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MAIDEN VOYAGE

AN ADVENTURE MODULE FOR FIRST TO THIRD LEVEL CHARACTERS
BY CHAD BROUILLARD



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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: A FOUL PROGENY	3
ADVENTURE OVERVIEW	3
OPEN GAME LICENSE	4
BEFORE THE JOURNEY: PORTSIDE	5
ENCOUNTERS IN THE STREETS	5
THE VOYAGE BEGINS	7
ALBERS SHIP AREAS	8
DAY ONE: FIRST IMPRESSIONS	11
EVENTS	11
NEW CARD GAME: SKULLS	13
DAY TWO: THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM	15
EVENTS	15
DAY THREE: MURDER AND MUTINY	17
EVENTS	17
INVESTIGATING THE MURDER	19
VINCENZ' PLANS	20
DAY FOUR: THE GHOST SHIP	22
EXPLORING THE SEA MAIDEN	22
THE PLANT	25
THE SEA MAIDEN'S FIRST ATTACK	26
THE FINAL ATTACK	28
RESOLUTION	29
APPENDIX: GM'S AIDS	30

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AUTHOR DEDICATION: To my father, Maurice Brouillard, for those Sunday morning comic book runs that sparked an imagination.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chad Brouillard will always be a native Lowellian (from Lowell, MA), but is currently transplanted in New York. A graduate of both the University of Massachusetts and Boston College, Chad hopes to complete his progress in the dark arts by becoming a lawyer. Fittingly, *Maiden Voyage* marks his first foray into the roleplaying genre.

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A FOUL PROGENY

An accursed ship, the foul progeny of an evil sea god, appears on the nights following a rare eclipse. The ancient terror rises from the depths of the sea every three decades and seeks out another vessel so that it may pass on its curse by slaughtering those aboard.

If the undead crew, composed of monstrous sea scourges, succeeds in killing those aboard the new vessel, the curse completes another cycle. The old ship sinks with the original scourges, who finally meet oblivion beneath the inky waves. The recently slain crew rises up as the next generation of scourges. The new ship becomes host to the curse, retreating into the fog where the foul god torments them until the next eclipse. The scourges must wait thirty years before passing their unholy burden onto other unsuspecting voyagers ...

Thirty years ago, the Sea Maiden was caught in the path of such a cursed vessel. Trapped in a windless sea and threatened by a black-sailed ship that remained forebodingly in view, the crew of the Sea Maiden committed mutiny. They tied up their captain, Orlando, but could not execute him before a bitter struggle between two factions broke out in the main hold. During the struggle, Orlando managed to get free of his bonds and locked both factions into the hold with strong chains. The two factions resorted to cannibalism in order to survive in the ensuing days.

Below, echoes of the screaming men drove Orlando to madness. Soon, he took his own life and was brought back by the influence of the malevolent ship. Orlando became the new undead captain, the half-eaten crew joining him below as servitors. The Sea Maiden, as the new dark ship, returned to the fog to bear the sea god's malice for thirty years.

Time has passed. The eclipse has come. A new ship, the Albers, unknowingly follows a course into the deadly still of the Sea Maiden ...

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

This adventure takes place on a ship voyage between two major but distant ports. It is meant for four to six characters of first to third level, but could easily be scaled up. What is crucial to the game is that characters feel the danger of being aboard a ship heading towards mutiny. Very high-level characters may be too powerful to be threatened by such a scenario.

The Game Moderator should familiarize him or herself with the NPCs and the sequence of events that unfolds aboard the ship. Timing and motivation drive each scene. To help, a section devoted to the NPCs on board ship has been provided at back.

LURING THE CHARACTERS ABOARD

Getting your characters into the scenario should be fairly simple. The PCs are hired to protect the ship in exchange for passage. Possible hooks include:

- The characters are low on money and need a cheap way out of the current dead-end city. There's little going on in this port and it's clear it's time to move on. Word on the street is that there is money to be made at a happening new port. As raids on the lucrative port increase, ships' need for swordhands increases. The characters are given the name of a local inn shipmasters frequent while at port.
- The characters are running from the law, creditors, or the guilds. The gates leading in and out of the port are closely watched, but their pursuers don't have men enough to keep a good eye on the docks. Word on the street is that the *Albers* is about to pull anchor for an exotic western port and is looking for some swordhands ...
- In an ongoing campaign, GMs may instead want to use ideas from the *Maiden Voyage* scenario to spice up a PC sea voyage.



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Version 1.0

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PORTSIDE

By hook or by crook, the party meets with Captain Fenn, the owner of the *Albers*, at the “Salty Wench” tavern on High Street (See Fenn’s description on page 31). Fenn sits alone at a table sipping ale. He will nod, acknowledging any characters that approach, and offer them a seat. Once the party declares its intentions to work for Fenn he orders a drink for all that sit.

With his one good eye, Fenn gives the party the up and down (he nods approvingly at the beefier characters) and flatly lets them know that they will be given passage and board, but only if they pull their weight. His ship has no room for useless extra stomachs. Captain Fenn is willing to pay an additional flat fee, but does not offer. The standard fee for such a trip would be 25 gp per swordhand.

Fenn shells out up to 40 gp per character if the PCs succeed in puffing up their abilities (this takes an opposed Bluff check against Fenn’s Sense Motive) or expertly negotiate the price since they know Fenn is in a rush (opposed Diplomacy).

After initial negotiations, Fenn informs the party that in addition to fending off any raiders, they will be expected to keep an eye on his cabin and person. Fenn knows some of the more superstitious of his crew have mouthed off because he keeps a woman in his cabin. The captain believes the presence of bodyguards on deck will keep some of the big mouths in line. Finally, Fenn agrees to pay them once they arrive at their port of destination, after he has unloaded and been paid for his cargo. If the characters agree to Fenn’s terms, he instructs them to meet at the Western Docks the next evening at sunset.

SUPERSTITION AND THE SEA

What if female PCs come aboard? The best way to handle this in play is to have the crew generally ignore that any female PCs are women. After

all, they are armed guards or adventurers and not quite of the same status as the captain’s consort, at least in the crew’s eyes.

ENCOUNTERS ON THE STREETS

The following events take place before the characters board the *Albers*.

THE BOUNTY HUNTERS

Sometime before their meeting with the captain, while the characters walk in the markets, a chase erupts before them. A single scraggly man (see the description of Vincenz on page 36) turns over stalls trying to block two armed pursuers from catching up to him. One of the armed pursuers leaps over the stall and yells “stop” over the crowd. The other pursuer draws an arrow and begins to aim at the man.

Player characters will most likely not want to get involved if they are trying to keep a low profile themselves. In the event they try to intervene to stop the pursued man, he will beg them, “Please help me.”

After a round of aiming, the archer fires a sleep arrow at her target. The arrow cracks at his feet releasing gas and Vincenz immediately falls asleep. The bounty hunters begin to take custody. The armed man kicks the sleeping form’s side and binds his arms. Soon after, a squad of the town watch arrives, passing a bag of coin to the bounty hunters and taking the captured man with them.

CHOSEN OF THE SEA GOD

An old man carefully bundled into a dirty robe approaches the PCs. The characters notice that the man shakes and shivers as if racked with some ailment.



NEW DEITY: KRAKAS, LORD OF THE MAELSTROM

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

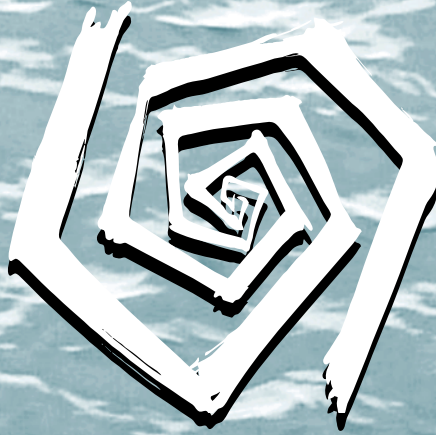
Domains: Chaos, Death, Evil, Water

Typical Worshipers: Followers of Krakas are often members of evil aquatic races, such as the sahuagin and kuo-toa, although an occasional crazed human cult springs up in backwater communities.

Description: Krakas (cray-kus), feared master of the watery abyss and violent seas, is chaotic evil. He embodies the uncontrollable and destructive force of the ocean. In myth, the ancient sea lord bears a special grudge against seafaring humanoids and port towns, often sending gales and tides to destroy ships and docks. Krakas is associated with the domains of Chaos, Death, Evil, and Water. His favored weapon is the trident.

Surface-dwelling communities have largely forgotten the malevolent sea deity; his legend has diminished into the vaguest of myths. For some reason, which is largely unclear even to his followers, Krakas has retreated beneath the murky waves of his planar demesne, the Maelstrom. These days, his influence is mainly felt through the workings of his faithful. A few of his lingering curses, such as the sea scourges found in this adventure, still roam the seas and prey on the unfortunate.

What remains of his following on land are a handful of superstitious rituals that sailors perform before embarking on sea-voyages. No one quite remembers why they follow the practices, and so they go through the motions only because they have been subsumed into sea tradition.



One example of such a practice is the superstition against bringing women aboard a boat. Most sailors consider it bad luck, but no one knows quite why. One reason for the practice is that in days in which Krakas took a more active role in the world, he had a penchant for drowning young maidens. Many ships carrying such maidens were sunk by vicious storms, killing all aboard — an occurrence that was well heeded by the sea-going community. Sailors and fishermen developed a nervous fear of bringing women aboard their ships. To this day, some more tradi-

tion-bound sailors still harbor a paranoia about having women aboard a vessel.

Few surface dwellers willingly join the ranks of Krakas' "faithful." The Lord of the Maelstrom sends nightmarish visions of drownings to his chosen within a surface community — often times this is an inbred or other down-trodden unfortunate within the port. These visions slowly drive the chosen person mad until her subsumed will becomes a conduit for the dark lord. Usually the chosen focus their activities on burning docks or otherwise causing destruction to the port cities that Krakas so despises.

Among the more unsophisticated human cults, the symbol of Krakas takes the form of a simple black or red spiral, sometimes carved on wood or, in some cases, flesh. It is often confused with other arcanic and druidic scripts. (This makes it difficult for sea god cultists to be identified as such.) The evil underwater races have better stylized versions of a swirling whirlpool or vortex in honor of their lord's realm, the Maelstrom.

The man unexpectedly rushes towards the characters and tries to hold them by the arms, all the while ranting, "A house divided will fall ... must fall ... His wrath is terrible ... He sees you ... His eye is upon you ..."

The old man's robe slackens, revealing his arms have been mutilated with self-inflicted cuts, some wounds still fresh and bloody.

After some moments of ranting, the man snatches a dagger from his belt and tries to carve a large rune in his stomach. If not disturbed, the man stabs himself and begins a bloody stroke of the design before fainting. Without aid, the man bleeds to death.

If stopped, the man might be helped if he's brought to a local temple. A priest notes that the man exhibits some strange marks of possession unlike any he has seen before. The priest takes care to make sure the man is restrained so that he cannot harm himself further.

A PC with Spellcraft might also notice the odd signs of possession by succeeding a DC 20 check.

THE VOYAGE BEGINS

The next night, the players get their first sight of the *Albers*. She is a venerable but seaworthy vessel. Her crew works hard through the night loading cargo. Upon sighting the PCs, a few crewmembers stop and watch the characters approach. A handsome blond man steps forward to greet them. He introduces himself as First Mate Huxley and soon has them in a line so he can inspect Fenn's hired swords.

Huxley questions each character about his or her background and examines each one's physique. He looks approvingly at any characters with an obvious build or martial training. He carefully scrutinizes any frail or seedy-looking characters, perhaps insinuating that they shouldn't join the voyage unless they are prepared to fight, and hinting at recent problems at sea.

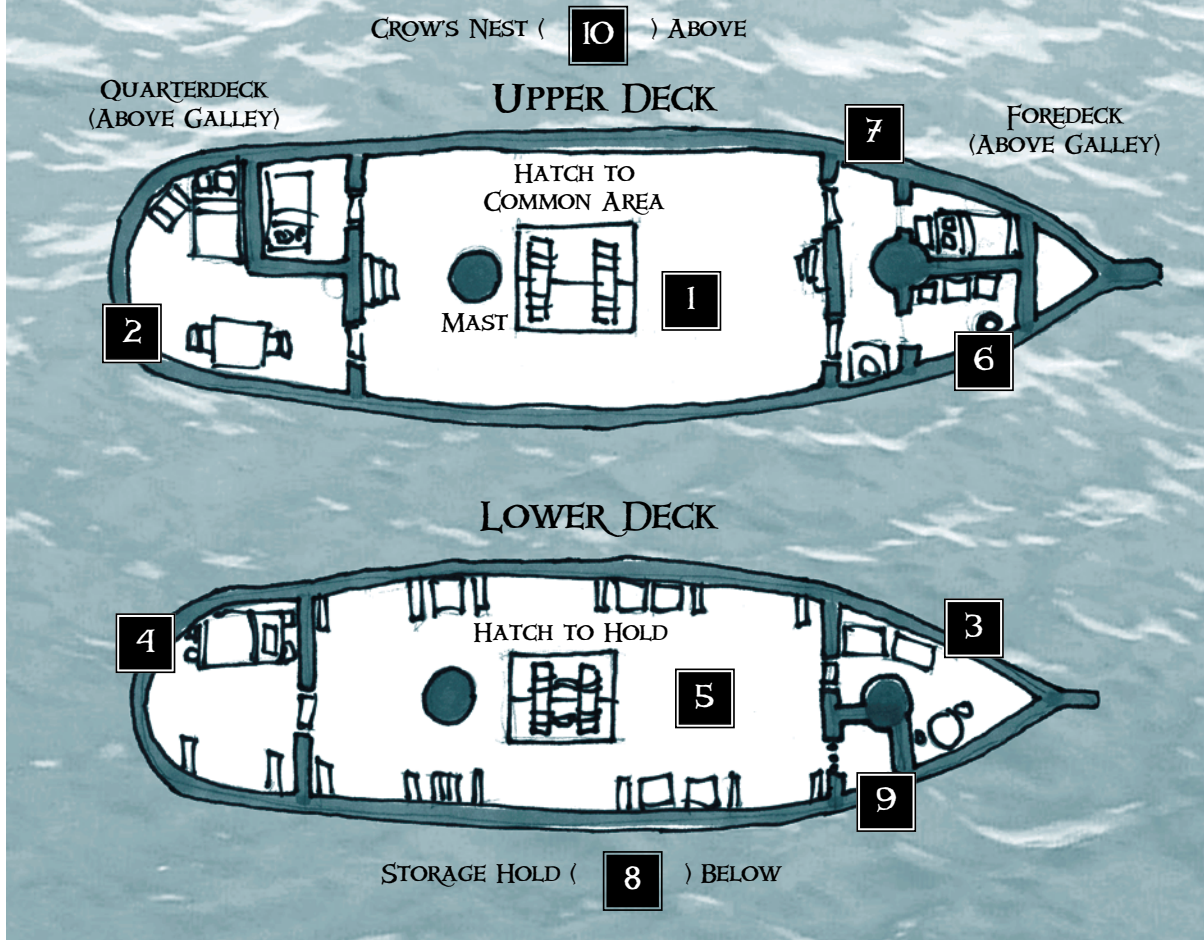
At the end of the line, Huxley and the PCs notice a small boy of no more than twelve years of age. Huxley asks who he is and the boy replies "Dert." Captain Fenn has promised the boy that if he is willing to scrub pots and swab decks then the crew will eventually teach him to be a sailor. Huxley studies him dubiously, but once he's sure the boy is serious, allows him aboard.

