

AT1.5

Bonus Module

THE FOLIO

Mini-Module



ADVENTURES FROM THE EMERALD SERPENT CAMPAIGN

Storm Seasons

Mini-Adventure AT1.5

by Scott Taylor

Everyone comes to Taux for a reason, and yet they come. A few will brave the Ebon Swamp, but most will come via ship, which is the method the party now employs. Unbeknownst to them, however, a storm is brewing, one with untold magical energy that can bend the very fabric of space and time. If they are lucky, they will have a story to be told beyond imagination. If they aren't, they will become the fodder of sea-faring legend, just another lost ship that never made it into the sheltered bay of Taux.



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Storm Seasons

Gamemaster's Notes

This mini-adventure is based around my love of the movie *The Final Countdown*. In it, the U.S.S. Nimitz sails through a time hole back to pre-WWII and has a chance to stop the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. In this adventure, players are traveling as a group aboard the trade ship *Teller's Bay*. As they get close to Taux a storm blows in and they race for the shelter of the bay only to be overrun by a strange glowing distortion. This magical vortex throws them back to the night Taux was overcome by a magical apocalypse, and they have just enough time to escape back to the present. In doing so, they recover an item that will later come into play with events in the full Taux trilogy.

1. Primary Purpose: This adventure's primary goal is to give the players a chance to recover $\frac{1}{2}$ of a legendary relic used by the war priests of old Taux, *The Fists of the Onyx God*. During the storm, the party will be attacked by a 'spirit priest', one recently possessed by the power beyond the Plane of Shadow that is washing over Taux during the time jump. Once defeated, he will dissolve, but the

relic will remain, one half on the deck, the other half washed out to sea (and later found by Brace Vash along the beaches).

2. Secondary Purpose: This adventure also serves as an introduction to the ghosts of Taux, both in the present and the past. It will also offer a chance for the party to form as a unit—getting some familiarity and comradery with each other—all before the events of Folio #11 take place.

3. Time for running: This mini-adventure is meant to be run **BEFORE** the events that take place in Folio #11. If you run it after, there will be too many problems within the timeline setting, so I do not recommend doing so.

All 'grey blocks' are for 5E conversions in this section.

The Teller's Bay

The ship is the primary point of this adventure. However, no real detail concerning it has been laid out here but you are free to use any ship map you have access to. If you are a miniatures gamer, and have a ship handy, by all means use it, but the real onus is on the stages of combat. That said, I'm going to list a few names and levels if you would like to incorporate members of the crew into the fight.

Captain

Nye Tram, a human 8th level fighter

[Bandit Captain]

First Mate

Sasha Imapov, a korys 6th level thief [Thug]

Ship's Quartermaster

Rovo Krass, a jai-ruk 4th level fighter

[Mercenary]

Crew

1st level fighters [Bandits]

Running Combat

Keep things fast in combat and slow in the build-up. Utilize the essence of the unknown, the dark, the sea, and the fog to keep players on edge. For this reason I wouldn't suggest bogging the fights down by adding excess crew to each attack. Let the players have a certain position on the ship, assigned by Captain Tram, and they can hold that spot until it is obviously time to abandon ship.

Telling the Story

Remember, this trilogy is highly focused on the narrative. As the DM, you'll see what I've put into each encounter and should try to branch off of that, continuing the feel and keeping players invested in the action as though they are part of a story and not just a fight.

Set up for Folio #11

This mini-adventure is based around the story that takes place in Folio #11 and thus if you run it before that adventure, you'll have a great base for how things should begin to play out once everyone is safely in Taux. It is my suggestion that before the initial storm, Captain Tram will have the party to his quarters for a meal, and there will regale them with tales of the infamous Emerald Serpent and the wiles of the Silk Purse, both located directly in the center of the of the Black Gate.

