

# FANTASEUM

Summer / Fall Issue  
2008



MARITIME  
EDITION



Journal of the  
Creative Community  
Alliance

# Ship's Log of the Westwind Courier Captain Argan Halfhand

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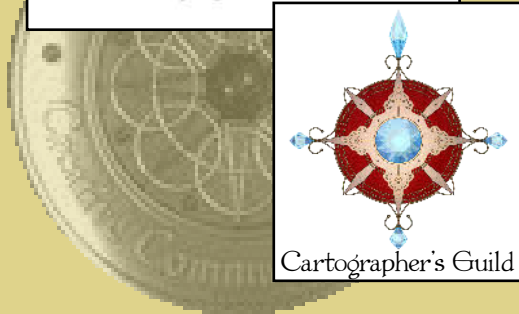
## Editorial

Captain's Observations

This E-zine has been compiled from materials posted on the Campaign Builders' Guild (for GMs and world builders), the Cartographers' Guild (for fantasy mappers) and Plotstorming (for writers).

Together we call ourselves the Fantaseum Alliance. We pride ourselves on being friendly and helpful and assisting new members to learn how to improve their skills.

If you are interested in joining any of the Guilds please click on the invitations on page 3 to go to their websites or click on one of the icons below.



Here we are with Fantaseum #2, and even as it is "put to print," behind the scenes, minds are working on new ideas for the Alliance of Creative Communities. The magazine, after only two issues, will probably have to take a hiatus for a little bit while other concerns are worked out, but have no fear, there are some fantastic ideas in the works.

In our Nautical issue of Fantaseum, you will find all of the resources and inspiration you will need to run a successful series of adventures on the surface of the sea. Barring that, you will at least be able to read some amazing stories from PlotStorming, view some absolutely beautiful maps from the Cartographers Guild, and learn some outstanding tips for surviving at the sea from the Campaign Builders' Guild.

As you read through this issue, make sure you pay extra attention to the beautiful work done by Ravi on the zine itself. He has put an extraordinary amount of effort into this zine, far surpassing the hopes of this particular low-tech editor.

We hope you enjoy this very special issue, and come visit the sites and join in some brilliant conversations about anything and everything related to fantasy and roleplaying.

Cheers!

### How to Use this Book

We have commandeered the Logbook of the good ship the 'Westwind Courier' and have slipped within its pages many of the fine works crafted by the members of the Fantaseum Alliance.

Look for the documents that bear a thumbprint and click on them. These will take you more detailed maps and stories contained in the Folio section of the Logbook. If you would like to see the original forum posts of the work and leave a message for the author click on the

Original Post button at the bottom of the Folio page. You may have to register on the Forums first. If you would like to do that now, click on the thumbprints on the invitations to the right.

We hope you enjoy the Summer/Fall Issue of the Fantaseum Alliance e-zine!

Ship's Log of the  
Westwind Courier  
Captain Argan Halfhand

From: Kalamantan  
To: Outer Grandonia

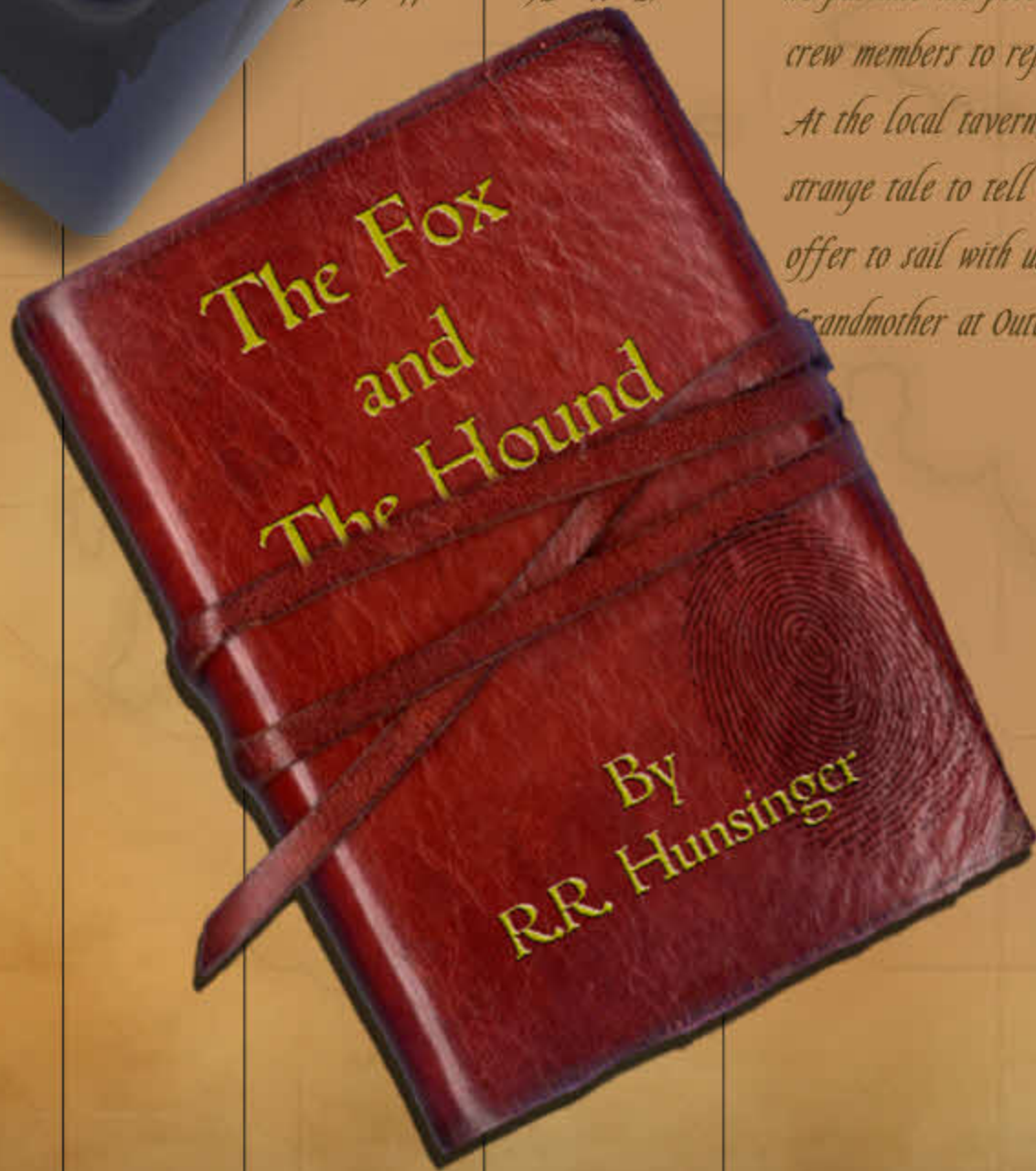


Ship's Log of the  
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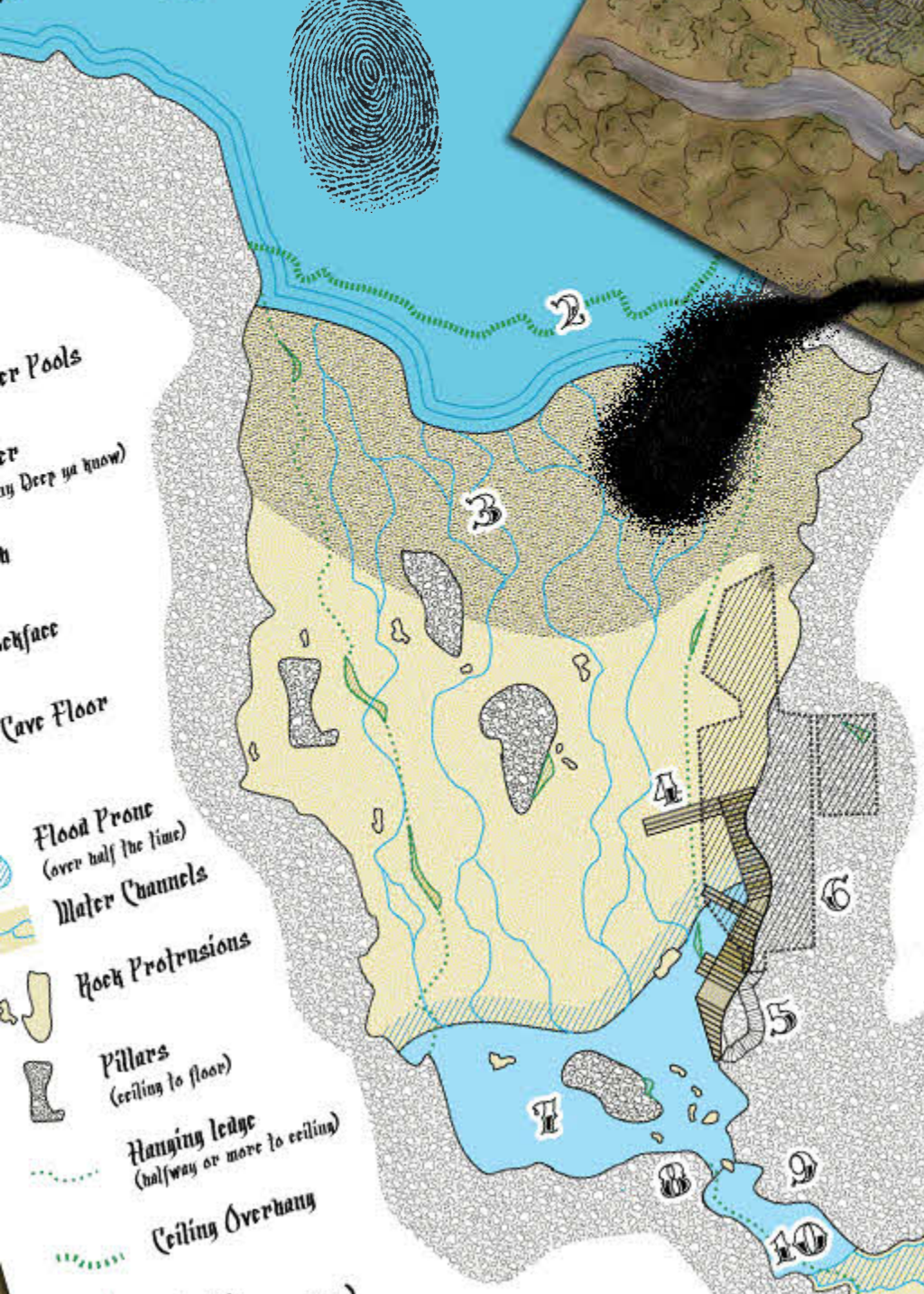