ONBOARD THE ALBERS

Huxley personally shows the characters to their quarters — a small doorless room overcrowded with bunks and hammocks, just barely large enough for the players to squeeze into. He informs them that the *Albers* will set sail early the next morning. From there, the players are free either to set themselves up in their room or to explore the ship as they see fit. The ship is described in the following pages.



THE ALBERS



The ship has a crew of fourteen, not counting the new arrivals, the cook, and the captain. A bare four-man skeleton crew normally makes sure the ship runs smoothly at night. However, tonight the entire crew is busy loading cargo and getting ready to set sail. Fenn is off the ship for most of the night, finalizing arrangements with the watch for Vincenz' transport. In early morning, Fenn and his mistress Selene come aboard, retiring to his cabin.

In the early morning, the ship sets off out of port and into the sea without a hitch. Just before shoving off, the town watch delivers the unconscious form of Vincenz — Huxley orders him put in the brig.

ALBERS SHIP AREAS

1. MAIN DECK

The work of the ship takes place here. The *Albers* boasts a modestly sized deck, allowing the crew some berth in maneuvering around each other. A rickety trapdoor in the center leads below to the interior areas of the ship.

Stairs lead up into an aft cabin where captain Fenn stays, and a ladder hangs to the right of the door, providing access to the upper deck and tiller.

Rigging and a rotted rope ladder lead above to the crow's nest. A dented alarm bell hangs from the main mast, often lightly clanging in the wind.

On the starboard side of the deck, a secured rowboat leans against the railing. Unhooking the boat properly takes a couple of minutes of untying the lines; cutting the securing lines takes two partial actions.

Sneaking into the room takes a series of relevant skill checks (Hide, Move Silently, etc.) opposed by the crew's Spot and both Fenn and Selene's Listen.

2. THE CAPTAIN'S CABIN

This is a small but cozy apartment that houses the captain and his lover Selene. The captain only ventures from his quarters for meals; Selene almost never comes out from the cabin. Dert brings meals to her each night.

The room contains a table, some chairs, and an ornate wooden bed with a chest at its foot, all nailed to the floor. Some shabby paintings depicting mermaids and other nautical scenes hang from the walls. A fine, gold-plated hourglass is mounted near the door.

A Search check (DC 14) reveals a strongbox built into one of the walls, hidden behind a lighthouse painting, as well as a latched box underneath the bed.

The chest by the bed contains clothes for Selene and Fenn, with one pair of finery for each (5 gp each). Selene also has some pearl earrings (80 gp) in a velvet bag. The latched box under the bed encases a fine cutlass given to Fenn in admiration for dispatching pirates.

The strongbox in the wall contains the payroll, the captain's log, and other documents. The payroll comes to about 500 gp in various currencies. Translating the log reveals some interesting information. Apparently four sailors — Wendt, Huxley, Ox, and Old Pete — each owe the captain a significant amount of money.

The captain has written his log in a sort of nautical shorthand, which will be incomprehensible unless someone makes a sea-related Profession or Knowledge check or makes a Decipher Script check at DC 18.

Getting into this cabin may be a problem. The captain and Selene are within the cabin, most of the time, and obviously notice any intrusion. If someone tries to sneak in at night, he has to first avoid the night crew's attention and then avoid making much noise while within the cabin, lest he wake Fenn and Selene. Anyone so caught faces harsh consequences, possibly being thrown in the hold or brig!

Once Fenn is found dead on the third day, it may or may not be easier to get access. Selene takes to a very irregular sleeping schedule during the rest of the voyage. If she remains in the cabin, she will become increasingly morose, driving herself first to desperate acts and later to full-blown insanity.

After Fenn dies, characters may either try to sneak into the captain's quarters (see above) or use Diplomacy or Intimidate (DC 16) to get access to the cabin and keep Selene quiet.

3. STORAGE ROOM

A hatch bound with chains leads to the storage hold. The room itself contains the non-food supplies of the ship. Tomas, the navigator, also maintains a cot and small table here for his work. A map is pinned to the table and some devices lay strewn about. Tomas has little of value here save some silver pieces he uses for poker night.

Come poker night, the table is cleared and the crew uses small crates to sit on.

4. PLAYER CHARACTERS' CABIN

A small overcrowded bunk area. One wall hosts a bunk bed; the other wall has rigging for up to three hammocks (from the storage area). Just outside the cramped room, Dert's small hammock hangs in the hall. If the characters spend a lot of time in their quarters, Dert makes an effort to befriend them. (See Dert's description on page 34.)

5. COMMON CREW AREA

A fair-sized common bunk area for the crew. Each crewmember has a bunk and chest save for First Mate Huxley, who prefers his hammock. As both the day and night crews sleep in here, the sailors try to keep things quiet. The trunks may hold from 2 to 25 sp each, in addition to the sailor's belongings. Huxley's trunk contains a set of fine clothes, a well-crafted flute, and a pouch with 30 sp.

6. GALLEY

A working kitchen with three small rooms. The first contains the stoves and the food prep areas. Wendt, the cook, is almost always found here, threatening anyone other than Dert who comes into his galley.

The second room is a pantry containing barrels of salted meats and pickled fish and perishables such as citrus fruit. A small corner is set aside for Dert's scullery work. If in the course of the adventure Wendt becomes suspicious of the characters or sees Dert talking to the PCs a bit too much, Wendt makes up a small cot in this room for Dert.

The third room contains Wendt's personal belongings (which are of minimal value) and a small bed. Wendt snores loudly late at night.

If a character tries to sneak into the galley at night, he has to make a Move Silently check (DC 10) not to wake the surly cook.

7. MESS

A large area with enough benches and tables for the crew and the PCs. The table is sticky with the remains of former meals. A small dartboard hangs on the far wall. Near the board is a beam notched with initials and scores. Carved into an overhanging rafter is the warning: "Danger! Don't cross in front of the dartboard."

8. STORAGE HOLD

This lower area of the ship is locked firmly and chained.

Opening the hold requires a player character to either unlock the chains (Open Lock DC 20) or break them (Strength check DC 26).

Within lie various crates filled with wares ordered by the next port's merchants, such as bolts of thick cloth, containers of spice, and various glassware products. The goods are worth over 1500 gp, but only to merchants of those types of goods.

A character will have to succeed at an Appraise check (DC 15) to get a rough estimate as to the market value of the goods. One of the crates (found with a Search DC 15 check) is partially open.

Inside the crate, the characters will find ornate alchemical bottles packed in straw. Several of these bottles appear to have shattered. PCs are unable to determine how much liquid might have leaked from the bottles, as the straw packaging absorbed it. If a character checks this against the captain's journal, he or she can determine that one of the bottles in question contained rare venom. An antidote to the venom is also found in the crate, intact.

9. BRIG

The brig is composed of a small cramped room with bars mounted into the doorframe. A converted ship's store, this closet-sized space contains a simple straw mat and chamber pot. Before the third day, Vincenz sleeps here in an alchemical-induced state.

Those watching his form carefully (Spot DC 10 or Heal DC 10) notice him breathing very shallowly. The following might be revealed about Vincenz if someone asks the crew (Gather Information DC 12) or confronts Huxley (Diplomacy DC 10).

Vincenz is a criminal awaiting execution for crimes committed at the next port. He was given an alchemical sedative to ensure he would be unconscious for the duration of the journey. (This is technically true, as neither Fenn nor the bounty hunters realized that Vincenz would shake off the effects so soon.)

A bard, or similar character with an idea of news abroad, may have heard of Vincenz "the Butcher," a criminal who murdered children in their sleep several months ago. This would require a Gather Information or an appropriate Knowledge skill, DC 23.

After the third day, Vincenz awakes and begins methodically plotting his escape. (See "The Awakening," page 14.)

10. CROW'S NEST

A small area, high up on the mast. Old Pete often does detail alone up here, treasuring the solitude. Despite liking to be alone, Pete is friendly and converses with any who wish to join him aloft. He tells tales of his long days at sea and the one true love he left behind at a distant port.

DAY ONE

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The day is slightly overcast in the morning, then sunny and windy all day. The day crew is in good cheer and curious about the new members on board. Dert receives a hefty dose of good-natured hazing (some sailor jibes at an opportune time that if they throw the boy overboard, he might turn to mud).

In general, the crew avoids the characters as they don't like strangers intruding on their space. The captain has never hired armed guards like this before, so they are unused to sharing their workspace. In the crew's eyes, the players have to prove themselves or, in the least, keep to their own business.

PCs might take it upon themselves to actually keep a watch of sorts on the captain's quarters. They notice that Huxley and Tomas make visits to the captain, usually in early morning or early evening. The boy, Dert, also makes regular rounds with food from the kitchens. Players on deck might also catch an earful of what the crew has on its mind.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

First impressions can be crucial in this sort of situation. Players that overtly threaten or lord over the crew will place themselves in a tough spot. Friendships or antagonisms formed now will greatly affect the balance of power on the ship later.

Any player characters that offer to help around the ship might win some of the sailors' sympathy and win a +1 bonus to any Diplomacy or related checks towards the crew. Any characters that help and have Profession (sailor) will be welcomed and receive a +2 bonus in related checks interacting with the crew. If the player characters do nothing but lounge around during the voyage, they receive a -2 modifier to any interaction rolls with the crew.

EVENTS

The following events take place during the PCs' first day on board the *Albers*.

MAKING A DATE WITH LADY LUCK

Ox, the friendly and hustling sailor that he is, does ask all newbies aboard the ship to play cards with him and some of the crew this evening. Ox plays down his abilities and invites them for a friendly game after supper.

Soon after, Old Pete approaches a strong-looking character and warns him against playing cards with Ox. He complains of his own debt to Ox and his eagerness to win some of it back. Without much prodding, Pete reveals his master plan — he hopes the player will enter a boxing match with Ox. By Pete's thinking, most of the crew would bet on Ox, and an unknown talent, like the PC, could walk away with a small windfall. If the character agrees, Pete arranges the friendly exhibition in a couple of days.

SEA SERPENT SIGHTING

During the early morning, a small commotion breaks out on deck and a handful of the crew crowds around the port railing. Any PCs near enough might catch sight of the thing holding the crew's attention.

By making a successful Spot check (DC 15), the characters see a thick, scaled green-gray torso sink beneath the waves.

A crewmember standing beside the PCs whistles and says, "Now that was a beauty of a sea serpent!" The crewmember goes on to explain that you see them from time to time, but usually not at

this time of year. The looming shadow near the boat slowly disappears.

Captain Fenn makes an appearance on deck and starts berating the crew for gawking worse than Dert. The men grumble and return to work. Huxley comes on deck and returns with the captain to his cabin. The men gripe among themselves about the captain for the rest of the afternoon.

MEETING WITH THE CAPTAIN

Huxley returns and singles out one or several of the PCs. He informs them that the captain wishes to speak with them in his cabin. Within the cabin, Fenn works at a small table while Selene sits upon the large bed humming and sewing his jacket. The characters might notice the captain penning some notes into a small ledger. Fenn starts by asking them if they are settled in. He then tells the characters to close the door and asks them what they think of the *Albers* so far.

Should the players tell him of the crew's general mood or some of the specific comments they've heard, Fenn shakes his head and gruffly continues, "Well, you can see what I mean now. A good crew,

but they are more prone to gossip than a parlor of nobles. Superstitious as well."

Fenn asks the PCs to help Huxley keep them in line. He informs them that he will be extremely busy double-checking his inventory and their plotted course over the next couple days, so they should go to Huxley if they need anything. During the interview, Selene watches the players closely. If the PCs have no questions, he dismisses them.

AN OMINOUS ECLIPSE

Later, in the mid-afternoon, the general alarm sounds! As the characters and crew rush to deck, they notice the heavens have darkened considerably. Looking to the sky, they see the sun eclipsed. The crew watches in awe and someone mentions this as being a very bad omen for the journey.

As the sailors' conversation degrades into confused shouting, Huxley rings the alarm bell again. The sailors turn to look at him and he barks orders for the crew to get back to work. Unlike Fenn's derogatory approach, Huxley claps his hands to get attention, talking to particular members of the crowd to set them upon their duty, and engaging in the work himself.



NEW CARD GAME:

SKULLS

RULES OF PLAY

The gist of this card game is to pass your worst cards off to your opponents. Every time a new five-card hand is dealt, an alternating character starts by choosing the number of cards to be handed to the character on his left. Each character so passes to finish the hand. Hands continue until every character has a chance to lead, finishing a round. At the end of the round, the character with the best hand (by poker standards) wins.

An interesting exception to this rule comes into play if a character manages to collect each of the lower value cards (ace through five of any suit); in that case, she calls out that she has drawn Skulls and the whole round ends with all characters handing over double what they have wagered.

To simulate the card game, each hand proceeds by players making Profession (gambler) checks — players can default to Wisdom if their characters don't have that skill — and adding in bonuses from cheating or betting above the minimum (see below). (It is recommended that, for this scenario, the GM only make a roll for Ox, as he is the only skilled crewmember playing.) They should add the result of each new hand's roll to the combined score from the previous hands. The game ends after a number of hands have been made rolled for equal to the number of characters playing the game (i.e. if there are five characters, five hands compose one full round). Whichever player has the highest combined score after a full round wins.

If a player ever rolls a result over DC 30 on one hand, his character has drawn Skulls — the hand and round ends immediately, with each of the other characters owing the winner double what she has currently wagered on the table, including all previous bets.

BETTING

After the first hand has been completed, betting begins. Ante is 1 sp. Each silver piece offered over the ante enables a character to draw an additional card in the next hand, conferring a +1 bonus to his player's next hand roll. A total of four additional cards may be drawn by the character in this manner, giving the player a +4 bonus maximum. (In most hands, NPCs will bet one or two silver pieces.)

CHEATING

As one can imagine, over the years gamblers have developed many methods for cheating at Skulls. The most obvious entails "marking" cards, enabling the character to know which cards to pass and which to hold. Another frequent practice involves "pairing," or passing signals to someone else in the game. Finally, some cheats go as far as "palming," which entails hiding loose cards for use later in the game. Checks to catch cheating should be made at the end of the first round that the deception is attempted by another PC.

