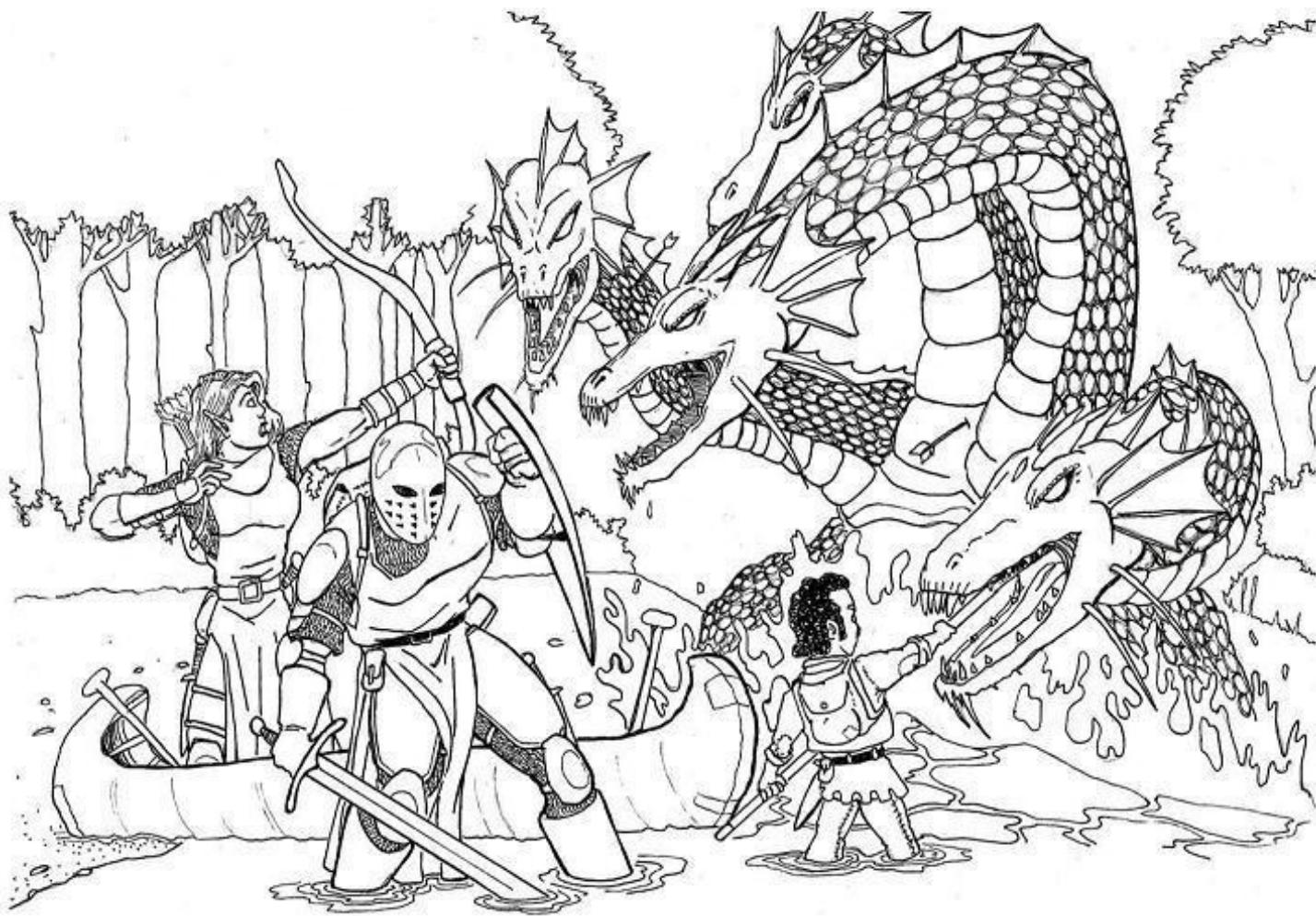


# THE RIVER QUEEN



by RC PINNELL

Cover & Interior Art by  
Cory "Shonuff" Gelnett

Official Event at the NorthTexas RPG CON 2010

# EXPERT ADVENTURE MODULE X-0

# The River Queen

For 5-9 characters, levels 2-4

**INTRODUCTION** This adventure is designed to allow **Basic** characters of levels 2-4 to experience encounters in a wilderness setting and possibly gain levels that will raise them into the lower end of the range of the Expert Rules system. Characters should begin at 2nd or 3rd level; if they should gain a level before the conclusion of the adventure, you (the DM) must refer to the Expert Rules manual for details concerning any class abilities gained. As this is a *very difficult* scenario players should be prepared and come to the table with a backup character, on the chance that their primary character might meet its demise. You (the DM) should not allow multiple characters per player unless doing so is a standard procedure in your campaign; filling out the party roster with hirelings is suggested. At these levels, the group should include at least 1 cleric (but 2 would be better) and 1 elf and magic-user; rounding out the party with fighters, dwarfs and Halflings. A thief might come in handy should the party reach the middle island and explore the ruins there, but lacking one will not stop the group from finishing the adventure.

## NOTES TO THE DUNGEON MASTER

The location of this adventure is very generic. It takes place in and around a long, wide river that runs through the known realm. This can be a kingdom, or barony within your own world, or you can place it at some spot within any of the published *Settings* on a major river. Trails lead to it from both sides, but need not be major thoroughfares. Any travelling to the location is not covered within this adventure, and you (the DM) will have to supply any events or encounters

that you wish the party to experience. Doing so is not required by the adventure, and will not adversely affect the playing of it should you choose not to. Once the party has begun the adventure you should keep a strict account of time, as the passing of days and nights will be obvious within a wilderness setting.

**BACKGROUND** The SCARSON river is a long and wide waterway that winds its way from the high peak mountains of the north to the sea, hundreds of miles to the south. Used by the mountain communities to ship needed lumber to cities in the valleys below, it is a major means of travel throughout the lowlands, and also supplies much needed water to the farm lands of the broad plains. It is bordered along most of its length by light woods and/or thick brush, and occasionally by the lowland hills it cuts its way through. There are at least a half-dozen trails that cut across the river, but all of these are located at fords where the Scarson is wide and the water shallow enough for horses to manage. All except one, where the water runs deep and the current is too swift for horses or man to even swim. The only way to cross is by boat, and even that is treacherous. At this location three islands appear in the center of the river. The middle island is flat, with a dock erected on its south side to allow travelers to stop and rest at the way station built upon it. The upper and lower islands can be reached on foot from the central one, as the water depth is nominal in comparison to the rest of the river. Sages believe that the 3 islands are actually just one, with three tops having been created by the swift flowing current. True or not, the way station has served many a weary traveler for scores of years.

But something has happened recently, causing all those that travel along the river to avoid the islands on their trips north and south, and to attempt crossing at other locations where the river is shallower; though such spots are miles--if not leagues--away. One of the river vessels that makes weekly trips up and down its length has vanished--the River Queen. A keel boat of 60' in length, the vessel was carrying cargo and passengers from the highlands to the large city-state of the Baron near the coast. Though only a week overdue, many that travel the river have reported no sighting of the vessel along the river's length, moored or otherwise. It has been assumed that she stopped at the way-station to drop off cargo and passengers; many now suspect the ship and those aboard her are victims of foul play. But that would imply the station Master and his employees might be involved in such chicanery; unless they, too, are victims of whatever might be responsible for the River Queen vanishing. Further reports by those still brave enough to travel along the river have revealed that the way station itself appears to be abandoned; not one person has been sighted going about his normal daily routine. The buildings appear boarded up, and strange howls have been heard late in the day by those that pass the islands. The Baron wants to get to the bottom of this mystery, as he had precious cargo aboard the River Queen and would like it found. Thus he has sent solicitations throughout the realm seeking parties to investigate the situation, and recover an item and return it to him; a large, locked iron box. Any party that does, and determines what happened to the vessel and way station will be rewarded with a payment of 5000 GP; any treasure that they find not verifiably belonging to someone else, they are given permission to keep.