'If you travel to Taux,' Tram says as he leans back in his chair and draws a long pull on a pipe, 'you must find your way beyond the Black Gate. There, below the Raised Market you will find the finest drinking house in all the Halo—the Emerald Serpent. Once you've had your fill of spirits you might even cross the gangway to the Silk Purse and partake of the sweetest flesh, both male and female, any of the races of the spark has to offer.'

The Storm

'The outer break islands of Taux rise up in the distance as great waves strike against the breakwater, throwing huge walls of white into the darkening sky. Above, ashen clouds churn like a cauldron, occasional flashes of lightning mimicking skeletal fingers grasping at the sheeting rain.'

1.

The Ship

Waves break along the rails as Tram calls to his sailors, each springing from task to task as the spray lashes hair to their faces in wet sheets.

Although no outward attack happens as the ship begins its slow crawl toward the shelter of the bay, the players should be called to action by Captain Tram. He will utilize their abilities as he can, having those with high dexterity securing rope lines and sails, those with strength lashing cargo, and those with spells staying clear unless they have magic that can assist. Appropriate ability checks can be utilized here as needed, perhaps even a man going overboard that the characters are called on to help if they can, otherwise he is lost in the waves.

2.

The Storm

Each moment in the churning maelstrom seems an hour as the Teller draws closer to the shelter of the bay. The Captain rails against the blow, his voice hurling insults into the gale-force winds as he steers his vessel past the first breakwater. It is there that a glow spreads across the water, wind taking on form like a thousand ghosts driving past you in a vortex that envelopes the ship in a cold embrace.

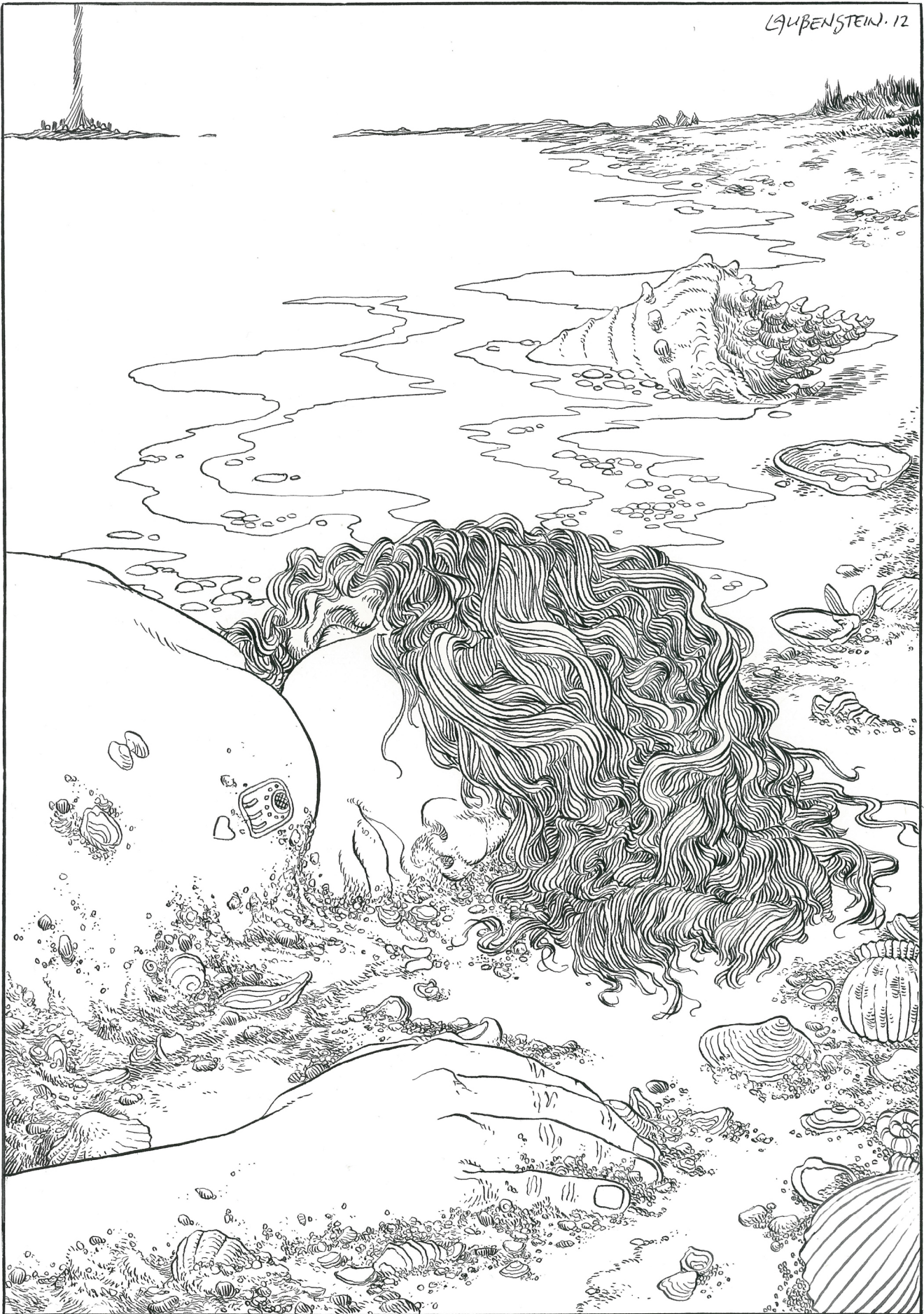
This is the time slip, the Teller having passed through a rip in time and space that takes it back to the fateful night of the Taux Apocalypse. All characters need to **making** saving throws versus **Magic [DC 15 Wisdom]** or be stunned for 1d4 rounds as the ship slides back into the **past. Consider half the crew to succumb to this effect, some sliding from lines and masts into the dark sea.**