The effect of **marking** gives a player a +3 skill check bonus each hand his character is playing with these cards. Characters with Decipher Script (DC 15) or Profession (gambler) (DC 13) pick up on the marks and their players can gain the +3 skill benefit after they study the pattern for more than three hands. (Ox uses the marking method on the

characters in this adventure.)

Characters may **pair** if two or more of them play and both succeed at an Innueendo (DC 10) or Profession (gambler) (DC 10) skill check. The other characters each get a Spot check against the cheaters' relevant skills to notice the cheat (that's two separate checks). Pairing gives both players a +3 skill benefit.

Palming the cards requires a bit more skill. The player makes a Pick Pocket check (DC 15) each round his character palms a card. This can be detected by another character's opposed Spot check. Palming confers a +6 skill check bonus to the hand result, but is the most dangerous of the options. No self-respecting gambler tolerates a bad palmer. (If Ox catches someone palming, he pummels them into unconsciousness ... or at least, he tries to.)

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

Three sailors — Ox, Tomas, and Wendt — sit down for a friendly game of Skulls. Ox marked the cards beforehand. After the five-card hand is dealt, Ox leads by passing two cards to Tomas; Tomas passes two on Wendt; and Wendt passes two to Ox.

To simulate this, each player makes a Profession (gambler) check (Ox's player receiving a +3 bonus for cheating). Tomas and Wendt's players default to a Wisdom roll since they don't have Profession (gambler). This roll determines the totals at the end of the first hand: Ox's player gets a result of 20 (a die roll of 9, +8 for his gambling skill, and +3 for cheating); Tomas's player rolls 7 and adds his character's +1 Wis modifier, giving him a result of 8; and Wendt's player rolls 16 but gets no Wis bonus (since Wendt only has a Wisdom of 10). As neither Tomas nor Wendt has real skill at gambling or script deciphering, they do not get a chance to notice Ox's marks.

Betting now begins for the next hand and each character throws in 2 sp (giving each of them an extra card and their players a +1 skill bonus for hand number two).

Tomas leads the second hand, drawing the one card he paid for and then passing three to Wendt. Wendt and Ox follow in turn. Again, the players make a check — Ox's player rolls a result of 21 this hand (a die roll of 9 again, +8 for his gambling skill, +3 for cheating, and +1 from the extra card), giving him a combined score of 41 (20 from the last hand + 21 from this hand); Tomas's player gets a result of 12 (a roll of 10, his Wis modifier of +1, and another +1 from the extra card), giving him a score of 20 (8 + 12); and Wendt's player gets a result of 12 (roll of 11, +1 extra card), giving him a score of 28 (16 + 12). (If this hand were the end of the round, Ox would clearly win with his player's score of 41.)

Betting then proceeds for what will be the last round, since there are three characters playing the game, with Ox putting in only the 1 sp ante, Tomas betting 2 sp (and earning his player a +1 on the next hand), and Wendt betting 5 sp (giving his player +4 for the last hand).

The final hand of the round begins. Wendt leads the close of the round by passing one card to Ox and so forth. At the end of play, Ox rolls a result of 30 (a roll of 19, +8 for his gambling skill, and +3 for cheating) on his skill check — he declares Skulls, throwing his cards down on the table.

	SAILOR	ROLL	MODIFIERS	SUBTOTAL	TOTAL
1 ST HAND	Ox	9	+8 Gamble/+3 Cheat	20	20
	Tomas	7	+1 Wis	8	8
	Wendt	16	None	16	16
2 ND HAND	Ox	9	+8 Gamble/+3 Cheat/+1 Card	21	41
	Tomas	11	+1 Wis/+1 Card	12	20
	Wendt	11	+1 Card	12	28
3 RD HAND	Ox	19	+8 Gamble/+3 Cheat	30	71
	Tomas	—	+1 Wis/+1 Card	—	20
	Wendt	—	+4 Cards	—	28

The eclipse lasts for roughly ten minutes. The crew then buckles down, for the most part, and those not on duty go below.

A PC spellcaster succeeding a Knowledge (astrology) or related skill (DC 20) realizes that indeed this eclipse coincides with a strange conjunction of the celestial spheres. In all of history, this conjunction has never been adequately explained, but sages from the local kingdoms have detected an excess of planar energies during the phenomenon.

A FRIENDLY LITTLE GAME

Supper that night in the common mess is eaten in tense silence. The captain dines with the crew, but offers no words of comfort. He retains a sour look for most of the meal. As the supper crowd disperses, Ox approaches any players who have agreed to play cards, to remind them of tonight's game.

Ox may not be bright, but the boy can hustle cards (see Ox's stats). He escorts his "guests" into the storage room along with some of the crew. Tomas puts away the maps and pulls out some tobacco pipes for the card players. Mugs of watered-down wine are passed

around. Ox starts by deliberately losing some small change games and then tries to raise the stakes. Once he's winning, he'll try to convince the players to win some back. The other crewmembers play for small change only and watch to see how much the player characters lose.

If the characters are hustlers themselves and pull one over on Ox, the big lummo blusters like a child and refuses to pay out initially. He kicks over the table and storms out of the room. Later in the morning, he angrily pays, but he displays a disliking for the characters who played cards with him from then on.

THE AWAKENING

One other event marks this night, possibly interrupting the card game. In the evening, Vincenz awakens and begins moaning for help. He is in the early stages of shaking off the lingering effects of the sedative, which makes him barely lucid. He will cry out for water until someone brings him a cup. After greedily drinking down whatever is handed to him, Vincenz promptly falls back into a normal sleep.

RUMORS ON DECK

The following gossip may be heard by perceptive PCs. Award these nuggets either for good NPC interaction or if a player makes a successful Gather Information check (difficulty dictated as below):

- DC 10** — That woman the captain got hisself is nothin' but bad luck. Worse, I hear she was sellin' herself on the streets the very day he found her. She's not a woman; she's a leech.
- DC 13** — Captain's got a prisoner aboard. Nobody knows nothin' about him and he's been out cold since the *Albers* shoved off.
- DC 15** — This here's the captain's last voyage. He's pretty old; he's been givin' more and more work over to Huxley. Word is, the captain's goin' to cut in on some of the port merchants' action.
- DC 17** — Fenn has been real lucky in avoiding all the pirates around these ports. Some say he's made a pact with devils to keep his ship from harm; others think the old man is in with the pirates or pays some sort of protection money.
- DC 19** — Ox lost a lot of money in a prizefight at the last port. He's really touchy about it, so you really shouldn't bring it up.
- DC 20** — Some crazy guy at port was talkin' about how he was at sea when the winds dried up. Supposedly his ship went adrift and the crew ran out of food. The crew killed the cabin boy and ate him until the winds came back and they reached port. Word leaked about it and the captain and crew were hanged.

DAY TWO

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

The second day is completely overcast and cold. The crew goes about its business without much talking or singing.

EVENTS

The following events take place on the second day.

THE PRISONER

The morning of the second day, Vincenz fully awakes from his draught. Around breakfast, he calls out for food.

At this point, Vincenz talks to any that come to visit him. Vincenz is no fool. He has the ability to escape from these bars, but at this point, where would he go? He realizes that until the *Albers* nears shore, he will have to play along in the role of the prisoner.

To this end, Vincenz makes it a point to get to know who's on the ship, directly or indirectly. He asks questions of any who come to him, hoping to discover what ship he is upon, the immediate destination, the officers of the ship, etc.

Vincenz takes particular notice of the adventurers and tries to warm up to them, in hopes of using them later. At some point, once he feels comfortable with one of the characters, he attempts to sell his own slant on his capture and awaiting execution.

Vincenz claims that he was singled out and persecuted because he dared to think differently. If there are obvious spellcasters in the group, he might admit to being a wizard, suggesting that the superstitious folk feared him for what he was. Enemies framed him for the slaughter of his dear friends and he has been exhausted trying to escape their henchmen. He claims that death has the odd advantage of bringing his long flight to rest and that he is sick of running.

All of this is, of course, malarkey. But feel free to play up Vincenz' innocence with any other stories. Keep in mind that Vincenz is an inveterate liar and those trying to sense his true motive must outmatch his bluffing abilities (see Vincenz' stats).

Once relations become strained on the ship, Vincenz seizes upon the opportunity to try making alliances with any factions that form (including the PCs' group) with the hopes of bargaining for release.

UNREST AMONG THE CREW

In the late morning, Huxley plays his flute in an attempt to raise morale. Even though his playing is good, the crew remains grumpy. A PC performer might see an opportunity to lend a hand; a stirring tune might quicken the crew's step and get people in a better mood, as well as garnering Huxley's favor.

A PC bard or performer succeeds in lightening the mood upon the deck of the *Albers* with a Performance check DC 15.

Inside the ship, an observant character may notice a few of the crewmembers gathered in the common area and speaking in hushed tones.

It takes a Listen roll DC 15 to overhear their conversation.

They mention the omen of the eclipse and what it could mean (see page 12). Some might gripe about the woman in the captain's cabin, and the leadership of captain Fenn. If the PC is noticed, the crewmembers leave and return to their duties.

Huxley realizes the dangerous condition of the crew's morale and if a player tells him of the crew's talk, he searches for some solution with greater urgency. If the character who spoke with Old Pete declined the bout with Ox, Huxley asks the character to reconsider the friendly fight, in order to raise the ship's morale. Huxley will be appreciative if the character agrees.

In fact, long before supper, Huxley goes to Fenn's quarters to ask advice in changing the mood of the men. Fenn advises Huxley to surprise the men with a barrel of strong ale after supper — advice Huxley later takes. Fenn informs Huxley that he will dine in his cabin this evening and that supper should be brought for him and Selene.

DINNER'S ENTERTAINMENT

Later, most of the men are gathered for supper. If someone has agreed to fight Ox after supper, the crew pushes back the tables and benches and begins laying bets. Unless the character facing Ox is of epic proportions, most bets, save for Old Pete's and any PCs', will be placed for Ox.

The fight is bare knuckles, and a winner is declared after either the PC or Ox loses one half his total hit points.

If it's a good fight, the crew's spirits raise considerably. If Ox loses this fight, he takes it good-naturedly and respects his opponent. If Ox wins, he is gracious in winning and will be the first to point out that many, many others have lost before.

In any event, at the end of the fight Huxley arrives with a barrel of ale. The crew cracks the barrel and celebrates with vigor. The winner and loser of the bout are given more than their fair share. Huxley then returns above deck to supervise the night crew.

THE CAPTAIN'S LAST MEAL

The characters might notice Dert carrying a tray with some stew and ale above deck. On his way up, Huxley stops him to ask what the boy is doing, but lets him carry out his duty. If the players question him, Dert explains he is bringing Fenn and Selene their dinner.

The captain, in fact, suspects that the eclipse might signal the coming of some storms. He works all night to plot a new course that will steer the *Albers* clear of this area, and plans to run it by Tomas in the morning. The captain has heard that ships get lost in these waters, never to be seen again. Fenn has heard the name of the *Sea Maiden* as a ship that was lost during one such eclipse thirty years ago. During his work, he pens the name "Maiden" on the map, which may be found later. Fenn doesn't reveal the nature of the course change he is working on in fear that it may escalate the unease of his crew.



DAY THREE

MURDER AND MUTINY

Some time in the night, the ghostly form of Orlando overtakes the captain — Fenn slumps over, silent and dead.

EVENTS

The following events take place on the third day.

ALARUM!

A woman's scream pierces the still of the early morning of the third day. Above deck Selene, the captain's mistress, cries in terror.

Arriving at the captain's cabin, investigators find the door locked from the inside. The door may be opened by a variety of methods:

- By forcing the door. (DC 15)
- By picking the lock. (DC 10)
- By trying to talk to Selene through the door and getting her to open up. (DC 25)

Within, captain Fenn lies slumped over on his table in a pool of stew and his own blood. Selene huddles on the bed shaking and crying in hysteria.

Any crewmembers present gasp and someone rushes below to wake Huxley. If player characters are present, they have a short time to investigate before Huxley arrives.

Searching the captain reveals the following:

- The captain's glass eye is missing. An empty socket stares out at the living. (Search DC 10)
- An examination of the body and successful Heal check reveals that the captain appeared to be eating when he died of some sort of violent convulsion. No natural cause for this is apparent. (Heal DC 15)

- The keys to the storage hold and strongbox are on a chain around his neck. (Search DC 15)
- The captain seemed to be working on some navigation materials. Anyone with navigation skills or Profession (sailor) will recognize that the captain was plotting a course other than the one now followed. Also, the word "Maiden" is penned onto the side of the map. (Search DC 17)

Selene, if the characters succeed in calming her down knows:

- The captain had said he would be working late.
- The captain had asked that Dert bring their evening meal to the cabin. She had fallen asleep and didn't eat her portion.
- The captain was disturbed by the omen and thought that something might lie in their present course. He was afraid for the safety of the crew.

Keep in mind that players have a very limited time frame (a couple of minutes) before Huxley arrives and starts barking orders.

WHODUNNIT? (BEHIND THE SCENES)

The ghostly captain Orlando, sensing a suitable replacement for his crew, inspected the *Albers* the night after the eclipse. After watching captain Fenn for a time, Orlando drained Fenn of his life essence, leaving him a corpse to be found in the morning. Orlando then dissipated; his ghostly essence relieved of its burden.

Fenn is inevitably given a burial at sea; his corpse sinks until it rests at the bottom, where the malice of the sea-god transforms him into the very horror that leads a final assault upon the *Albers*. Unless the characters can pull the crew of the *Albers* together, the cycle begins again ...

SELENE'S PLAN

Selene awoke an hour before screaming. Initially, she met the fate of her lover with shock, but slowly pulled herself together. Selene quickly realized that it appears that the captain has been poisoned. Further recalling that the meal was also meant for her, though she dozed off before eating anything, Selene now fears that there is a killer on board out to get her.

Fenn's glass eye fell from his head when he collapsed in the night. Selene found it in the morning and hid it in a fold of her nightgown, thinking that she might be able to use it later if the killer reveals himself.

Selene understands that most of the crew resents her presence and that the death of Fenn spells an end to her security upon the ship. She further fears that she will be blamed for the death of Fenn. As such, she carefully staged her rude awakening to gather the attention of all the crew, hoping that safety, for now, lies in numbers.

When Huxley takes command of the *Albers* (see below), Selene grows to resent him and suspects that he is the murderer aboard the ship.

Over the coming days, Selene takes to strolling around the ship, sometimes late in the evenings and even into the early mornings. Motivated by the desperation of her situation, Selene tries to get to know more about the layout and the people aboard the ship. The crew reacts coldly to her presence.