**START** While it is possible that the party could approach the river from either the north or south side, it is recommended that you (the DM) have them begin the adventure following the trail up from the south. This will deposit them near the beginning of the text encounter listings (A1-2-3) and be easier for you to refer to the module as the listing sequence unfolds. Assuming the player-characters have accepted the commission, they will receive detailed directions with which to reach the trail leading to the location of the crossing, and the way station islands. En route you can

have them experience a few, minor encounters, that might be reasonable for wilderness travel. You can make up such encounters, and times they might occur, or you can use the following suggestions.

#### WILDERNESS JOURNEY ENCOUNTER TABLE

<u>D8</u>	<u>Creature type/s</u>	<u>Found in Manual*</u>
1	Brigands(1-10)	X53
2	Bees, Giant(4-16)	B26
3	Hobgoblins(3-12)	B31
4	Boar(1-2)	B27
5	Wolf(2-7)	B39
6	Centaur(2-8)	X47
7	Wyvern(1-2)	X57
8	Beetle, Tiger(2-8)	B26

\*Refers to which (Mentzer) manual and what page the creature/s can be found.

Hit points and items/possessions for each creature or group should be determined ahead of time if possible. Not all will be initially hostile to the party, while some will.

If not using strict movement rules, simply make a wilderness check 3 x per day (morn, midday, evening), with a result of 1 on a d6 indicating some type of encounter has occurred.

Once the party has reached the river, and the docks, they will be subject to random encounters, as well as those that they stumble upon (Set encounters). Those of a random nature will occur either in the water or on the land. The following tables are minimal if you wish to employ them, and should be expanded and elaborated should the party remain in the area for an extended period of time. Check once every 6 Turns and if the party is not within a Set encounter area, a result of 1 on a d6 will indicate a random encounter.

#### RANDOM AREA ENCOUNTERS

##### RIVER

<u>D8</u>	<u>Creature type/s</u>	<u>Found in Manual</u>
1	Buccaneers, 1 boat(10-20)	X53
2	Insect Swarm(1-3 swarms)*	X52
3	Nixies(2-12)	X54
4	Insect Swarm(1)**	X52
5	Giant Bass(2-8)	X49
6	Giant Crab(1-4)	X47

Buccaneers *may* have treasure on them. All others will not.

\*2 HD type only

\*\*Either 3 or 4 HD type

## RIVERBANK/SHORELINE\*

D8	<u>Creature type/s</u>	<u>Found in Manual</u>
1	Noble(1)**	X53
2	Harpy(1-2)	B31
3	Lizard Man(2-7)	B33
4	Giant ants(1-8)	B25
5	Giant Crab(1-2)	X47
6	Crocodile(1-4)	X47
7	Giant Toad(1-6)	X56
8	Hydra(1)***	X52

\*Extends inland to about 50'

\*\* This L3 female fighter is the niece of the Baron, and was the one transporting his "locked, iron box" from her father's estate to be given to her uncle. When the River Queen went down, she nearly drowned, but was pulled ashore by a friendly creature and has been laying there in a coma since. Dehydrated and nearly dead (2/12 hp left!) some creative spell casting by the party will revive her. Her name is *Eliana*. S15 I14 W12 D15 C13 CH17 How much she wishes (you wish) to reveal to the party is entirely up to you; she might suffer from amnesia. All her personal possessions went down with the ship, and she does not know what was in the iron box. She is Lawful, and could serve as an NPC

\*\*\* 5 heads only

Check once every 6 Turns the party is moving along the riverbank, or in the overgrowth, and if the party is not within a Set encounter area, a result of 1 on a d6 will indicate a random encounter.

## SET ENCOUNTER MATRIX

As the party moves along the trail in a northwesterly direction they will find themselves being hemmed in on both sides from the natural geology of the area. To their right the ground becomes thick with heavy brush and plants that eventually give way to trees. To their left is a rising slope that becomes a broad band of low hills. It is between these two biomes that the trail cuts a path toward the river. The trail twists and turns frequently, cutting off the view ahead at times. By the time the trail reaches the point where it first appears on the map the characters will feel the air become cooler, and moist, as the nostrils of their steeds flair open as the animals sense water ahead. At this point **A1** a very narrow and barely noticeable side trail leads off to the north.

**A1** There is a 1 in d6 chance of the party noticing this trail as they move past it. Should they have been on

foot, for any reason, the odds of seeing it improve to 1-2 in d6. If an elf is in the party the odds are 1-3. And if a halfling is on foot, he will spot it on a 1-5 in d6; if he is on horseback it is a 1-3 chance, as the elf. If they reach this location at night, all the chances are lowered by 1. Should the party follow this narrow trail it will take them to a clearing (see map) about 90' wide by 280' long. At the north end of it they will discover a stone statue, standing and posed as if in combat, and about to strike at something. In his hand is a club that may have been wooden at one time. This inanimate object is the recent victim of a creature that is hiding in the thicket west of here. Sent to investigate the recent build up of hostile creatures in the area, this *druid*, named Ollie Oakboro, met his demise 3 days past and has been standing here since. In his wisdom he decided to lay his backpack down behind a large tree before entering the clearing. Should the party conduct a search of the area, they will find this on a 1 in 6 chance per hour searching--cumulative. Inside it is a *scroll* with the spell *Stone to Flesh*, 2 week's worth of iron rations, a lantern, 3 flasks of oil, a flint and tinderbox, a 75' coil of rope, a small hammer and 9 iron spikes. Though Ollie is, indeed, dead, if the party uses the scroll to return him to flesh you should award the group 1000 XP for doing so, IF they take the time to port his body back to civilization (a good week's ride there and back) and secure the aid of a high-level cleric to "raise" the poor man back to life. If they cast the spell, all his clothing and weapons will return to normal as well. His club is a +1 magical weapon. If they restore him to flesh, and simply steal all his possessions, then you should deduct 1000 XP from each Lawful character, and 500 from any Neutral one that is in agreement with doing so. If you wish to use Ollie further than what is presented here, you will have to determine his abilities, hp and other information. You will find within the (Mentzer) Companion Set details about this class on p.14 of the players' book. (Since *druids* are not found in the '81 BX rules, you should "port" all data pertaining to the class from the Companion manual) It is strongly suggested that you not involve Ollie in the party's adventure beyond what is presented here, except perhaps in a supportive role for them to return to for assistance. His level and abilities are far beyond those

of the characters intended to adventure within, and would unbalance the scenario in their favor.

**A2** A short distance further along the main trail a second side path appears, and veers mostly north much like the previous one (see map). The chances of spotting it are the same as those previously described. It, too, ends in a clearing; one that is much smaller than the previous one, being only 70' wide and 160' long. This *clearing*, though, is barely that. While the taller trees ring the perimeter, the "clearing" still contains plants and brush as high as 3', and bunched in 20' diameter clumps here and there; signs of something being dragged along the ground are apparent everywhere, along with an occasional 3-toed footprint. Among one of the clumps hides a **Basilisk** (27 hp). It is this creature that is responsible for the druid's demise, and the fleeing Bugbear located to the west (see A3); it had stumbled upon the two forces in the middle of combat, and while turning the druid to stone, the Bugbear escaped--barely, fleeing west. The creature has managed to gather up all the coins and "goodies" the fleeing Bugbear dropped in their hurried exit, and buried it beneath the clump that it rests under. This includes 200SP, 100EP, 100GP, 25PP, 3 quartz gems (10GP ea.), and a Potion of Heroism (lasts 6 Turns).

**A3** As the party approaches this location they will see three things: to their left, a large, swampy bog, a river and dock at the end of the trail, and up ahead on their right (A3) a group of **Bugbear**. If the party has taken reasonable means to move without making a lot of noise, they will surprise the monsters; who are still recovering from a hasty flight through the thicket from their encounter with the Basilisk. These creatures are fatigued, some are low on hp, and in a generally foul disposition. You should determine how many of them there are based on the size of the party. For 5 characters, you can have 3 Bugbear, for 6-7 you can have 4, and for 8-9 characters, allow 5 Bugbear; (20, 18, 16, 14, 12, hp) use the higher hp for the lesser amount appearing. These creatures have crude armor and weapons, and foul tasting rations; they lost all their valuables in the clearing to the east, escaping from the Basilisk.