	Lat (N)	Long (W)	Weather and Captain's Observations
Almsday	5° 25' 47"	32° 18' 21"	We put into the port of New Shadina for provisioning and to take on two more crew members to replace Taskali and Zarbat who deserted at the Scaline Isles. At the local tavern, I met an old salt by name of Elias Kirby who had a strange tale to tell of shipwreck and his death and rebirth. Although he declined my offer to sail with us, he gave me a journal and bade me to transport it to his grandmother at Outer Gandonia. For which he paid a price of 2 gold peices.



# CAP'N JANE'S RO

## A Good Place to Splice yer W



- 3 (Branch floor slo... Pool approx)
- 4 The Docks (w/ ladders to cave floor)
- 5 The Carved Stair (30 steps in all)
- 6 The Room (6m above approx 8)
- 7 The Pinch (4m deep)
- 8 The Water (5m drop from upper)
- 9 The Upper Chambers (5m higher than the Main Chamber and rising as the cave heads south)
- 10 The Upper Sump (upstream water collects here)
- 11 The Handmaiden's Grotto (Don't ask why... really)
- 12 The Pinch (narrows too much for an adult to pass through this crevasse)



*Kalamantan*  
*donia*

*Perovations*

*Cat for Description.*

*Depth Guate... ending*

*knots and freshening. Whitecap... starboard bow.*

*we have found the Lair of Capn' Jane. Feared Pirate*

*of the southern seas. For the sake of safety we are*

*ing ourselves before entering the bay which takes*

*ame. My first mate had secreted a chart of her*

*and we will use that to guide our way in the*

*finding buried treasure.*

The Log of the  
Courier  
Halfhand

From: Kalamantan  
To: Outer Gandonia



Weather and Captain's Observations



Oldsday  
56° 32' 21"  
11° 42'

of New Shadina for provision  
Taskali and Zarba  
the Scaline Isles.  
by who had a  
though he declined my  
to his  
he paid a price of 2 gold peices.  
I have come across only three in my  
I would not see them again. The men talk in hushed voices of a  
less fear in the deep. The older mariners are wan, and drinking more than is  
usual for them. They put needless fears into the minds of the others by speaking  
of their past experiences of the Harvester. I have had one such strapped to the  
main-mast and given six licks of the cat, but that appears to have lent credence

Fire on me up!!!

# Ship's Log of the Westwind Courier

Captain Argon Halfhand

From: Kalamantan  
To: Outer Gandonia

Date	Dist.	Lat (N)	Long (W)	Weather and Captain's Observations
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Stay upwind of the weather gauge

5 knots

400m Pool  
Kalamantan  
side of



Rake

Harbour

Current

Broadside



7 knots

Weather gauge







# Ship's Log of the Westwind Courier

Captain Argon Halfhand

From: Kalamantan  
To: Outer Gandonia

Date	Dist.	Lat (N)	Long (W)	Weather and Captain's Observations
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Monday	28 Leagues	82° 27' 43"	38° 12' 61"	
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It turns out that one of our crew, Delgon, is something of an artist. I only discovered this by chance when I saw the men gathered around him before first watch and admiring his work. I invited him for dinner that night at my cabin so he could tell me more about the tools of his trade and something of his techniques. He showed me some maps he had drawn up in his time and we spent a few happy hours passing the evening.



*Ship's Log of the  
Westwind Courier  
Captain Argan Halfhand*

*From: Kalamantan  
To: Outer Gandonia*

<i>Date</i>	<i>Dist.</i>	<i>Lat (N)</i>	<i>Long (W)</i>	<i>Weather and Captain's Observations</i>
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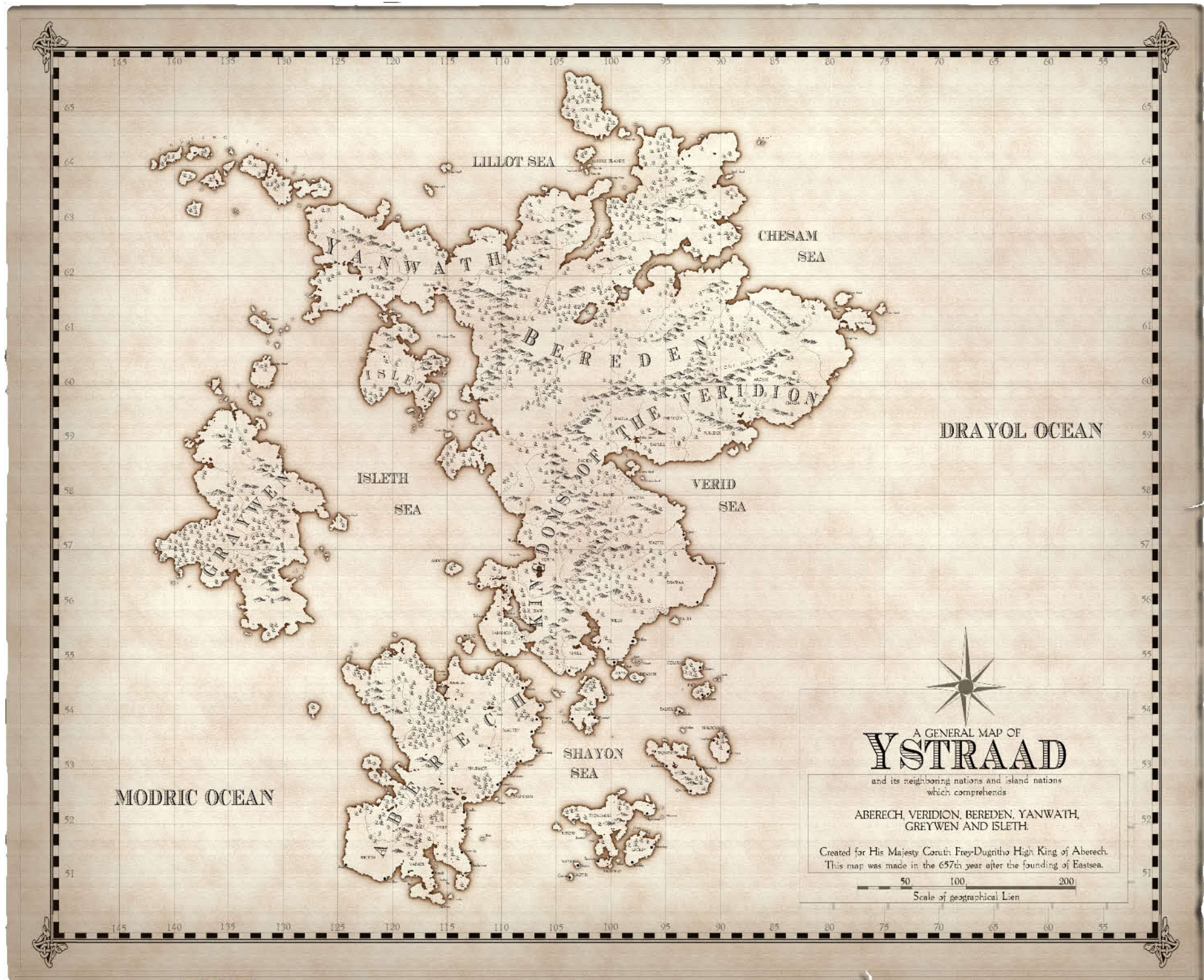
# Folios

Being Attachments to the Logbook  
Of the *Westwind Courier*

As attested to  
*Captain Argan Halfhand*

# Ystraad

By Bohunk



# The Fox and The Hound

By R.R. Hunsinger

AD 1777

The fog was an impenetrable wall of white mist, so thick that even the pink of dawn could not pierce it. Through the ancient gold coin embedded in the tiller arm beneath his palm, Elias Jericho Kirby could sense the shifting currents and sand bars that made travel through the islands and shoals of the coastal waters of the Carolina's so hazardous. The rigging of the main sail groaned no more than an old floor board. The men, even Rume, who was working the lead, were still. They were specters manning a ghostly schooner upon a shadow sea; slipping through a dream reality past the British blockade.