At some point, Selene may come to any PCs who showed her kindness, sharing her fear of an active killer aboard. Selene sees the PCs as potential allies in the coming nights. Furthermore, she makes it a point to find out what the prisoner aboard knows or has done. Selene is willing to make friends in low places if it will give her some advantage.

Once her spite for Huxley has grown, she tries to plant Fenn's glass eye among his personal affects, hoping to implicate Huxley in the murder (see page 25).

HUXLEY INTERVENES

Upon his arrival, Huxley orders everybody to stand back from the room and that Selene be taken down below for the time being. Assessing the situation,



DAY THREE: MURDER AND MUTINY

Huxley wants to get the captain's body wrapped and ready for burial at sea as soon as possible.

If a character informs him of the venom in the hold, Huxley whispers quietly, "Then we have a traitor among us; keep this between you and I for now. Let us speak later."

Huxley then orders that all of the crew be gathered on deck. Ox rings the alarm bell and the crew assembles. Huxley explains that the captain died the night before. Some of the crew whisper about the sun omen before Huxley can silence them.

At this point in the adventure, the balance of power aboard the *Albers* teeters. Huxley is a smart man — he realizes that if too much is made of the captain's death, then doubt and suspicion may divide the crew into factions. At all costs, Huxley wants this ship under control, preferably his own. What the PCs say and do at this point could well unbalance or outright threaten Huxley's position.

If Huxley is not interrupted, he insists that the entire crew join in a proper sea burial for the captain. Huxley says a few words and lets others say what they wish about the captain. After sending the captain's body overboard, Huxley tells the crew that he will take the captain's position until they reach their destination. Keep in mind that most of the crew actually likes the personable Huxley, so barring any PC interaction, Huxley gains command of the *Albers*.

If the PCs do object, they put themselves in a dangerous position; whatever the PCs suggest, they are outsiders, and their advice will be taken with a certain measure of suspicion. If the characters have been playing themselves up as bodyguards and distancing themselves from the crew, the crew has all the more reason not to trust them. After all, weren't they supposed to protect the captain? Players who try to assert command over the ship will be surrounded, disarmed, and thrown into the cargo hold until things get worse aboard the ship.

In the worst case, players could try attacking some of the sailors. Even if they overpower the crew, they have the problem of being stuck aboard a vessel they don't know how to run. Also, once the *Sea Maiden* arrives, they'll have to deal with the undead sea scourges alone ... and the slaughtered crewmembers will swell the *Maiden's* ranks!

When he takes command, Huxley is quick to get the men back to work. At this point, the PCs can engage in a variety of activities. If they decide to pursue the captain's death further, see "Investigating the Murder," below. If the players decide to politic with the crewmembers, see the NPC descriptions on pages 31 through 36 for ideas on how their shipmates are likely to react.

The rest of the third day passes quietly on deck until the evening. At night, the moon hangs full and blood red. A light fog begins to creep onto the ship's deck. The sailors know that fog usually isn't present unless land is near. According to Tomas' maps, however, the *Albers* is at least a half a week from land. The crew might conclude the presence of uncharted islands, but none are spotted.

INVESTIGATING THE MURDER

The characters find that a few areas of the ship are now accessible, such as the captain's quarters and the hold. These areas might give further leads into the nature of the captain's murder. In addition to ship exploration, PCs may try to question several people about the captain's murder.

The NPCs know the following:

DELT

Dert brought the captain's last meal to him. If questioned about it, Dert recalls that when he brought the food above deck, Huxley stopped to talk to him. Dert also knows that food was usually brought not for the captain (the captain usually ate with the crew), but his woman Selene. Dert knows little about Selene, except that she has been kind to him whenever he has brought food up to the captain's cabin. She calls him "dear."

If given a chance to think about it, Dert recalls that the some of the food he brought up last night was intended for Selene, as well.

HUXLEY

Huxley wants to be kept informed about any developments in the PCs' investigation (if he suspects one). He cautions the characters, warning them not to arouse suspicion about their activities



and not to call the captain's death into question in front of the crew without his permission. Above all, he asks that they be discreet.

SELENE

Selene claims that Fenn would not come to bed and that he said he had some late work to do. Selene says that she then went to sleep and only found his body in the morning. Selene is frazzled and somewhat bitter. If pressed, she all but accuses Huxley of killing Fenn, especially since Huxley is now the captain. She does not know of any particular bad blood between Huxley and the captain, but emphasizes that they had arguments.

TOMAS

The navigator knows that the captain asked him to bring maps and plotting material to his cabin that fateful night. The captain told Tomas little, save that the *Albers* might have to change course. Tomas asked for clarification, as he believed the plotted course was sound, but the captain told Tomas to come again in the morning. If Tomas examines the map the captain left behind, he is not able to decipher how the captain was planning to change course, thanks to the blood and food stains. Given about a half day, Tomas is able to piece together from what remains of the map that the captain's course steered well clear of their present position.

WENDT

The cook does not tolerate being questioned by any save Huxley. Furthermore, if he notices Dert talking to the PCs or if the PCs come snooping near his galley, Wendt grows suspicious and has the boy move his belongings into the pantry, giving Wendt constant supervision over the boy. If Huxley presses, Wendt claims to know nothing about the captain's death. If poison is mentioned, Wendt flatly and angrily denies any involvement.

OLD PETE

Pete has heard of the *Sea Maiden* being lost, but won't remember that fact unless someone specifically asks him if he's heard of the *Maiden* as a ship. Pete can recount what was believed of the ship — namely that it was destroyed in a violent storm somewhere around these parts. If pressed, he also remembers that an eclipse preceded the storm.

VINCENZ

The prisoner was asleep at the time of the murder. If pressed about the last evening, Vincenz tells of a dream he had. In the dream, a ghostly presence hovered about his sleeping form as if studying him for an unknown purpose. The vivid nature of the dream makes Vincenz feel as if it might have some connection to last night's events. Telling or showing Vincenz the map makes him increasingly curious. Vincenz mutters about some unseen connection and wants time to consider the matter further.

Vincenz uses the dramatic shift of power aboard the *Albers* to his advantage by testing alliances with the party and crew. If any have open minds, Vincenz suggests a continuing exchange of information about the goings on in the ship. See the section below for more on Vincenz' machinations.

VINCENZ' PLANS

Shrewdly, Vincenz plays the part of helpless prisoner in hopes of discerning more about the size of the crew, the position of the ship, and the best timing for an eventual escape.

Due to his Spell Mastery, Vincenz can escape the brig at any time.

Once news of the captain's death spreads on the ship, Vincenz takes a more active role in politicking from his cell. Vincenz grows curious about who supports whom on the ship, taking particular interest in whatever position the PCs take. Using scraps of his arcane knowledge and his innate sense of human motivation, Vincenz tries to convince the PCs that they could use his particular talents in the nights to come, feigning some greater intuition of the flow of events. If they flat-out refuse, Vincenz delivers passive threats, intimating some hidden fate he sees in store for them.

TURNCOATS

Of the named NPC crew, Tomas, Wendt, and Selene are most prone to give any credence to Vincenz. Should any one of them feel their position on the ship has become threatened, he or she will

DAY THREE: MURDER AND MUTINY

join forces with the murderer in order to gain an edge. NPC collusion with Vincenz allows the GM to heighten the paranoia if a PC group has supported Huxley, or otherwise has found a way to stabilize the situation.

Possible results of the NPCs joining with Vincenz include:

1. WIZARD'S APPRENTICE

Tomas or Wendt agrees to find some fine sand, a crucial ingredient to Vincenz's *sleep* spell.

Two options are available: Wendt knows of the hourglass in the captain's cabin and could try to find his way in (probably attracting attention); alternatively, Wendt might try to force Dert into doing his dirty work.

Knowing that the captain transports alchemist's materials, Tomas instead figures on finding a way to get into the hold through the trapdoor in the storage room, and then search through the cargo. Finding some exterior motive to get the key and/or permission suits Tomas best, yet if he has no other option, he breaks the lock with a crowbar. If Vincenz knows about the hold (and especially if the PCs have told him about the venom), he insists Tomas take the latter route.

2. A NEW ORDER

Vincenz incenses Selene to make an attempt on Huxley's life. Selene recognizes Vincenz for the type of scum that he is and doesn't quite trust him. If possible, Selene implicates Vincenz in the attempt in whatever way available, possibly arranging for Vincenz's door to be unlocked if the wizard believes Huxley to be unguarded. In the event that an uneasy alliance is struck between the two, each seeks to gain the upper hand in their association. Neither is above turning against the other for their advantage.

3. CONSPIRACY

In the worst case, all three NPCs join in league with Vincenz. Under the prodding of Vincenz, the three aid each other in covering up their activities. Tomas and Wendt act as the most willing cronies; Selene still negotiates an uneasy alliance with Vincenz, following only as it suits her purpose.

This option is best for raising the difficulty of the scenario if the PCs have had an easy time of it.

CAUGHT!

The PCs may catch one or more of the above parties talking at great length with Vincenz. If the PCs approach subtly, they catch snippets of what Vincenz and the crewmember had planned, allowing them to intervene in a number of ways. First off, they could confront the crewmember or Vincenz directly. If this happens, Vincenz denies any accusations flatly, Tomas or Wendt spill their guts under pressure, and Selene conceals or reveals the truth depending on whatever might cast her in the best light.

Should the players or crew threaten Vincenz physically, he lashes out first with his *sleep* spell (if he has gotten the components) and then with *burning hands* to finish the job. Keep in mind that anyone slain in this way returns in scourge form once the *Sea Maiden* attacks.

Even if players confront the conspirators directly, they then have to deal with paranoid co-conspirators, who will most likely be afraid that the PCs know about their deal. If the players indirectly keep an eye on the conspirators and Vincenz, they have a better chance of rooting out just how far Vincenz's influence has spread on the *Albers*. It also gives them leave to separate the potential mutineers and deal with them one at a time.

Huxley and the other crewmembers listen to any PC allegations but want proof of mutinous activity before turning on their own. (This is especially so if the crew has any reason to distrust the PCs.) If he hears of Vincenz's stirrings, Huxley orders the brig off limits to all but himself.

DAY FOUR

THE GHOST SHIP

The light fog of the last evening thickens into fog that all but eliminates visibility for more than 20 feet away from the ship. Little wind penetrates, leaving the *Albers* adrift for the fourth day.

Give the PCs enough time to politic and investigate as continued from the day before. Sometime before night, the *Albers* should find the abandoned *Sea Maiden*.

EXPLORING THE SEA MAIDEN

The *Sea Maiden* drifts listlessly in the fog, her main mast's sails and rigging disturbingly absent. There is no apparent activity on the *Maiden's* deck.

Once Huxley is alerted to the situation, he orders the *Albers* to be brought alongside for boarding. The swordhands (that means the PCs) are sent as the boarding party, to search for survivors. Huxley maneuvers the *Albers* so that a gangplank might be raised to bridge both ships.

Eager PCs may try to jump the gap as maneuvering may take too much time. In that case, a Jump (DC 14) clears the ships, but a Reflex save DC 16+ must then be made as the *Sea Maiden's* decks are slippery, caked with wet sea scum. Failed saves result in 1d4 hit points of damage as the character seriously injures a limb from the brutal fall.

SEA MAIDEN SHIP AREAS

1. MAIN DECK

Although the main mast stands, little else is found on deck. Most of the equipment has long since been swept away by storm waves. Frayed rope ends are all that remains of the ship's rigging.

As stated above, the main deck is very slippery. As appropriate, characters may have to make Reflex checks (DC 12) to keep their footing if they try moving quickly. A successful Search check (DC 15) also reveals a seaweed-caked wooden placard on the deck, reading "*Sea Maiden*."

At the aft of the ship, a locked (and trapped) door leads to the captain's cabin (see below). Near the mast, thick chains and a rusted lock bar the trap door to the hold. The chains and lock open easily from the outside — almost as if they were placed so as to prevent someone from getting out of the hold rather than getting in.

2. CAPTAIN'S CABIN

A successful Search check (DC 18), reveals an unnatural bulge on the door of the captain's cabin, as if some great pressure was being exerted upon it on the other side. If a character recklessly opens the door, a stacked pile of rounded stones (for catapulting) comes spilling out onto the main deck. Characters in the path of the balls need to make a Reflex check (DC 17) or be struck for 1d6 damage.

After rolling past the PCs, a few stones embed themselves in the rotted deck. A few others continue rolling until they take out the railing closest to the *Albers*. Surprised cries come from the *Albers*, but fortunately the ship is not struck.

After quelling the crew's alarm, the PCs will probably return to the cabin. Within, an inert skeletal captain lounges, propped against a chair; these are the remains of Orlando. A rotted jacket of the old style lies in tatters on his frame. A decayed crossbow assembly rests dusty by his side. Beneath the crossbow, a waterlogged journal details the final days of the *Sea Maiden*.

The log of the *Sea Maiden* is a badly damaged collection of vellum pages bound into a ruined leather cover. Most of the early portions of the journal have been destroyed by salt water. A

DAY FOUR: THE GHOST SHIP

damp, rotted odor emanates from the pages as they are opened. Even the few entries that remain in the middle portions of the journal are smeared and take some time to decipher (see the handouts on pages 37 through 39).

Branded into the interior of the leather cover is the following inscription: "Captain Orlando of the *Sea Maiden*, Worthy Vessel of the Merchant Alliance."

