecting the two ships. He beckons to you again as he reaches the sharp, tapered railing of the Cloud Ray's port side.

"Let's move. Sgt. Crash is waiting below deck to brief you. Now get over here so we can hoist anchor!"

The force bridge is a full 12 feet wide and provides no trouble for PCs attempting to cross it. If PCs are too reluctant the concentrating sorcerer aboard the Cloud Ray, who outranks them significantly, harangues them. If they still delay, he threatens to conjure up creatures to carry them over. As soon as the PCs are across, read the following:

The second the last boot touches the ship, the force bridge vanishes and the ship lurches upward. As the fire elemental roars to life from the exertion, the ship begins the climb in altitude rapidly. After nearly 20 minutes of climbing, Captain Wrynth hands off the controls momentarily to a well-dressed female half-elf. You notice that at the rear of the ship is a small, bespectacled goblin dressed in brilliant blue robes, using some sort of strange "V" shaped instrument to scratch notes onto parchment. As you're pondering this new crewmember the captain hustles over to speak with you.

"Welcome back! I suspected after our last drop that we just might be seeing a bit more of each other. You handled yourselves like true professionals. It's a pleasure to have you back aboard. If you'll excuse me though, it's going to take everything I've got left in my dragonmark to get us enough of a lead on that elemental galleon to get you a good drop trajectory. Crash will get you up to speed on this drop. Head below deck, and hold tight."

As the captain returns to take the wheel from his first mate, he shouts to you over the screaming wind, "Nice costumes!"

The Captain has no time for additional conversation, and directs any attempts toward Sgt. Crash waiting in the tiny hold belowdeck. Any attempts to meet with the ship's sorcerer or first mate meet with similar urging.

A Good Lead

The now-familiar cabin below deck is small, cramped and filled almost entirely by the massive frame of Sgt. Crash. The minotaur is dressed, as is customary, in the stately "blacks" of the company, the fabric straining under his heavy musculature. The row of medals gleaming across his broad chest is nothing short of impressive, and you notice some additions to his collection since your last encounter with him. Among the more notable medals are a pair of golden crossed swords, a pair of blue dragon wings, and something you've not seen before, a pair of griffon wings that appear to be made from an eberron dragonshard.

The drop officer looks with sightless eyes as you enter, staring blankly in your general direction. He greets you in his surprisingly melodious, eloquent manner:

"Salutations my daring pupils."

He stretches out his arm toward you, slowly unclenching his fist. Appearing as no more than a children's jewelry in his gargantuan palm, a handful of medallions gleam in the dim light of the cramped cabin.

"I assume you all remember these. I've just received a fresh batch from our chief artificer in the Arclight, specifically for this mission. You may have also noticed our new crew member, sent just for this mission courtesy of General Ogdin himself. Lt. Commander Scree is a mathematician. Rumor has it he used to calculate range and arc for siege weapons for the Cyran Army. When Field Marshal Maceck purchased his services he was the best shot with a ballista or catapult this side of Sarlona. As you may have guessed, he's here to make sure that our "shot" doesn't miss."

The minotaur nods to you, indicating that you should take your modified feather fall talisman from his outstretched hand.

"Allow me to brief you on the details of this jump," he takes a deep, sonorous breath.

"Your target is the royal elven elemental galleon, the Dajar Maerenor. Blackwheel intelligence reports that this modified wind galleon departed Stormreach en route directly to Pylas Talaer. You may thank the deadly shoals of the Shargon's Teeth for slowing them down. They weren't able to fully engage their air elemental until clearing into deep water some 8 hours ago. We should catch them just past the halfway point in the Thunder Sea, perhaps a little northeast of Jerian's Marker—that is, if the Captain doesn't burn out our dragonshard first from all the power he's channeling. "

"You may also consider yourselves fortunate that this is an air elemental galleon. The great cloud of mist surrounding the ship when underway completely precludes the need for us to cut power to our fire elemental before you make your jump. So long as they're at full speed they shouldn't be able to spot much of anything. For precaution's sake, Dol Dorn be praised, we'll be making a lower altitude drop. A drop from 5,000 feet isn't going to leave you much time to second guess things, but it's the closest we can afford to get to their ship while minimizing the trajectory needed to get you directly over your target. Even at 5,000 feet, we'll still need a good lead."

"Now let's cover a few important details..."

Sgt. Crash smiles at the hires and asks them to gather around for formal instruction. A **very** long section of read-aloud text follows, sometimes pausing to have the players demonstrate a technique or act something out breaks up the monotony of the text. Sgt. Crash is a patient and careful teacher with a good sense of humor. Still, he's apt to remind his students about the speed they're going to be moving at and the possible consequences of failure if they're not learning fast enough or if they are taking things less seriously than he'd like.

Mission Briefing

"Your new talismans have been enchanted with transmutation and abjuration magic so that your course will be minutely altered each second of freefall to bring you closer to any air elemental. Let's hope there's only one present when we drop, eh? I assume you recall how to operate the mechanism? You're all veterans at M.A.A.D.'s at this point, so I won't bother reviewing the details with you. When you get clear of the Cloud Ray, get your heads angled toward that ship, don't bother with your box position, you need to be a precise arrow shot blazing toward the bullseye."

"You're going to have to hold out until the last possible second to begin your slide. If you kill your momentum too soon, the ship may pass right beneath you as you're only a foot or two above it. We'll be dropping you a good ways out in front of the target, so at the moment you begin to slide, you'll need to spin your body around so that your feet are going with the movement of the ship, rather than against it. And keep your head and arms clear of masts and rigging. Lt. Commander Scree has calculated the drop so that you should hit the forecastle of the ship, giving you plenty of space to make your landing, even if you're a little late on your slide."

"We'll be dropping at night so that you land with a short watch on." The blind minotaur effortlessly slides a small crate forward with his hoof. He gently lifts the lid, revealing a number of potions, a fist-sized medallion and an ornate metal box. The potions have a liquid that seems to swirl purple and gold and they have some sort of tiny shard inside of them that pulses from time to time. The metal box is just large enough that it would take two hands to hold it.

"The potions contain a customized invisibility spell," intones the minotaur. "The shard you see is a sliver of a Siberys shard, it will dissolve the moment you uncork the potion. You'll drink these the instant before you jump, and they should grant you around 2 hours of limited invisibility. If you attack or take some offensive action, the invisibility will fade. They will also help muffle your sounds. More importantly, the potions will allow you to remain unseen to those who cannot detect the invisible, but you will be visible to each other. The medallion, when activated, has about 2 hours of a 15 foot radius Silence-like spell on it that also helps muffle the sound of any who've imbibed the remnants of that shard you see in the potions. This should cover the sound of your landing and your progress through the ship without drowning out the ambient noise of the ship like a traditional silence sphere. Better still, it should allow you to freely communicate. The Company and the Dragonmarked Houses have invested a small fortune in this equipment, so you can tell just how important this artifact is to them. But that is not all..."

Sgt. Crash, with a delicate touch unexpected for his oversized appearance, gingerly lifts the lid on the metal box.

"And this is the show stopper. At the inception of the Blackwheel Company, we lost the original Glory Road prototype to one of these. Ever since then, some of House Cannith's best artificers and the most talented elemental binders from Zilargo have been working nonstop to recreate the effect. It's a banishment bomb. Much like an incendiary device, it explodes. Except, this beautiful piece of craftsmanship produces no sound, no visible effect, and no vibration."

The banishment bomb is relatively small. It is a metallic disc that's center appears to be overlaid with dragonshards in a clockwork pattern. The outer rim of the disk is pure metal, but studded with more rounded, tiny dragonshards that vary slightly in size.

"Once activated," The minotaur places a thick finger over the largest dragonshard on the rim of the device, "the effect cannot be stopped or reversed—though the disk can be thrown overboard or relocated. It takes approximately 15 minutes for the disk to arm and detonate. Once the bomb detonates it uses a specially augmented version of the banishment spell, designed specifically for an air elemental. This should suppress the elemental back to its binding shard for approximately 3 to 4 hours. If their elemental handler is particularly skilled, you may only get two hours out of it before he can coax the elemental back to the ship again. Either way, two hours should be plenty of time for Vukoor's Requitall to catch you. The trouble comes in when the bomb detonates it will no longer be invisible and it may attract some attention, particularly if the elemental handler aboard suspects foul play."

"The blast radius itself is only about 30 feet in diameter, so you'll need to locate the elemental's containment chamber within the ship and get the device as close as possible. Don't bother trying to get it within the chamber, which is sure to be heavily warded, just get it as close as possible, the bomb's blast is invisible to the naked eye, but should pass right through the wooden walls of the ship. These containment chambers are often directly beneath the helm on the lower levels of a ship. After the bomb detonates, however, you may want to hide it until it can be retrieved later or throw it overboard. If something goes

wrong with the bomb, your only hope is to break into the containment chamber and smash the dragonshard within. The Vulkoor's Requitall has been out to sea for a month plotting a course for this intercept. At this very moment it is under full sail on a course to interdict the Dajar Maerenor; their paths should cross perfectly if all goes well with the bomb. After you detonate the device, you should remain hidden until you receive the signal from the Ebon Siren."

The minotaur smiles a toothy grin to himself, "And that signal is quite the spectacle to behold. They don't call her the Siren for no reason. The figurehead of her ship broadcasts her voice for miles around, singing loudly. Some say that she sings a slow, haunting funeral dirge for the crew she is about to slaughter. Others say that she chants a rousing battle hymn that whips her crew into a frenzy. One thing is certain, very few, if any have survived to report about it. Nonetheless, you will recognize it when you hear it. That should be your signal to prepare for battle."

"The Dajar Maerenor is heavily laden with plundered artifacts from Xen'drik and has a full compliment of royal soldiers aboard which may include some Deathguard as well as some undying troops. No matter how well or how poorly things are going, remember that your mission is Sephraman's Scepter and only Sephraman's Scepter. Skilled as you are, you would not be a match for a full compliment of Aereni soldiers. We've paid a heavy price to the pirate queen, so let her do the bulk of the fighting. You may find that your most effective role will be to use your invisibility to take out their elemental handler, any casters you see, or other targets of opportunity since you'll be behind the front line of combat. The element of surprise may save many lives on both sides."

*"The good news is, the Dajar Maerenor, like most wind galleons relies on speed, not strength of arms. The crew is picked among noble heirs assigned "safe" duty on the un-catchably speedy ship, and the ship itself is ill-equipped for ship-to-ship combat. Without her elemental, she'll be a sitting duck. I'd wager that her ballistae have never once been used. The pirate crew is born for this sort of slaughter and should make quick work of the resistance—though don't count out the tenacity, or more importantly, the magic, of the Aereni. They're strange folk, and remember, they **want** to die, they certainly don't fear it with their skull masks and ancestor worship. Let the pirates do the dying, we've trained you too well to let you go now."*

"Now take note, some of the Aereni crew must survive and be turned loose to pass along the alibi that it was simply a random attack by pirates after their elemental failed. I suggest cutting a handful of them loose in a rowboat with a month's worth of rations. That or you could subdue some of them and imprison them until you reach your rendezvous point—just make sure they hear nothing of what's happened. The Dajar Maerenor is to be scuttled once the pirates have taken their share. Grab the Scepter and don't allow your eyes to grow bigger than your swords. These pirates have laid waste to entire port towns and are among the most well-equipped, vicious, and savagely talented warriors to terrorize the Thunder Sea. Let them have their cut, it's not worth dying over. Once the treasure is in sight, you're only as valuable to them as the long distant oath of a cutthroat to some pompous Blackwheel Company officer. Keep your wits about you on the journey back—and try to make yourself useful, it may be the only thing that keeps you alive."

"We should be nearing the drop zone in an hour or so. Good luck hires, something about the import of this mission, and your selection for it tells me this could be a turning point in your service to the Company. We're proud to have you aboard! Now, you may want to use the remaining time to do any additional planning you need, or to pray—or perhaps both. I'll be assisting Lt. Commander Scree with his calculations, I don't recommend disturbing us, I'd hate to make a careless mistake on account of being interrupted."

With that, the eloquently spoken minotaur gives you a graceful smile and squeezes past, heading for the main deck.

The potions function exactly as described, granting the PC's the affects of the invisibility spell for two hours. During that time they will be able to see each other and receive a +4 bonus on any Move Silently checks. The medallions grants any PC under the effects of the potion a +10 bonus on Move Silently check. It also allows any PC within the radius of the effect to talk or cast spells freely while only being heard by those who have taken the potion. The banishment bomb is roughly the size of two human fists placed together. It has 13 gems around the outside and is armed by depressing seven of the gems simultaneously. It detects as strong abjuration and moderate evocation.