**B** On the south side of the trail the party can clearly see a large marshy area. It extends from the bank of the river up to the hills. At about 440' at its widest, and about 800' in length, this boggy land takes up around 350,000 square feet. It is filled with tall willow fronds reaching heights of 6' rising out of the soft and muddy soil somewhere beneath a shallow pool of murky water that seeps up from below. Walking through it is possible, but the muck is so thick as to entrap one's feet unless he can make a Strength check with each step he attempts to take. (Rolling ones Strength or better on a d20, modified by any strength bonus/penalty) Failure to make a check will result in the character's feet



becoming stuck-fast in the mud, requiring assistance in getting free of the grimy grasp. The mud, water and tall reeds do not impede the movement or actions of the creatures that are presently residing within the bog. And if the party approaches the marsh a band of **6 Giant Toads** (15, 14, 13, 12, 11, 10, 9 hp) will lunge out to attack the horses and men. If (and any time) the party camps along the trail on this side of the river, a like amount of the creatures will appear at night, preceded by a long and annoying hour of loud croaking, followed by 1 round of silence before they launch an assault. All characters must make a Save vs. Death Ray or the prolonged croaking will have caused them to become nauseous and irritated to the point of suffering a -1 to hit and damage, for 3 rounds. For some reason, Halflings get an additional bonus of +2 to their save! If

the party decides to enter the bog during the day, they will encounter a band of toads as described on a 1-3 roll on a d6 after 2 turns of moving. Their move rate being, of course, 1/3 normal due to the bog's mucky bottom. The creatures have no treasure. During the day, there is a 1 in 6 chance per character per move of stepping into a pit of quicksand; at night this becomes a 1-3 chance. Those that do will sink immediately up to their waist and continue to do so for 1-6 rounds, at which time they are dead! If they struggle at all they hasten their demise to 1-2 rounds. Only assistance from others can save those trapped.

**C** Upon reaching the riverbank at the end of the trail the party will come to a wooden dock. The structure is very weather beaten and worn, with many of its planks bearing cracks. At just over 30' in length, and 18' wide, it is large enough for the party to walk upon; if they attempt to bring their horses, the pier will begin to wobble, indicating the device cannot stand up under too much weight. The party is now faced with a dilemma--what to do with the horses? Leaving the animals hobbled near the riverbank is not a good idea, but what choices have they? If they were able to restore the druid to his former self, he will gladly look after the animals while they investigate the islands. You should award the party 500 XP for thinking of this, and deduct the same amount should they choose to leave their mounts behind in such a fashion. If they should manage to come up with some other clever solution, you should consider the possibility, and be generous in your ruling.

**D** Two long canoes are tied up to the dock here. Both are about 15' long with a 3' girth. They bob up and down in the water and knock against the pilings with the ebb and flow of the current. Each has a stern seat where the handle of a rudder could be easily controlled (though neither has one), and a forward seat; 7' of space separates the seats. The one nearest the shore appears to have water in the bottom of it at about a hand's depth, the other doesn't. Each can normally hold 600 pounds of cargo, be it man or materials. This is the 2nd dilemma the party must solve--how to get the entire party across to the island with 2 boats? To make matters worse, the boat holding the water actually has small cracks in the sides just at the water line when fully loaded. Thus, it will begin taking on water and fill

up before they can reach the island. If the party inspects the boats allow each character a 5% chance of determining the condition of the vessels; giving anyone with boating background a 25% chance. Though the distance from dock to island is not that great, fighting the current will determine how long each trip will take. If the occupants of the canoe have a combined strength of 34+ it will take them 2 Turns of physically demanding rowing to reach the dock on the middle island. If their combined strength is from 25-33, it will take them 3 Turns. If their strength is 11-24, it will take them 4 Turns. If their strength is 10 or less it will take them 1 hour/6 Turns! In each case, the rowers will be exhausted, and need to rest at least 1 turn per each spent rowing before doing anything very physical. Since Halflings and elves weigh less than dwarves and humans it is possible to have more than 2 characters in a boat at the same time. To help determine the weight of a character, you can refer to the *Rules Cyclopedia*, or use the following table as a guideline.

CHARACTER WEIGHT				
HUMAN*		HGT	MAX HGT	WGT
	Male	5'0"	6'10"	100
DWARF**	Female	5'0"	6'6"	90
	Male	3'8"	4'8"	110
ELF***	Female	3'8"	4'6"	110
	Male	4'6"	5'6"	75
HALFLING+	Female	4'6"	5'4"	70
	Male	2'8"	3'6"	50
	Female	2'6"	3'4"	40

For each 2" gained,

\* add 10 Lbs. up to 5'6", then 20 Lbs. thereafter

\*\*add 10 Lbs.

\*\*\*add 5 Lbs. up to 5', then 10 Lbs. thereafter

+add 5 Lbs.

For Strength consideration, include the following variable

S18 add d20 worth of weight in Lbs.

S16-17 add d10 worth of weight in Lbs.

S13-15 add d8 worth of weight in Lbs.

S9-12 no adjustment

S6-8 minus d4 worth of weight in Lbs.

S4-5 minus d6 worth of weight in Lbs.

S2-3 minus d8 worth of weight in Lbs.

The above will help you determine the character's portion of weight involved in loading the boat(s). You

must consult the appropriate manual(s) in order for you to take their armor, weapons and other possessions into account as well.

It is possible to utilize the damaged boat in order to move more characters across at a time. Tying the bow of it to the stern of the other and putting strong rowers in the lead boat will allow more to be ported across the river in one trip. This will require a minimum of 36 combined Strength points in the lead boat, and 30 in the towed one; anything less will result in the latter taking on water and swamping halfway across. If the party experiments with this and eventually solves the riddle of doing so, award them a bonus of 500 XP. And in spite of all this, even if they should happen to do everything right, there are still encounters within the river that might likely come into play, and make things a whole lot more difficult!

Such as...

**E** Roughly 130' west of the dock and 200' north is a pair of **freshwater termites** (14 & 10 hp). These creatures have already attacked the damaged canoe in weeks past, and should the party keep a direct route west from the dock to the island there is but a 10% per Turn that the creatures will detect a change in the water and go south to investigate. If, on the other hand, the party should steer north at first, intending to then turn west and allow the current to take them to the island, there is a 25% chance the creatures will feel the vessels when within 80' and rise to attack. For each 20' closer the canoes get, the chance rises 10%. These monsters do not have any treasure, unless you wish to allow them to have some minor bauble or coin.

**F** Almost directly west and 760' from the dock on the bank the characters came from is a similar pier on the middle island. While the island itself has, and is described later in, its own listing, the dock is mentioned here for 2 reasons: it should be their 1st destination after leaving the south shore, and upon reaching it they are most likely to encounter the creatures residing just below the pier. 3 **giant crabs** (14, 12, 10 hp) will lunge out from beneath the dock and attack as the characters attempt to transfer themselves from the canoes to it. They do not have any treasure.