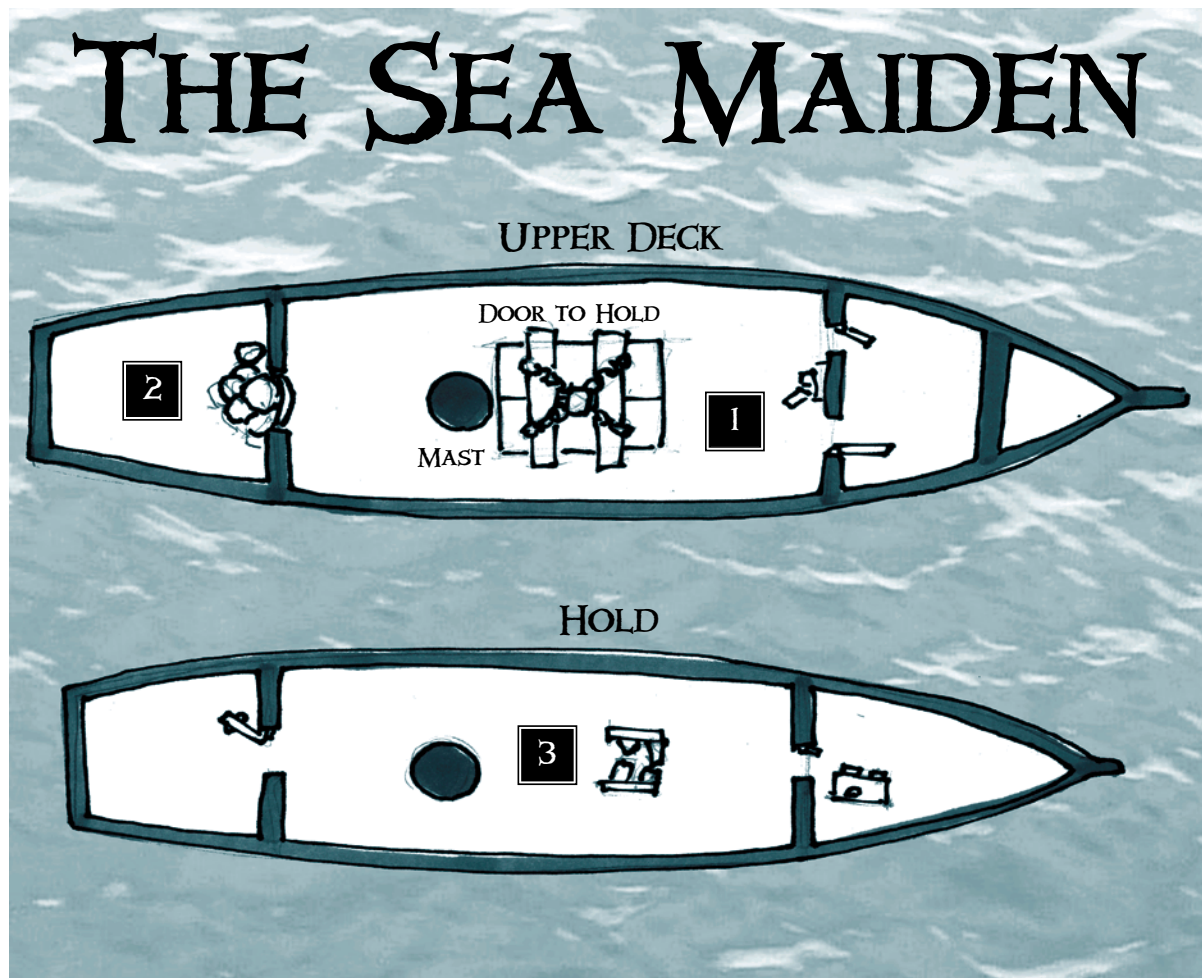
Searching (DC 10) the skeleton's body reveals an antiquated bronzed gadget, which any with Profession (sailor) recognize as a compass. A successful Appraise roll (DC 15) could suggest that the item might be worth a pretty penny to the right sort of collector (say, 100 gp).

Also within the cabin lies the old rotted frame of a bed, and a stained map hangs on the opposite wall. Anyone looking into the room might notice that the soaked map heaves every now and again as if air were pushing from behind it. Behind the map, the rotted back wall to a niche lets in the sea

air. Within the niche lies a rusted strongbox, plain and unadorned.

A Spot check DC 10 is needed to notice the fact that the map is moving suspiciously in the breeze. A Search (DC 15) of the strongbox then detects the presence of a needle trap. Disabling the rusted device (Disable Device DC 10) should be fairly simple. If a character opens the box without detecting the trap, he or she must make a Reflex save (DC 18) to avoid being pricked. If the save fails, then the character needs to make a Fortitude save (DC 16) to avoid the diminished effects of this once-lethal poison. Characters stung lose 1d4 points of their Strength score as their whole arm goes numb. The effect lasts approximately an hour.

Within the strongbox are 90 very old gold coins. The value of the coins might be taken for granted, but if a clever PC succeeds in appraising the contents of the box, he or she knows that the coins might be worth 500 gp to the right people. If the party takes the coins at face value, merchants at port gladly relieve the PCs of the coins as if they were 90 gold pieces.



3. HOLD

If the party opens the door to the hold, they are greeted by the noxious smell of death and bloated flesh.

Any in the party not hardened to bloodshed must make a Fortitude check (DC 15) or get sick for 1d6 minutes.

From above, it will be difficult make out what is in the hold. Directly below the door, the rotted wreckage of the stairs dangles limply. The hold is flooded to a depth of at least two feet. The area is cramped, wet, and smells horrible. Without the stairs, PCs will only be able to get a good look at what's down there if a rope lowers them.

If a character does want to be lowered, once he approaches the frame of the hold, he must overcome a pervading sense of dread to continue any further (Will save DC 12).

Once below, and with proper lighting, the character beholds the grisly scene. Sickly green, bloated corpses float amongst the remains of wrecked cargo. The murky waters swirl with an odd mixture of the still, black sea and the remnants of the crew. The player should be reminded how tight the room is and how difficult it is to breathe the death-laden smell of this place. The hold repulses any attempted blessings.

At this point the character should feel very uncomfortable about being here. If the player feels adventurous, exploring the hold yields little of value. Nothing much remains of the cargo — it is forgotten stow bound for forgotten ports. If needed, the GM should give the player some encouragement for getting back up on deck. Noticing, out of the corner of the eye, something moving in the water might do the trick. In the extreme, PC movements down below could help contribute to the ship's intake of water, making the Maiden rock forebodingly.

CURSED SHIP. THE SEA MAIDEN

The old vessel is the current incarnation of a parasitic curse. Every thirty years, an eclipse comes and the waters near the last incarnation of the ship grow still and windless. During the day, the remains of the cursed ship can be found. The remains look much as they were left the day the curse took effect. At night, the cursed ship's crew and captain seek release from their burden by finding another ship and crew to take its place.

The captain of the *Maiden* serves as a focus for power. After being tormented for thirty years, the returning captain is imbued with the ability to travel and attack astrally. (This is often used as a final act to seek out a new host.) Fenn, in this scenario, will not have this ability until after he and his crew return to the fog for thirty years.

When found, the derelict *Sea Maiden* stinks of a foul evil (certainly triggering *detect evil* spells or abilities). Opening the hold reveals the grisly fate of the crew. At the point when the Maiden is found in this scenario, Orlando has already attacked and transformed Fenn into his replacement. Fenn undergoes the grisly transformation, which shapes him into a horror while under the waves.

Derelict Sea Maiden: Break DC 20, 60 hp

Risen Sea Maiden: Break DC 40, 120 hp

Crew Compliment: 15 sea scourges (+ any transformed crew of the *Albers*, see page 27)

Still Wind (Su) — The *Sea Maiden* causes the winds to die. This effect affects a mile radius centered on the

Maiden. The ship itself, when encountered in its risen form, billows along on gales composed of screaming souls.

Cursed Crew (Su) — The Maiden's undead crew numbers fifteen before the first attack (assuming none were hacked to pieces in the hold). To make matters worse, the recently slain, when close to the influence of the ship, transform rapidly into sea scourges. While the ships are close together, fallen sailors will arise within 1d4 minutes. Even before their transformation is complete, their twisted corpses crawl to the *Sea Maiden* for temporary refuge during the change.

The incarnations of the ghostly ship are not undefeatable. Turned sea scourges cower back onto the *Sea Maiden*. Should a stalwart band repel or destroy her crew, the sea god's curse will be broken and the ghostly ship will return to the sea for its final rest.

Foul Presence (Su) — The ship radiates the foul presence of the sea god. Within view of the ship, clerics will have a difficult time turning back the sea scourges. Scourges turn as if they were undead creatures of two greater hit dice while the ship is near.

Also, any who are close enough see wispy figures (drowned souls) churning around the radius of the boat. During the final battle, the twirling of the souls heightens into a vortex, which is a portal into the Maelstrom, home of the dark sea god Krakas (see page 6).

DAY FOUR: THE GHOST SHIP

Players may try to haul up the corpses and hack them to pieces. By all means let them. While down in the hold during their second haul, the *Sea Maiden* begins to rock noticeably as their movements cause the ship to start to sink with rapidity. This should be enough to make them want to leave the ship. If the players do destroy some corpses, keep note of how many of the daytime forms of the sea scourges have been dispatched before the final attack.

RETURNING TO THE ALBERS

Once back onboard the *Albers*, the characters may want supplies to burn up the *Sea Maiden*, or they may decide to try to sink the ship. Keep in mind that supplies are low aboard the *Albers*; Huxley and the crew quickly point out that burning the *Sea Maiden* would be a waste of oil they might later need. If the players are persuasive or obstinate about the matter, Huxley accedes over protest from the crew.

If the players do torch the *Sea Maiden*, then the crew demands that they start the fires and then unhook immediately — the crew does not want a raging inferno anywhere near them. In gauging the success of any plan, consider that the decks, and most of the ship, are soaked and rotted.

Breaching the hull might be a more reasonable plan, but this could only reasonably be accomplished from the ship's hold; none of the characters should relish going back there. Again, the Maiden will start to rock and list to one side as the hold begins to take on water, most likely prompting the characters to leave the ship quickly when the flooding becomes apparent. The crewmen of the *Albers* will want to unhook from the other ship before it goes down.

When the slow process of sinking or burning has begun, or when less destruction-oriented characters finish their search of the *Sea Maiden*, the *Albers* leaves it behind as the ships drift apart in the mist. Keep in mind the players never see the ship completely sink.

What about loot? Whether the characters fess up to the booty they pillaged on the *Albers* might change the crew's reaction to them. If the players show it to Huxley or the crew and let them divvy it up, then they might gain more respect from the crew. If the characters don't tell them about the

treasure, but it's somehow discovered, the crew grows considerably more chill towards the PCs. Also, later, when the proverbial poop hits the deck, a disgruntled sailor might blame the PCs' looting for the subsequent attack.

THE PLANT

Sometime during the time when the PCs are aboard the *Sea Maiden*, Selene seizes upon the opportunity to place Captain Fenn's glass eye in Huxley's effects in the common area. Most of the crew's attention is fixed upon the derelict vessel, so she need only slip down below to evade detection.

If the PCs have split up, leaving some of their group aboard the *Albers*, they might notice Selene heading below by making an opposed Spot check against Selene's Hide skill. None of the crew notice her.

Later, when Huxley is not on duty, shouts break out below deck. Several of the crewmembers hold both Huxley and Ox from each other. Ox hurls fearsome threats at Huxley, calling him a murderer and a traitor as he points at captain Fenn's missing glass eye staring out from Huxley's cabin trunk. Huxley shouts back that he didn't put it there. The remaining crew examines the eye. The men turn Huxley out on deck to decide what should be done.

Some of the crew, led by Ox, shout that Huxley should be thrown in the hold or worse; others like Old Pete stand by their new captain. In the absence of a commanding presence, the crew is ready to tear into each other. The PCs must handle the situation in some way.

Multiple Diplomacy, Bluff, or Intimidate skills may be called into play (DC 18), although you may find it more satisfying to let your players try to partially resolve this through interaction. Any of the antagonisms caused by PCs during the voyage should factor into the resolution.

Keep in mind that even if the players persuade the crew to give Huxley the benefit of the doubt, the crew becomes considerably more distrustful of each other. The mood above deck changes. Crewmembers are less apt to go anyplace on the ship alone or with just one other person. Ox and Huxley avoid each other on deck.



NEW MONSTER TEMPLATE: SEA SCOURGE

Medium Undead

Hit Dice:	Increase by one die type to a maximum of d12.
AC:	Natural armor increases by +2.
Attacks:	Creature gains a slam attack, in addition to previous attacks.
Damage:	Creature gains 1d6 damage for a slam attack in addition to other attacks.
Special Attack:	Create Spawn
Special Qualities:	Undead
Saves:	As base
Skills:	As base
Abilities:	Increase and decrease from base as follows: Str +2, Dex -2, Int -4, Wis -4, Cha -4. Scourges have no Con as they are undead.
Feats:	Toughness, if not part of base.
Alignment:	Chaotic Evil

Once transformed by the power of the sea god's curse, afflicted crewmembers exist in a confused undead state. It is possible that some of the crew might retain random memories and intelligence, but lucid moments are rare. For the most part, the scourges are damned to act out the malevolent cycle of their curse.

Create Spawn (Su) — If a crewmember is felled by a scourge attack, he will arise by the power of the cursed *Sea Maiden*, becoming a servitor to the ship and its captain. Note that a scourge's power to create spawn is directly related to the cursed ship. If the curse is broken, the fallen will not rise.

In any event, the characters have the rest of the afternoon to do what they will, tying up some loose ends. At night, the *Sea Maiden* attacks ...

Ropes may be cut as a free action, but keep in mind that given the thick fog, the *Albers'* crew won't be able to find each line before an initial wave of the flesh-hungry sea scourges is upon them.

THE SEA MAIDEN'S FIRST ATTACK

At the time of the attack, the fog has increased so that visibility ends beyond twelve feet. The ship hasn't seemed to move for hours. Only crewmembers in the crow's nest might get a view of the nightmare vessel before it is alongside the *Albers*. Rising steadily from the sea, the *Sea Maiden* sails on ghostly winds — its midnight sails billow towards the helpless *Albers*.

A Spot check (DC 20+) from the crow's nest gives time for the alarm to be sounded and the crew to be readied for boarding.

The characters on deck may not fully recognize the ship as the *Sea Maiden* until the first wave of five sea scourges leaps aboard. Grappling hooks are quickly tossed from the Maiden, snagging the deck and rigging of the *Albers*.

Five of the 15 undead scavengers from the *Maiden* scatter onto the deck of the *Albers* and search for live targets upon which to sate their unholy thirst. If Huxley makes his way on deck, he fights with poise and strategy, trying to get his panicked men organized. He will not be above taking point in pushing the creatures back.

Players may try to set the *Sea Maiden* on fire. If a character scores a direct hit with some flaming oil or the like, the Maiden cuts lines of its own accord to retreat temporarily into the mist until the final battle.

During the initial wave, the crew has five rounds to cut the remaining grapple hooks, sending the *Sea Maiden* drifting off back into the fog. Otherwise, a new wave of five more sea scourges rushes the *Albers*. Once it is beaten down, the *Maiden* retreats into the mist.

In the battle's aftermath, the characters should have time to notice that the corpses of fallen shipmates are missing (they'll be returning in the final attack).

DAY FOUR: THE GHOST SHIP

Also, at least one NPC crewmember should be grievously injured (but not killed) the attack. (See “The Injured Crewmember,” below.)

After this first attack, the players and crew have some time to figure out why the *Sea Maiden* has returned. If the crew knows the PCs took loot from the *Sea Maiden*, then the crew points fingers. The crew might also remember the blood red moon or the eclipse, or some might point to the death of the captain as cause. Let the players sweat out the possibilities and dread the realization that another attack may be coming.