Elias' mismatched eyes were slit in concentration that had nothing to do with trying to see beyond the prow of the Fox. He was feeling the world around him through the spells his gran had taught him. He sensed the blockade vessels through the life energies of the men who manned them. With these magics, unknown to those that served under him, for they would see him dead for it, he had the reputation as the canniest smuggler ever to tread the deck of a ship.

The young man's eyes flew open wide. The blue one, the one gifted with the Sight, saw the warlock as clearly as if the man stood across the deck from him. And the smuggler knew that the spell caster saw him too! 'We are spotted!' He leaned the tiller hard to starboard, nearly throwing half his ten man crew overboard.

'Captain, how can they?' Egelbert, a portly man, who had been a merchant until the British took his own ship as a prize the previous year, asked, his eyes huge behind his misted glasses.

'There!' cried Rume. The big sailor had escaped a British frigate after one too many lashes from the cat, and had no desire to be taken again. She loomed out of the fog, a sleek, shallow drafted sloop of war; ten guns at the most. Well suited for chasing prey in these treacherous waters. She was prow on and would have driven the schooner under her keel, had Elias not taken evasive action.

The two ships were so close that the cannon of the sloop could not bear down on the Fox; for the smaller ship sat lower at the free board. The ene-

my vessel let loose a thunderous broad side as the Fox bore away. The cannon were loaded with round shot and the six pound balls flew harmless through the rigging.

Elias felt the men of the British ship running about through the magic he possessed. 'Marines!' came the order, and the shadowy soldiers were at the rail. There were bright flashes in the white accompanied by the thunderous report of a dozen muskets firing almost in unison. The warlock was the captain of this vessel, and the young Bostonian was sure he was a very successful hound for King George. Rounds zipped and whined, smacking into the deck. Egelbert, his glasses blasted off his face, fell as an unlucky ball smashed him between the eyes.

'All sail!' Elias cried as he drew his flintlock his belt. He pulled the hammer back and brushed his thumb against a silver stud among the diamond shaped cluster of brass studs on the grip. Whispering a word of power, the pistol bucked in the captain's hand and the man who had killed Egelbert flew back mortally wounded. The silver stud now resembled the brass about it, and only a few silver studs remained on the whole of the grip. The men of the Fox flew about; setting gaff and foresail speed outweighed the need for stealth. Elias made for the open sea, hoping to tack back up the coast after loosing the enemy ship in the fog. He had little hope to accomplish that if the warlock had any kind of power or knowledge of these waters. Without sight, the Hound could still follow him to his lair, sniffing out the trail of magic.

The smuggler felt sweat trickling beneath his boat cloak despite the chill mist, and his heart began to pound. Never had he touched the mind of another spell caster save his grandmother. He had encountered those with the gift, but nothing as strong as a true caster. Through his abilities, he had always kept the Fox from becoming a British prize or grounded on a sand bar. He never felt the fear of impending capture; running from the blockade ships had been a game, one where the odds were stacked in his favor. But a true caster pursued him now and with the brief contact he had with the man, one more powerful than himself.

The tide was slack and would not turn inland for a couple hours at least. The fickle currents helped Elias' little vessel by not slowing her escape, but

the schooner would have been more agile in the tack than the sloop that pursued her.

A muffled explosion roared and a plume of water not five yards off the stern soaked the deck. Elias looked over his shoulder, his wet, black queue of hair almost slapping him on the cheek. The harrier had run out a bow chaser and he could just make out the gunner reloading. The small cannon was enough to rip through his light hull, but should it hit the powder he carried for the Continental Army.....

Why were the British trying to sink her without a hail or offer of surrender? The Navy invariably offered smugglers one chance to strike, so they might take ship and cargo as prize. There had been no offer here, just a lightning strike of raking musket fire from the fog.

The cannon roared again, the ball hurtling across the deck. Somehow the worst that had happened was Elias' tri-corn flew from his head, taken by the wind created by its passing. He did not have time to think of the near miss, his mind raced as he ordered his men to work the sails, trying to gauge his position and options. He thought to stand down and hope to surrender, or perhaps to load the gig and slip into the fog, leaving the powder and the Fox to the British. Such a course would not sit well with his creditors and would ruin him, but it would save his men.

The coin beneath his palm grew warm. In his mind's eye - as if it were above the water and clear as day - he saw one of the many small islands that dotted the coast in low and slack tide. The sand bar was just below the surface and lay in his path. He could see it through the enchantments, could avoid it easily. But could the man who pursued him?

The young captain consciously loosened his grip on the tiller and fell into the flow of the magic, fell into the currents, and he felt the rush of the waters around him, the swirls about the sand bar. He ignored the looks of worry from his men. Rume was actually praying, something Elias thought he would never hear. He felt the ship beneath his feet as a living part of him, an extension of his senses through the deck, the tiller, the snapping sails; the wind in his hair like the caress of his mother.

He did not know when he made the turn and did not remember giving the orders that slackened sail at the right moment, but he did feel the furthest edge of bar gently kiss the hull as the Fox slipped by.

The British ship fired the six pound bow chaser at the same moment that she hit the sand bar. The cannon belched then rolled sideways with the recoil and the impact, the gunner fell beneath the iron. Though not a massive gun, it was more than enough to crush him. Elias felt the man's life extinguish with a cry of agony, felt the crunch of the keel as it plowed into the

unyielding sand. Spars cracked and a sailor throwing the lead was nearly pitched over the side.

Elias released the enchantment of the coin with an exhale of breath. The men of the Fox cheered raggedly, not sure if they were safe or not. This had been the closest they had come to being taken. The last round from the pursuer, though thrown off, still tore away the railing near Rume who had taken several painful splinters all along his body. Matson, the closest they had to a surgeon, did what he could for the big sailor. The rest of the men turned to Elias for further orders. The captain tried not to show how much the magic had drained him, or how badly shaken he was from his encounter with a caster.

'Trim sail, we were lucky to miss that bar. Had we that sloop's draft, we would have been the one to run aground. We shall tack back in as planned. The tide will be with us shortly. Mist'ers Gellum and Smith, please see to Egelbert, gently now.'

Elias Kirby was exhausted and would be a long voyage yet to Beaufort.

\* \* \* \* \*

Elias entered the tavern; he stood in the doorway for long moments, allowing his mismatched eyes to adjust to the gloom. Tall, over the six foot mark, he unconsciously ducked a little so as to not strike his head on the lenthil. He was broadly built, his shoulders wider than was aesthetically pleasing, his chest and limbs thick from a vigorous life. He was dressed in a light jacket of blue over a black waistcoat and britches, more presentable now than life aboard the Fox had allowed. Polished boots more suited to riding than a ship's deck came up to the knee. A new tri-corn replaced the one he lost to the cannon ball. His rugged, sun weathered face broke into a grin as he saw the man he had come to meet.

Robert Burke stood and Elias embraced his friend and father's old sailing partner. Burke was the merchant on shore that saw that the ship's cargo made it to Washington's men. Even with the French promise of aid, gun powder and other war materials were hard to come by and the Continental Army always needed muskets, shot, and powder. Even the barest of necessities, such as shoes, were in scarce supply. 'I'm sorry about Eglebert,' the older man said.

'Not as much as his wife and children,' Elias returned bitterly, his smile fading. 'This conflict has left many a widow and orphan.'

'I know.' Elias sat down and waved for a pipe and a drink. 'I gave her Eglebert's share of course, along with my own. The rest of the crew gave what they could. But it does not replace the man.'

'It was a damnable thing though, Rob. This sloop just appeared as if it was made of the fog itself. Too damned close a thing. If we had lost the powder....'

'It would have been nearly a tragedy,' Robert interrupted in all seriousness. 'That sloop's name is the Raider. Her captain is an Angus Campbell. A Campbell! Crown serving sycophants!

'It would have been tragic because this Campbell has taken six of our runners in as many weeks. You were down in the Indies when he took his station. He is a terror, Elias! The first two crews surrendered. He hung them as pirates! Did not even acknowledge the law, and none stopped him. So the other four knowing their fates, ran. He sank them all! A few survivors made it to shore. They said he did not even order them to strike - just blasted them out of the water!'

'As it was with us,' Elias admitted.

He had escaped, his cargo safely off loaded and the Fox well hidden. He was not so well known in Beaufort that he had to worry that this Campbell would find him. He did not tell Rob that the master of the Raider was able to find the smugglers as he was able to avoid blockade ships. He understood Rob's frustration though.