**G** About 250 feet directly southwest of the island dock, under 20' of water, lies the wreck of the River Queen. Though the water here is noted as 30' deep, the ship lays on its side, cutting the distance from its port side to the surface by 10'. The interior has been destroyed by corrosion and current, leaving only the frame of a small cabin on its deck, with few wall planks intact. But what remains of the wreckage is enough to conceal a creature that resides within it. A **River-Hydra**, bearing 3 heads has made its home in the debris. Each head can take 18 hp of damage before being destroyed or going dormant. If all 3 are destroyed the creature will die, but as long as 1 head remains, it will regenerate 3 hp per Turn until it is fully restored; missing heads will grow back, and damage will be repaired within this time. It can bite with each head, per round, for 1-10 hp of damage, or it can exhale when upon the surface a scalding stream of water from each for 3d6 of damage (1/2 if a Save is made) once per day per head. If submerged it cannot use this attack, but can build up and discharge an enormous wave of heat that will scald anyone or thing in the water within 10' of it for 8d6 of damage (1/2 if a Save is made), 1 time per day. It attacks as a 7HD monster, and if its body takes 19 points of damage one head will become dormant; 37 points and 2 will become dormant; 49 and it will die. Its AC is that of a standard Hydra, but attacks by weapons underwater suffer a -4 penalty to hit and damage due to the resistance of the water, with blunt weapons doing only 1/2 damage at most; except for spears, daggers and piercing melee type weapons which attack normally. This creature will only surface to attack if anyone or thing remains fixed above the wreckage for more than 3 rounds. Passing over the site allows a mere 10% chance that the beast will surface and attack. This creature did not sink the River Queen! The vessel was the victim of fire damage; whether of a magical sort or natural is unknown, but should the party manage to inspect the wreckage, they will find 3-5 large holes in the ship's hull that are ringed with charcoal, indicating fire of some sort. The creature merely came along after the fact, and has claimed it as its home. (*More about the ship's sinking is described later*) Though the creature normally does not possess treasure, it has accumulated a few things from other river travelers that were unfortunate to have passed over the site, and lingered too long. Thus, if the

party explores the interior of the hull, they will find spread loosely about, 4000 CP, 2000 SP, a Pearl (valued at 400 GP), a +1 *Ring of Protection*, and a *Wand of Frost* (4 charges left!) You should study the Expert manuals before play begins to conceptualize all the mechanics necessary for the characters to conduct their activities underwater. Or, you can *House-rule* as things follow their course.

**H** Passing over this location it is 40% likely to see the long and slithering shadow of a **Giant Sturgeon** in the depths below (45 hp). This huge fish has claimed this area and swims clockwise in a circle 160' in diameter with this designation (H) at its center. It does not often rise to the surface and attack, but if a boat is overhead it will rise up beneath it, attempting to jar "things" out of the object and into the water; thereupon closing on the flailing victim in an attempt to gain a meal. It is not known to possess treasure, but this particular one has managed to swallow a Halfling who lies rotted in its stomach, still bearing a *Ring of Protection* +1, 10' radius, upon the third finger of its left hand!

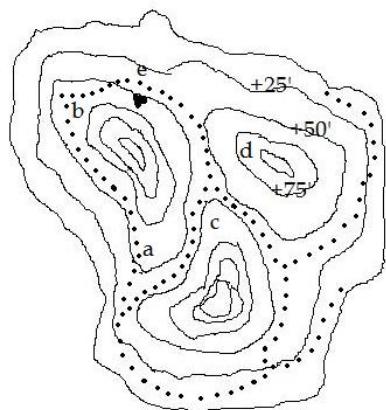
**IJ** The water at these locations is only 3-5' deep, making it possible for taller characters to easily walk along from island to island. Unfortunately, doing so the first time will attract a small group of 3 **Giant Leeches** at each location (30, 27, 24 hp at ea.). These creatures will attempt to attack the legs of bipedal beings, and not raise out of the water during combat. Thus, there is a -1 to hit and damage against these monsters while they are submerged; blunt weapons doing only 1/2 the maximum possible should they hit at all. They have no treasure.

**K** The largest of the islands, and with 3 peaks that each rise to a height of 100-150' above the water is the home to the strangest couple the party has likely ever encountered. A young female **Cyclops** (39 hp) ran away from her family and realm upon falling in love with a handsome and dashing **Centaur** (18 hp) and the two of them have claimed this island having discovered it in their flight. While *she* is Chaotic, and will fling stones and boulders and combat anyone that attempts to approach them (believing anyone that tries to be sent by her father, and her people, to retrieve her!) *he*, is Neutral, and more calm about things. Having only been

on the island a few days, they are not aware of the history of the way station, or the reason behind the sinking of the River Queen. They do hear strange howls, growling, and baying coming from the center island at nights when the moon has risen, and will convey this if questioned. There is a reward for her return, should the party wish to veer from the adventure and head off in new directions. You will have to create all the information and circumstances regarding this if you allow the players to pursue such.



They do not have much treasure with them; he wears a +1 *bow* slung over his shoulder, while a harness supporting 4 quivers that hang at his sides contain 20 arrows each; one being filled with +1 *arrows*. In a cave inside one of the hills on the island (e) the two have made a makeshift home. Under a large cot that she sleeps upon is a huge wooden footlocker 6' long by 2' wide and 2' deep; inside is all the treasure she grabbed from her family home before fleeing: 200 CP, 1000 SP, 200 EP, 200 GP and a *staff of slinging*. (This item is described later) The following Insert shows the possible locations of the Cyclops and centaur at a given time. At the beginning of the game roll a d6 to determine the initial position of the creatures. Roll again at midday and at night\* to simulate their movement and where they are likely to have gone. Consult the table that follows.



Location	Centaur	Cyclops
a.	1	
b.	2	1
c.	3	2
d.	4	
e.	5-6	3-6

\*At night add 2 to each roll

If communication can be made and non-hostile actions used it is possible the party might be able to speak with the creatures. If the party is clever and comes up with some means to do so, award them additional group XP250. While the Cyclops and centaur have little useful information to convey to the group, they have noticed the strange flying creatures that seem to hover about the top of the most southern island; they suspect that the creatures nest there as well. They have often heard strange, but pleasant singing coming from that direction at night. While it is soothing to them, it has no particular effect.

**L** The center island is the smallest in actual square surface footage. It is also more level, looking to have been worked to remove previous hills, filled in and evened out. While this makes it susceptible to flooding, the fact that it rises above the waterline by 5' has prevented this about 60% of the time.

The only dock to the island is on its south side in order for boats and canoes to moor without having to fight with the river's currents; even there the flow is not an easy pace to judge, and often requires several attempts to achieve. Interestingly the water depth between the 3 islands is actually such that a person can walk from one to another, being less than 5' in most places; again,

the current is enough and the depth enough to reduce a character's Move Rate by 1/3rd.

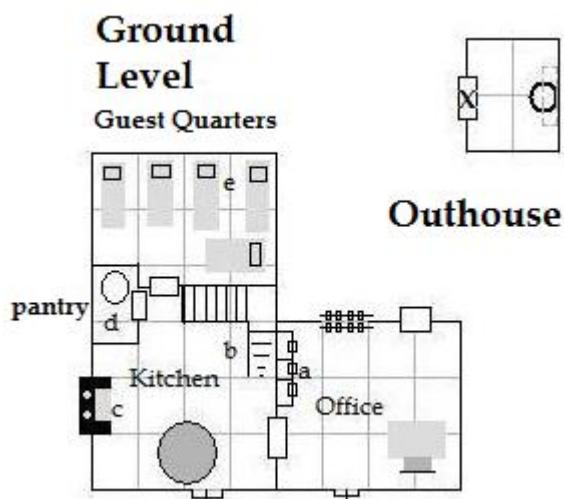
Near the center of the island stand 2 structures that are clearly manmade. The smaller one is only about 10' square, with the door secured by a big padlock on the outside; it stands about 20' from the larger one. Upon approaching it the air quickly becomes foul with the scent of excrement, hinting at the building's purpose. The larger one is L-shaped, with a 2nd story. Lots of tracks appear on the ground, humanoid appearing and bipedal, all about the structures; mixed among these is a pair of impressions that indicate long toes with claws with the heel mark missing, as if the person or thing that made the tracks was walking on the front of his foot. All of these are days old, if not older.

#### THE WAYSTATION MATRIX GROUND LEVEL

Given the isolated condition of the establishment and the difficulty of reaching the island the number and type of wandering creatures that might be encountered during exploration of the buildings and island is few and limited to the following table. You should make a Check 3 times per day (late morning, afternoon, and night) with a roll of 1 on a d6 indicating something is moving about. None of these creatures will have any treasure on them.

Wandering Monster Table		
Roll d8	Type of Creature/s	Found in Manual
1-2	Giant Ferrets(1-3)	B30
3	Giant Ant(1-2)	B25
4-5	Giant Rats(1-6)	B36
6-7	Insect Swarm(1)2HD	X52
8	Giant Toads(1-4)	X56

A single locked door in the north wall is the only way in and out of the ground level; small rectangular windows in the office and kitchen are the lined with wolfs bane and are too small for even a halfling to get through; these act more as smoke and heat ventilators than anything else. The one large window capable of using as a portal seems to have been barred and boarded securely, to keep something out--or perhaps in!