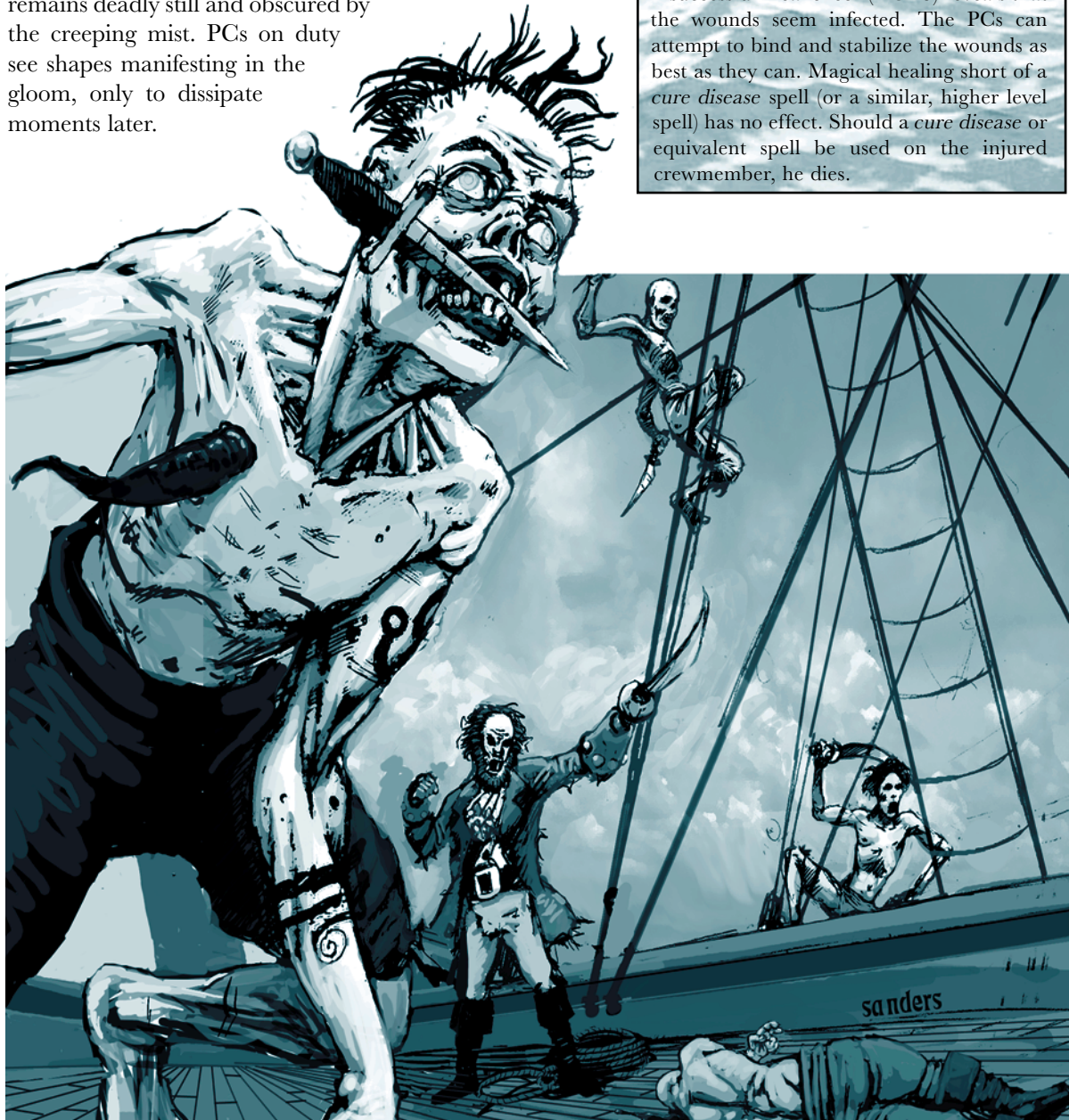
Huxley sets up a vigilant watch over the night if none of the PCs suggest it. The night remains deadly still and obscured by the creeping mist. PCs on duty see shapes manifesting in the gloom, only to dissipate moments later.

Anyone checking in on Selene finds her delusional, raving that “He will return,” “He is coming!” and “A house divided must fall!” If none come, she eventually finds her way on deck in the middle of the night, and begins to wander aimlessly while ranting. Selene appears exhausted and on the verge of a breakdown.

THE INJURED CREWMEMBER

During the first battle, the scourges should have harmed at least one of the crew. Upon examination, the crewmember seems to be barely alive.

A successful Heal check (DC 15) reveals that the wounds seem infected. The PCs can attempt to bind and stabilize the wounds as best as they can. Magical healing short of a *cure disease* spell (or a similar, higher level spell) has no effect. Should a *cure disease* or equivalent spell be used on the injured crewmember, he dies.



If the crewmember remains aboard the *Albers*, he slowly transforms into a sea scourge. Keep track of where the crew puts the injured person. Sometime during the night, the newly transformed scourge tries to overtake anyone watching over him and then moves on to the rest of the *Albers*' crew.

Once the scourge is dispatched, the night grows deadly still. Note who takes the last watch before morning, as the *Sea Maiden* swoops in for its final blow an hour before sunrise.

DARK REVELATION

Before the final attack, Vincenz pieces together the strange happenings on the ship, connecting it with some ancient lore he picked up during his studies. Vincenz remembers from his readings that long ago an ancient sea god plagued the coastal areas. As far as Vincenz recalls, this ancient sea god had a fleet of cursed, black-sailed ships manned by unliving crews. The undead crews were called "scourges," and by some references they attacked ships, slaughtering entire crews to join their master's horde. Vincenz has never heard of the *Sea Maiden*, but if he has observed the ship or read the *Maiden's* log, he becomes convinced that the cursed ship is the one of legend.

THE FINAL ATTACK

Those members of the *Albers* who fell in the previous attack have now risen in undead form to augment the crew of the *Sea Maiden*. All the scourges that are left of the original fifteen attack en force for this final push. This time, the undead crew is led by its newly joined captain — the raised captain Fenn trying to reclaim his ship! In the final scene, the remaining crew of the *Maiden* seeks to overrun the *Albers* completely and transform it into a new ship of the undying.

At the time of the attack the fog wanes slightly, allowing well-positioned crewmembers ample opportunity to spot the *Maiden* before it is in range (Spot check DC 15).

The *Maiden* crashes into the *Albers*, causing the boats to become entangled. The only way to release the *Maiden* would be to hack away some

of its railing and rigging, but the PCs don't have time for that.

The rest of the undying ones shamble aboard the deck of the *Albers*. The *Sea Maiden* crew has only one objective — to wipe out the crew of the *Albers* and transform it into the new cursed ship. The transformation is complete once Fenn has slaughtered his former crew and assumes control above deck. If he succeeds, the *Albers* sinks below the waves and eventually journeys into the Maelstrom.

COMPLICATIONS

The undead horde employs simple tactics — they spread out across the *Albers* and butcher everyone they find. A small squad of three scourges acts under Fenn's direction to both slake his thirst on his former crew and to protect the railings so that both ships enter the Maelstrom. Fenn singles out any of the named crew he finds on deck, starting with Huxley.

Selene is driven completely insane by seeing her returned lover. If the PCs did not find the cutlass in the captain's room, she enters the fray with it, calling out to her beloved and killing any of the *Albers*' crew she finds.

The players and remaining sailors must make a desperate last stand here. The *Maiden* crew takes no prisoners and single-mindedly focuses on claiming the *Albers* as its own. The fog makes it difficult for the *Albers*' crew to fight with any organization above deck. PCs and crew become easily separated and overwhelmed in the mists. At key points of the battle, the *Maiden* begins its slow decent into the ocean, which wrenches the *Albers*' deck violently.

Anyone above deck when the *Albers* jerks needs to make Balance skill checks (DC 16) to avoid losing his footing.

Note that the crew and PCs are at an extreme disadvantage if the crew has not been brought together in the preceding scene. The sailors fight mostly to save their own skins and don't risk themselves in a concerted effort. One faction might take up in the captain's cabin, another in the crew's quarters, and Vincenz gathers his conspirators near the brig. Holed up and divided, the separate factions realize too late that the *Maiden* is dragging them all to their icy doom ...

If things go really poorly, Huxley or another named crewmember rings the bell and orders everyone below deck. Within the cramped confines of the interior, the PCs and crew have a better chance of bottlenecking the incoming scourges at the stairs, consolidating their defensive efforts.

Whether above or below deck, both the crew and PCs can feel the *Albers* tipping as it is slowly dragged towards the icy chill of the Maelstrom itself. Fenn and a few scourges hang back to ensure the deed is done. At some point, the crew realizes they must face Fenn directly to disengage the two ships. Huxley (or another named crewman) insists on going above and putting their former captain to rest.

Fenn savagely attempts to repulse any final effort. If possible, he engages directly with his crew, using his enhanced strength to impale them on his sword. Alternatively, if the fighting approaches the railings, he attempts to toss his combatants into the Maelstrom.

If Fenn is defeated, his screaming soul is released into the air and the scourges stand dazed for a round.

RESOLUTION

After the battle, the players have the immediate problem of dealing with the sinking *Maiden*, which is now attached to their own ship. Ten minutes of concentrated work should get the other ship untangled, allowing it to drift and finally sink into the sea.

Anyone close enough to the rail hears the lamenting of tortured souls and notices that the vortex the Maiden sinks into doesn't lead to the ocean bottom, but "somewhere else." Vincenz, if part of the fray, notices the opening and frantically commands that the ships be cut from one another.

Wizards or clerics with an appropriate planar Knowledge understand the vortex forms an interplanar portal.

If the undead crew has been defeated and the Maiden cut from the *Albers*, the weather slowly clears up and the wind returns. Assuming the

REWARDS

If the characters have acted decisively to save the lives of crewmembers, whoever is left insists that they take a portion of the funds from the strongbox as payment; the payroll totals about 500 gp. A percentage of the profit from the goods in the hold may also be appropriate as a reward; the merchants agree to 25%, which comes out to 375 gp. The merchants also offer a limited discount on goods if the crew reports that the PCs acted heroically to save the ship. They can have a 10% discount on any non-magical goods that are under 100 gp. The merchants let them buy a total (as a party) of 500 gp worth of such items. Any booty recovered from the *Sea Maiden* also is handed over to the PCs. The old coins and antique compass fetch a fair price on the open market at the very least.

In addition to CR awards for defeating individual sea scourges, characters who survive the *Sea Maiden* encounter should receive a bonus 250 XP each. The group should also receive 50 XP for each sailor who survives the attacks, but none for saving Vincenz. Delivering Vincenz to justice merits a further group bonus of 600 XP.

PCs survive the encounter, they still have the problem of getting to port. As long as five crewmembers make it alive, they have no problems. If the PCs can learn quickly, they might be able to sail her back with only three remaining sailors. If no crewmembers live, the characters face the unhappy process of being stuck adrift in this boat.

Once they get to port, PCs possibly have to figure out what to do with the ship and how to explain the death of the captain and crew. The merchants at port are delighted to receive their cargo and take the *Albers* into their care until a new crew is found.

Also, Vincenz's fate needs be decided. If he's still alive, Vincenz attempts to escape the ship by any means once the *Albers* nears port. Once he's handed over to the authorities, Vincenz soon hangs for his crimes. Should the PCs deliver him to the port's guard, they earn the gratitude of the victims' family and the city itself. But if the PCs sell Vincenz out, he may later escape from the watch's cells, creating an enemy for another day ...

Most disturbing, the characters may have raised the ire of a malevolent sea god, providing hooks for further adventures.

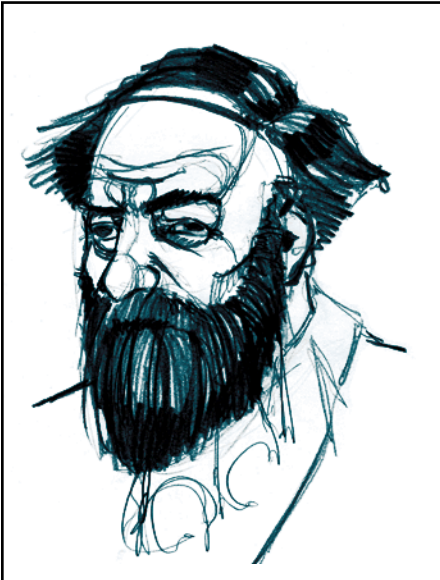
GM'S AIDS

The following section contains several character cards, handouts, and other GM aids. Feel free to photocopy anything in this section for your personal use. You can also download copies from www.atlas-games.com.

COMBAT TABLE

Listed below are the key combat stats for each NPC and the sea scourges. This chart is designed for the GM to be able to keep track of initiative and damage.