The idea behind the blockade runners was simple enough. The British did not have the resources to stop them all, so many would get through with their cargoes for the war effort. The smugglers were profiteers and patriots. Himself one of the later, he had seen the Tea Party and was there in Boston when Captain Preston ordered his men to fire into the unarmed crowd. He had fought under Washington at Dorchester Heights, and now he served to supply his army. All smugglers felt reasonable sure they would be successful. But for six ships to be taken so quickly, so brutally, that would unnerve many. It unnerved Elias Kirby because he knew what his enemy was.

'With those ships taken, Elias, I will need the Fox to fit out immediately. I have the goods for trade that were supposed to go out on other vessels for the French Indies. When can you sail?'

'We have minor repairs to do, and the men have personal business to attend to. I have to find Eglebert's replacement.....' The last was muttered softly.

'Owl has returned.'

'When?' Elias brightened slightly.

'Two days before you put in. He was looking for you - I think he might sign on. He seemed queer, even for him.'

'Where is he now?'

'Who knows with Owl? I cannot understand the Indian, he is closed mouthed and when he does talk, it is some Catawban nonsense.'

'You do not understand because you will not listen. But I will find him. Have the cargo ready at the bluff in three days. We shall leave then.'

Elias rose, tamping out his pipe when he saw two red coated marines enter the tavern, their bayonets fixed on their muskets, their high hats nearly brushing the ceiling. They were followed by a slim naval lieutenant with a well trimmed red beard and a small sword at his side. Watery blue eyes swept the dark interior, stopping on Elias - the only man standing.

'That would be Lt. Campbell,' Rob muttered.

Elias shuttered his mind as his gran had trained him to do, for she knew that there were other casters out in the world. Some even employed themselves as witch hunters because untrained minds could be discovered by merely making contact.

The lieutenant's gaze passed by Elias without a flicker of recognition, he finished the sweep of the room. He then rolled up to the bar with the gait of a man accustomed to walking on a ship's deck rather than the land. The man surveyed the room once more as he took his drink and held it high.

'God save the King!'

The men in the bar stood and saluted with their drinks; Burke and Elias joining the cheer. The two marines stomped the butts of their weapons on the ground as they repeated the toast.

Lt. Campbell's smallish eyes narrowed on Elias as he finished the dregs of his tankard. The smuggler played with the perverse idea of letting his guard down and giving his foe a glimpse of what he was up against. This man had been responsible for the death of Nathan Eglebert, a friend and a man under his command. Instead he repeated what was common knowledge about the Raider, now that he knew the ship's name and her captain.

'Did your boat float free then, Lieutenant? Since you are able to drink with us?'

He heard Rob take in a sharp breath of air. Since he was risking only himself, Elias felt he could be bold. Campbell scowled, his freckled features becoming scarlet.

'Well enough with the tide thank ye. And you would be?'

'Elias Kirby, at your service, sir. A humble tradesman in search of work.'

'That work would be?'

'Pilot. Would you be needing one?'

The tavern drinkers erupted in laughter, unable to contain themselves.

The British officer knew better than to cause a fight over the minor slight. Accepting the insult for the moment, he left the tavern amid the guffaws. He had neglected to settle his bill.

'Do not fret, Lieutenant. I will stand you the drink!' Elias called after him. Rob clutched his arm after the marines followed their commander.

'Are you daft, boy? You need to remain anonymous. Now you call attention to yourself and your trade?' Elias leaned in, placing his knuckles on the table, looming over the older man without intending to.

'He scared me witless on the water, Rob. By God I will not be bearded on land. And now that I have his measure, I will best him on the water as well!'

\* \* \* \* \*

'I heard what you did to the new British captain, very unwise, my friend. He looks for you. He will find a reason to avenge himself. Wound a man with a blade, but not with words - those wounds do not heal, but fester.'

'All the more reason to inflict them, Owl!' Elias turned from his men as they loaded salt, pork, tobacco, and cotton for the run to the Carib and the French held islands for illicit trade.

'Good that you found us!' He embraced the Catawba Indian, who returned it with equal vigor.

Owl was of middle height with the build of a runner. His solemn face was deeply lined with care, beneath his gray streaked raven wing hair; his copper skin had darkened to umber by time and weather. He was dressed in a simple buckskin shirt and britches, two flintlocks were shoved through a sash, balanced by a fighting knife and tomahawk. The old warrior had fought with Elias in various skirmishes and they had become close friends. The bond they shared flowed as much from the magic they both possessed as the blood they had shed together.

'I had a vision many nights ago, that is why I came looking for you. You sail into danger, against a foe that is more than your match. After what Robert has said and what I have heard, I believe this new British captain is that foe.'

'I am ready for him now,' Elias replied, leading Owl away from the crew.

'He revealed himself unguarded. I know he is a caster, and when we met in the tavern he did not know me.'

'Perhaps he is a powerful caster that has no need to hide. You have only your magic toys and a child's knowledge of the spirits you deal with.'

'Then the mighty Owl of the Iswa had best sail with his odd eyed friend, eh?' Elias grinned.

The Catawban warrior's face betrayed no emotion or thought. 'It may be the last voyage we take together.'

'What do you know, Owl?'

'I do not know anything, Odd Eye, I only feel that this foe will be your undoing.'

Elias paused for a moment. His old fear coming back. 'We have to make this run. The powder we managed to land with will not last long. If we are to win, we need all the help we can get!'

'There are other sailors, young Kirby, other men that will bring the powder, the guns. The French are soon to join your Washington fully. This journey does not have to be yours.'

'Can other sailors see through the fog as bright day? Can other sailors pilot waters they have never sailed before? Or do they crash on shoals? Run aground on sand bars? Can other sailors sense this man, who can do these things that I can do?!'

'No, young Kirby, they cannot, and I shall sail the waters with you and lend you my strength.'

Elias clutched his friend's forearms gratefully.

\* \* \* \* \*

The waters of the Caribbean were so clear and blue Elias could see the fish that swam beneath them and the sand on the ocean floor. The wind was fresh and the Fox bounded over the waves as her name sake though the wood. The sun was warm and inviting; in only his shirt sleeves he reveled in the freedom of it all.

They had made their rendezvous with their French partners off St. Croix with no sign of the British foe and now they were making the passage back to the Carolina's with enough powder and shot to send George's whole Hanover line back to Germany!

The spirit of the men seemed to mirror his own, with clear weather and brisk breezes. The death and near failure of so many weeks before now seemed to be forgotten.

'Sail on the horizon, Captain!' cried Parker, a skinny lad of but sixteen, from his precarious perch seventy feet above the deck.

'Where away?' Elias cried, snapping out his spy glass and following the young man's out flung arm. The sails were just over the horizon, her hull still obscured by the ocean. Elias could not make out her colors, but she seemed to be a two mast, sloop rigged vessel. He felt uneasiness in his guts. They were a long way from the treacherous shoals of the Carolinas. What could possibly be the chances that this was his Hound?

'What is it, young Kirby?' Owl asked at his elbow.  
'Sloop, I think.' He pointed to the dot on the horizon.  
'You think it is he?'  
'I don't see how.'  
'But you think it?'  
'Damn it, of course I think it!' he hissed.  
'Orders, Captain?' Rume asked.

He replied more easily than he felt: 'Maintain course, and see if we can coax more speed from our lovely Fox.' To Owl he said: 'She could be anyone in these waters.'

'But following us? Following you?'

'We do not know. She could be the Raider, but it would be more likely that she is just a French trader, or rum smuggler.'

'What do we do then?'

Elias watched the vessel through the glass for a few long moments, steadying himself on the taffrail. 'Evade her, just in case. Wait 'till dark, then run without lights. Change course.'

Then he murmured quietly so only Owl could hear: 'She's too far away for me to feel her out with my spells. And I do not want her close enough to feel me out, if it is the Raider.'

'I could try, Odd Eye.'

'At what risk?'

'I need only bargain with the spirits. Those of the sea are more unpredictable and cunning than those of the land, but I can do it.'

'After we change course tonight, you and I will take the mid watch so the men do not see.'

Owl, inscrutable, nodded.

The day became long and tedious with all aboard the Fox concerned over the ship behind them. She had gained enough to tell that she was indeed a sloop, but who she belonged to was another matter. Elias kept his men at their duties, rather than worrying about and watching the closing vessel. He set them to the tasks all ships need done. Sail and cordage repair, scrubbing the deck, anything to pass the day away.

Finally, the sun settled to the water, giving the crew a blazing show like no other to be seen. The dark blue sky was alight with flames of purple and pink, until sea and sky were separated by only a thin band of yellow. Then came the absolute of night with no moon, but a vast blanket of twinkling stars to dazzle the eye and confuse the brain.

For an hour they held their course and saw no lights from the pursuing vessel. Elias knew she had not changed course, felt it in his guts. No, the

ship was still there in the dark, following their lights. 'Well, let us see how they do without them.'

'Douse the lanterns. No light at all! We change our heading to the south-west, and just before dawn we'll head north-west. Quickly then, no sound lads!'

The men of the Fox did as Elias bid and then the captain excused himself for sleep, giving instruction to be awakened for his watch.