1. OFFICE A 15' x 20' room. This chamber is sparsely furnished with a desk and chair in the southwest corner and some cabinets (a) along the west wall north of an interior door. During the day the faint sound of rustling can be heard from within the cabinets and, if checked, 1d6+4 of **normal rats** (5-10) will be discovered nesting within (1 hp ea.) Each cabinet is 5' in height, with 3 drawers in each. The contents of these consist mostly of shipping schedules, ship logs, and manifests; almost all are now rendered useless and hole-riddled and nibbled on by the rats; excrement fills the bottom of most of the drawers as well. They will only attack if threatened, preferring to stay within the cabinets during the day light hours. There is a 5% cumulative chance per Turn should the party search the cabinets of finding a small wooden box. It is locked and requires a thief to open it; attempting to smash the locking device will ruin the box and its contents. Inside is a *vial of Clairvoyance*. The desk in the southwest corner of the room appears to be intact, sturdy, and undamaged. One long drawer beneath it can be pulled outward from behind. If the party searches this drawer they will find a half-dozen scrolls of parchment, a quill, and a small bottle of black ink. All of these are of high quality, and are used by scribes and magic users to pen scrolls. Beneath them all is a silver key that fits the lock on the "outhouse" and pantry doors and in the door in the cellar below at area "O", and a brass one to the front.

2. KITCHEN Entry is gained through the door in the east wall that leads into the office. A second door in the

north wall leads to a guest chamber. A round table 7' in diameter is pushed up against the south wall, and a fireplace stands in the west wall. A flight of stairs in the northeast corner leads to the 2nd story, while a small door leads to the pantry in the northwest corner. A barrel of rancid water sits beneath the stairs (b) with the top ajar. Spoiled by something that makes the water murky and unclear, if anyone reaches in or otherwise attempts to search the liquid, he will be attacked by a **gray ooze** (14 hp)! Built into the west wall is a brick oven with holes leading up and out to the exterior to allow smoke to escape (c). An iron hook attached to the left front swivels, allowing cooking pots and other containers to be swung inward where they cook over the fire built within; currently the stove is cold and appears unused for at least several days. A large iron pot sits on the floor south of the oven and is covered with a lid. A gagging stench can be felt and noticed when within 10' of it; the entire room is filled with the aroma of decay. If searched, the pot will appear to contain a human head, badly decomposed. This belonged to the Way-station Master--one, *GUNDER OSLOFV*. (More about his fate appears in the *Back story*, following the adventure) The pot is also filled with 6 **carriion-worms!** (1 hp each; stats are as those of giant centipedes, except they do not inject poison and bite. Instead, if they make their attack roll they burrow into their victim and will then die and decompose inside, causing serious disease/s in 3-7 days that may have devastating effects; you must determine what these might be!) Burning the creatures as they attempt to enter will kill them--causing damage to the victim as well. They can also be removed by cutting into the victim and extracting them; again, causing damage to the victim as determined. A small 5' x 7' pantry (d) contains shelves that hold food stock. Most of these items are spoiled and rotted, with those not, being rancid and distasteful at best. A small trapdoor appears in the floor allowing access to the cellar below. However, it is bolted and *appears* secured with a large padlock to prevent the bolt from sliding. Clearly implying that its purpose is to either secure what is below, or keep something from getting out. (More on this later.)

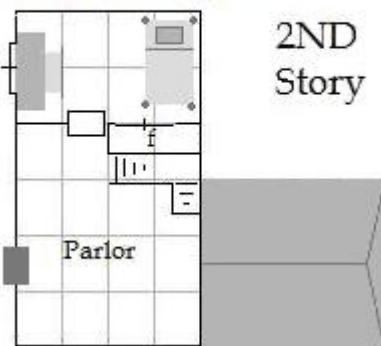
3. GUEST QUARTERS 5 single cots fill this room. Used by travelers in need of a few hours or night's rest, it is a very cramped chamber, very plainly furnished. There is

nothing of value in the room, and if the party searches they will encounter a **crab spider** (9 hp) at area (e).

## SECOND STORY

**4. PARLOR** This large room served as a place for the station master and guests to relax and socialize. It still contains several large, stuffed chairs, a sedan, several wooden chairs and small end tables. Against the west wall the chimney to the stove below radiates enough heat to warm the chamber; being the stove below is not functioning, the parlor is cold. In fact, at night the room is very cold as holes in the ceiling are the culprit. These allow sunlight to break through in angled rays that crisscross the room. If the party purposely examines the ceiling rafters they will notice nests there in the southeast corner. These are occupied by 5 **stirges** (6, 5, 4, 4, 3 hp) that will attack the group if they gain the element of surprise, and should they prodded or threatened. Hidden among the nests are 4 gems (1 x 50GP, 2 x 100 GP, 1 x 500 GP).

Station Master's Qtrs.



**5. STATION MASTER'S QUARTERS** This room is 10' x 20', with a window in the west wall where a desk stands beneath, and a large 4 poster bed stands against the east wall. Oddly, the bed is made, though this is but an "illusion," as a **Sheet Ghoul** (14 hp) is spread across the bed making it seem so. It will attack anyone that sits on it, or stands near. (*Details of this creature are given at the end of the adventure*) About a dozen bits and pieces of parchment lie in a pile atop the desk. These seem to be hastily written, in the common language. Many have tears running through them, with holes as well, making most of what is written, incomplete. If the

party spends time reading the scraps of paper, they will see that it is in the form of a journal and learn the following. (You may read this aloud to the players)

*The keel boat, River Queen moored last night. Bearing only 3 passengers, a woman of apparent noble lines, a hulking mass of a fighter and the 3rd a weasel of a fellow, they plan to stay only the night.*

*Harlan, master of the River Queen tells me he picked up this fare far north. When I asked about them he seemed nervous, almost scared to continue--especially about the 3rd fellow.*

*Alas! murder is afoot. The River Queen departed in the night as I slept--that bastard, Harlan! The big fighting man is dead in my cellar, and the weasel-like one locked in the outhouse! Their combat awoke me just in time to save my neck and chase the fellow there. Who they were I'll likely never know. And what has become of the woman?*

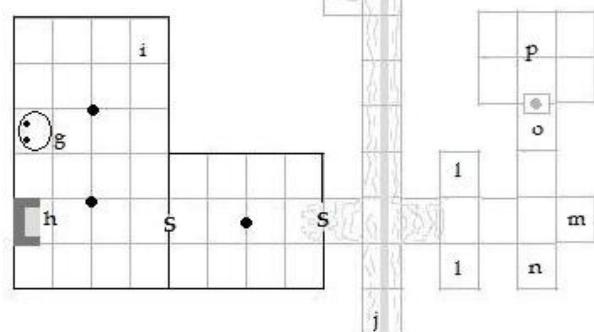
*Woe is upon me. The thing in the outhouse is no man! But I doubt my simple lock will hold it within for long. Even worse, there are no ships scheduled to pass for another fortnight or more.*

***It** is at my door! Should anyone find my body, please bury it with holy words said, as I do not want to return after death as one like **It**!*

A closet (f) 2 & 1/2' x 10' contains miscellaneous clothes, including a **girdle of giant strength** and a **yellow mold** (9 hp) Data on girdle found in Expert Rules.