Once the PCs have had a chance to ask questions, Sgt. Crash departs for work above deck. A Sense Motive (DC 20) check reveals that the minotaur seems to be a little nervous or concerned about the upcoming mission. If asked, he mentions that he's confident about the drop, but more nervous about the amount of time you'll be spending with such ruthless pirates between the time you touch down and your scheduled pick up time. A successful Diplomacy or Gather Information check (DC 18) gets the Sgt. to reveal

that he is almost certain the General Ogdin is trying to play the pirates and the Aereni against each other as much as possible. The Blackwheel Company has been particularly vexed by pirate raids on their ships and an all-out war between the Aereni and the large pirate operation would certainly be beneficial to the Company. It would keep the Aereni resources tied up in the sea, rather than exploring the lost treasures and mysteries of inland Xen'drik and would certainly make any offer of Blackwheel Company protection more welcomed. He's also sure that he doesn't fully trust General Ogdin's intentions

Allow the players any time they need to plan a strategy. The crew of the Cloud Ray isn't much for conversation and is fiercely busy trying to make the drop zone in time to allow for a safe, successful drop. Sgt. Crash has no additional information about the pirate crew or the resistance they may face aboard the elemental galleon. Once the players seem to have their strategy set and have had enough time to discuss the mission, proceed to the next section.

Magic-Assisted Airship Drop

"Company, on deck!" Booms the deep baritone voice of Sgt. Crash, *"Drop Zone in five minutes."*

From the rough vibration of the deck beneath your feet to the wind screaming by deafeningly, it's obvious that the captain is giving the Cloud Ray all she can handle. Sgt. Crash is gesturing to you from the rear of the airship, where he stands next to a small platform, raised perhaps a foot off the deck. As you approach you note that the platform is roughly 12 feet wide and extends a foot or two past the rear deck of the ship. Though the scene looks familiar, it's no less awe inspiring than the first time you saw it.

"Step up, form a line along the edge hires, you know the drill, we've just come up past the target." The minotaur bellows into the howling wind and points below.

Peering over past your feet you see the dizzying expanse of the Thunder Sea rushing by. Several of Eberron's moons cast pale glows over the water and the reflection of the fire elemental itself sheds a flicker over the midnight black water below. In the distance behind the rear of the ship a ball of mist churns forward on the surface of the water. The captain seems to have trimmed the Cloud Ray's speed to match as he sheds altitude, bringing the ball of mist closer into view.

"There she is!" Belows the minotaur, gesturing toward the ball of mist. *"The Dajar Maerenor!"*

The next few minutes seem to crawl by as the ship makes minute adjustments to its speed and altitude. Lt. Commander Scree can be heard on occasion, shouting adjustment to Captain Wrynt. Sgt. Crash methodically glances back and forth between the captain and the rapidly approaching elemental galleon in the distance below. Compared to your previous jumps, 5,000 feet seems but a short skip from the surface of the water. You understand now why your timing must be so precise—you're going to have only a few seconds of freefall at the most.

"It's time!" The Sgt.'s boom shatters your train of thought. *"Potions out and drink."*

"Platoon leader, get your silence medallion ready to activate as you hit clear air. On my mark, jump as one. Get into your horns angled for that ship. Remember, when you get ready to slide in, get your feet angled with the direction of the ship. Go on my call, not a second before or a second after. Scree has the calculations planned down to a second. Get ready hires, here it comes. One aim—United! Now wait for it.

The minotaur glances toward the goblin and the front of the ship and waits for a moment before nodding.

"Jump!"

Assuming the PCs jump, continue:

And suddenly you find the vast Thunder Sea rushing up to meet you. The vast ocean is no longer a blur, but a beautiful expanse of reflective black that is rushing up to meet you. As you descend, you feel small pulses from your feather fall talisman that you assume are the corrections toward the air elemental. Your eyes lock on to the rapidly approaching ball of mist. After a few more seconds of freefall you can begin to make out the outline of a ship. After several more seconds masts and vast sections of rigging come into view. As you continue to fall, it almost appears as if you'll impact the water and then be barreled over by the ship, but as another second passes, you can see that you'll soon be an adventurer-sized hole through the forecastle if you don't begin your slide soon. As you continue to count down in your mind, the time has come to activate your talisman.

A DC 20 Spot check reveals a relatively light crew aboard the magnificently crafted ship. The few guards present wear the midnight blue and gold of the Undying Court.

Magic-Assisted Airship Drops

Successfully activating a *feather fall* talisman at the appropriate time during a MAAD means succeeding at a DC 11 Will save. Use the chart below to determine the result of the Will Save.

Final Will Save Total	Result
1 or less	Death—Talisman not activated before impact, or talisman activated too soon (<i>feather fall</i> spell expires before impact)
2-3	3d6 falling damage, landing missed—Talisman activated late. DC 12 Reflex save required to keep from falling overboard. Succeeding on the Reflex save means the PC can catch some rigging and pull aboard the forecastle.
4-5	2d6 falling damage, land prone—Talisman activated late
6-7	1d6 falling damage, land prone—Talisman activated late
8-10	Land prone—Hard landing
11-19	Acceptable landing
20 or more	Flawless landing—PC lands with a flourish, +2 bonus on Spot, Move Silent, Hide, and Listen checks as well as Initiative and attack rolls within 20 seconds of landing.

Few situations are as difficult as a Magic-Assisted Airship Drop. While risk must exist, it's unrealistic to penalize 5% of players for rolling natural 1's on the Will save. Natural 1 rolls are not instantly fatal. Treat them as you would any other roll of the d20 in this unique situation. Players may always add an action point roll to this save. NPCs may (and perhaps should) encourage PCs with negative Will save modifiers to use magic or other means to help augment or offset that weakness during the drop.

A DC 15 Tumble check successfully reduces any damage taken by 1d6 points. Casting a spell during freefall requires a DC 20 Concentration check due to the extreme conditions unless otherwise noted.

Landing

The forecastle of the ship extends some 15 feet beyond, before descending to the main deck. The cloud of mist surrounding the ship now completely obscures any view of the water below.

At this point, provided nothing went cataclysmically wrong, the PC's begin the main part of their mission. They have roughly 2 hours worth of invisibility and silence to cover their tracks as they explore the ship looking for the containment chamber.

Part Three: The *Dajar Maerenor*

Exploring the Ship

The mission for the PC's is simple: Find the containment chamber and then find a suitable place to detonate the bomb. Ideal locations include the aft section of the Hold (location 13), in the antechamber before the Containment Chamber (location 16) or in the aft-most officer's quarters (location 11) on the deck directly above the Containment Chamber. A Knowledge (Arcana) check (DC 18), Profession Sailor check (DC 12) or a Wisdom check (DC 18) can be used to help the PC's determine if a location is suitable. Once the PC's have found a location for the device, move immediately to the "Detonating the Bomb" section that follows the location descriptions.

While a full wind galleon holds great potential for exploration, take care to remind the PC's that they are there to accomplish one goal: disable the *Dajar Maerenor* as quickly as possible. If they become distracted or intent upon looting and pillaging the ship prior to the pirate attack, remind them of their obligation to the Blackwheel Company and the importance of following orders.

1. Forecastle Deck

Some 60 feet wide, the forecastle is impressive, to say the least. A large ballista arms each of the crowns on the starboard and port side of the ship, but neither appears to have suffered from much use. Two of the unusual direction sails adorn the center of the forecastle, sprouting up like a pair of bat wings from a peg. Stairways lead down to the main deck on either side.

Unless the PC's have dispelled their invisibility or something catastrophic happened upon landing this area is clear. Should the PC's encounter guards, a pair of Aereni marines show up to investigate. Use the Combat Statistics provided to resolve this issue.

2. Main Deck

Sturdy soarwood planks, lightly coated in sea salt lie beneath your feet. Toward the front of the ship are the stairs to the forecandle deck and a door leading to the forecandle proper. In the center of the ship is the main mast. Wind Galleons do not require a traditional sail, but have a main mast as a backup in case the elemental fails or for negotiating shallow or dangerous waters. The primary sail attached now is almost the shape of a dragon wing, and is used more for direction and turning than for speed. Large cargo doors, sealed shut dominate the center of the main deck. The raised hatch for the ship's primary stairwell lies just beside the main mast. To the rear of the ship lie the stairs up to the quarterdeck and the helm along with a windowed door to the sterncastle.

When the PC's first arrive, this deck holds only 4 Aereni marines as guards, one in each corner of the main deck. Later, the majority of combat will take place here with the crew of *Vulkoor's Requital*.

Foes: Prior to the banishment bomb being detonated, the Aereni marines attack the PC's only if they are spotted.

Aereni Marine (4): hp 12, 11, 11, 10; Combat Statistic

Aereni Sailors (4): hp 8, 7, 7, 6; Combat Statistic

Tactics: If the marines spot the party, which should be quite difficult prior to the bomb going off, they attack immediately and call for help. One of the marines makes a run for the stairs, if he succeeds in getting below deck, he returns with an additional 4 marines and 1d4 Aereni Deathguard. The sailors join the fight, but quickly attempt to flee if things look bad for the crew.

Scaling the Encounter:

5th-level: No change.

6th-level: An additional pair of Aereni marines guard the main deck.

7th-level: An additional two Aereni marines and one Deathgaud protect the main deck.

3. Forecandle Interior

A quintet of doors line this narrow hallway. Off to the port (left) side is a small staircase leading down. From the looks of it, the remaining doors look to be officer's quarters and storage.

The forecandle hallway is currently empty, but can be quite busy while the ship is underway.

4. Officer's quarters

Secure looking beds line the walls of this room. Unlike the crew quarters, these are actual beds instead of rope hammocks. Four beds occupy each room, and a pair of footlockers sit upon the floor at the foot of each of the lower bunks.

If the PC's explore the rooms prior to the pirate attack, each room contains 1d4 sleeping Aereni officers. After the attack the rooms are empty. The first time the PC's explore the footlockers in one of the Officer's Quarters, award them the following event treasure, after that the lockers contain only useless items:

Treasure: Unguent of Timelessness (DMG 268) and Dust of Tracelessness (DMG 255) is lying hidden amongst the empty jar and barrels.

5. Ship's Armory

Bucklers, leather helms, crossbows, the occasional longbow, along with rapiers and shortwords line the walls and shelves of this room. There's also a large stack of ballista bolts in the corner collecting dust.

The equipment is all mundane in nature, and the PC's can take as much of it as they can carry (there are 20 bucklers, 20 helms, 12 crossbows, 200 crossbow bolts, 10 rapiers, 4 longbows, 80 arrows, and 6 shortwords). The pile of ballista bolts contains 10 traditional bolts and 4 "chain" bolts used to tear the sails of enemy ships.

6. Captain's Quarters

Unlike many traditional sailing ships, no panorama of beautiful glass graces the stern wall of this room. The pressure from the raging air elemental would prove disastrous for such a delicate façade. Indeed, even the mist cloud created by bringing the air elemental up to speed would make such a window useless. Instead, only a tiny slit of thin glass lines the upper part of the wall, perhaps only a foot high and two feet wide. A large table dominates the center of the room, with charts and maps spread over its surface.

Whether the PC's arrive before or after the pirate attack, the captain's quarters are empty. A Search check (DC 16) or Investigate check (DC 12) reveals a ring of keys that looks rather important, particularly given that there are no locked storage chests or doors in this room.

7. Storage

Foodstuffs, clothing, coils of rope, bolts of cloth, and various other bits of miscellany crowd this storage room.

The storage room is empty save any potential event treasure the PC's may find. They have a 20% chance each time they search a different storage room of finding the treasure. Once successfully located, the treasure cannot be found again in any other storage room.

Treasure: Potion of Aid

8. Berth Deck

Rows of tables, both oblong and circular dominate this large deck. Crates, boxes, barrels, and stacks of miscellaneous maritime equipment are scattered throughout the room. To the north is a door leading toward the fore of the ship, and to the south a door leading toward the aft. The main staircase of the ship lies just behind and to the starboard side of the main mast.

During the span before the pirate attack the berth deck is home to half a dozen Aereni marines sitting together at a table. During or after the pirate attack it is empty. Searching the barrels and crates reveals nothing of interest to the PCs.

Foes: Prior to the banishment bomb being detonated, the Aereni marines attack the PC's only if they are spotted.