NPC	Init. Bonus	Init. Rolled	Attacks/Damage	Special	AC	Hit Points	Damage Taken
Selene, Fenn's Lover	+6		dagger +2 melee/1d4 fine cutlass +3 melee/1d6+1	Sneak Attack +2d6, Evasion, Uncanny Dodge, Toughness Dodge, Improved Initiative	12	15 hp	
Captain Fenn	+3		dagger +4 melee/1d4+1 fine cutlass +5 melee/1d6+2	Improved Initiative	9	20 hp	
Undead Captain Fenn	+2		dagger +5 melee/1d4+2 fine cutlass +6 melee/1d6+3 slam +5/1d6+2	Improved Initiative, Undead, Create Spawn, Toughness	10	31 hp	
First Mate Huxley	+2		dagger +3 melee/1d4+2 cutlass +3 melee/1d6+2	Toughness, Endurance	12	13 hp	
Old Pete, the Lookout	+1		dagger +2 melee/1d4-1 shortbow +3 ranged/1d6	Alertness	11	23 hp	
Vincenz, the Prisoner	+0		punch +1 melee/1d3	Toughness, Spell Mastery: sleep, burning hands	10	17 hp	
Wendt, Ship's Cook	+0		butcher knife +1 melee/1d4+1	Great Fortitude	10	5 hp	
Tomas, the Navigator	+0		dagger +0 melee/1d4	Iron Will	10	4 hp	
Generic Sailors (10)	+0		dagger +1 melee/1d4+1 cutlass +1 melee/1d6+1	Improved Unarmed Strike	10	4 hp	
	+0		dagger +1 melee/1d4+1 cutlass +1 melee/1d6+1	Improved Unarmed Strike	10	4 hp	
	+0		dagger +1 melee/1d4+1 cutlass +1 melee/1d6+1	Improved Unarmed Strike	10	4 hp	
	+0		dagger +1 melee/1d4+1 cutlass +1 melee/1d6+1	Improved Unarmed Strike	10	4 hp	
	+0		dagger +1 melee/1d4+1 cutlass +1 melee/1d6+1	Improved Unarmed Strike	10	4 hp	
	+0		dagger +1 melee/1d4+1 cutlass +1 melee/1d6+1	Improved Unarmed Strike	10	4 hp	
	+0		dagger +1 melee/1d4+1 cutlass +1 melee/1d6+1	Improved Unarmed Strike	10	4 hp	
	+0		dagger +1 melee/1d4+1 cutlass +1 melee/1d6+1	Improved Unarmed Strike	10	4 hp	
	+0		dagger +1 melee/1d4+1 cutlass +1 melee/1d6+1	Improved Unarmed Strike	10	4 hp	
Dert, the Cabinboy	+0		dagger -2 melee/1d4-2	none	10	2 hp	
Crewman Ox	-1		light hammer +3 melee/1d4+3 cutlass +3 melee/1d6+3	none	9	12 hp	
Sea Scourges (15 to start + fallen NPCs)	-1		slam +2 melee/1d6+2 cutlass +2 melee/1d6+2	Toughness	12	7 hp	
	-1		slam +2 melee/1d6+2 cutlass +2 melee/1d6+2	Toughness	12	7 hp	
	-1		slam +2 melee/1d6+2 cutlass +2 melee/1d6+2	Toughness	12	7 hp	
	-1		slam +2 melee/1d6+2 cutlass +2 melee/1d6+2	Toughness	12	7 hp	
	-1		slam +2 melee/1d6+2 cutlass +2 melee/1d6+2	Toughness	12	7 hp	
	-1		slam +2 melee/1d6+2 cutlass +2 melee/1d6+2	Toughness	12	7 hp	
	-1		slam +2 melee/1d6+2 cutlass +2 melee/1d6+2	Toughness	12	7 hp	
	-1		slam +2 melee/1d6+2 cutlass +2 melee/1d6+2	Toughness	12	7 hp	
	-1		slam +2 melee/1d6+2 cutlass +2 melee/1d6+2	Toughness	12	7 hp	
	-1		slam +2 melee/1d6+2 cutlass +2 melee/1d6+2	Toughness	12	7 hp	
	-1		slam +2 melee/1d6+2 cutlass +2 melee/1d6+2	Toughness	12	7 hp	
	-1		slam +2 melee/1d6+2 cutlass +2 melee/1d6+2	Toughness	12	7 hp	
	-1		slam +2 melee/1d6+2 cutlass +2 melee/1d6+2	Toughness	12	7 hp	
	-1		slam +2 melee/1d6+2 cutlass +2 melee/1d6+2	Toughness	12	7 hp	
	-1		slam +2 melee/1d6+2 cutlass +2 melee/1d6+2	Toughness	12	7 hp	
	-1		slam +2 melee/1d6+2 cutlass +2 melee/1d6+2	Toughness	12	7 hp	



CAPTAIN FENN

KEY INFO: The captain of the *Albers*.

BACKGROUND: Rumor on deck is that Fenn makes payments to the sea raiders and that Selene makes contact with them while at port — this is patently false; the captain knows the waters of these seas so well that he is able to instruct the navigator to avoid potential ambushes and hazards. He also happens to be in love with Selene, although he's not the type to express it onboard. The night before his death, he promises Selene that he will retire from the sea and make a life with her on land.

APPEARANCE: Fenn carries himself as a crusty, if not eccentric, old sea dog. Notably, his left eye is missing and an ornate glass eye stares lazily out at the world. His fine jacket and cutlass bespeak the success of his many successful cargo hauls. Merchants respect his ability to get goods shipped on time and his crew respects the fact that his ship, the *Albers*, has a reputation for avoiding pirate attacks. Onboard his ship and in public, he cuts a stoic, grim figure.

ROLEPLAYING NOTES: In conversation, he says very little, and usually only to inform others of his decisions. The crew wonders, when he's not on deck, what any woman can see in a detached man like that ...

The captain instructs the characters to deal with Huxley for most everything after he hires them.

GOALS: Fenn's goal is to make it to the *Albers*' destination with his cargo and crew intact.

"HUMPH . . . SO, YOU CALL YOURSELF A 'SOLDIER'? WHAT BATTLES HAVE YOU SEEN? THE *ALBERS* AIN'T NO PLEASURE CRUISE . . ."

LEVEL 5 EXPERT (SAILOR)

CR 4; SZ M (humanoid); HD 5d6; 20 hp; Init +3 (-1 dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 9 (-1 dex); Atk: melee +4 (1d4+1/crit 19-20/x2, dagger), melee +5 (1d6+2/crit 18-20/x2, fine cutlass*); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 9, Con 9, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 13

*cutlasses use the same stats as scimitars

Skills: Bluff +4, Climb +2, Diplomacy +4, Intimidate +4, Intuit Direction +2, Knowledge (geography) +5, Listen +2, Profession (sailor) +5, Profession (merchant) +4, Sense Motive +2, Spot +4, Swim +4



SELENE

KEY INFO: The captain's woman, previously an informant for hire.

BACKGROUND: Selene is no innocent in distress. It's no secret aboard the *Albers* that Selene was a harlot on the streets of a distant port before Fenn took her on. What most on the ship doesn't know is that Selene was a low-level cutpurse and informant for a gang of pirates operating not far out of port. Selene whored as a means to an end — gathering information.

Fenn and Selene met by design. The *Albers* happened into port with some pricey cargo and Selene was sent to pry open the lips of the old captain. But something unexpected happened between the two — love. Selene finally found someone with resolve and shrewdness to match her own.

The pair lured the pirate ship into the seas where several fighting barges were waiting for it. The pirates were hanged and the *Albers* given a fair share of the raider's treasure. Ever since, Selene and Fenn have traveled together; Fenn is soon to retire from the sea and make a life on land.

APPEARANCE: Selene is older, but reasonably fit and attractive. Her smooth tanned skin and long brown hair catches the attention of most men on deck. Hence the captain keeps her in his cabin ...

ROLEPLAYING NOTES: After the captain's death, Selene becomes both frantic and shrewd. In her more lucid moments, Selene will calculate her actions, realizing that she is not liked on the *Albers* and that her lover's murderer walks free. Selene will immediately suspect Huxley to be the culprit.

GOALS: Selene wants revenge for her lover's death.

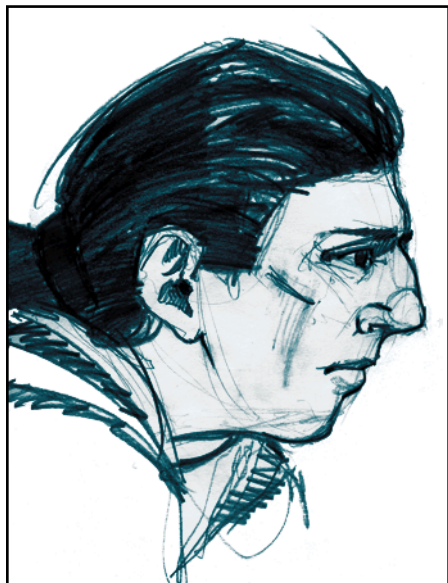
"HE . . . HE JUST TOLD ME THAT HE WAS GOING TO WORK LATE LAST NIGHT . . ."

LEVEL 3 ROGUE

CR 3; SZ M (humanoid); HD 3d6+4; 15 hp; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 dex); Atk: melee +2 (1d4/crit 19-20/x2, dagger), melee +3 (1d6+2/crit 18-20/x2, fine cutlass); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA sneak attack (+2d6); SQ evasion, uncanny dodge; AL CN; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 12

Skills: Appraise +3, Bluff +4, Climb +4, Diplomacy +3, Gather Information +4, Hide +8, Listen +2, Move Silently +7, Sense Motive +3, Search +4, Spot +4, Swim +4

Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative



"AHOY THERE! YOU LOOK LIKE A STURDY ENOUGH FELLOW . . . BUT YOU, ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN USE THAT THING? WE DONT HAVE ROOM FOR LAZY DOGS ABOARD THE ALBERS"

FIRST MATE HUXLEY

KEY INFO: The young and ambitious First Mate of the *Albers*.

BACKGROUND: Huxley worked his way up the ranks the hard way — by practicing self-discipline and learning the harsh lessons of leadership. The *Albers* is not his first ship, but Fenn was the first to give this promising young talent a First Mate's position.

APPEARANCE: Huxley's work aboard the *Albers* keeps him in good shape. He favors simple clothing without any ornamentation that might get in the way of his work above deck. He engages in all things, including play, with an energetic intensity.

ROLEPLAYING NOTES: Above deck, Huxley brims with constrained energy. He motivates the crew by the example of his own hard work, rather than always telling them what to do. He respects the fact that the crewmembers are seasoned sea dogs and leaves them to do their business. When speaking to the characters, Huxley cuts right to the chase. In no uncertain terms, he tells them what he wants and how he wants it.

Below deck, Huxley mostly relaxes on his hammock and enjoys playing tunes on his pipes when the other men won't be disturbed. Huxley tries to maintain a close bond with the men and treats them like his family.

GOALS: Huxley wants the best for his crew and the *Albers*. He understands the mood of his crew and instantly realizes the dangerous consequences of the captain's death. As such, he wants to keep the murder quiet and an investigation even quieter.

LEVEL 3 EXPERT (SAILOR)

CR 2; SZ M (humanoid); HD 3d6+4; 13 hp; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Atk melee +3 (1d4+2/crit 19-20/x2, dagger), melee +3 (1d6+2/crit 18-20/x2, cutlass); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL LN; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 13

Skills: Bluff +2, Climb +2, Diplomacy +3, Intimidate +3, Intuit Direction +2, Listen +2, Perform (flute) +2, Profession (sailor) +5, Spot +4, Swim +3

Feats: Endurance, Toughness



"LOOK I JUST WANT TO MAKE IT TO PORT, COLLECT MY PAY, AND MOVE ON. I DONT CARE WHO'S IN CHARGE OR WHO DID WHAT TO WHOM, DEAL WITH IT."

TOMAS THE NAVIGATOR

KEY INFO: A young, bright navigator, waiting to get his chance to serve aboard a bigger vessel.

BACKGROUND: The son of a notable shipwright, Tomas grew up watching his father's ships leave dry-dock to sail across the horizon to ports unknown. From those early days, Tomas got the notion that he wanted to be on those ships instead of building them. His father's modest means allowed Tomas to be educated in the rudiments of navigation and cartography.

After training, Tomas looked for work aboard warships and with exploring parties but found his lack of experience fatal. Temporarily resigning himself to a smaller ship, the *Albers*, Tomas hopes to get just enough experience to qualify for service aboard his dream vessels.

APPEARANCE: Tomas is bespectacled and pallid due to the poor lighting in the storage room, where most of his work is done.

ROLEPLAYING NOTES: Tomas considers himself a cut above the sailors around him (although he would never say that to them) and doesn't care to fraternize save for in the mess and during the infrequent card games. His humor tends towards the dry and sarcastic, but without directing ridicule towards others.

GOALS: Tomas wants off of the *Albers*; even more so when events begin to unfurl. He sees bigger things in his future and won't risk that future for anyone.

LEVEL 1 EXPERT (NAVIGATOR)

CR 1/2; SZ M (humanoid); HD 1d6; 4 hp; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk: melee +0 (1d6/crit 19-20/x2, dagger); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12

Skills: Diplomacy +2, Intuit Direction +2, Knowledge (geography) +4, Listen +2, Profession (navigator) +5, Spot +2, Swim +2

Feats: Iron Will



"NOTICED YOU WERE NEW ABOARD... LISTEN, ME AND THE BOYS GET TOGETHER FOR A LITTLE CARD GAME AT NIGHTS SOME TIMES... YOU IN?"

CREWMAN OX

KEY INFO: A big, friendly deckhand who, while not very bright, can play a mean hand of cards.

BACKGROUND: Ox left the country long ago for something better to do than shoeing horses and plowing earth. The cities welcomed a man of his girth and he spent some years as a bouncer to illegal gaming dens. While not watching the doors, Ox learned the tricks of the trade and became something of a small-time card hustler. His employers later caught wind of his "after hours" amateur setup and ran the poor man out of town.

Ox was so afraid his employers might do something nasty to him that he caught the next ship out of port. Ox picked up the sea trade and now, years later, serves on the *Albers*. On ship, he can be found both on deck working the lines and below making hull repairs as needed. Despite his previous run in, Ox cannot help but ply his card trade both on the *Albers* and at port.

APPEARANCE: Ox is a bald, healthy-looking lug, with innocent, vacant eyes. He carries himself in a jocular, friendly manner, getting serious only when he's working or playing cards. Ox prominently displays an ornate mermaid tattoo on his upper back.

ROLEPLAYING NOTES: Ox likes to chat it up with just about anybody and loves to laugh. Ox rarely uses his strength to bully others and tends to look up to strong authority figures like Huxley or the captain. If Ox is guilty of anything, it is for acting as a thug for those he respects.

GOALS: Ox just wants to do honest work at honest pay. He likes the *Albers*, and the crew has been his life over the past couple of years. Ox will do anything to save the ship.

LEVEL 2 EXPERT (SAILOR)

CR 1; SZ M (human); HD 2d6; 12 hp; Init -1 (-1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 9 (-1 Dex); Atk melee +3 (1d4+3/crit x2, light hammer), melee +3 (1d6+3/crit 18-20/x2, cutlass); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref -1, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 9, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 11

Skills: Bluff +4, Craft (carpentry) +3, Craft (horseshoeing) +3, Intuit Direction +3, Listen +3, Profession (sailor) +4, Profession (gaming) +8, Sense Motive +4, Swim +3

Feats: Skill Focus (gaming)



"GET OUT OF MY GALLEY! IF YOU TOUCH THAT KEG, I'LL CHOP YOUR FINGERS OFF AND SERVE IT WITH GRUEL TOMORROW!"

WENDT, SHIP'S COOK

KEY INFO: A cranky old sleazeball, running the galley with an iron hand.

BACKGROUND: Wendt worked in his family's inn, "The Spotted Dog," for most of his life, until it went broke. Wendt's father, Rudolph, cooked with much more pizzazz and brought in coin in the early years. Wendt, tried as he might, could never be the cook his father was.

Once Rudolph died, life soured for Wendt. Taking over the kitchens of the "Dog," Wendt hoped to keep the usuals coming back despite the change in cooks. Poor Wendt drove the place into the ground. Destitute, Wendt found a job aboard a ship leaving for far off ports.

Wendt hates sea life, but he fears returning to his home and facing his creditors. Instead, he makes his galley one of the most miserable places to be on the ship.

APPEARANCE: An obese, unkempt man in early middle age. His arms are riddled with tattoos and he is missing two fingers. Wendt somehow smells worse than the honest working men above.

ROLEPLAYING NOTES: Wendt doesn't speak to anyone on the crew without insulting, cursing, or threatening them. He is not above placing some of his own special "ingredients" into the food of any who raise his ire. (This may leave them sick to make his point, but nothing worse.)

GOALS: Wendt makes sure everybody stays the hell out of his way, so he can lead his own stinking, miserable life. If he weren't so indebted to captain Fenn, he might leave this tub at the next port.