## CELLARS

Cellar



**6. CELLAR** A trapdoor in the ceiling (g) gives access to this chamber. It is currently sealed with a padlock upon the draw-bolt on the other side (in the pantry above). This chamber is cramped to move about in due to the low hanging floor above; being but a mere 6' from the floor. Characters taller than this will have to bend and stoop in order to explore, with those of such height/s of 5' or more using long weapons (3'+) suffering a -2 to hit

and damage due to the constriction of overhand swinging. Halflings and dwarves under 4' do not suffer this penalty when using shorter weapons (under 3'). 2 pillars spaced along the center of the room help to support the floor above. The bottom to the stove in the parlor above (h) is basically the ash clean out drawer. Upon entering the cellar the smell of rotted flesh will fill the characters' nostrils. Looking about, they will spot the decomposing body of a large fighter in the northeast corner (i). He appears to be wearing his armor, a suit of *studded leather*, as he lays upon a *shield*. If Detect Magic spell is cast, both respond in a positive result, as both are *+1 magic items*. A secret door is set into the eastern wall directly across from the ash pit of the fireplace. Allow elves and others that may be searching the standard chance/s to find it. This is not as difficult as getting past the creature living in the webs just above the door. A **giant black widow spider** (14 hp) has made her web here. Preferring silver over everything else, she has manage to wrestle from the corpse in the corner 100 SP that she has tucked away in her web.

**7. SECRET ROOM** At 15' x 20' this chamber sits directly beneath the office above. A single pillar rises in the center between the 2 secret doors indicated. The fact that entry is possible only via secret doors indicates the chamber must have had a purpose meant to be hidden from those unaware of its presence. Whatever that purpose was is not obvious from the contents of it now. Wooden boxes and crates, mostly smashed, are scattered about, with long thin shanks of iron covered in rust strewn everywhere. If characters try to compare the objects to their own items, they will notice a vague similarity between the shanks and their blade weapons. Other objects, like wooden handles and grips, seem to confirm, that weapons were once stored here. The secret door in the east wall leads to the sewers.

## THE SEWERS

For drainage purposes 3 tunnels were dug beneath the station house. All are only 5' wide. The longest begins directly beneath the outhouse (k) where a large hole in the ceiling of the chamber leads up to the surface. A 1' wide, 6" ditch runs down the center of the tunnel going south that deposits the waste into a large hole at (j).

The hole is clogged with bones and rotted body parts, thus the whole tunnel is backed up with excrement. Anyone that searches the tunnel at (j) or attempts to climb up the shaft at (k) must make a Constitution check or become infected with some type of parasite that will cause illness within 1-7 days. If this occurs the victim will be rendered incapacitated by violent fever, shaking, and projectile vomiting and diarrhea. This will last for 2-12 more days, and the victim will be unable to participate in combat without suffering a -6 to hit and damage, and suffer an AC penalty of +4 to his rating. Spell casting, studying, etc. will be impossible. There is a 10% chance that whatever disease is caught will be fatal. Just east of the long tunnel is a pair of alcoves 5' square (l). While neither is occupied, they are safe havens should the trap ahead be triggered. Another alcove at the eastern end of this dissecting tunnel appears (m) and within it a handle set into the south wall. The party will find it in the down position, but it can easily be moved to midway and up. However, the device is worn and will not stay at the midway point--its neutral position, which disengages the trap; characters will have to come up with a clever solution to keep it in this position. If they do, and avoid at (o) you should award them 1000 XP to be divided by the party. If left in the down position or moved to the up one, the trap at (n) will release a 5d6 fireball that will streak north until it reaches area (o), where a pressure plate triggers the trap. Those within the corridor will take full or half damage depending upon their Save throw; anyone in either of the (l) alcoves will only suffer half or no damage, depending upon the result of their Save roll. A door at location (o) is locked and requires a key; this can be found in the office, above. A 10' x 15' room (p) north of (o) is filled with items of interest to the party. Upon entering this chamber the party will be most likely startled to see its contents:

3 Battle Axes	4 Backpack
6 Hand Axes*	14 Flasks of oil
3 Crossbow, Light	1 Silver Holy Symbol
1 Longbow	3 Vials Holy Water
2 Shortbow	2 Lantern
40 quarrels***	3 Mirror (steel)
360 arrows***/#	4 50' Rope
5 Daggers**	24 Spikes, iron
3 Short Sword*	9 Torches

1 Long Sword	3 Tinderbox/Flint
1 Two Handed Sword	5 Water skin
3 Mace*	7 Wine kegs(1 qt. ea.)
9 Pole Arm (halberd)	4 Wolfs bane (fists)
4 Sling	5 Shield*
100 Spear**	3 Suits Leather Armor*
1 War Hammer	1 Suit Chain mail

\* 1 being +1 magical   \*\*2 being +1 magical

\*\*\* 1/2 being +1 magical   \*\*\*#/ 1/2 of the non-magical being Silver tipped

Many of these items the characters will most likely already possess. In which case, they should be thought of as "treasure" since they will probably be sold out of the game for the GP. In this instance, award 1 XP per each 5 GP the group gains by doing so. These items will be stacked and stored according to their type in boxes, crates, sacks or whatever. In addition to them there appears to be a figure standing in the northwest corner in the form of a man--made of clay! This is actually a **Living Statue** (12 hp/2 HD) that attacks with 2 fists. It will animate and attack similar to one made of *iron* 1 Turn after the chamber is entered.

**8. THE OUTHOUSE** This 10' square building served the station master and guests as the waste disposal area. A single door in the west wall allows access; all that remains of interior accommodations is a stool with a round hole cut out in the center straddling a hole in the floor beneath. Currently it is serving as the prison of the monster that killed the station master and the fighter whose corpse still lies in the cellar. The lock on the door has, so far, been enough to prevent the **werewolf** (18 hp) trapped within from escaping. But its howls and moans often escaped its wooden confines and are heard as far as the shores of the river. This creature was one of the passengers of the keelboat, River Queen, when she moored at the island some time ago. In its human form it goes by the name, MARKUS SKALON. (*As a human he was a T5, an outlaw, being hunted by the local authorities when he fled the north country and found passage on the River Queen. Upon discovering that the Lady Eliana was transporting something of great value he decided to confiscate whatever it was, but to do so meant killing everyone at the time. You can add more plot to this if desired or create something else altogether.*) Unfortunately for the station master, soon after being locked in the Outhouse, Markus was able to

enlarge the waste hole by digging down. This eventually led to the sewer below, and he gained access to the cellars. Upon doing so, he discovered that some tunnels had been excavated beneath the station in order to drain the waste into the river, and a secret way back into the station house (see map) When the party first arrives on the island, and depending on the time of day/night, Markus's location initially, and thereafter, is important to establish, to better help you prepare for the party's explorations and the odds of encountering him when they search about. Use the table below to determine his location, rolling a d10 each hour.