Aereni Marine (6): hp 11, 11, 10, 10; Combat Statistic

Tactics: If the marines spot the party, which should be quite difficult prior to the bomb going off, they attack immediately and call for help. One of the marines makes a run for the stairs leading above, if he succeeds in getting up, he returns with an additional 4 marines and 1d4 Aereni Deathguard.

Scaling the Encounter:

5th-level: No change.

6th-level: Add two additional marines.

7th-level: An additional two Aereni marines and one Deathguard protect the main deck.

9. Galley

Kitchen and mess are combined into one small room within the deck of this efficient ship. Rows of tables stand in stark contrast to the simple oven and sets of cauldrons that line the starboard wall.

The galley lies empty both before and after the pirate attack.

10. Sick Bay

Two rows of beds are interspersed with stacks of boxes and the odd table or two. Two tiny slits for windows occupy the foremost wall.

The PCs will find the sickbay empty both before and after the pirate attack. Searching the sickbay (DC 16) reveals the following event treasure.

Treasure: 4 potions of Cure Moderate Wounds

11. Crew Quarters

Layer upon layer of hammocks stack this room from top to bottom and from side to side. These cramped, narrow quarters would look almost certainly inhospitable if not for the obvious signs of continuous use.

The crew quarters contain 1d8 sleeping Aereni sailors before the pirate attack. After the pirate attack they are empty. The quarters contain no significant items of value.

Foes: Prior to the banishment bomb being detonated, the Aereni sailors attack the PC's only if they are spotted.

Aereni Sailors (1d8): hp 8; Combat Statistic

Tactics: The sailors fight, but quickly attempt to flee if things look bad for the crew. If a sailor is able to successfully flee, he returns with a dispatch of 4 Aereni Marines.

12. The Quarterdeck

The large wheel of the helm, studded with dragonshards, dominates the center of the quarterdeck. A pair of giant sailcloth fins protruding up from the back of the deck act more as directional devices than true sails.

Prior to the pirate attack the Ship's captain is manning the helm along with an Aereni marine, two Aereni Deathguard and two Aereni sailors. At the time of the pirate attack, the Aereni Captain hands the helm over to a sailor and joins the fight.

Foes: Prior to the banishment bomb being detonated, the Aereni marines attack the PC's only if they are spotted.

Aereni Captain: hp 28; Combat Statistic

Aereni Deathguard (2): hp 23, 23; Combat Statistic

Aereni Marine (1): hp 12; Combat Statistic

Aereni Sailors (2): hp 8, 7; Combat Statistic

Tactics: Prior to the pirate attack the crew attacks only if they are able to spot the PC's. The Captain and Deathguard fight to the death, while the marine and sailors attempt to get help. If any of the crew is able to escape, they return with a complement of 6 Aereni Marines and 4 Deathguard.

13. The Hold

Crammed with chests, cages full of exotic flora and fauna, barrels, boxes and other assorted items like the berth deck above, this large chamber is strictly utilitarian in nature. Toward the front of the ship, a large door separates the hold from the bulkhead, to the rear, another door cordons off another set of rooms. Stacks of thick crates and piles of rope seem to be concentrated at the aft section of the room.

The hold contains nothing of immediate value to the PCs. Prior to the pirate attack the hold contains 1d4 Aereni marines. The hold itself contains a number of suitable places the PC's could detonate the banishment bomb, the crates and stacks of barrels provide perfect cover from which to set off the device. A Wisdom check (DC 16) could help the PC's determine the suitability of this location. During and after the pirate attack it contains no sailors or guards. When the banishment bomb detonates, provided the crew is not able to spot the now-visible bomb, they all rush above deck to see what has happened. The area remains empty as the pirate attack occurs shortly thereafter.

Foes: Prior to the banishment bomb being detonated, the crew attacks the PC's only if they are spotted. The forward and aft doors are each being guarded by an Aereni Deathguard.

Aereni Marine (1d4): hp 11; Combat Statistic

Aereni Deathguard (2): hp 22, 20; Combat Statistic

Tactics: If the marines spot the party, which should be quite difficult prior to the bomb going off, they attack immediately and call for help. The Deathguard fight until slain. One of the marines makes a run for the stairs leading above, if he succeeds in getting up, he returns with an additional 4 marines and 1d4 Aereni Deathguard.

14. The Bulkhead

A sturdy wooden door is framed with cross beams leading to the bulkhead. A large padlock protects the door. A zombie-like creature, heavily armed, with a gleam of intelligence in its hollow eyes guards the door.

This strong wooden door (break DC25) is protected by an average lock (Open Lock DC 25). The keys to this lock can be found in the Captain's Quarters (location 6).

Foes: The Undying Soldier guards the door until the banishment bomb has been detonated, at which point it departs to the decks above.

Undying Soldier: 27hp; Combat statistic

If the PC's enter the room read the following:

The dim light cast from a continual flame lantern attached to the wall illuminates large piles of potentially interesting ancient artifacts. They range from the bizarre—a half chewed, run carved giant femur—to the magnificent—a jewel encrusted crown.

Whether the party enters the bulkhead before or after the pirate attack, the undying soldier stands guard the relics. Sephraman's Scepter is relatively easy to find among the other artifacts with a Search (DC 15) check.

15. Treasure Room

Thick locked doors greet you on either side of this small antechamber.

The doors are sturdy wooden doors (break DC 25) protected by a trap and average locks (Open DC 25), the keys to this room can be found in the Captain's Quarters.

Trap: Inflict Light Wounds Trap: CR 2; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*inflict light wounds*, 1st-level cleric, 1d8+1, DC 11 Will save half damage); Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26. Cost: 500 gp, 40 XP.

Each of the two doors is locked and trapped. Within the treasure room is some unique event treasure (Search DC 18). Once it is located in one room, it cannot be gained again from the other. The draconic tome immediately appears of interest to the Company, and contains information about the draconic prophecy. It has no other uses or value.

Treasure: Cloak of Resistance +1, Amulet of Natural Armor +1, Draconic Tome

16. Containment Chamber

A colorful tile mosaic depicting a roiling wind blowing across the ocean's surface greets you upon the exterior of this iron door. Magical sigils along with a flowery run along the edge of the door.

A Knowledge (Arcana, DC 18) or Profession Sailor (DC 12) check reveals that this room is likely to be the containment room for the ship's elemental. The door is protected by good lock (DC 30), trapped, and warded by the *alarm* spell. If the PC's set off the alarm spell, 4 Aereni Marines and 2 Aereni Deathguard show up to investigate. Inside the room is a simple pedestal with a dragonshard. Smashing the dragonshard (hardness 10, hp 15) permanently disables the ship until the shard can be replaced.

Detonating the Bomb

Once the PC's have found a suitable location for the bomb, read the following text:

You depress the gems in the pattern you were shown by Sgt. Crash and suddenly they begin flashing in a pulsating, counterclockwise pattern. The pulsing pattern starts slowly, but begins to flash more quickly as time passes. After what seems like an eternity, the pulsing gems flash one final, brilliant time and a deep, thrumming vibration explodes out from the disk. The explosion is silent and invisible, but can be felt, almost as if a wave of sound ripped through the air. The faint purple outline that surrounded the device fades, and the bomb becomes visible.

The dull roar that constantly surrounded the ship suddenly dissipates, and slowly the vibrations indicating the ship's forward progress become more and more faint. The new state of silence stands in stark contrast to the ship's previous cacophonous existence. Amid the newly found quiet, the sharp barks and shouts of sailors can be heard from the decks above. While speed and momentum were the sounds that defined the Dajar Maerenor once, confusion and panic is her new symphony.

Assuming the PC's successfully detonated the bomb, all they need to do is hold tight until they hear the sounds of the *Vulkoor's Requital* from above. Given the pirate's course to intercept, it should only take about 30 minutes for that to occur. The vast majority of sailors will be either on deck or in the containment room during this time. If the bomb is out in plain sight, near one of these areas, it will be spotted. If spotted a group of 4 Aereni Marines accompanied by 4 Aereni Deathguard attempt to search for the saboteurs.

Part Four: The Death of the *Dajar Maerenor*

Something Wicked this Way Comes

The PC's were given specific instructions to await the coming of the pirates before revealing themselves. Some PC's may choose to assist immediately, although it would probably be wiser to wait until combat has begun. Assuming the PC's successfully detonated the bomb and were able to await the coming of the *Vulkoor's Requital* without being detected, read the following:

The tension within the ship is palpable, and from the alarmed shouts of the sailors on the main deck it is obvious that they've spotted something. Suddenly the tiniest of vibrations reverberates throughout the ship. The tiny vibration then blossoms fully into a haunting sound. An echoing melody, a slow, somber funeral dirge sung in the elven language drifts throughout the ship. The chilling dirge carries with it an air of both menace and hopelessness. Although the song remains, its icy grip on the ship is shattered by the sound of the Dajar Maerenor's ballista firing. The song grows louder with each passing moment, punctuated only momentarily by the rhythmic thrum of the ballista, and suddenly a new set of vibrations strike the ship along with thumps and crashes from above. Several screams can be heard and you think that for a moment you hear the roar of fire.

The singing stops abruptly and the brief silence is splintered by a raucous cheer and the sound of bowstrings. The Dajar Maerenor begins unexpectedly listing from side to side, rocking about as if caught in a storm. Then, the sounds of combat fill the air, indicating that the battle above has begun.

The figurehead of the *Vulkoor's Requital* has burst into an intimidating song, hoping to demoralize the crew of the *Dajar Maerenor*. This tactic is legendary among the Ebon Siren's crew, and devastatingly effective. The Ebon Siren has learned numerous languages and always chooses a language specific to the crew she is attacking. Any in the PC's party that is of elven blood must make a DC 17 Will save or become shaken for 10 minutes.

At this point all hands are on deck to repel boarders. The PC's may choose to explore the ship, given their newfound freedom, or they may choose to join combat immediately. If they choose to explore the ship refer to the locations in the section above. Also, if they choose to explore, assume that their invisibility wears off after the first several rooms, if it has not already. If they choose to join combat, continue on to the section that follows.

16. Waylaid! (EL 4)

Suddenly, on your way up, you run across a group of sailors coming down for provisions or weapons.

This situation presumes that the PC's did not wait on deck for the pirate attack to occur. Use either the Berth Deck (location 8) or the Hold (location 13) as the scene for this encounter.

Foes: If any of the PC's are visible, the crew attacks immediately. If the PC's are not visible, they may choose to let the crew pass, or they may choose to initiate hostilities here.

Aereni Sailors (2): hp 8, 6; Combat Statistic

Aereni Marines (3): hp 12, 11, 9; Combat Statistic

Tactics: If combat ensues, the crew fights to the death.

Development: Once the PC's either bypass or overcome this encounter, they have free reign of the lower decks of the ship if they choose to explore. If they choose to join combat, continue directly to the next section.

Scaling the Encounter:

5th-level: Add an additional Aereni Sailor

6th-level: Add an additional Aereni Marine

7th-level: Add an additional two Aereni Marines

AERENI MARINE

CR 1

Bluish-grey leather armor clings to the slim yet muscular frame of this elf. A rapier is buckled to his waist and a longbow is slung over his back.

Male elf warrior 2

LN Medium humanoid

Init +2; Senses Listen +2, Spot +2

AC 15(+2 Dex, +2 armor, +1 shield), touch 12, flat-footed 13

hp 11 (2 HD)

Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee rapier +4 (1d6+2 18-20/x2), or longbow +5 (1d8)

Base Atk +2; Grp +4

Abilities Str 14, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8

SQ Elven traits, Low-light vision 60 ft.

Feats Weapon Focus (Longbow), Iron Will

Skills Balance +2, Climb +3, Profession Sailor +2, Swim +2, Listen +2, Spot +2

Possessions: masterwork leather armor, masterwork small steel shield, rapier, longbow

Elf Traits: +2 racial bonus on saving throws against enchantment spells and effects. Immunity to sleep spells and effects. +2 bonus on Search, Spot, and Listen checks. An elf passing within 5' of a secret door automatically gets a Search check to detect it.

AERENI SAILOR

CR 1

This fair-skinned elf lacks the weathered, well-tanned skin so common to many human sailors. Despite his appearance, he carries himself with an air of competence aboard the ship.

Male elf expert 2

LN Medium humanoid

Init +1; Senses Listen +2, Spot +4

AC 12(+1 Dex, +1 armor), touch 11, flat-footed 11

hp 8 (2 HD)

Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +4

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee short sword +2 (1d6+1 19-20/x2), or dagger +2 (1d4+1 19-20/x2)

Base Atk +1; Grp +2

Abilities Str 12, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8

SQ Elven traits, Low-light vision 60 ft.