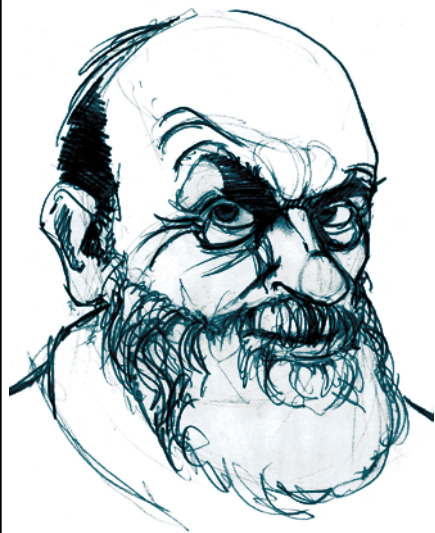
LEVEL 1 EXPERT (SAILOR)

CR 1/2; SZ M (humanoid); HD 1d6+1; 5 hp; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk melee +1 (1d4+1/crit 19-20/x2, butcher knife*); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL CN; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8

*butcher knives use the same rules as daggers

Skills: Bluff +2, Craft (cooking) +4, Climb +4, Intuit Direction +2, Listen +2, Profession (sailor) +2, Spot +4, Swim +2

Feats: Great Fortitude



"THAT REMINDS ME OF A TIME . . . OH, IT MUST HAVE BEEN TWENTY YEARS AGO OR SO. THIS YOUNG FELLA COMES UP TO ME AND TELLS ME MUCH OF WHAT YOU JUST SAID. HE WAS A BRAVE ONE, WAS A BRAVE ONE MIND YOU. . ."

OLD PETE

KEY INFO: Old resident of the crow's nest.

BACKGROUND: Pete has spent most of his life aboard a ship. As a young man, he signed on for dangerous voyages, hoping to see the world and find new places. For years, Pete served on war barges chasing raiders from the shipping lines between ports. After ending up the sole survivor when his barge broke up against the northern coast, Pete tried to retire and start a family on land.

As Pete would be the first to admit, things didn't quite work out. Within a year he was bored with land-life and terrified of starting a family with the young woman he married. Pete was on the next cargo ship headed for the sunset. To this day, Pete has never looked back.

APPEARANCE: Normally seen on the crow's nest, Pete's beard glistens with sea spray and his eyes squint from gazing towards the horizon too long. Most often he wears a gentle smile, inviting people to come and talk for awhile.

ROLEPLAYING NOTES: Ships are Pete's home and he considers the young crew a family of sorts. He is quick to tell a tale or joke and goes out of his way to try to get know everyone aboard.

GOALS: Pete loves his life aboard the *Albers* and will do what he can to protect it and its crew. Pete's passion for life aboard the *Albers* is not, however, based on any conception of loyalty. If worse comes to worst, Pete is not above saving his own skin, betraying whoever he has to in the process. Above all, Pete is a survivor — he will lie, steal, or even murder to protect himself if he has to.

LEVEL 4 EXPERT (SAILOR)

CR 3; SZ Medium (human); HD 4d6-4; 10 hp; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk: melee +2 (1d4-1/crit 19-20/x2, dagger), missile +3 (1d6/crit x3, shortbow); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL CN; SV Fort -1, Ref +2, Will +6; Str 9, Dex 13, Con 8, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 12

Skills: Bluff +4, Climb +2, Diplomacy +2, Intuit Direction +2, Listen +6, Profession (sailor) +6, Spot +6, Swim +2

Feats: Alertness



"LOOKS LIKE WE'RE NEIGHBORS. IF YOU DONT MIND ME ASKING, WHERE ARE YOU ALL FROM?"

DELT THE CABIN BOY

KEY INFO: The worldly young scullery boy, looking for a life beyond his sleepy hometown.

BACKGROUND: Dert lived on a farm, and was the youngest of many children. Dert realized the failing farm was not be able to support all of his family, so under the cover of night, he left for a port town. But he found himself tiring of it within a year.

Dert often watched the ships sail in and out of port, and it wasn't very long before he insinuated himself into their saloons. Intrigued by the tales of the sea-life, Dert joins the *Albers* hoping to become a sailor himself.

APPEARANCE: A small boy, not more than ten, with a sandy-brown mop and inquisitive eyes.

ROLEPLAYING NOTES: Dert strikes a balance between being curious and shrewd. He knows better then to annoy adults, but often indulges his natural curiosity.

GOALS: Dert hopes to prove he is a hard worker so that the crew will teach him to sail.

LEVEL 1 COMMONER

CR 1/2; SZ S (humanoid child); HD 1d4; 2 hp; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC11 (+1 size); Atk melee -1 (1d4-2/crit 19-20/x2, dagger); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL CG; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 7, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 12

Skills: Craft (scrubbing) +2, Listen +3, Spot +3, Swim +1



SAILORS

KEY INFO: The crewmen of the good ship *Albers*.

BACKGROUND: The crew is made up of hearty, toughened seamen. They've left their families behind to find adventure on the high seas, touching land only to squander their hard-earned pay on wine and women.

APPEARANCE: These men may be sea dogs, but they do know how to wash up before a meal ... there's usually plenty of water around, after all. Most either tie their hair back with a thong, or have one of their shipmates take a knife to it every few weeks while at sea. They wear the standard breeches and well-worn boots of their trade, donning a plain white shirt when etiquette or the weather demands.

GOALS: Most have dreams of retiring and raising a family on land, but their more immediate goal is making it to the next port and the revelry awaiting them there.

"AYE, CAPTAIN!"

LEVEL 1 EXPERTS

CR 1/2; SZ M (humanoid); HD1d6; 4 hp; Init +0; Spd 30; AC 10; Atk melee +1 (1d4+1, dagger), or melee +1 (1d6+1, cutlass); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills*: Bluff +4, Craft (variable) +2, Climb +4, Intuit Direction +2, Listen +2, Profession (sailor) +4, Spot +4, Swim +4

Feats: Improved Unarmed Strike

* A sailor is a subtype of the expert NPC class. The skill list for sailors includes: Craft (variable), Profession (sailor), Rope Use, Bluff, Climb, Intuit Direction, Knowledge (geography), Listen, Swim, Spot

THE SEA SCOURGES

KEY INFO: The undead servants of Krakas.

BACKGROUND: Once mortal sailors, the sea scourges have fallen victim to the evil sea god Krakas.

APPEARANCE: Pale and bloated, many sea scourges have missing tissue where crabs and other carrion eaters have feasted in their remains. They reek of salt water, seaweed, and blood.

ROLEPLAYING NOTES: Older scourges are mindless slaves of the evil sea god. Newly-risen scourges may retain some knowledge of their former lives.; they will call out to old friends and loved ones, hoping to take advantage of their opponent's discomfort.

GOALS: The sea scourges seek to gain control of the *Albers* and guide it into the Maelstrom. They attempt to disable as many sailors as possible and will attack anyone who tries to cut the *Sea Maiden* loose from the *Albers*.

SEA SCOURGES (IS)

CR 1; SZ M (undead); HD 1d8; 7 hp; Init -1 (-1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 natural armor); Atk melee: +5 (1d6+2, slam), melee +6 (1d6+2/1crit 18-20/x2, cutlass); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Create Spawn; SQ undead; AL CE; SV Fort +0, Ref -2, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 9, Con —, Int 5, Wis 6, Cha 9

Skills: Climb +4, Listen +2, Profession (sailor) +4, Spot +3, Swim +4

Feats: Toughness

CAPTAIN OF THE SEA SCOURGES (FENN)

CR 5; SZ M (undead); HD 5d8+3; 31 hp; Init 2 (-2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 10 (-2 Dex, +2 natural armor); Atk melee: +5 (1d6+2, slam), melee +5 (1d4+2/crit 19-20/x2, dagger), melee +6 (1d6+3/crit 18-20/x2, fine cutlass); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Create Spawn, Astral Form/Astral Attack (not usable for 30 years); SQ Undead; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 7, Con —, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 6

Skills: Bluff +2, Climb +3, Diplomacy +2, Intimidate +2, Knowledge (geography) +2, Profession (sailor) +3, Profession (merchant) +2, Spot +2, Swim +6

Feats: Improved Initiative, Toughness



VINCENZ

KEY INFO: A dangerous criminal being transported to his execution at the *Albers'* next port.

BACKGROUND: Vincenz eked out a decent life as a trader in a distant port. His life completely changed after he acquired some rare occult items from a strange fisherman. The man claimed to have come across the books and objects while investigating the remains of a ship that had broken up against rocks. Vincenz did not quite believe the man's tale, but bought the items at a considerable price, nonetheless.

As a boy, Vincenz was taught to read and write by goodly priests at the local monastery. Even then he displayed talent and intelligence, but his parents' means could not afford study at a proper university.

One of the fisherman's items included a book of incantations from a wizard. Vincenz became obsessed with breaking the arcane code acting as a cipher to the text. Painstakingly, over the next several years, Vincenz extracted the secrets that lay within until he could perform the spells himself.

In the meantime, Vincenz left all his worldly affairs neglected. His trading business ran into the ground, his few friends abandoned him to his eccentricities, and his coffers bled dry. Forcibly evicted from his homestead, Vincenz resolved to use his magic to take whatever he pleased from the world.

Several months ago, in the port the *Albers* now travels to, a small merchant family ran afoul of Vincenz. The family, the Lundts, worked with Vincenz before he became obsessed with magic. Taking pity on him after his eviction, the Lundts invited their former associate into their home temporarily. Once welcomed, Vincenz used his arts to murder each one of them in their sleep, seeking to claim their wealth and power as his own.

Vincenz' plan was not subtle. Local authorities caught on and he was forced to flee by ship. He was captured just prior to the sailing of the *Albers*, and the true heirs of the merchant family have paid handsomely so that Vincenz will be returned to his home port to be hanged for his crimes.

Captain Fenn took on this special "cargo" in a last-minute deal. Fenn was assured this man was harmless (the bounty hunters who caught up with Vincenz took his spellbook, so they assumed he would be powerless). Little did they suspect that Vincenz mastered some of the spells by rote ...

Only Fenn realizes Vincenz is more than a wanted criminal, facing death at the next port.

Vincenz has been given a powerful sedative, so he will not awaken until the third day (while in this alchemically induced state, he requires no food or drink).

APPEARANCE: Most of the time Vincenz sits disheveled in his cell, brooding. His hair and beard have grown long from his inattention. His eyes remain alert and intelligent as if he is looking for something to happen. He displays nothing but contempt for most of the crew, but will regard adventurers with polite interest.

ROLEPLAYING NOTES: Vincenz watches from his cell with an air of superiority towards the crew. He regards adventurers as closer to being his equal and seeks out their company. Vincenz distorts the truth of any situation to his advantage, especially playing up his claim that he is innocent of the crime that he will be executed for. He does not believe himself to be a criminal — he thinks himself a cut above the stupid and docile sheep that demand his death.

GOALS: Vincenz does not want to hang. He will do anything to avoid the fate that awaits him at the next port. If that means working with others during a time of crisis or murdering more hapless fools in their sleep, so be it. After waking, Vincenz hopes to find information about how far the ship is from its destination so he might choose an opportune time to make a move. He realizes his best chance for escape lies in either sneaking off ship in a life boat when the ship is not too far from shore, or forging some alliance with the crew after the balance of power has shifted. Until then, Vincenz is content to wait it out in the hold.

"WHAT? BECAUSE I AM LOCKED BEHIND THESE BARS, AM I SOME SORT OF ANIMAL? MOST PEOPLE FEAR ME FOR WHAT I AM. THAT IS WHY I GO TO MEET MY DEATH. FEAR WHY SHOULD I EXPECT BETTER FROM YOU?"

LEVEL 3/1 WIZARD/EXPERT (MERCHANT)

CR 3; SZ M (humanoid); HD 3d4+1d6+4; 18 hp; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk melee +1 (1d3 [subdual], punch); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 9, Cha 13

Skills: Appraise +4, Concentration +2, Diplomacy +5, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (religion) +4, Listen +2, Profession (merchant) +4, Sense Motive +2, Speak/Write Draconic, Speak/Write Abyssal, Speak/Write Infernal, Spellcraft +4

Feats: Scribe Scroll, Spell Mastery, Toughness

Spells: 4/2/1 (no spellbook)

0 Level — *read magic*

1st Level — *sleep* (lacking components), *burning hands*

2nd Level — *knock*

First Remnant -

I feel the end is near. For days, we have been stranded on these lifeless waters, a good half week from land in any direction. Each day, I pray to the gods for wind, but none comes. Our stores dwindle, the men know this as I do. I have suggested rationing as is proper, but the men are of low morale. First Mate Anderson has enforced my order on this ship, but frankly I know not how long we can maintain.

Second Remnant -

... this evening a black ship was spotted sailing across our port field of view! Immediately I called the men to raise our sails, thinking salvation had finally come. How wrong we were! The sails were raised but our billows did not fill. How on earth did the black ship sail? The men speak of it as a ghost ship and a night watch has been posted. Frankly, I'm beginning to believe them myself.

Third Remnant -

I have made a sorry mistake. After days of no food and the cursed ship looming out of reach, I lost my composure in front of the men. The rash words I uttered are of no consequence, suffice it to say the men must realize I am as frightened as they. That is something a captain should never show before his crew. It shan't be too long now ...

Anderson won't look me in the eyes any longer. The men will come for me soon.

Fourth Remnant -

Devils walk aboard the Sea Maiden! My crew is reduced to mutiny and savagery! Bound by my own men, I waited for the death they would mete out to me. My life was saved by infighting between them. I managed to slip free once the fighting began in the hold. All of the men were below ... slaughtering one another ... the madness of it all.

I pray the gods may forgive me for what I did next. Hoisting the thick chains from our stores, I sealed the hold and all my men within. My only company above now is that damned ship that waits across the horizon for ... what? It sails around us bloated on dead winds ...

Fifth Remnant -

The screams grow fainter. At first it was difficult to stand ... to hear my men pleading, begging that I might release them. I shudder to think of the blasphemous acts that hunger drives the few surviving men to. Sometimes ... I hear them scratching at the trap. I see the splinters in their fingers as they claw at what will inevitably be their coffin, the Maiden herself.

I hear more ... whispers in the dark of my cabin. From that ship. I know it. Whatever dark presence befalls that vessel has infected my ship grown pregnant on the carnage and treachery below the trap.

Eyes are upon me ... as if they wait for me to expire ...

I've seen a dread visage hovering before me in my mind's eye. Although perhaps a figment, I cannot deny its presence. This thing is real, but beyond the realm of sensible comprehension.

The Sea Maiden will be my coffin as well.

Sixth Remnant -

I can endure no longer. This is my last entry ... may the gods pardon my soul for what I must do and may they commend my men to fitful rest.