The first watch had reported no lights or movement upon the sea when the captain came on deck. He dismissed the crew to their berths. Half-way through their watch, with the rest of the crew below asleep, Owl sat cross-legged with a small drum that he beat softly, rhythmically. His chanting to Manatou and the spirits of the sea could barely be discerned over the lapping waves. Elias felt the hair prickle on the back of his neck and along his arms, as his friend summoned the magic to himself. His blue eye saw the spirit that Owl summoned. It resembled a man in general form, but between the legs and arms spread a thick flap of skin, akin to that of a bat, but smooth. The spirit was black on its back and brilliant white on its belly. A downward curved mouth with small teeth was set in a chinless jaw, green glowing pits were its eyes, and along its ribs ran eight vertical slits: gills. The spirit seemed to understand what Owl was asking of it and sailed off into the black night, undulating more so than flying. For long minutes Elias watched Owl as the Catawban warrior sat, his head slightly up turned, his lips barely moving in near silent concentration on his spell and the spirit he was joined to.

Owl stiffened, the whites of his eyes showing through fluttering lids. He began to convulse and foam at the mouth. Through the Sight Elias saw that the man was being assaulted by amorphous spirits formed out of the black of night itself. The captain pulled a small pouch from the wallet at his waist and poured a thin line of gun powder, the black granules flecked with silver, around himself and the shuddering Indian. With flint and steel he struck a spark that ignited the powder with a flashing hiss, nearly blinding his sight in the mortal plane. The blue eye saw the smoke demons caught up in his incantation writhe and flutter away, as if caught by the night winds.

Owl slumped forward, drum and stick rolling away after being released from his frantic grip. The Catawban was bathed in sweat and his hair was plastered to his drawn flesh, his eyes were hollow and exhausted. 'Thank you, Odd Eye. It is he. More powerful than either.....' he swallowed hoarsely, '....than either of us realized.'



'Easy, old friend.' Elias retrieved the dipper from the water cask on deck. The Indian drank greedily.

'We have slipped him in the night, but his spirits found us, through my own. Your spell destroyed them, so he has lost us through the loss of them. But he sent a message before my own spirit brother was destroyed. He said if we survive his friends that he will await us in the waters of the Carolinas. He knows you now, Elias Kirby, caster with the odd eyes.'

There was a bump beneath the ship, then a rasping near the water line that sent a shudder through the small vessel. Elias jumped to pull a line that ran below decks, ringing a bell. 'Up lads, and prepare to repel boarders! Up, lads! Up!'

A great head, fringed with flaring gills, with black sightless eyes and rows of small inward curving teeth, topping a sinuous neck, slithered over the railing near Owl. Before Elias could yell a warning the Catawban rolled away to his feet. Quick as the bird of prey he was named for, the warrior buried his tomahawk in the beast's skull. Yanking it clear, the thing slipped back into the frothing water as another rose to strike at him. The men were pounding up the short stair with lanterns and weapons in hand. Elias saw another of the monsters haul itself bodily onto the deck, sinuous as a snake with a rudder like fin; the thing was nearly ten feet long, both fish and reptile, its hide a smooth, oily green. It had the look of an eel, but not like any Elias had ever seen. The monster was about to snatch Parker in its razor jaws as the boy was coming out of the hatch. Elias fired his flintlock - using the last of the enchantments stored upon it for accuracy - blasting the thing through the eye, and removing its head in a splatter of gore.

The deck exploded into chaos as half a dozen of the eels slithered up and out of the water, slashing and snapping with their flat tails and dagger teeth. More were following. Elias was into them, his second flintlock roaring, though not enchanted it still smashed the creature back over the side. He slashed with his hanger, the stiff curved blade bit solidly into the muscular bodies of the eels, cutting some in half with one blow. Despite the strain of his spirit summoning, Owl fired both his own pistols and with a blood curdling scream he leapt into the midst of the writhing sea monsters, slashing with his tomahawk and knife.

The men of the Fox were initially horrified by the beasts, but thought them of natural origin, like wolves or other feral creatures. Who had not heard the stories of sea serpents attacking ships? They fell upon the foe with gaff hooks, cleavers and cutlasses. Matson joked that they would have good eating for the rest of the voyage. The men took as they gave out,

nasty bites that ripped flesh from bone and tail thumps that shattered limbs. When the deck was cleared of the eels and no more remained but twitching halves and gory streaks on planks, they took stock in their losses.

Matson was tending the worst of the wounds; Rume lost a huge chunk of his thigh to the bite of one of the things. The entire crew suffered from some kind of wound from fighting Campbell's creatures. Elias was finding it hard to breathe from a blow from a tail that may have cracked ribs. Owl was battered mentally as well as physically, several gashes through his buckskin along his legs and torso showed where eels had lashed him with their teeth.

The boy Parker, the only one to come away without a scratch, moved to help Smith roll one of the larger eels over the side. Suddenly the creature, life still within it, lashed out with its killer jaws. Parker's forearm was trapped in the monster's grip as it flopped over the side.

The men cried out as the boy was dragged below. Elias, without hesitation, tore Owl's knife from his belt and dove in after the beast. He hit the warm waters of the sea and felt the shell necklace at his throat tingle. Created by a slave woman with the Gift in Charles Town after he had bought her and her son their freedom; it allowed him to breathe and see beneath the waves as if it were air. It took conscious effort on his part to open his mouth and allow the sea water to rush into his lungs and expel as if he were breathing. He could see the boy, nearly unconscious, struggling with the serpent far below him. With powerful kicks he dove deeper, chasing the thing before Parker could drown.

He would not loose men to his own foolishness! Why did he taunt Campbell? Why had he ignored Owl's warning? Eglebert had all ready died; Rume very well could from such a nasty wound. Owl might have died from the attacks by the smoke spirits, and now this boy! A sixteen year old kid who went to sea because the army would not have him; a boy - three years younger than he had been when Adams and others tossed tea into Boston Harbor - might die for his pride.

The men above and this boy followed him, a man much younger than many of them, because he had a ship and sailed against the British. He offered prize money and adventure. They followed him because he was lucky! Now that luck ran out and a child would pay!

He was on the creature and its prey. The boy was still held fast in its jaws; Elias lashed out with the knife, cutting deep into the gills. The serpent released its prize and snapped at Elias, perhaps feeling victorious in its own element. The captain drove the knife through the thing's fanged maw and

up through the top of its skull. He released the weapon as the creature thrashed way into the darkness below.

Taking hold of Parker's waist Elias clawed for the surface. It seemed an eternity before he felt the pressure of the ocean release him. He purged his lungs of sea water as a deep exhale; breaking the surface he gulped fresh night air. Hands grabbed at him and Parker, hauling them aboard.

Smith pumped Parker's chest forcing the water from his lungs, and the boy coughed and sputtered. Matson had taken hold of the boy's arm to tie a tight tourniquet just below the elbow. 'The thing nearly bit his arm off,' the surgeon said. 'I have to take it!'


Elias could only nod, tears of rage mingling with the salt water that plastered his face.

\* \* \* \* \*

The sky was leaden, the sea was white capped and tumultuous. Sea and sky matched the mood of the captain of the Fox. Both Rume and Parker had succumbed to their wounds, while the rest of the crew was weakened from the poison of the eel bites, or simply from the battering that their spirits and bodies were subjected to. Elias was in a silent fury at his now elusive foe.

Lt. Angus Campbell had not made another run at his ship. Why would he need to? The British bastard knew he would come to him where their chase had begun months before. If for no other reason than Elias wanted revenge. He and Campbell knew that this battle was no longer about the smuggling of cargoes for the war effort, or doing one's duty to prevent that. Campbell could have accomplished his duty without the sinking of ships or the slaughtering of men. Or the summoning of such creatures as attacked the Fox! The lieutenant enjoyed using his power, his Gift, to terrorize men. And the lieutenant sensed that Elias knew that as well. He wanted nothing more than to drive his sword through Campbell's innards and twist the blade until he tore the man's intestines out like uncoiled cordage!

The coward would not put himself into such a position though; else he would have challenged Elias in that dingy little tavern when the younger man goaded him into a fight. Campbell was waiting for him and the Fox. The Raider was larger and far more heavily gunned - as the Fox only sported four six pounders and two pound swivel guns, one each port and starboard as deck sweepers. The Raider would bear down and blast the Fox to smithereens, or take her by sheer numbers as prize, and Campbell would see Elias hang.

 Return to Image

Neither of those outcomes would be the fate of the Fox. She had been brought to bay by King George's Hound but now she would turn to face him.

Elias allowed himself to fall into the magic that pulsed through the gold coin and into his being, feeling the swell and current, turning the Fox to take advantage of the sea's power. He left his mind open, seeking the foe. There! Campbell found him! Through the magic he could sense the Raider turn and prepare to engage him. Yes, come lieutenant. See how a fox can fight!

The Raider appeared from behind a small inlet, moving to intercept. She came at the Fox, prow to broad side. Elias looked to the straw crew propped up about the deck and hoped that they would fool the British. He heeled over to meet the Raider. Bracing the tiller with a guide rope to keep her on the course he set for her, Elias jumped down to the main deck, and ran out his first gun and touched off the powder. The light cannon roared and jumped to the end of its guide ropes. He moved to the next, dodging past a scarecrow crewman, its arms flapping wildly. The chicken trapped in its wicker breast, clucking and flapping from the cannon fire, lent the dummy more animation. He ran the gun out and fired! Both had been double charged to create as much smoke as possible.