3.

The Calm

The sea beneath the Teller turns to a black sheet of glass, the ship's tortured flight from the storm suddenly ended as a hundred thousand twinkling lights from Taux rise up around you. Those lights, however, are nothing compared to the swirling green funnel towering over it. At the center of the bay the impossibly tall Star Tower stands beneath the swirling cloud, its shimmering light suddenly dimmed as a great torrent of dark shadows begin to descend on the city, the bay, and the world beyond.

The crew has arrived at the very moment the doom has been released on Taux, a wave of killing energy coming from beyond the Plane of Shadow to blast souls and flesh alike directly into the stone of Taux. However, since the Teller has come out so close to the Star Tower, some of its abjuration magic thwarts the energy, turning it corporeal and giving the ship a chance to fight.



4.

The Fog

A fog, cold like the kiss of the northern wastes, slides across the surface of the ebon waters. Aboard the ship, men exhale wisps of icy breath, and hellfrost forms on the masts and lines, each second drawing the shimmering cloud closer and closer.

The frost has no true effect on the players, however, movement on the ship's icy deck will cause a -1 penalty to attacks.

Captain Tram begins calling for his men to form 'gangs', the players will also be called upon and it is here they should be given a 'zone' for defense on the ship, preferably next to a launch which they will be required to use to escape the certain doom of the Teller.

5.

The Shades

The green witch-fire light that penetrates the gloom from the Star Tower gives form to clawed behemoths and humanoid shapes, some with groping tentacles, others masses of teeth and eyes. The abominations roll out of the fog bank onto the deck as men scream and tear at their own flesh in horror.

These creatures are a type of bender-spawn known as tether-abominations, spirit creatures from the realms beyond the Elemental Plane of Shadow, given form by the Star Tower. Each has a 'tether' of magical energy that still connects it to its home plane of existence (think a character's astral thread). These tethers can actually be seen by players with a successful Wisdom check **[DC 12 Perception]** and can be destroyed using magical spells or weapons. It takes 10 points of damage to destroy one, and they are considered to have Magic Resistance 35% **[Magic Resistance]**.