Feats Skill Focus (Profession: Sailor)

Skills Balance +4, Climb +5, Jump +2, Profession Sailor +9, Swim +6, Listen +2, Spot +4, Use Rope +4

Possessions: padded armor, short sword, dagger

Elf Traits: +2 racial bonus on saving throws against enchantment spells and effects. Immunity to sleep spells and effects. +2 bonus on Search, Spot, and Listen checks. An elf passing within 5' of a secret door automatically gets a Search check to detect it.

AERENI CAPTAIN

CR 4

An azure sash cuts a bright streak across the regal-looking studded crimson tunic of the Aereni captain. Jet-black hair, drawn back severely and piercing grey eyes prove an effective complement to the longsword she carries.

Female elf expert 5

LN Medium humanoid

Init +3; Senses Listen +2, Spot +6

AC 16(+3 Dex, +3 armor), touch 13, flat-footed 13

hp 28 (5 HD)

Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee longsword +4 (1d8+1 19-20/x2), or MW composite longbow +7 (1d8)

Base Atk +3; Grp +4

Abilities Str 13, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 12

SQ Elven traits, Low-light vision 60 ft.

Feats Skill Focus (Profession: Sailor), Endurance

Skills Balance +13, Bluff +2, Climb +5, Diplomacy +3, Jump +5, Profession Sailor +13, Listen +2, Spot +4, Survival +10, Swim +9, Tumble +8, Use Rope +11

Possessions: MW studded leather armor, longsword, MW composite longbow

Elf Traits: +2 racial bonus on saving throws against enchantment spells and effects. Immunity to sleep spells and effects. +2 bonus on Search, Spot, and Listen checks. An elf passing within 5' of a secret door automatically gets a Search check to detect it.

AERENI DEATHGUARD

CR 2

Trained to serve the Undying Court in life and in death, the Deathguard are among the finest warriors in the Aereni empire. A macabre skull tattoo of midnight black and brilliant white covering the warrior's face accentuate the intimate connection with the afterlife.

Female or male elf fighter 2

LN Medium humanoid

Init +6; Senses Listen +2, Spot +2

AC 20(+2 Dex, +5 armor, +2 shield, +1 deflection), touch 13, flat-footed 18

hp 23 (2 HD)

Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee longsword +1 +6 (1d8+3 19-20/x2), or mighty (+2) composite longbow +5 (1d8+2)

Base Atk +2; Grp +4

Abilities Str 14, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10

SQ Elven traits, Low-light vision 60 ft.

Feats Weapon Focus (longsword), Toughness, Improved Initiative

Skills Climb +5, Intimidate +3, Jump +2, Knowledge (religion) +1, Swim +1

Possessions: Chain shirt +1, light steel shield +1, ring of protection +1, longsword +1, mighty composite longbow

Elf Traits: +2 racial bonus on saving throws against enchantment spells and effects. Immunity to sleep spells and effects. +2 bonus on Search, Spot, and Listen checks. An elf passing within 5' of a secret door automatically gets a Search check to detect it.

AERENI ELEMENTAL HANDLER

CR 4

Short-cropped blonde hair accents the hawkish features of this sailor. The elf wears thick armor made of overlapped, iridescent blue scales along with a shield made of a strange, twisted wood. Wands and various spell components hang from a belt pouch at his waist.

Male elf cleric 4

LG Medium humanoid

Init +0; Senses Listen +4, Spot +4

AC 17(+5 armor, +1 shield, +1 deflection), touch 11, flat-footed 17

hp 31 (4 HD)

Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +6

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee MW shortspear +4 (1d6)

Ranged MW light crossbow +4 (1d8 19-20/x2)

Base Atk +3; Grp +3

Atk Options cleric spells

Cleric Spells, (5/5/4 CL 4th)

2nd (4 per day)—calm emotions (DC 14), eagle's splendor, resist energy, wind wall

1st (5 per day)—command (DC 13), endure elements, obscuring mist, sanctuary, protection from chaos

0 (5 per day)—create water, detect magic, light, mending, read magic

Abilities Str 10, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 16

SQ Low light vision 60', elf traits, turn undead, spontaneous casting, air domain (can turn or rebuke air elementals), magic domain

Feats Extra turning (can turn 10x per day), improved turning (+1 level for turning attempts)

Skills Concentration +6, Diplomacy +4, Knowledge (arcana) 6, Knowledge (planes) +8, Knowledge (religion) +2, Profession (sailor) +3, Spellcraft +4, Swim +1

Possessions: scale mail +1, brooch of shielding, MW darkwood buckler, MW shortspear, MW light crossbow, 20 bolts, wand of cure light wounds (18)

Spontaneous Casting: A good cleric (or a neutral cleric of a good deity) can channel stored spell energy into healing spells that the cleric did not prepare ahead of time. The cleric can "lose" any prepared spell that is not a domain spell in order to cast any cure spell of the same spell level or lower (a cure spell is any spell with "cure" in its name).

Magic Domain: Use scrolls, wands, and other devices with spell completion or spell trigger activation as a wizard of one-half your cleric level (at least 1st level). For the purpose of using a scroll or other magic device, if you are also a wizard, actual wizard levels and these effective wizard levels stack.

UNDYING SOLDIER

CR 2

An undead elf armed for war stands before you. It wears a fine breastplate and helm and it carries a shortspear and a heavy shield.

It must be something other than a zombie, for it has a spark of intelligence in its eyes.

NG Medium deathless

Init +0; Senses Listen +8, Spot +8

AC 18 (+6 armor, +2 shield), touch 10, flat-footed 18

hp 26 (4 HD)

Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +5

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee MW shortspear +5 (1d6+2)

Ranged MW shortspear +3 (1d6+2)

Base Atk +2; Grp +4

Atk Options Smite evil

Abilities Str 14, Dex 10, Con -, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 13

SQ Damage reduction 5/targath, darkvision 60', deathless traits,

Feats Blind-fight, Cleave, Power Attack

Skills Climb +5, Jump -1, Listen +8, Spot +8

Possessions: Breastplate +1, MW heavy steel shield, MW shortspear

Deathless Traits: Immunity to poison, sleep, paralysis, sunning, disease, death effects, and mind-affecting spells and abilities. Not subject to extra damage from critical hits, nonlethal damage, or ability drain. Immune to damage to ability scores. Immune to fatigue and exhaustion effects. Subject to energy drain, healed by positive energy, harmed by negative energy. Immune to any effect that requires a Fortitude save except for energy drain. Uses Charisma score for Concentration checks. Not affected by *raise dead* or *reincarnate* spells. Evil clerics turn or destroy deathless creatures as good clerics turn or destroy undead. Good clerics can rebuke, command, or bolster deathless creatures. Benefit from *consecrate* and *hallow*, are harmed by *desecrate* and *unhallow*.

Smite Evil: Once per day, an undying soldier can use a normal melee attack to smite evil. It gains a +1 bonus on its attack roll and deals an extra 4 points of damage against evil creatures.

The Main Event

The battle for the *Dajar Maerenor* is the seminal encounter of the adventure. Even the PC's take time to explore the ship thoroughly before ascending to the main deck, this encounter should occur. Assume, in that case, that the *Dajar Maerenor* and the *Vulkoor's Requit* spent a substantially greater amount of time jockeying for position and trading ballista and crossbow volleys before the PC's arrived. If they choose to proceed directly to the main deck, assume that they arrive just as the combat is beginning. Read the following as they come into sight of the main deck.

The ship lurches violently from side to side, bobbing like a cork in the turbulent seaswell. The Dajar Maerenor's reserve rigging is in a state of partial deployment, an indicator of just how quickly the Vulkoor's Requit came upon the crippled ship after the elemental was disabled. The unmistakable sounds of combat fill the air, along with the strange wafting scent of blood, smoke, and seaspray. Along side the majestic Aereni wind galleon, the Vulkoor's Requit has made her move to board.

In stark contrast to the milky inlay of oak and teak that is the wind galleon, the Requit is the color of a blood-soaked sunset. The entire ship, from stern to stern, sails, rigging, and all, has been dyed, painted, or tinted a deep, dark crimson, similar to the suits of armor you bear. It sits, perhaps only 30 feet from the Dajar Maerenor. You can see goblins, humans, and hobgoblins clad in dark red sharkskin armor loading crossbows and attempting to toss grappling hooks across from ship to ship. Occasionally a flaming ballista bolt hurtles toward the Dajar, and the Aereni crew scurry to put out the flames.

On the main deck, the elven crew is doing its utmost to repel the flood of boarders attempting to cross. But between the crossbow barrages, the fires, and the grappling hooks, the Ebon pirates have the Aereni crew spread thin. Suddenly a small group of pirates appear out of thin air on the main deck, flashing gems sparkling from ornate rings on their fingers. Seeing this incursion, the captain, along with a pair of zombie-like guards, charges down from her post on the sterncastle and joins the fray. On the forecastle, a group of

marines and Deathguard man the ballista, trying furiously to wound the Requit. On the sterncastle, a heavily armored elf is chanting and making gestures at some nearby Deathguard.

If the PC's are invisible, they will likely have a choice of where to begin combat. They could choose to approach the ship's elemental handler first on the sterncastle, or take out the ballista on the forecastle. Or they could simply join in the combat taking place on the main deck with the ship's captain. If the PC's are visible when they reach this point, they are pulled into combat as soon as they emerge.

While the crossbow and ballista barrages stopped as soon as the Ebon pirates made their first successful boarding attempt, there are still plenty of dangers about. The pirates have summoned unnaturally rough seas (Profession: sailor DC 12; Knowledge: nature DC 15; Survival DC 15) that are making footing aboard the *Dajar Maerenor* treacherous. The ship is considered to be in heavy rolls as it rocks precipitously from side to side. During the first round of combat the ship's starboard side is elevated, during the second round, the ship is even, and during the third round the ship's starboard side is low. This cycle repeats itself continuously throughout the combat (i.e., Round 1: Starboard high, Round 2: Even, Round 3: Starboard low, Round 4: Even, Round 5 Starboard high, etc.).

A ship with a severe list is the same as a steep slope. Each square in the ascending direction of the ship counts as elevated terrain. For example, if the starboard side of the ship is high, a PC would count as elevated against any foes in squares lower than his own (gaining a +1 bonus on melee attacks against foes downhill). PC's moving uphill must spend 2 squares of movement for each square of steep slope. PC's running or charging downhill must succeed on a DC 10 balance check upon entering the first square of steep slope. PC's who fail this check stumble and must end their movement 1d2x5 feet later. PC's who fail the check by 5 or more fall prone in the square where they end their movement. A severe list increases the DC of Tumble checks by 2.

Development: If the PC's are still invisible and choose not to fight immediately, then after a minute or two their invisibility begins to fade. Until the *Requit* can pull closer, the Aereni crew and pirates fight to a stalemate, leaving the PC's as the deciding factor in the combat. The battle continues until all three areas of the ship have been cleared. If the PC's retreat or choose not to engage in combat in one of the areas, give them some mild encouragement to do so (e.g., "*General Ogdin urged us to show these mangy pirates what the Company can do!*" or "*In the Blackwheel Company, you lead from the front!*"). If they still choose to remain out of combat, the better-armed and more experienced pirates will eventually overcome the Aereni crew and the battle will end.

1. Main Deck (location 2 on the ship's map, EL varies)

The fighting on the main deck is fierce. As the ship rolls sickeningly from side to side, torrents of seawater spew over the gunwhale. A large group of Aereni have mustered here to defend their ship. The captain herself has joined the fray, and a pair of undead-looking bodyguards flank her. A mixed group of goblin, human, and half-orc pirates are locked in combat with the crew.

From across the span between the two ships, a lithe figure clad in deep crimson, stands unbraced upon the railing of the Vulkoor's Requit. Suddenly, she shouts, in a distinctly feminine, yet commanding voice that rings out even above the crash of waves and blades,

*"Kill all of the filthy Aereni. Vulkoor has come in the flesh to reward their betrayal. Kill them all, the Dajar Maerenor is **mine!**"*

Combat is already underway as the PC's arrive. While the Ebon Siren watches from her ship, her crew, better armed and more experienced than the wind galleon's crew, attack with sheer brutality. They make no effort to spare lives, take prisoners, or respond to pleas for mercy.

Allies: The DM controls a small group of pirates. The human and goblin pirates attempt to use their crossbows before closing the distance. The pirates recognize the role the PC's play, and do not attack, aiding them if possible. The pirates are reinforced every 8 rounds by 2 new human pirates and one new half-orc pirate.