The Raider returned fire from her own bow chaser, adding to the smoke and din. The master and commander of the sloop of war looked through his spy glass. Using the Sight, he sensed the life on board the little schooner as Kirby raced along the deck aiding his men in firing their pitiful array of guns. The shots fell just short of the spray sent up by the Raider's prow. He saw Kirby spin the swivel and fire that as well. The boy wanted to try and win the fight single handily! Campbell could see his men flapping their arms and bobbing in panic - they knew their captain was mad coming at the sloop. He lowered the glass.

'Come to starboard three points then tack back to port. I want to fire a broad side as the Raider heels back over with cannons depressed.' The midshipman at his elbow knuckled his forehead and barked his captain's orders.

He turned his attention back to the boy that thought he knew what power was; even the old shaman had realized his mistake in challenging Angus Campbell! Kirby was back at the tiller, changing tack to come even closer to the Raider. Did he think that he could take a vessel of His Majesty's Navy by boarding action with his ragamuffin crew? Campbell laughed.

'Load the chasers with grape!' he ordered.

Elias saw the Raider change tack as he expected she would to draw down and fire a broadside. He lit the slow match at the hatch cover to the

hold and was back at the tiller, adjusting his own tack, hoping to keep on good terms with the wind. The two ships were drawing close enough that there was no way the Raider could escape. He met Campbell's gaze as he pried the gold coin to come free of the tiller arm into his grip. The young man grinned as he saw Campbell's eyes take in his scarecrow crew. He gave the lieutenant a jaunty salute and threw himself over the side.

'Hard about! Hard about!' Campbell cried, but it was too late. The crew executed his last orders as the two vessels passed within spitting distance, then the Fox's tiller came free and she dove in at the Raider. The port battery of cannon fired as the Raider heeled back into the path of the smaller ship. On the Fox, the slow match reached the hold and the barrels of gun powder she held.

The world evaporated in a hellish conflagration for Lieutenant Angus Campbell and the men of the sloop of war Raider.

Elias saw a flash of searing light, and then the concussion of the explosion lifted him out of the water and rendered him unconscious. The steel gray sea closed around the smuggler and claimed him.

Far to the south, on a spit of land that was mostly water logged sand, the remains of the Fox's crew stood around the gig and watched the Raider disintegrate in a plume of red and orange flame. The men cheered at the sight. With the destruction of the damned ship they did not feel so cheated out of their shares from the delivery of the powder.

When they quieted, Smith swept back his lank hair over large ears. 'The captain didn't survive that, did he?' All grew completely silent and looked to Owl who stood as still and wooden as he always did. The Catawba Indian shook his head almost imperceptibly.

'Then God bless him and keep him,' said Gellum, wiping his pointed nose on a ragged sleeve.

'What do we do now? Without Elias? Without the Fox?' asked Matson.

'As you will,' replied Owl. 'Odd Eye served your new country, this United States - gave his life for its struggle. To honor him can you do any less? Join your people as best you can to fight the Red Coats, as my people fight.' The men of the Fox, with unashamed tears, nodded. In pairs and singles they went their way. Owl walked a little way to a scrubby knoll where he sat and waited.

\* \* \* \* \*

Elias coughed and spit up salt water, tasting dead fish in his mouth. He rolled onto his belly and vomited. Painfully he sat back; every muscle in his body was on fire. He was lucky he had been on the surface when the

explosion tore through the water, the force would have shattered his ear drums, and perhaps killed him. It was enough he did not drown, thanks to the sea shell necklace he wore. Owl sat before him, slightly higher on a scrubby little hump. The warrior regarded him with wise eyes.

'You are dead,' the Indian said simply.

'I feel like it.'

'Your men mourn you, and have left to serve your memory.'

'Well, I could not really explain how I survived the water now could I?'

'Perhaps not.'

'Did I do right? Destroying the powder? The Fox? I could have landed elsewhere, saved it all for the fight to come.'

'You served your people far better by killing your foe. His power would have destroyed far more than your little ship and her store of gun powder. But what shall you do now, Odd Eye?'

'I had a vision while I bobbed out there unconscious.'

'A vision?'

'Like the one that brought you to my side when we first met and all those you claim to have had since.'

'I do not claim anything.'

Elias smiled. 'In this vision I saw a great fleet along a river - a French fleet. And on the land I saw the whole of the Continental Army amassed. In between were Cornwallis and the British army. This will be where the British will loose this war and America shall have Her independence. I intend to be there!'

Owl nodded. 'I shall go too. But you are dead.'

Elias flipped the gold coin in his hand end over end, catching it deftly.

'Elias Kirby might be dead, but I shall take my grandmother's maiden name. After all, I have her eyes and her Gifts. I shall be Jericho Reese from here on out.'

'Reese,' the Catawban repeated, trying it out. 'Then come, young Reese, for I can no longer call you Odd Eye, let us see the end of this war for independence.'

The two men turned from the beach and began the long walk inland.

# Cap'n Jane's Roost

By Publius



# Pirate's Cove

By Torstan



# Red Wake, Avatar of the Black Abyss

By Nathan Ellsworth

*"He went over before the storm or the beast took us, a rogue wave - he was the lucky one. We was looking in the churning sea when the tentacles rose around the ship, massive, like we was in a forest. But those trees was bent on ripping our boat apart..."*

## Break the Stereotype

When was the last time your characters gave any animal they faced a second look? Maybe the tyrannosaurus scored a few hits, but the party overcame the challenge and moved on. Animals are classic adventurer fodder, random encounters, and "speed bumps" on the road to the villains. Their second-rate status is understandable - a limited intelligence cripples their ability to make a dynamic villain.

EVIL hadn't touched an animal yet, and there are plenty of beasts that roam the seas. Some creatures of deep lend themselves to villainy more than others: sharks, octopi, squids and giant eels, and because of it they were summarily dismissed. The perfect candidate for Uncommon EVIL comes from completely unexpected stock, and to most people one of the most unassuming creatures of the sea is the dolphin. Often gregarious, chipper, and amazingly cunning, dolphins have a reputation for helping humans in distress. It was time to turn a protector of the sea EVIL.

## The Death of Long Sun Diver

Long Sun Diver was a normal dolphin that enjoyed all the past times of his kind - herding fish, breaching, surfing, and mock fighting. However, the young male also enjoyed deep diving, a rare fascination among his kind. Diver would fill his lungs with clean air and then dive down into the darkness to see how far he could go. Many dolphins felt the young male was reckless and foolhardy, but Diver ignored their quips and continued to push himself deeper. He enjoyed the complete darkness of the deep, and the quiet - it was so unlike life near surface, especially around his noisy kin.

One of his favorite spots to dive was off the north shore of a lonely island in the tropics. There was a great sheer underwater cliff there that called to him, and no matter how far he descended the cliff never changed. Then one day, he dove farther than he'd ever gone before - too deep. Long Sun Diver never returned to the surface.

His pod searched for him. When they couldn't find him they mourned for Diver's loss, but many felt he had probably brought it upon himself, due to his recklessness. They left the island shortly afterward and haven't returned because of the memory of their missing pod-brother.

Deep in the black abyss, Long Sun Diver was alive, but only in the loosest sense. That day he'd kept diving because he'd heard something call to him, a voice that spoke in the tongue of his kin but wasn't his brothers or sisters. The dolphin had been lured into a trap by Atlotolin, the Black Abyss, a long imprisoned god of the sea, storms, chaos, and death. It felt Diver's expeditions going deeper and deeper every year, until he finally came close enough. With what divine power the god could channel, it reached out and ensnared the dolphin. Atlotolin kept Diver's body safe while it entered his mind.

The dolphin knew pain, witnessed horrors no mortal should be subjected to, and suffered the caress of the abyssal god's mind for years. Eventually Long Sun Diver broke under the onslaught. He embraced Atlotolin's will, and the dolphin was reborn - an avatar of the imprisoned god, he was vested with a sliver of divine power, and he vowed to find a way to free the deity.

Red Wake, as the dolphin now referred to himself, sought out ancient lore and powerful magic. He roved the seas and then scoured the land - guided by the knowledge the Black Abyss planted in his mind. The avatar eventually found what he sought in the last place he suspected. He uncovered a ruined city buried under the dirt and dust at the center of a dry lake bed. Red Wake spent years studying the relics and records of the lost civilization, but eventually the will of Atlotolin called him back to the ocean. Knowledge and more in hand, the avatar returned to the sea and began the next phase of his plan.

## The Will of the Black Abyss

Red Wake dreams of releasing its divine master, and he has devised a way using the knowledge taken from the buried city. Atlotolin at its might could break free, but its long imprisonment has sapped its strength. The avatar plans on invigorating the deity by making a sacrifice to it - a great sacrifice. Red Wake wants to flood the world until only the highest mountains remain above the waves. Only the simultaneous death of millions beneath a torrent of water will nourish and empower the ancient deity to break the shackles that keep it bound.