8 Tether Abominations [AC 4, HD 7+7, HP 49, #AT 3, D 2–12 (Necrotic/Slash), +1 or better weapon to hit]

TREASURE

NONE

8 Tether Abominations [AC 16, HD 7d12+14, HP 56, Initiative +3, #AT 3, Hit +6, Dam Slashing Appendage 9 (2d6+2) + 6 (1d8+2) Necrotic, Multiattack, Damage Resistance (non-magical weapons), Vulnerability (radiant)]

The characters should be hard pressed by these creatures. At a minimum, they should be forced to fight five of these creatures before moving on to Part 6. Obviously, cutting the tethers is the fastest way through this battle.

6.

The Priest Specter

Amid the carnage and screams another form appears, this one wearing a great feline headdress and wielding an obsidian hammer. His flesh is like polished obsidian, eyes burning with embers of crimson flame, and forearms adorned with softly glowing wood and onyx bracers. With a scream, he approaches, hammer raised for battle.

This is the body of the Taux war-priest that brought about the cataclysmic spell. His body has been fully infested with a powerful bender-spawn, this one strong enough to enter the world without a tether! Once defeated, his body will crumble and explode, the hammer going over the side of the ship along with his left arm (and bracer), but his right bracer will be cast across the deck and bounce off the ship's single launch (as a sign perhaps it is time to go!).

1 Greater Bender Infested Spawn [AC 0, HD 12, HP 72, #AT 2, +5 Hit, D 1-12+8, +1 or better weapon to hit]

TREASURE

+2 OBSIDIAN HAMMER, THE FISTS OF THE
ONYX GOD (RELIC)

1 Greater Bender Infested Spawn [AC 20, HD 12d12+24, HP 96, Initiative +4, #AT 2, Hit +9, Dam Obsidian Hammer 17 (2d12+5), Multiattack, Damage Resistance (non-magical weapons), Vulnerability (radiant)]

7.

The Launch

The sound of screaming is dying along with the crew of the Teller. Above the din Captain Tram calls to abandon ship, his outstretched arm pointing at a disc of light swirling off the ship's portside.

The magical shimmer is reminiscent of the glow that brought the ship into the storm in the first place. It is at this point the players will need to quickly devise a way to get the launch into the water as the ship starts to break apart, more bender-spawn appearing, and the captain nodding slowly to the party as he is overwhelmed. To launch the ship without magic, the players must have a combined Strength total of 40 and need 1d4 rounds to get it in the water. They will also have to contend with more bender-spawn interfering with the launch, which might decrease the overall Strength score, and each round without a combined 40 adds another round they will have to be on the ship. If they are still aboard after 10 rounds, the adventure is over and they will die, just another victim of the demise of Taux.

8 Tether Abominations [AC 4, HD 7+7, HP 49, #AT 3, D 2–12 (Necrotic/Slash), +1 or better weapon to hit]

TREASURE

NONE

8 Tether Abominations [AC 16, HD 7d12+14, HP 56, Initiative +3, #AT 3, Hit +6, Dam Slashing Appendage 9 (2d6+2) + 6 (1d8+2) Necrotic, Multiattack, Damage Resistance (non-magical weapons), Vulnerability (radiant)]

8.

The Beach

The launch breaks apart around you as the glowing magic abates. Warm water, welcomed after the cold of the battle, washes against your body in a gentle rhythm, the lights of a city alive and prospering rising up out of the darkness. Sounds of lapping water can be heard nearby, and the light of the Ghost Moon reflects against the pearlescent sands of a crescent beach.

Once in the water, the launch will be drawn to the glow as though an unseen hand or tide is pulling it in. You may describe the dire cold of it, the cracking of the boards around them, and the terrible screams echoing from the Teller, but otherwise they will make it through without any rolls needed.

Here ends the mini-adventure, and it should be the hope that they have survived with the bracer in their possession.

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