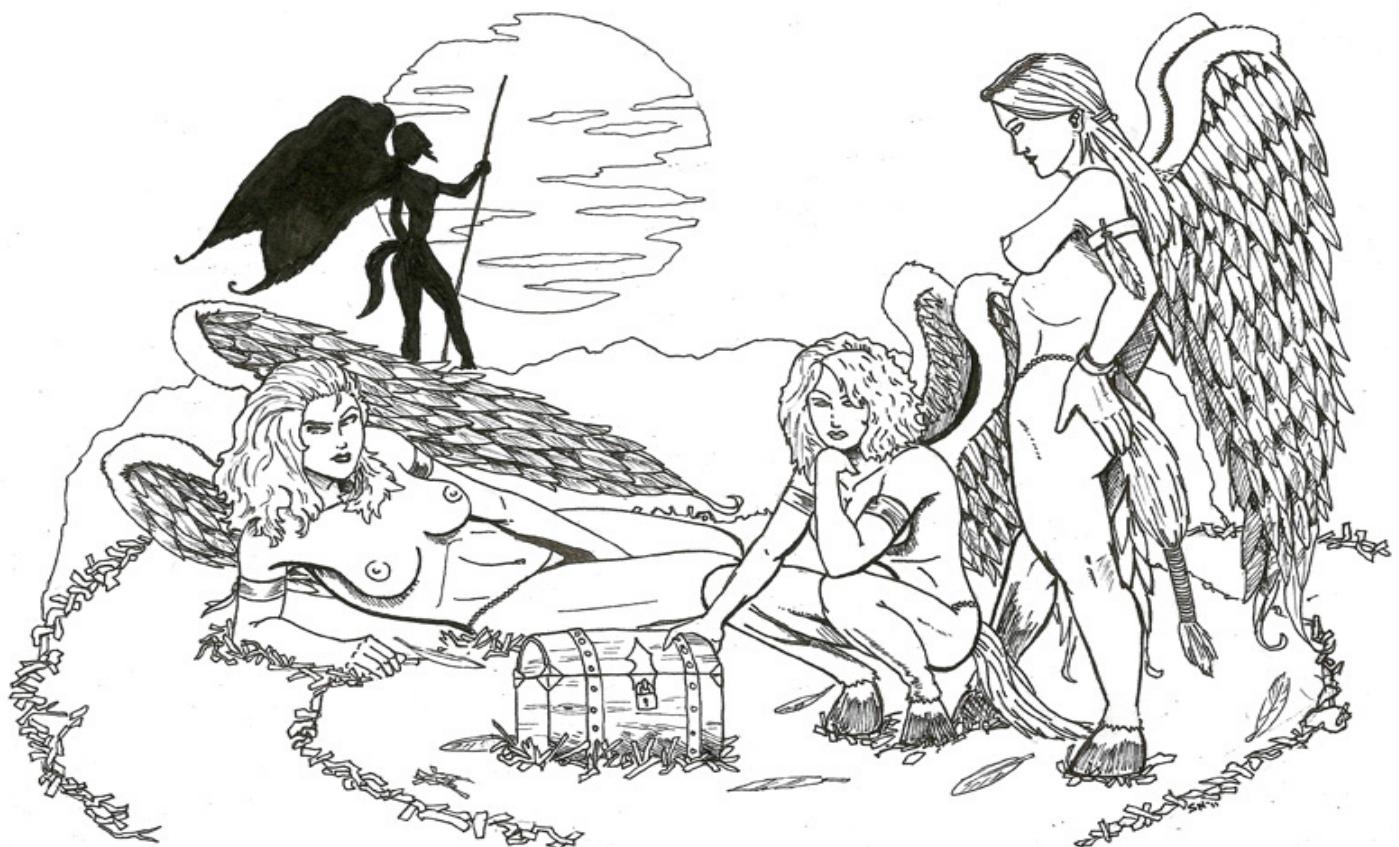
Die Roll	Location of Markus/Wolf
1-3	Outhouse
4-5	Sewers K
6-8	Secret Room
9	Cellar
10	Not on island*

For each hour past sunrise subtract 1 from the die roll, and for each hour past sundown add 2. If Markus is not on the island, then he has squeezed through the drain hole at (j) and is out prowling the wilderness. In which case, you can design and encounter for him with the party or, consider including him in any "wandering" monster table you might devise. He has not given up on possessing the iron box that Lady Eliana was taking to her uncle, the Baron. He knows where the wreckage of the River Queen is and thinks it may still be within the vessel. He does not know it was removed by the creatures that dwell on the southern island, before it sank.

**M.** High atop the peaks of this island nest **5 Pegataur** (18, 16, 14, 12, 10 hp) Often mistaken for Harpies from a distance, upon a closer glance it is obvious that these creatures are beautiful beyond imagination, and not the crone-hags that Harpies are. Their origin is unknown among the races of men, dwarfs and Halflings. But their mythology has existed among elves for millennia. It is said among the elf tribes that elders of the race at one time had friendly contact with the creatures. That is not the case now. Pegataur are shy, reclusive beings that, for the most part, resemble beautiful maidens. The stark differences are that they possess a pair of long feathery wings attached to their shoulder blades,

and have an equine tail dangling from the end of their spine, and hooves instead of feet. Though Good in their respect for life and that of others, they are "chaotic" in the sense that they abide by no strict code of laws concerning non-moral matters. Characters should think of them as Neutral, with erratic behavior. (*More about these appears at the end of the adventure*) These enchanting creatures possess the same **Charm** ability of song as Harpies, which is often why they are mistaken for the crones at a distance, and avoided. When the party first reaches the river it is possible they will see 1 to 2 of these winged beings floating about the air above their island. In their nest atop the mound the other 3 are struggling to open a locked, iron chest that they recently retrieved from the river vessel, The River Queen before it sank. Normally they do not involve themselves in the affairs of river travelers. But these creatures were awakened in the night by several explosions, and bright streaks that lighted up the sky.

Looking down they saw the vessel struck by several lightning bolts and begin to capsize. Curiosity being a strong characteristic of theirs, they went to investigate. Upon arriving they found the Lady Eliana struggling to remain afloat while holding on to the box. As the figure sank into the waters the elder Pegataur grabbed the container and returned with it to their nest. (The youngest, however, saw that Lady Eliana had not sunk into the depths along with the vessel, and grabbed hold of the woman's hand and managed to pull the near-drowned woman to the south bank, where she laid her upon the solid land.) They are not aware that what lies within the container is a bane to those that accidentally put it on. (For inside rests a large, golden *helm of alignment change!*) They will attack to defend themselves if they must, but will fly away if they are seriously injured, or one of them is killed. In which case they will abandon their nest, and the box.



**N.** North bank dock. This pier looks to be in much better condition than its counterpart on the south side of the river. This could be attributed to the **River Troll** that dwells beneath it (27 hp). Similar to its commonly encountered kin, the creature has webbing between its fingers and toes, as an aquatic adaptation. It only regenerates when it is immersed in running water. Fire only does 1/2 damage against it that can be regenerated as mentioned; acid damage cannot. Having claimed the pier as its home, it charges 100 SP to each that wish to use it. If attacked, it will defend itself vigorously. It keeps its booty in several burlap sacks tied to the pylons supporting the dock. If the area is searched the party will find these on a roll of 1 in d8, cumulative, per turn spent looking. Each sack contains from 100-800 SP.

**O.** A cave opening can be seen in the cliff face here from the north dock; about 100' above the trail leading north. If entered the party will immediately be set upon by 5 **Giant Scorpions!** (18, 17, 16, 15, 14, hp) When these are destroyed or sent fleeing the party will discover a large cave filled with the bones of previous travelers. They will also notice 3 small tunnels (3-5' wide and 6-9' high) leading deeper into the mountains. Whatever miscellaneous treasure might be among the scattered bones is up to you, as well as what might lie ahead should the group decide to investigate the tunnels.

*This formally ends the adventure, The River Queen! It is our hope that this adventure has brought to the DM and his players some thrills, excitement, and moments of wonder.*

Written & Designed by RC Pinnell

Covers/Interior art by Cory Gelnett

Maps by: Cory Gelnett & RC Pinnell

First ran at the NTRPG CON, June 2010

Play testers: Mike Stewart (DM), Elizabeth Stewart, Adam Casey, Lauri Webb, Robert Fisher, Father Brian Klingele

The adventure play-tested has been slightly modified to correct certain errors, and to enhance the dangers and rewards.

## RECAPPING (Back Story)

As mentioned in the text, the young Lady Eliana was transporting a locked, iron box from the realm of her father, the Duke of the North Pass, down the great SCARSON river, to be delivered to her uncle, the Baron of the southern lands. En route the vessel she was aboard (the River Queen) stopped at an island in the middle of the river. Upon the island stood a Way Station that served as a resting spot for travelers along the river, or for those crossing. Travelling with her was a huge fighter, a guard sent by her father to protect her. But along the way the vessel picked up another traveler, one Markus Skalon, an outlaw and thief on the run. When he discovered she was transporting a locked, iron chest, he decided that its contents must be of some worth, and made plans to steal it. But his plans were discovered, and as the huge fighter attempted to keep the man at bay--a man no more, for he had transformed himself into a wolf beast--Eliana and the ship's captain attempted to escape with the intention of picking the guard up later, down river. But everyone's plans were foiled. After killing the guard Markus ran to the dock, only to see the ship in the distance. Taking a scroll from his backpack, he recited the magic runes and a series of lightning bolts flashed through the air, striking the side of the ship, and capsizing it. Hoping to reach it before it sank, he went back to the station house to retrieve ropes and tools when he was met by the station master. Armed with a blade that shone of silver, Gunder made chase of the villain, who fled into the outhouse with little time to think. Jamming his blade into the door crack, Gunder quickly ran to his office and retrieved a big lock, then hastily slipped it onto the lock-ring upon the outhouse door, securing the villain within. But Markus eventually found a way out, and caught the station master unaware. By then, however, the ship had sank, and Markus had been denied his prize! Little did he know that the creatures on the southern island had seen everything unfold, and winged to the sinking vessel, and retrieved the box; with the youngest dragging the limp body of Eliana to the south bank where they know the druid often visits.