Goblin Ebon Pirate (3): hp 11, 9, 9; Combat Statistic

Human Ebon Pirate (2): hp 22, 20; Combat Statistic

Half-Orc Ebon Pirate: hp 16; Combat Statistic

Foes: The Aereni Sailors and Aereni Marines are considered shaken as a result of the Ebon Siren's haunting song.

Aereni Sailors (5): hp 8, 7, 7, 6, 6; Combat Statistic
Aereni Marines (3): hp 12, 11, 9; Combat Statistic
Aereni Captain: hp 28; Combat Statistic
Undying Soldier (2): hp 27, 25; Combat Statistic
Aereni Deathguard (2): hp 22, 22; Combat Statistic

Tactics: The crew of the *Dajar Maerenor* is already engaged with the pirates when the PC's arrive. They will not discriminate between targets, and attack any assailants equally. The Captain and Deathguard will not hesitate to use their bows if an opening or opportunity is provided. The elves remain in close proximity to each other, and attempt to prevent flanking if at all possible. They fight valiantly to defend their captain. If she falls, they continue fighting to save their ship and their own lives. The Undying Soldiers use smite evil upon appropriate targets and fight quite intelligently.

Development: The pirates are absolutely merciless, and will not stop at just murdering, but freely take tokens (fingers, noses, ears, eyes, teeth, etc.) from their fallen enemies. The PC's may want to take a prisoner or two here, a Bluff, Intimidate, or Diplomacy check (DC 18) succeeds in convincing the pirates to aid them in doing so without argument. Otherwise the PC's may have to revive bleeding or badly wounded Aereni. Any Aereni in the PC's custody are left alone by the pirates.

Scaling the Encounter:

5th-level: Add an additional Aereni Marine
6th-level: Add an additional Aereni Deathguard
7th-level: Add an additional two Undying Soldiers

2. Sterncastle (location 12 on the ship's map, EL varies)

A well-armed elf, clad in overlapping pale blue scale armor stands atop the sterncastle shouting orders. As a group of pirates approach, he utters a prayer to the Undying Court, and charges at his foes along with several Deathguard. An Aereni sailor is desperately heaving on the ship's wheel in an attempt to use what little wind that fills the Maerenor's half-rigged sails to put any distance possible between this ship and the Requit.

Combat is already underway as the PC's arrive. While the Ebon Siren watches from her ship, her crew, better armed and more experienced than the wind galleon's crew attack with sheer brutality. They make no effort to spare lives, take prisoners, or respond to pleas for mercy.

Allies: The DM controls a small group of pirates. The human and goblin pirates attempt to use their crossbows before closing the distance. The pirates recognize the role the PC's play, and do not attack, aiding them if possible. The pirates are reinforced every 8 rounds by 1 new human pirate and 1 new half-orc pirate.

Goblin Ebon Pirate (2): hp 11, 9; Combat Statistic
Human Ebon Pirate: hp 22; Combat Statistic
Half-Orc Ebon Pirate (2): hp 16, 15; Combat Statistic

Foes: The Aereni Sailor and Aereni Marines are considered shaken as a result of the Ebon Siren's haunting song. The lone Aereni Sailor mans the wheel and does not join the fight unless attacked directly.

Aereni Sailor: hp 8; Combat Statistic
Aereni Marines (2): hp 10, 9; Combat Statistic
Aereni Elemental Handler: hp 31; Combat Statistic
Aereni Deathguard (3): hp 23, 22, 20; Combat Statistic

Tactics: The crew of the *Dajar Maerenor* is already engaged with the pirates when the PC's arrive. They will not discriminate between targets, and attack any assailants equally. The elves remain in close proximity to each other, and attempt to prevent flanking if at all possible. The elemental handler has no real offensive spells prepared for a typical sailing day, but will not hesitate to spontaneously cast cure spells, particularly if he or one of the Deathguard become badly wounded. The elemental handler will back away from combat and attempt to use his wand of *cure light wounds* to bolster his crew if possible.

Development: Once the ship's elemental handler falls, the *Dajar Maerenor* is all but lost. Even so the crew continues fighting, preferring death in combat to the horrible fate that awaits them at the hands of the Ebon pirates. The pirates are absolutely merciless, and will not stop at just murdering, but freely take tokens (fingers, noses, ears, eyes, teeth, tongues, etc.) from their fallen enemies. The PC's may want to take a prisoner or two here, a Bluff, Intimidate, or Diplomacy check (DC 18) succeeds in convincing the pirates to aid them in doing so without argument. Otherwise the PC's may have to revive bleeding or badly wounded Aereni. Any Aereni in the PC's custody are left alone by the pirates.

Scaling the Encounter:

5th-level: No change

6th-level: Add an additional Aereni Marine

7th-level: Add an additional Aereni Deathguard

3. Forecastle (location 1 on the ship's map, EL varies)

A pair of Deathguard, flanked by strange zombie-like creatures man the ballista with several marines. They've honed the operation of the ship's weapons to a perfect routine up to the point when the pirates storm the forecastle. As the marauders approach, the Deathguard abandon the siege weapons and grimly turn to face their unsavory assailants .

Combat is already underway as the PC's arrive. While the Ebon Siren watches from her ship, her crew, better armed and more experienced than the wind galleon's crew attack with sheer brutality. They make no effort to spare lives, take prisoners, or respond to pleas for mercy.

Allies: The DM controls a small group of pirates. The human and goblin pirates attempt to use their crossbows before closing the distance. The pirates recognize the role the PC's play, and do not attack, aiding them if possible. The pirates are reinforced every 8 rounds by 1 new human pirate and 1 new half-orc pirate.

Goblin Ebon Pirate (2): hp 10, 8; Combat Statistic

Human Ebon Pirate: hp 20; Combat Statistic

Half-Orc Ebon Pirate: hp 14; Combat Statistic

Foes: The Aereni Marines are considered shaken as a result of the Ebon Siren's haunting song.

Aereni Marines (2): hp 10, 9; Combat Statistic

Undying Soldier (2): hp 26, 25; Combat Statistic

Aereni Deathguard (2): hp 22, 20; Combat Statistic

Tactics: While the Undying Soldiers are already dead, the Deathguard do not fear to the afterlife, and fight until they join their undying brethren. The Undying soldiers use smite evil against any likely target (they are quite intelligent) and fight with skill and precision along side the Deathguard. The marines will take up flanking positions or use their longbows if a shot is available.

Development: If this is the final encounter for the PC's, proceed directly to the "The Siren Speaks" section. The pirates are absolutely merciless, and will not stop at just murdering, but freely take tokens (fingers, noses, ears, eyes, teeth, tongues, etc.) from their fallen enemies. The PC's may want to take a prisoner or two here, a Bluff, Intimidate, or Diplomacy check (DC 18) succeeds in convincing the pirates to aid them in doing so without argument. Otherwise the PC's may have to revive bleeding or badly wounded Aereni. Any Aereni in the PC's custody are left alone by the pirates.

Scaling the Encounter:

5th-level: No change

6th-level: Add an additional Aereni Deathguard

7th-level: Add an additional Undying Soldier

The Siren Speaks

Assuming the PC's survive, the Ebon Siren pays a visit to her new prize as soon as the fighting appears in hand. Once the PC's clear the entirety of the main deck, the Ebon Siren uses her *dimension hop* spell to board the *Dajar Maerenor*. She gives a brief speech, primarily for show, and aimed directly at the PC's. Her goal is to lull them into a false sense of security, so she can take the true prize she wants. Her plan is to capture, or feign the capture of the *Dajar Maerenor*, which she knows must be contrary to the Blackwheel

Company's goals. She understands that sending the evidence of this mission to the bottom of the Thunder Sea is imperative to Company operations. She intends to claim the *Dajar Maerenor* as her own, and use any good will earned from cooperating with the Blackwheel Company hires to fool them into giving her the true prize she seeks. She's going to play very nice with the PC's in an attempt to earn their trust and respect, or at the very least, throw them off her true intentions.

As the fighting finally subsides, so too does the ranging sea. The eerie silence is punctuated by the moans of the dying, and the torments of the savage Ebon pirates. Suddenly, amid the forecastle, a figure materializes from mid air. A myriad of dyed crimson braids stand in sharp contrast to the dusky skin of this fierce drow captain. A steel breastplate covered in a thin sheet of scarlet leather highlights the rest of her entirely crimson attire. A linked chain that appears to be made of crimson-colored glass tipped with a scorpion barb hands menacingly at her side. The chain is licked down its length by a dancing unnaturally orange flame.

This can only be the Ebon Siren. She takes several steps forward, placing the heel of her boot atop the corpse of a nearby Aereni Deathguard, and speaks,

"Captain! I know your spirit lingers, but let it depart to the land of our ancestors. Depart knowing that the neglect of your race, your unfulfilled promise has led you to this place. In partial payment of your debt, the Ebon humbly accept your offer of the Dajar Maerenor. We claim it as ours!" The pirates cheer raucously for a moment before returning to their looting. As she turns and begins pacing the front of the forecastle, the flame on her scorpion change changes from a brilliant orange to an enigmatic white. As she paces, she suddenly spins about on her heel and turns directly to you.

"And the Ebon thank the Blackwheel Company for their assistance in collecting this ancient debt. I watched your skill in combat from afar, and I must say, your Company certainly did not misrepresent itself when they said they were sending some of their finest. You would be a welcome addition as crew of the Vulkoor's Revenge, once you gained your sea legs of course." The pirates chuckle heartily at her jest before she continues, "You have come for your own debt, my brothers will see you to the treasure room and ensure that any traps or wardings are disabled. You may claim your prize, but I caution you, elf treasures carry a treacherous curse. We are already twice accursed by the Aereni, let us bear that burden as it is our fate. Once you have claimed your Scepter, return here and we will welcome you aboard Vulkoor's Requital and transport you safely to your destination as arranged. Some of my crew will remain here to sail the Dajar Maerenor back to our lands. This will be a profitable day for us both!" As she turns to her crew again, she states plainly, "Thanks to these brave warriors of the Blackwheel Company, we have in our hands the type of ship we need to achieve our most ambitious goals and desires." The crew cheers again, lustily.

At this point, the Ebon Siren is not bluffing. She fully intends to sail the *Dajar Maerenor* away if the PC's do not object. If the PC's object to her seizing the ship, she plays hard to get for a bit before acquiescing to their demands. The Ebon Siren is a formidable woman, capable of felling the entire party if need be, not to mention the presence of nearly three dozen of her crew. She is used to giving orders and having them carried out—any attempt to Bluff or Intimidate is met with laughter from herself and her crew. Further attempts are met with the threat of force.

A Diplomacy attempt is the best way to reason with the pirate captain. A check of DC 25 or above and she gracefully acknowledges the PC's point, complimenting them on their wisdom and orders the scuttling of the ship as soon as the looting is finished. A check of DC 18-24 results in some placid reasoning and argument from the Ebon Siren, though she will begrudgingly give in to the PC's demands. A check of below DC 18 is met with a harsh rebuttal from the Siren, who uses her razor sharp wit to berate the PC's foolishness at wasting such a prize before furiously agreeing to sink the *Dajar Maerenor*. Ultimately, the Siren has an ulterior motive, and any emotion she displays is an act in an attempt to fool the PC's. She won't stick to any particular argument for long, and cares little for the fate of the *Dajar Maerenor*. The treasure in the ship's hold is worth at least three times as much as the ship itself. She cannot afford to spare her own elemental handler to pilot the ship, as she'll need him later for a much more important ship. So sailing the crippled *Maerenor* back to port will be a tedious and slow process—one that her crew is not likely to be happy with.

The pirates are all too happy to converse with the PC's and will tell wild, bawdy, and bloody tales all through the day if encouraged. Although the bulk of the Requital's crew has no idea of the Siren's true plans, she has instructed them to help her in ruse. Therefore the pirates are unusually likely to acquiesce to demands or requests from the PC's. Objections to their torture of prisoners or maiming of corpses, in particular, are met with begrudging apologies. This is a well disciplined and tight-knit crew and they would sooner die than disobey or disappoint their crimson captain.

The Ebon Siren is also more than willing to converse with the PC's. She is polite, eloquent, and witty in conversation. Indeed, even her threats seem to come off as silver-lined and honey-coated. Although she will

not discuss the particular operations of the Ebon organization, she will happily launch into a passionate diatribe about why she hates the Aereni (see the adventure background section) and why she and her crew prey upon the elves with such zeal. If the PC's ask about her future plans, she does not attempt to bluff them. She simply states that her end of the "bargain" is to sail directly through Shargon's Teeth and get them safely to the rendezvous location on Sorrowdusk Island to the west of Stormreach. She won't reveal much about her dealings with the Blackwheel Company except to reveal that she met with an envoy of General Ogdin's and that she understands that the scepter is incalculably valuable.