Flooding the world is no small feat, and it requires powerful magic. Red Wake and his minions are constantly at work crafting numerous relics - twisted knots of cancerous coral imbued with a piece of Atlotolin malignant will. Once complete, each relic must be placed at points of strong magical power all over the globe, so they have the greatest effect during the final ritual. The forces of the Black Abyss have completed and placed a number of the relics, but Red Wake's task is far from complete.

### **Horrors from the Deep**

Red Wake's forces are numerous and diverse. Many of the foul denizens of the oceans have gravitated to the avatar, enticed by the ancient and dark power he radiates. Sahuagin continue to answer the call in large numbers, but rarer and deadlier beings like kraken and a deep sea variant of the aboleth also serve the disciple.

He has further bolstered his forces through deception, perversion, and dark magic. He enjoys corrupting sea elves and humans to willingly worship Atlotolin and serve his cause. And his elite wereshark warriors - a force Red Wake is particularly proud of - are creatures born from his own twisted imagination.

- Basic sea force - Sahuagin Squad - Sahuagin officer, 6 sahuagin warriors & 2 sharks
- Basic land force - Pirate Squad - Pirate leader & 4 cuthroats
- Advanced sea force - Scout Squad - Sea elf officer, 2 weresharks & 2 sharks
- Advanced land force - Acolytes of the Black Abyss - Human priest, 4 acolytes
- Elite sea force - Slaver Squad - Aboleth & 4 sahuagin
- Elite land force - Maulers - 6 wereshark warriors

### **The Eye of Rage**

The lonely tropical island has become a far different place since Red Wake rose from the deep. Thanks to the magic of the aboleths and the krakens, a storm constantly broods around the island. Hurricane force winds provide the first line of defense against anyone daft or daring enough to come and investigate. Beneath the waves, sahuagin and sharks prowl in large numbers, constantly searching for intruders and food. Closer to and surrounding the island, the sahuagin and sea elves have established their communities. The avatar demands the two groups coexist relatively peacefully, and the tense truce is maintained by the presence of the aboleth and kraken.

Deep beneath the waves, where light doesn't penetrate, Red Wake's other forces dwell. The aboleth have built twisted complexes on the stoy sea floor, while the kraken simply drift and dream in the inky depths. Red Wake resides in one of the deep aboleth cities - when he's present - the closest complex to where the Black Abyss lies imprisoned.

# **Kazryia, the Weeping Dragon**

**By Nathan Ellsworth**

Snake-eye held up the necklace, a pretty bauble of platinum and glittering diamond. "Not interested in even seeing it?"

"Not even the slightest," Maria replied from the rail.

"The craziest thing I ever heard - a dragon refusin a bit o' treasure."

The woman whirled, and seeing her eyes made the captain take a step back.

"I am not a whore to be won over with a necklace stolen from the dead! Understand one thing, gout ridden cur: I will never be your friend! You, and the pox blighted inbreeds you work for, tortured and murdered my daughter, tortured me, and now you're blackmailing me with the life of my son. You and your friends better hope I die doing your vile work. Because that is the only thing that will stop me from hunting all of you down and making you suffer like my children suffered!"

### **Break the Stereotype**

Dragons, where to start? They're strong, intelligent, magical, and amazingly dangerous - even the youngest are a force to be reckoned with. There are two categories of dragons most often talked about: chromatic and metallic. Evil dragons, usually red, are the iconic monster of the role playing hobby. But we're not here to discuss iconic evil.

Metallic dragons are defenders of the weak and innocent, and agents for the forces of light. For all their physical and magical power, dragons are still driven by emotions similar to our own. They feel anger, love, and fear - they care for their friends, fear for the safety of their hordes, and love their mates and offspring. Their personal ties and emotions are their greatest weakness that few think to, or are daring enough to exploit. If something they care about enough is threatened, even a mighty dragon may be manipulated to perform acts they would never normally consider doing.

### **A Tortured Parent**

Kazryia considered herself lucky - she had lived prosperously for over a century. The bronze dragon had a sizable stash of treasure, powerful mate, and two amazing wyrmlings. It only took a year for fate to turn her world upside down. Her mate was slain in a confrontation with a black wurm, and shortly after both her wyrmlings were kidnapped. The kidnappers didn't demand any ransom, instead they used vile magic to torture her daughter, and through a sympathetic bond, forced Kazryia to experience the act. Infuriated, but helpless from the agony, the dragon could do nothing but endure the death of her child.

Afterwards, Kazryia began to relentlessly hunt down the kidnapers, but then they finally sent her a message - their first demands. They ordered her to destroy a small island outpost. For many years the fort had provided a safe harbor in a region known for the pirates that hunted the waters. The dragon rebelled, but then the torture began anew through her son. Distraught beyond reason, Kazryia razed the outpost - while their defenses may have withstood a pirate attack, they couldn't stand against a raging dragon.

As she flew from the scene, a ship at sea near the island hailed her. She transformed and landed to find that the captain had another ultimatum. He didn't have her son, but served the ones, the Cabal, who did. It was their wish that she served on his vessel for seven years, and after the indenture was complete her child would be released. Kazryia took the offer poorly - she devoured the captain and destroyed the ship. And for her defiance, they tortured her son. The dragon suffered for days on the ocean floor, unable even to expend the effort to return home.

Eventually the anguish subsided, and she rose to the surface to find another ship waiting. The captain of the Rage, "Snake-eye" Jarvis, offered her another ultimatum. Kazryia had one more chance, but for her insolence the period of servitude had increased to fourteen years. Broken and hopeless, she acquiesced.


The Cabal Jarvis served wanted to carve out an empire throughout the islands and the coastal region the dragons used to protect. With the fortuitous death of Kazryia's mate, only she stood in their way, and they knew the key to controlling her. They kidnapped her children and forced her into the current situation - the hopeless dragon now serves as the muscle for their evolving thug empire.

### **Savagery and Sorrow**

Jarvis and Kazryia quickly brought the region under the thumb of the Cabal. They assaulted every craft on the water, including other pirate vessels, and stormed every town until no one opposed them and everyone paid the Cabal's taxes. But that wasn't enough for the shadowy organization. They ordered the pirate to expand into the north, where heavy ships sail between rich northern ports - an order he's undertaken with some zeal.

The northern powers aren't giving up without a fight. They've sent numerous ships after Jarvis, Kazryia, and the Rage, but no single ship has succeeded in overcoming the dragon's defense. When they send a sizable force, the pirate always turns south to join up with other vessels beholden to the Cabal, and the northern sailors and military are lucky to escape with their lives.

Word of the bronze dragon's attacks have spread throughout the north. Those who survive the assaults always tell a similar tale: the beast never meets the eye of anyone on a doomed vessel, but it's easy to see tears as they stream down her cheeks. It's evident that the dragon takes no pleasure in her destruction, and it's earned her a moniker: the Weeping Dragon.

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### **Thugs, Pirates, and a Dragon**

The true identity of the thirteen members of the Cabal remains a mystery - they always wear masks and cloaks to conceal themselves. But no one denies that they are the ultimate powers of the islands and the coast. Their rules are few but their taxes are extreme, and any that don't pay or that foolishly rebel answer to the thirteen's monstrous thugs, cutthroat pirates, and - for the worst offenses - Kazryia.

Outside the Azure Coast, pirates and spies seek to expand the Cabal's influence, and Snake-eye Jarvis is the undisputed leader of these forces. The wily pirate is a constant thorn in the side of the northerners, and as long as he has Kazryia under his command they will never overcome him.

- Basic force - Thug Squad - Human cutthroat leader & 6 hobgoblins
- Advanced force - Tax Collectors - Human cutthroat leader, 2 hobgoblin fighters & 2 ogres
- Cabal ship - Ship of the motley pirate navy - 350 ton ship with 45 cannon and a crew of 300

Kazryia is the Cabal's greatest force. Even though she fights half-heartedly, she has yet to face anything that can stand against an adult bronze dragon. She is a tragic figure, doomed if she does and doomed if she doesn't. Four years into her service, she's ashamed of the blood on her talons. She's considered defying the Cabal again, but then she remembers the agony and never follows through. The experience has nearly broken her, and when the Cabal or Snake-eye hasn't sent her on a despicable task, she either spends her time staring out to sea or remains locked in her cabin. Her only hope is that someone mounts a strong enough offensive to bring both her and the Cabal down.

### **Azure Coast**

The coast and the nearby islands used to be dotted with peaceful small communities and the occasional harbor for ships sailing the north-to-south route. Under the protection of the bronze dragons the communities thrived, but the rise of the Cabal changed everything. Stress and worry have shattered the peace of the region, as hamlets must now continuously toil to produce enough to meet the Thirteen's exorbitant taxes. They also suffer the presence of Cabal thugs that abuse their station as much as they protect the people.

The Rage is the flagship of the Cabal's motley navy. It's a maneuverable "third-rate" ship of the line with two gun decks and 64 guns. If Kazryia is aboard, Jarvis rarely needs to use the cannon, and the pirate usually removes 24 to make the ship more maneuverable. It also allows him to pack more men aboard - up to 550 - and bring home larger hauls. Kazryia has sizable quarters aboard the Rage, they rival the captain's, but hers are still spartan even after four years.