## NEW ITEMS &amp; MONSTERS

**STAFF OF SLINGING** This device is not magical, but an effective training tool for young Cyclops to learn the art of boulder throwing. Shaped very much like a common sling-shot, the long handle-staff is 6' in length while the space between the Y-top is a good 4'; the canvas boulder-holder attaches to the Y-top by heavy leather cords, and is capable of supporting and slinging stones up to 3' in diameter and weighing 100 lbs. Only very strong creatures (including characters) can wield the weapon effectively. Thus, only those that have a strength of 18 or better can utilize the weapon. (Those enhanced with magic items of strength can, of course, wield it) The range for the device is treated as double for giant types (including Cyclops), or a hand axe, for humans and others with 18 strength. Damage done by a large stone (one that fills the holding sack) is 3-18+4, which only giants, Cyclops and characters with magical strength enhancement can hurl with the device. Humans and others with an 18 strength can only cast boulders half this size, possibly inflicting 1-12 points of damage upon a struck victim. (While not magical, the device is very valuable and will fetch from 1000 to 5000 GP in a large city market.)

**SHEET GHOUL** AC9 HD1+1 M60'(20')/120'(40') flying AT1 DAM1-3 + drains 1 point Constitution #APP.1 SA F1 MO11 TT Nil AL Chaotic XP 75 Not truly an Undead creature, it does nonetheless feed off the life-force of the living by draining the victim's ability score. If anyone drops to 0 CON as a result of such attacks, he is dead, and only a Raise Dead cast by a level 14 or higher cleric will return him from death. The creature is drawn to areas of death and decay hoping to attach itself to dying creatures. It drains abilities by engulfing its victim, like a sheet. From thus it gets its name.

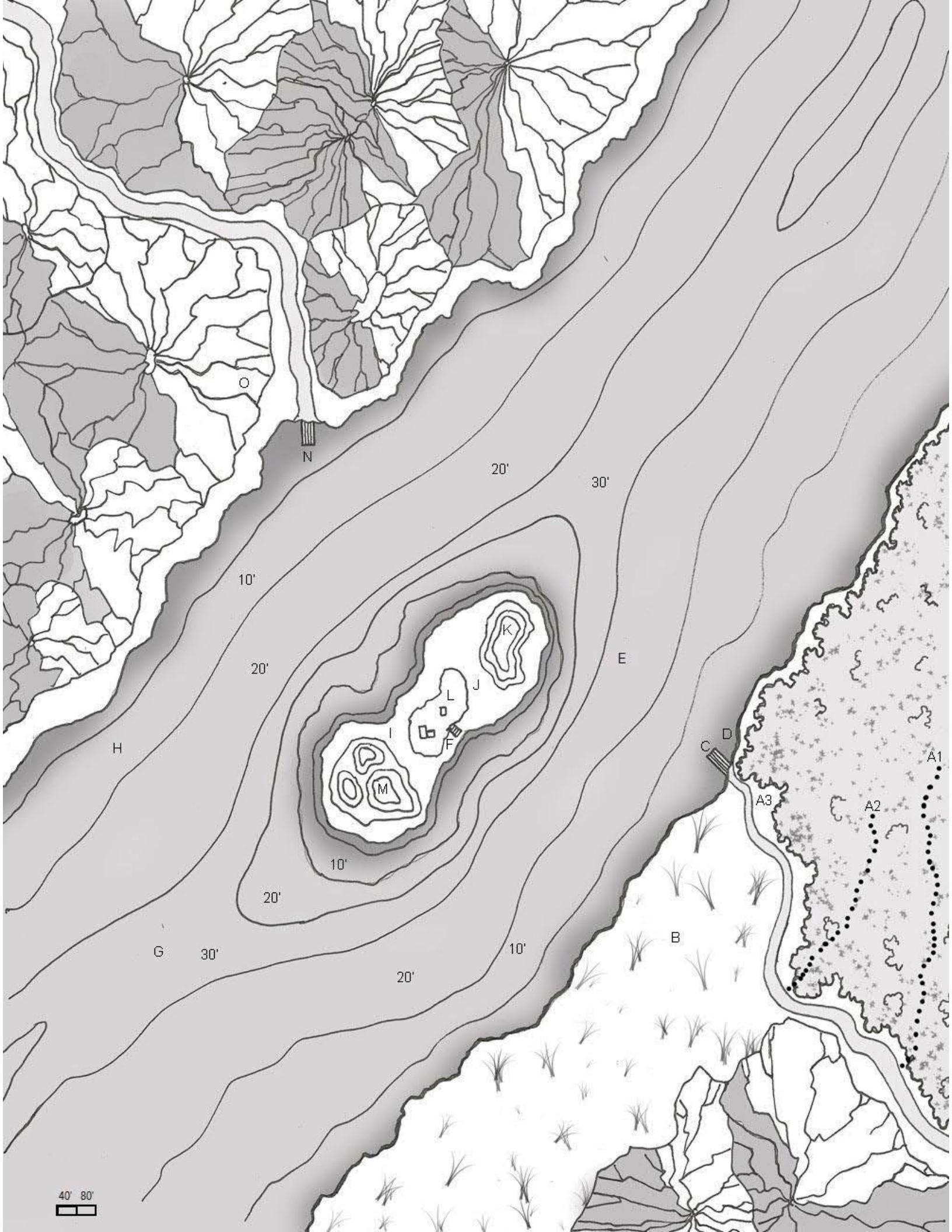
**PEGATAUR** AC8 HD2+2 M150'(50')/210'(70') flying AT1 weapon, 2 hooves DAM BWT and 1-4/1-4 #APP1-8 SA F2 MO9 TT Special AL Neutral/Chaotic tendencies XP50 These beings are a mythical cross between a human and Pegasus. They are exclusively female in appearance, very beautiful, and with a

*Charming* voice attack similar to that of Harpies--their racial enemies! They can fly using their wings, or run (faster than a war horse!) They enjoy the company of sprites, and will tolerate the presence of elves, pixies and gnomes.

**RIVER TROLL** AC6 HD5+3 M120'(40')/120'(40') swimming AT2 claws 1 bite DAM1-4/1-4/1-8 #APP1-4 SA F5 MO10 TT Special AL Chaotic XP550 Other than being adapted for life in the water, this creature bears many of the same characteristics and abilities of its land-based cousin. It only regenerates when it is immersed in running water. Fire only does 1/2 damage against it that can be regenerated as mentioned; acid damage cannot.

## OPTIONAL ADVENTURES

The tunnels mentioned at the back of the cave at encounter (0) suggest that more adventuring is possible should you desire to create the setting and decide what monsters you'd like the party to encounter. But one glance at the large wilderness map should bring to mind many possibilities for you to create many other adventures for your playing group. The swamp (b) that extends southwest of the dock on the south bank could harbor many slithering and venomous types of creatures. The thick wooded area (a) is but a small section of what could be a large and gnarly copse filled with dangers behind every tree, or high within its canopy. The hills to the north are ideal for caves and lairs of even bigger and more deadly creatures! Any of these side ventures could have thin story links tying them to the general plot of the adventure. Or, they can simply be random encounters with indigenous wildlife and terrain. You need not limit yourself to the adventure and encounters provided. You should make changes, omit things, and personalize the scenario to satisfy your style, and provide the most entertainment for your playing group. As the DM, you are obligated. As a Gamer, you should want to.





**Other Titles available from PinHammer Publishing**

**Advanced Dungeon Module "MAN EATER"**

**Classic Fantasy Adventure Module BB1**

**"The Pearl of Pirates' Cove"**

**COMING SOON**

**"The Ruins of Tenkhuran"**