Development: If the PC's have not yet retrieved the Sephraman's Scepter, the crew will escort them to the now-open and unlocked treasure room to do so. The pirates will not tolerate the PC's taking loot that belongs to them, and that was not part of the original terms of the mission. If the PC's choose to set prisoner's adrift or otherwise find or turn loose survivors the pirates will not interfere. In fact, if asked directly, they will begrudgingly assist. The PC's are free to explore the rest of the ship, but again, all of the other treasure in the treasure room belongs to the Ebon pirates. Finding provisions and a small lifeboat to set any survivors adrift in is a simple matter, and the pirates will assist if asked.

Once the PC's are done, if they have convinced the Ebon Siren to scuttle the *Maerenor*, she does so, having her crew set a fire deep inside the bottom hull of the ship. The PC's can watch the ship burn and sink as they sail away. If the PC's did not convince her to sink the ship, she sends a skeleton crew of sailors to man it, and then makes way.

HUMAN EBON PIRATE

CR 3

The ebon pirates are so called because of the soot, ash, and black mud they use to decorate their faces and skin. They also coat their weapons and armor in soot to prevent any reflection during night raids.

Male or female human rogue 2, fighter 1

CE Medium humanoid

Init +2; Senses Listen +0, Spot +1

AC 15(+2 Dex, +3 armor), touch 12, flat-footed 13

hp 22 (3 HD)

Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +0

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee shortsword +3 (1d6+1 19-20/x2), or MW heavy crossbow +7 (1d10+1 19-20/x2)

Base Atk +2; Grp +3

Atk Options sneak attack (+1d6), point blank shot

Abilities Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8

SQ Trapfinding

Feats Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (heavy crossbow)
Rapid Reload (heavy crossbow)

Skills Balance +8, Bluff +4, Climb +4, Escape Artist +3, Hide +7, Sleight of Hand +6, Move Silently +7, Jump +5, Profession Sailor +6, Spot +1, Swim +7, Tumble +7, Use Rope +4

Possessions: MW sharkskin armor, short sword, MW heavy crossbow, 20 bolts

GOBLIN EBON PIRATE

CR 1

The ebon pirates are so called because of the soot, ash, and black mud they use to decorate their faces and skin. They also coat their weapons and armor in soot to prevent any reflection during night raids. The pirates are known to be a mixed crew, and this particular one happens to be a goblin.

Male or female goblin rogue 1, warrior 1

CE small goblinoid

Init +2; Senses Listen +0, Spot +0

AC 16(+2 Dex, +3 armor, +1 size), touch 13, flat-footed 14

hp 11 (2 HD)

Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +0

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee shortsword +1 (1d4-1 19-20/x2), or light crossbow +4 (1d6 19-20/x2)

Base Atk +1; Grp -4

Atk Options sneak attack (+1d6)

Abilities Str 8, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8

SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Trapfinding

Feats Rapid Reload (light crossbow)

Skills Balance +5, Bluff +3, Climb +3, Hide + 10, Move Silently +10, Profession Sailor +4, Swim +4, Tumble +6, Use Rope +4

Possessions: MW sharkskin armor, short sword, light crossbow, 20 bolts

HALF-ORC EBON PIRATE

CR 2

The ebon pirates are so called because of the soot, ash, and black mud they use to decorate their faces and skin. They also coat their weapons and armor in soot to prevent any reflection during night raids. The pirates are known to be a mixed crew, and this particular one happens to be a half-orc.

Male or female half-orc rogue 1, fighter 1

CE medium humanoid

Init +2; Senses Listen +0, Spot +0

AC 15(+2 Dex, +3 armor), touch 12, flat-footed 13

hp 15 (2 HD)

Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +0

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee MW glaive +5 (1d10+3), or longsword +3 (1d8+3 19-20/x2)

Base Atk +1; Grp +3

Atk Options sneak attack (+1d6), Power Attack (+1), reach weapon

Abilities Str 8, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8

SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Trapfinding, Orc blood

Feats Weapon Focus (glaive), Power Attack

Skills Balance +5, Bluff +2, Climb +3, Hide + 6, Move Silently +6, Profession Sailor +4, Swim +6, Tumble +6, Use Rope +4

Possessions: MW sharkskin armor, MW glaive, longsword

THE EBON SIREN, DROW PIRATE

CR 9

A myriad of dyed crimson braids stand in sharp contrast to the dusky skin of this fierce drow captain. A steel breastplate covered in a thin sheet of scarlet leather highlights the rest of her entirely crimson attire. A linked chain that appears to be made of crimson-colored glass tipped with a scorpion barb hands menacingly at her side.

Female drow (elf) rogue 1, duskblade 5, fighter 1, scarlet corsair 2

CN Medium humanoid

Init +2; Senses Listen +0, Spot +0

AC 23(+2 Dex, +8 armor, +3 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 21

hp 71 (9 HD)

Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +3

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee keen flaming drow scorpion chain +1 +14/+9 (1d6+8 + 1d6 fire 17-20/x2)

Base Atk +8/+3; Grp +12

Atk Options sneak attack (+2d6), improved feint, improved trip, duskblade spells, drow skirmisher

Duskblade Spells, as sorcerer (6/6/3 CL 5th)

2nd (3 per day)—*dimension hop* (10 ft., DC 16), *stretch weapon*
1st (6 per day)—*Blade of Blood* (DC 16), *Kelgore's Fire Bolt* (5d6
fire, DC 16), *Bigby's Tripping Hand* (+11 attack, DC 16)
0 (6 per day)—*acid splash*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 14), *ray of frost*,
daze, *open/close*, *mage hand*

Abilities Str 18, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 8, Cha 14

SQ Darkvision 120 ft., drow traits, arcane attunement, arcane channeling, spell resistance (19), trap finding, armored mage, quick cast

Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Trip, Improved Feint, daylight adaptation, drow skirmisher, weapon focus (drow scorpion chain), Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes

Skills Balance +5, Bluff +13, Climb +8, Concentration +10, Intimidate +14 Jump +7, Knowledge (arcane) 8, Knowledge (local: thunder sea) 8, Knowledge (geography) +6, Knowledge (nature) +6, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +6, Knowledge (planes) +5, Profession (sailor) +10, Spellcraft +11, Swim +6, Tumble +7, Use Rope +6

Possessions: breastplate +3, amulet of natural armor +3, drow scorpion chain (flaming, keen) +1, ioun stone (pale blue),

Arcane Attunement (Sp): Can use the spell-like powers *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *flare*, *ghost sound*, or *read magic* a combined 7 times per day.

Arcane Channeling (Su): You may use a standard action to deliver any touch spell known as part of a melee attack. This attack does not provoke attacks of opportunity. The spell must have a casting time of 1 round or less.

Armored Mage (Ex): Can wear light or medium armor with no chance of spell failure.

Drow Skirmisher: You treat the drow scorpion chain as a martial weapon. You gain a +1 bonus on damage rolls with this weapon as long as you have moved more than 5' under your own power during the round in which you make the attack.

Drow Traits (Sp): Once per day can use *faerie fire*, *darkness*, or *dancing lights* as a 9th level caster.

Improved Feint: You may make a Bluff check to feint in combat as a move action.

Improved Trip: You do not provoke an attack of opportunity when tripping an opponent while you are unarmed. If you trip an opponent you gain an immediate attack against that opponent as if you hadn't used your attack for the trip attempt.

Quick Cast: You can cast one spell each day as a swift action. That spell must have a casting time of 1 standard action or less.

New Spells

Bigby's Tripping Hand, *PHB II*, 103

Evocation [Force]

Level: Duskblade 1, sorcerer/wizard 1

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target: One creature

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Reflex negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

A large hand sweeps at the target creature's legs in a tripping maneuver. This trip does not provoke attacks of opportunity. Its attack bonus equals your caster level + your key ability modifier + 2 for the hand's

Strength score (14). The hand has a +1 bonus on the trip attempt for every three casters levels up to a maximum of +5.

Blade of Blood, *PHB II*, 103

Necromancy

Level: Assassin 1, blackguard 1, cleric 1, duskblade 1, sorcerer/wizard 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 swift action

Range: Touch

Target: Weapon touched

Duration: 1 round/level or until discharged

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

When the affected weapon strikes a living creature, blade of blood discharges. The spell deals an extra 1d6 points of damage to the target. You can voluntarily take 5 hit points of damage to empower the weapon to deal an additional 2d6 (for a total of 3d6) points of damage. The weapon loses this property if it is dropped or the wielder loses contact with it.

Dimension Hop, *PHB II*, 110

Conjuration [Teleportation]

Level: Duskblade 2, sorcerer/wizard 2

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

You instantly teleport the subject creature a distance of 5 feet per two caster levels. The destination must be an unoccupied space within line of sight.

Kelgore's Fire Bolt, *PHB II*, 110

Conjuration/Evocation [Fire]

Level: Duskblade 1, sorcerer/wizard 1

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./ level)

Target: One creature

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Reflex half

Spell Resistance: See text

The spell conjures a small orb of rock and sheathes it in arcane energy. This spell deals 1d6 points of fire damage per caster level (maximum 5d6). If you fail to overcome the target's spell resistance, the spell still deals 1d6 points of fire damage from the heat and force of the conjured orb's impact.

Stretch Weapon, *PHB II*, 126

Transmutation

Level: Bard 2, cleric 2, duskblade 2, sorcerer/wizard 2

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 swift action

Range: 0 ft.

Target: Melee weapon wielded

Duration: One attack

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless, object)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless, object)

The affected weapon stretches, extending towards its target, though it can be wielded normally. The spell adds an additional 5 feet of reach to a melee weapon for a single attack.

New Weapon

Drow Scorpion Chain, *Secrets of Xen'drik*, 137

Exotic [Two-handed melee]

Cost: 25gp

Dmg (S): 1d4

Dmg (M): 1d6

Critical: 19-20/x2

Range: --

Weight: 3lb.

Type: Slashing

A drow scorpion chain resembles a regular spiked chain in many respects. It is slightly longer than a regular spiked chain and has a daggerlike blade at each end. The weapon takes its name from the technique of holding a sizable length of chain behind the back and then flipping it over the head to strike at a foe: drow warriors often open combat with such a strike. A drow scorpion chain has a reach of 10 feet, but unlike other reach weapons it can be used against adjacent enemies. You can make trip attacks with the drow scorpion chain; if you are tripped during your own trip attempt you can drop the chain to avoid being tripped. When using a drow scorpion chain you get a +2 bonus on attack rolls made to disarm an opponent. You may use the Weapon Finesse feat with a drow scorpion chain even though it isn't a light weapon. Weapon Focus, Weapon Specialization, Exotic Weapon Proficiency, and other feats associated with a spiked chain also apply to the drow scorpion chain.

New Armor

Sharkskin Armor, *Stormwrack*, 106

Light armor

Cost: 85 gp

Armor/Shield Bonus: +3

Max Dex Bonus: +6

Armor Check Penalty: -1

Arcane Spell Failure: 10%

Speed (30/20ft.): 30/20 ft.

Weight: 15lb.

Similar to leather armor in appearance, sharkskin is treated so that the sharp, tooth-like denticles covering the skin remain attached to the outside of the armor. Shark teeth embedded along the forearms, shoulders, and legs, which count as armor spikes, provide a +6 circumstance bonus to Escape Artist checks when the wearer is bound with rope or other similar bindings.

New Material

Blood Glass, *Secrets of Xen'drik*, 147

Blood glass is a dark, volcanic glass similar to obsidian. It is formed when Khyber dragonshard deposits mix with cooling magma. The resulting fusion is strong enough that minor elementals can be bound into blood glass without the need for an actual dragonshard. Blood glass slashing or piercing weapons grant the wielder a +1 bonus on damage rolls. Blood glass only has a hardness of 5 and 10 hit points per inch of thickness and is vulnerable to *shatter* spells and similar effects. Blood glass items weigh 10% less than the same item made from metal. The market price modifier for a blood glass weapon is +500 gp. Ammunition costs +10 gp.

Part Five: Aboard Vulkoor's Requit

A Pirating We Go.

The journey aboard the Vulkoor's Requit is largely uneventful. The PC's are good-naturedly challenged to become useful aboard the ship and help out with daily tasks. Evenings are often spent conversing with the crew, drinking kuryeva gin, and playing three dragon ante—or usually all three at the same time. If the

adventure has passed quickly, feel free to engage the PC's in a game of three dragon ante, with you playing the role of one of the pirates. If one of the PC's is able to win a hand, award them a potion of *cure moderate wounds* as event treasure.

The crew makes a legitimate attempt to get along with the PC's, and may even take a liking to them. Piracy often means getting along with people you're going to kill while you're aboard ship and you have no choice. While the Ebon Siren remains relatively reclusive, she comes out every few nights to tell a tale about the drow to the crew. She is quite busy aboard the ship, and makes only the most minimal efforts to answer questions from the PC's, though she does so with tact and fluency. Her flagship is now heavily laden with treasure and with dangerous adventurers that are the key to her true goal. Speed is of the essence, and she and her crew do everything they can to push the *Requital* to her limit, including taking a risky course. The only adventure-generated encounter is the result of the Ebon Siren taking a calculated risk, and steering the *Requital* straight through sacred Sahuagin territory to shave time off the journey.

The PC's are given their own room in the hold (location 16 on the map) and are afforded a good measure of privacy. The room is relatively well furnished, with an exceptionally ornate and thick door. It looks obvious that dignitaries or other people of importance are often put up here. Exploring the ship is generally discouraged, but as pseudo-crew members, the PC's will have limited access to most public areas. For the sake of parsimony, use the map of the *Dajar Maerenor* as the map for the *Vulkoor's Requital*. Any PC's that is able to succeed on opposed Hide and Move Silently checks against a watch (4 random crew members) and succeeds at a DC 20 Search check will find an exceedingly large stash of potions of *fly* and rings of *feather fall* hidden in the ship's armory. If questioned about these objects, the PC's are told they were part of a previous haul from another ship. Further exploration yields little save the typical instruments of piracy and the treasure from the *Dajar Maerenor*.

The journey aboard the pirate ship is surprisingly quiet, and dispels nearly every childhood myth of piracy. The crew are relatively friendly if exceptionally coarse, and often challenge you sportingly to assist with shipboard chores. Working aboard the ship earns extra rations of food and kuryeva gin, and attempts to use the ballista to harpoon whales off the bow—which is quite the sport among the crew. Evenings are passed in conversation with the crew, drinking kuryeva, and playing a card game the pirates are fervently fond of called Three Dragon Ante. They often encourage you to play, and hold winners in high regard. While shipboard life is tedious, the crew of the Vulkoor's Revenge seem born for it.

This ship itself is being pressed to its limits for speed. The deck crew has been doubled, and they man the rigging and rudder day and night to milk every ounce of wind they can. The ship's mage appears exhausted from his efforts, and the crew are strenuously busy thanks to the pace they are keeping. The Ebon Siren has been just as busy charting and recharting their course. Although she can be hard to catch during the day, every few nights she appears to tell tales of the drow to her crew. While the tales are often bloody and seem both overly sympathetic and exaggerated, they raise the spirits of the crew. Day after day, night after night, the Requital cuts through the water like a blood-stained blade. Each day that passes brings the rendezvous and your return to the Company closer.

You've been assigned a private cabin in the hold, which is quite spacious and well decorated for a sea-going vessel. It's equipped with an especially thick and sturdy door for privacy, and the secluded location and comfortable lodgings make it so that the motion of the sea and roar sound can't be heard or felt at all. Compared to some of your lodgings with the Blackwheel Company, the current situation is not terrible by any stretch of the imagination.

If the PC's choose to engage in exploration or play cards with the crew, this is the opportune time. If time is short, move on to the encounter that follows. If the PC's cast *detect magic* in their room, the door detects as faint abjuration. While the mix of spells is unclear, the effect seems designed to ward against unwanted intrusion. If the PC's ask about the door, the Ebon Siren tells them that persons of importance often lodge in those quarters, and the door was designed to prevent unwanted guests or eavesdropping.

1. Sahuagin Surprise (EL 6)

The talk around the crew for the last several days has been about the route the Requital has taken. Apparently, in an effort to save as much time as possible, the ship is plowing straight ahead through the narrows of Shargon's Teeth and directly through sacred Sahuagin territory. Your group has been asked to man an extra watch during this very dangerous shortcut. As the Requital hits a patch of dead wind in the dark of night, you now see why. Silhouetted in the ship's dim lanterns, their sound masked by the ocean, half a dozen shapes slip over the gunwhale and on to the deck. The crew knows that remaining at such a slow speed in a patch of dead wind can be fatal for them all, and every able hand works to adjust the rigging and get the ship moving. These intruders will fall to you alone to deal with.

Use the diagram of the main deck (location 2 on the map) of the Dajar Maerenor for this encounter. Start the PC's near the center, and have the Sahuagin come at them from all corners. Although the ship is crewed, the crew are doing their best to gain some speed in the dead wind, lest hundreds of Sahuagin be able to catch them and come aboard. This raiding party is the PC's alone to deal with.

Foes: The sahuagin are looking to slow the ship down, and eliminating the watch is the first step in that process.

Sahuagin (6): hp 13, 12, 12, 11, 10, 10; *Monster Manual*, 217

Tactics: The sahuagin are savvy pirates themselves, and concentrate their attacks on one or two of the PC's before moving on to the next. They are incensed by the brazen incursion into their territory, and fight until dead. If they can eliminate the watch, their obvious goal is to slow the ship down so more of their aquatic brethren can board.

Development: If the PC's are able to defeat the sahuagin, they are praised by the crew, particularly by the Ebon Siren, who thanks them publicly. While the raiding party was a surprise, she won't hesitate to use any possible opportunity to further ingratiate herself with the PC's.

Scaling the Encounter:

5th-level: No change

6th-level: Add an additional sahuagin

7th-level: Add an additional two sahuagin

Arrival at Sorrowdusk.

Several days after the encounter with the sahuagin, the crew begins to chatter restlessly about the imminent arrival at Sorrowdusk Island. While the pirates have shown no sign of letting up on the speed, the crew seems a bit more relaxed at the prospect of making landfall. After another day, the Ebon Siren herself happens upon you on deck. She is dressed in a simple black shirt and trousers to match, her scorpion chain used as a belt, doubled around her waist is covered in a soothing blue flame. She addresses you,

"You have comported yourselves well, you few of this Blackwheel Company. You would indeed make a fine addition to my crew. Your services in disabling the Dajar Maerenor were invaluable, and your skill in combat saved the lives of many of my crew. Indeed, repelling the sahuagin raiders was another service for our cause. Although I know we carry the appearance of monsters, we are simple folk... warriors with our own cause and our own ways. The sea is a cruel mistress, and often we must celebrate what few victories we have while we still can. I would like you to join us tonight at a dinner in your honor. Each of the crew has donated some of their food rations, and I will throw in my best cask of kuryeva. Debts do not go unpaid."

As she turns to walk away she remarks, "I sent word to your Company ten days ago. When we arrive at Sorrowdusk late tomorrow evening, a ship should be awaiting you."

The Siren knows the best way to bluff is not to bluff at all, and her words and her intent carry no malice. She is truly interested in honoring the PC's and their efforts. The Ebon Siren is always careful to measure her words so that attempts to sense her intentions are eluded. More importantly, by keeping her intentions pure, she has little to fear. The banquet will contain no attack or poison, just some good cheer and heavy drinking. Her repayment of her debt will be allowing the PC's to live as she ambushes the Cloud Ray. The truth is, the *Requital* will be arriving at Sorrowdusk shortly after midnight tonight. The PC's may, of course, refuse dinner, which would be strange since they always sup with the crew, but no attempt to persuade them is made.

A Party Among Equals.

A shipboard banquet is truly a sight to behold, particularly as conducted by pirates. They seem to be going out of their way to tell extraordinarily bombastic tales of their exploits and get roaring drunk—all in your honor of course. The main course consists of surprisingly decent food for a ship, and all the kuryeva that can be had. As the evening winds on, many words of praise for your deeds are given, and the final tribute is a rousing sea chanty that details your exploits aboard the Dajar Maerenor and your contributions to piracy. As the party winds down, the sailors that can still stand congratulate you with overly enthusiastic slaps on the

back, or crooked-toothed smiles. As you enter your cabin to retire for the evening, you contemplate what a strange adventure this has been.

Unfortunately, the adventure is not quite over. During the night, while the PC's rest their door will be locked and barricaded from the outside. The antechamber between their door and the door to the hold will be filled with debris, and the door leading to the hold will also be locked. Finally, a group of pirates waits to detain them if they are able to escape.

Betrayal (EL varies)

As thoughts of this most recent mission drift through your mind, suddenly, the realization hits—none of you have been summoned for morning watch. Although your room, isolated and insulated so comfortably, is usually quiet, you can hear nothing and feel no motion from the ship at all. Something is wrong. As you reach for the door, the final realization sets in—it's locked... from the outside. Something is very, very wrong.

The door is locked and barred on the outside. The door is 3 inches thick and has a hardness of 8 and 40 hp. It has a break lock DC of 28 and requires a caster level check of 15 for the *knock* spell to be effective. If the PC's are able to break through, read the following:

The antechamber between your room and the hold is stuffed full of junk. Rope, broken barrels, and other bits of debris are strewn atop perhaps a foot-and-a-half to two-feet of ash and soot. Unsurprisingly, the door leading to the hold is locked also.

The debris and rubble is meant only to slow down the PC's in the event they made it past the first door. The pirates are simply trying to buy time. The debris is easily removed in about 10 minutes of hard labor. If the PC's have a shovel, the debris can be removed in half that time. The door leading to the hold is locked and barred. It is a strong wooden door, that is 2 inches thick, has a hardness of 5 and 20hp. The break DC is 25 and the door is subject to the *knock* spell. If the PC's are able to break through the door, read the following:

As you emerge from the antechamber and enter the hold, a menacing sight awaits you. A group of the Ebon pirates stands before you, weapons at the ready. As they see you, the human pirate speaks,

"Sorry lads, it had to be this way. You've proved yourselves for sure, and we're under orders to avoid bloodshed if we can. She wants to spare your lives to repay her debt. 'Course, we're also under orders to kill you if you try and leave the hold. And orders are orders, I'm sure you understand that. So I'm here begging you to walk back through that door and sit tight for about twenty minutes. It'll all be over soon. You see, it wasn't the Dajar Maerenor she wanted. As we say out at sea, there's always a faster fish. Point of fact, one fish was fast enough to catch the Maerenor, and that fish was the beauty you rode in on. She's had a mind to snag an airship for some time now. Air piracy is uncharted territory you see. And there's just nothing a pirate loves more than uncharted territory. Now like I said, this should all be over in a few minutes, so what's say you don't cause any unnecessary bloodshed, and head back into your quarters for a short bit."

If the PC's choose to fight, combat ensues immediately. If the PC's do not fight give them a short description of the time passing, and then proceed to the "Aftermath" section that follows. Do not put any pressure on the PC's to choose between fighting or staying. The pirates will not take bribes and will not willingly allow the PC's to pass, no matter how strong a case they make.

Foes: The crew of the Ebon Siren isn't happy to have to fight their former mates, but orders are orders, and there will be no passing without a fight.

Goblin Ebon Pirate (3): hp 13, 12, 12; Combat Statistic

Human Ebon Pirate: hp 23; Combat Statistic

Half-Orc Ebon Pirate: hp 16; Combat Statistic

Tactics: The pirates are at the ready, ranged weapons drawn, and if the PC's attack, the pirates get a surprise round to act. They begin by firing their crossbows at the PC's and the human and half-orc pirate move to engage in melee. The goblins attempt to remain back unless an opportunity to flank becomes available. They fight to the death, and make every effort to keep the PC's from leaving the hold.

Development: If the PC's are able to defeat the pirates, proceed immediately to the "Aftermath" section. If the PC's are defeated, the pirates do not kill them, but instead bandage their wounds and lock them back in their room.

Scaling the Encounter:

5th-level: Add an additional Half-Orc Ebon Pirate

6th-level: Add an additional Goblin Ebon Pirate and Human Ebon Pirate

7th-level: Add an additional two Goblin Ebon Pirates, one Human Ebon Pirate, and one Half-Orc Ebon Pirate

Aftermath.

The events of this section vary depending on how long the PC's have taken to get here, and the choices they've made along the way. Despite the PC's best efforts, there is no saving the Cloud Ray at this point. All need not be lost, however, as the PC's actions have a chance to save some pivotal Blackwheel Company members.

If the bleak and barren Sorrowdusk island wasn't foreboding enough with its blasted, jagged rocky outcroppings and sulfur plumes, the scene before you makes it even more grim. Shards of broken glass blanket the entirety of the docks and rocks surrounding the berthed Vulkoor's Requit. Below, several dozen bodies litter the jagged crags—most of them belonging to the pirates. One of the bodies appears to be the massive frame of a minotaur. The scene above is nearly incredulous, perhaps thirty pirates flit through the air around the unmistakably sleek frame of the Cloud Ray. They appear to be flying about unsupported, firing occasional shots from their crossbow while bolts of force and lightning erupt from the deck of the ship. The occasional empty potion bottle rains down from above shattering as it slams to the ground.

Suddenly a final bit of debris is ejected from the ship, a goblin clad in thick blue robes tumbles through the air before slamming sickeningly into a jagged rocky outcropping. With that, a maniacal figure leans over the railing of the Cloud Ray some 150 feet above. The long, wickedly-barbed chain, ablaze in black flame, dangling over the railing paired with murky crimson armor make the figure unmistakable. Blood-red braids dangle down, framing jet-black skin, precede a wicked cackle.

"I thank you once again, intrepid adventurers. The Blackwheel Company has a knack for providing me with the finest of ships. This one I've named Vulkoor's Raptor, and you will be a small part of its legend over Xen'drik. I am quite certain that we will see each other again... consider our mutual debt paid."

Even as she is speaking the ship had been slowly ascending, but as she uttered her final words, it tears away and up into the sky. As the ship speeds off into the distance, a baleful moan escapes from one of the bodies lying on the ground.

The glass lying on the ground comes from potions of *fly* dropped by the pirates. While the Cloud Ray is within combat range, there is little that the PC's can do to stop it at this point. Even a maximized empowered fireball would barely scratch the well-warded hull of the sleek and combat-tested airship. Furthermore, as the ship ascends, all of the remaining pirates quickly board the ship. The Ebon Siren is granted full cover from the ship's hull, and airborne attack against nearly three-dozen pirates and the deadly Siren is suicidal.

On the ground, broken and beaten, lies the crew of the Cloud Ray. Their condition depends entirely on how quickly the PC's were able to escape *Vulkoor's Requit*. If they were able to escape very quickly (in the DM's opinion), they will find both Captain Wrynth and Sgt. Crash badly beaten, but alive. If the PC's tarried, or struggled to get through the ship, they will find only Captain Wrynth alive. If the PC's were unable to get out of the ship at all, chose not to fight or find some other way around the pirates, or experienced extreme delays in getting out, they will find both Captain Wrynth and Sgt. Crash dead.

If the PC's are able to escape the ship quickly or a relatively moderate pace, read the text that follows. If the PC's proceeded on the slowest path, skip directly to the "Ending the Adventure" section.

Coming upon the body of Captain Wrynth, you see the grey-haired elf badly battered. His frame crushed by the fall and dotted with crossbow bolts, he clings to life by the slimmest of margins. As breath rattles in his chest, his eyes flicker for a moment, settling on you briefly. He gasps for a moment, summoning his strength and motions you closer. He gives a brief choking laugh, incredulously, blood flecking his lips, and speaks.

"I know what you're thinking... but don't let your youth and inexperience get the best of you. There's no way you could have known. Someone higher up had a hand in this... There's no way any of us could have known... that's the trouble with pirates..."

Even as he collapses, you can see life in him still, and there may be others around that could survive with healing. As you set about the grim task of inspecting the scene, the Cloud Ray fades into a speck in the distance.

Again, Captain Wryth will live if he is stabilized with any healing from the PC's. If the PC's were fast enough, they should be able to save Sgt. Crash as well if they are able to stabilize him. If he lives, he will reiterate that the PC's are not responsible for the pirate ambush and couldn't have known. No other members of the Cloud Ray's crew, including Lt. Commander Scree survived the attack.

Ending the Adventure

If the PC's are able to survive the ordeal, the adventure ends after the escape of the Cloud Ray. If they were able to escape the ship, read the following:

The one advantage of a ship like the Cloud Ray is that anything that fast is expected back soon. You can be certain that in an organization as efficient as the Blackwheel Company would come looking for the ship shortly after it went missing. Indeed, after two long days stranded on the island, a second airship arrives to investigate. The airship contains medics and a basic combat team, but only a low-level envoy from General Ogdin, who uninterestedly takes your debriefing on the mission and takes the sceptre. As the airship lifts off with your platoon and the remaining survivors, you spot the masts of the Vulkoor's Requital below. At some point, you can be sure that the Blackwheel Company and the Ebon pirates will cross paths again.

If the PC's were unable to escape the ship, simply explain to them that after several days a Blackwheel combat platoon frees them, and then read the text above.

All of the PC's that survive earn the Mark's Man rank promotion story object. PC's that fought their pirate captors at the end and were able to rescue Sgt. Crash and Captain Wryth earn the Mark of Resolution story object. Be sure to use the award of the story objects and/or the survival of Cloud Ray crew (thanks to the PC's) as a morale booster for the PC's. Losing a ship isn't easy, and the Blackwheel Company will understand that they are not at fault, nevertheless, they have the Scepter, and the prospect of revenge...

Adventure Questions

1. Describe how the PCs fared during the MAAD.
 - a. They all landed successfully.
 - b. Some landed poorly.
 - c. Most landed poorly.
 - d. Some PC's died as a result of the drop.
2. Describe how the PC's proceeded before detonating the banishment bomb?
 - a. They moved with calculated efficiency, not wasting any unnecessary time, and quickly found a suitable location to detonate the bomb.
 - b. They wandered slightly, and wavered some in their decision, but ultimately moved somewhat directly toward their goal of detonating the bomb.
 - c. They floundered around the ship, attracting attention or exploring unnecessarily.
 - d. They were completely disorganized or in disagreement, they wasted too much time around the ship, and only proceeded to detonate the bomb as an afterthought.
3. Were the PC's able to recover any additional treasure from the ship.
 - a. Yes, they were able to recover all of the event treasure, including the draconic tome.
 - b. Yes, they recovered most of the bonus items around the ship.
 - c. Yes, but only the smallest amount.
 - d. No, they recovered only the scepter.
4. Did the PC's convince the Ebon Siren to destroy the *Dajar Merenor*?
 - a. Yes, easily.
 - b. Yes, after some debate.
 - c. Yes, after a heated argument.
 - d. No, her crew sailed away with the ship.
5. Describe the PCs involvement in the attack on the *Dajar Merenor*?
 - a. The PCs fought fiercely, making an impressive showing for the Blackwheel Company
 - b. The PCs fought well, but relied on the pirates at times.
 - c. The PCs fought, but the pirates did the vast majority of the work
 - d. The PCs fought only minimally.
 - e. The PCs did not fight at all.
6. Describe the adventure's conclusion.
 - a. The PCs fought their way out of the hold and were able to revive both Sgt. Crash and Captain Wrynth.
 - b. The PCs fought their way out of the hold, but were only able to save Captain Wrynth
 - c. The PCs escaped the hold, but were unable to save any of the Cloud Ray's crew.
 - d. The PCs failed to escape the hold.
7. Rate the group's roleplaying.
 - a. Fantastic! Everyone had interesting and engaging characters that interacted and challenged the adventure in very fun ways.
 - b. Good. Most players had interesting and engaging characters.
 - c. Okay. There was some roleplaying.
 - d. None. There was no roleplaying. They treated the adventure as nothing more than a set of objectives to be accomplished.

Story Objects:

Object ID: EXBC14

Object Name: Mark's Man Rank

Object Description: This object is a small enameled black wheel with a pair of spokes on it. It is a sign of the third rank in the Blackwheel Company: Dragoon. Within the Blackwheel Company rank is a sign of esteem, leadership, accomplishment, and pay. While rank is not an absolute determinant, lower ranking members generally defer to higher ranking members. Blackwheel Company members gain a +1 bonus on Diplomacy and Sense Motive checks with other Company members of their rank or lower for each spoke on their rank insignia. Mark's Men add an additional +300 to their gold piece limit and gain a 20% reduction in

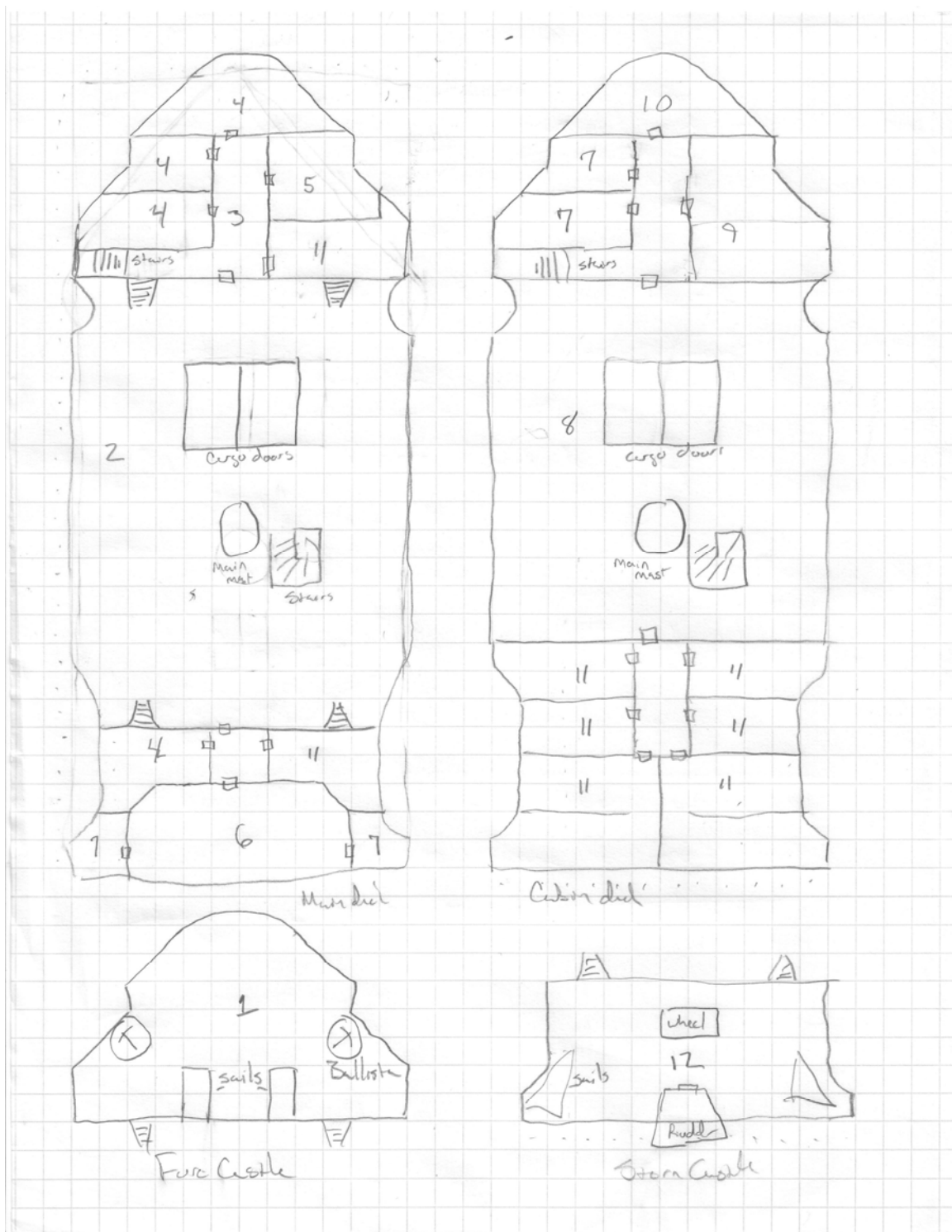
the cost of any healing potions. Like all Blackwheel Company medals and badges of rank, this insignia will magically adhere to armor, skin, or clothing at will. The benefits of rank are cumulative with all previous ranks earned.

Object ID: EXBC15

Object Name: Mark of Resolution

Object Description: This medal is awarded to Blackwheel Company members that have survived capture or interrogation by hostile forces. The medal is a gold severed finger bone with the word "Fin" etched into the front. One of the most difficult medals to earn, bearers of this honor have the respect of the companions in the Company. The Mark of Resolution allows any character to use the Escape Artist skill untrained, and grants a +1 bonus on rolls made to escape, break bindings, or bash doors. The bearer may also spend an action point once per day to reroll any Bluff check.

Dajar Merenor – Upper Decks



Dajar Merenor – Lower Deck