# The Harvester

By Nathan Ellsworth

*"We found her, well that's being generous. We found the body less than an hour ago - bloated by the water and eaten by the fish," the sergeant said with a wave of his hand. The magistrate held a scented cloth up to his nose and clenched his jaw to stop from gagging. "Current must have taken it north from the harbor," the guardsman was saying.*

*"Yes, yes! I want it disposed of, quickly and discretely!" He eyed the corpse - it was missing a leg. The body had been gnawed on by the fish, but there was no mistaking the killer's handiwork. This made five victims, that they knew about.*

## Break the Stereotype

Golems are mindless constructs bound to unquestioningly follow the commands of their creators. Often serving as simple guardians and brute force destroyers, golems waylay adventurers and hold the front line in combat, so their magical masters can safely blast opponents with spells from a distance or make a clean get away. Like animals, golems usually don't make memorable villains because they lack the intelligence to be devious.

What if, through some twist of magic, a wizard created a golem with a spark of consciousness? What if the construct became a killer out of its own need to survive? What if the golem began to enjoy the murders it committed? The Harvester is the embodiment of these questions.

## Mad Wizardry

The wizard Marrador wanted to make his flesh golem unique. He altered the creation spells in significant ways, and used only the finest components and "parts" in its construction. As the powerful magic coursed through the construct, a semblance of life returned to the dead flesh, and the golem actually awoke on the table.

The results initially pleased Marrador. His flesh golem was quicker than the shambling monstrosities of his fellow wizards, and it had a glimmer of intelli-

gence, allowing it to perform more complex tasks. Though his golem did have a unique problem - its appendages (arms and legs) did not keep the semblance of life for long, a couple months at most. Once the magic began to fade, they suffered accelerated necrosis and rotted away until they didn't function. This condition was simply not acceptable to the wizard.

Marrador researched the problem to see if he could salvage his work, and in the interim, he sent his creation out to "harvest" from the closest graveyards and morgues. Unfortunately the wizard's research came to a dead end, and they ran out of suitable corpses. His golem drew unwanted attention one month when it brought home a "fresh corpse." Unbeknown to Marrador, the glimmer of intelligence in the golem had continued to grow, and when it didn't find any suitable corpses in its foray, it made the logical leap and created one.

The wizard could sweep the incident under the table using his clout and a little intimidation, but that didn't solve the golem problem. Marrador decided it was time to accept the failure and rid himself of his troublesome construct. The wizard took the golem deep into the wilderness, told it to guard a tree, and then rode off. Accepting its master knew best, the golem stood at its post and waited.

It waited until one of its legs almost rotted off, and then the spark of intelligence flared. It realized its master was never coming back, it was on its own, and if it wanted to survive it better find a replacement. An unfortunate woodsman was the golem's second victim, and he even provided the coarse thread to sew the leg on. Foreign to the concept of freedom, the golem wandered the wilderness until another limb began to rot.

Lucky for it, it stumbled upon a road and followed it to a small farming village - unlucky for the village. The golem had learned from the problems it had faced in its first life: don't waste time with the graveyard because fresh limbs last longer, and don't get caught or it would be punished. Thus, the go-

lem came in the night, relied on stealth, took what it needed and returned to the woods.

One gruesome death scared most of the villagers witless. Their best trackers and woodsmen formed a small party and hunted for the murderer - it was relatively easy to follow the golem's trail. They attacked without question, but they were unprepared for the creature itself and the golem killed them all. The village went hysteric when their brave men didn't return. Believing they were cursed, they packed up all their belongings and fled to the closest city. The golem followed.

The golem saw the city and knew it never had to fear about finding replacements again. It slipped past the guards in the dark of night and claimed a run-down and abandoned house in the worst part of town. Now as intelligent as a human, it began to observe and learn. Soon it could predict the customs and actions of the citizens, even if it didn't understand the reason behind them. When it next struck, it knew where to hunt and who to kill, and it moved like the night itself. The Harvester was born.

### **Evolving Evil**

The golem now known as the serial killer "The Harvester," has struck many times since its initial murder. Once a month the killer selects its victim from the weak and drunk of the slums, and because it's a port town, the golem has plenty of potential donors. Since it hunts and kills the dregs of the city, the guard isn't moving quickly to find and stop the killer, but news of the gruesome attacks and fear is spreading. Eventually the wealthy and powerful will want the blight hunted down and removed from their city.

Until then, the mood in the slums continues to grow darker and more desperate. Dread and fear is palpable in the air, and the regular residents are paranoid even in the day. The smart ones are looking to get out, and those that can't lock their doors and never go out at night. The Harvester hasn't broken into a house yet, but no one is taking any chances.

The golem used to kill only to keep itself alive and mobile, but it has embraced The Harvester persona. It's evolved far beyond basic survival, and it now experiences a vile joy every time it kills. It revels in the infamy and power it wields over the simple citizens. It's the master of the slums, manipulating the populace through fear. The Harvester

The Harvester is a flesh golem, but one unlike any that's been constructed before. Namely, the golem is intelligent, and its intelligence continues to grow

in more devious and fiendish ways. It's a predator that stalks the streets and the shadows as capably as any skilled thief, and its quite nimble and quick considering its seven foot (2.13 m) frame.

The golem hides in the shadows and attacks its opponents from behind. It prefers to overpower its victims with its tremendous strength and snap their necks, but it does carry a keen short sword to help harvest its prizes. If faced with a determined party, The Harvester will make multiple hit-and-run strikes, targeting spell casters first.

### **The Haunted House**

The house is a few blocks from the docks. It's one of a handful of older estates built when the city was younger. When the first trade barons wanted to live nearer to the sea and their warehouses, and when the harbor didn't smell like like it does now. The house had been abandoned for at least a decade when The Harvester moved in.

Since then, the house has earned a reputation for being haunted - mostly due to the crashes and bangs The Harvester makes when it rearranges the house to suit it. The golem has rigged the house with numerous vicious traps, preparing for the off chance that someone might come and snoop around the house, or the even unlikelier event someone comes hunting it.

# Encounters on the High Seas

By Nathan Bivins

## Encounters on the High Seas

The party boards the ship and settles in for a week long journey about the Salty Dog, a merchant ship that just so happens to be headed towards the PC's next destination. You describe the ship, the captain, and a few quirky ship-mates before conceding that "The trip is uneventful and you arrive at the destination in one week." What a lame journey.

Journeys, and especially those across the high seas, don't have to be boring affairs. Add some salt and spice to your next sea bound adventure by adding these three exciting encounters aboard the Salty Dog!

### I. The Shipwreck

The Salty Dog nears an island with a small sandy beach that is surrounded by dense forest. The lookout spies a wrecked sloop in the shallow water of the beach, a large rock visible in the prow of the sloop. The sloop lists to the side and is obviously beached and wrecked. Three men run about the beach waving shirts and kerchiefs at the nearing Salty Dog.

The captain of the Salty Dog tells the PCs that he intends to rescue the shipwrecked men and angles his ship towards the island. He weighs anchor off the island and sends a rescue party ashore in two rowboats. The captain takes the following precautions:

- One rowboat is full of 10 armed marines. A rowboat can carry 10 people besides the 6 rowers.
- He calls his men to stations, loads the ballistae and the mangonel, and puts a man in the crow's nest.

Allow the PCs to join in on the rescue in whatever capacity they see fit. If they wish to join the rescue party, they replace marines.

#### The Rub

Pirates have set a trap using the shipwreck as bait. The men on the island are pirates themselves and run into the woods without a word when the first person steps out of the rowboats onto shore. After a few seconds, the crow's nest erupts with a call!

"Ship! Ship to port! Gods, oh Gods...pirates Captain!"

The pirates fly a black flag and approach in a galley painted red and black. The pirates want to capture the Salty Dog intact, and they intend to board the Salty Dog and take her by force.

The Salty Dog cannot raise anchor and her sails fast enough to avoid being boarded. The captain's preparations have paid off however, and the Dog is not defenseless.

#### The Battle

There are a number of different ways this battle can play out depending on the location and level of the PCs, so adjust accordingly. The battle should be chaotic and very deadly with the artillery being flung across to each ship, magic flying about and destroying things and people, etc.

The Salty Dog:

- The Captain orders his 10 remaining marines to prepare to repel boarders, and the crew begins firing the mangonel and the two ballistae on-board. Fire arrows are shot from the forecastle when the pirate ship is in range, and small bundles of 6
- 10 darts are fired from the ballistae to shred the pirates.
- The mangonel from the Salty Dog should score a crippling blow to the pirate ship at point blank range just as it comes alongside, ripping a huge hole in her side at the waterlevel. As the pirate ship begins to take on water, the battle turns even fiercer as both sides realize that there is now only one ship to sail away.
- The marines in the rowboat hurry back to defend the Salty Dog. If the PCs are with them and more time is needed, the Salty Dog's defenders can cut the grappling ropes, push off ramps, or start a fire aboard the Altasha.
- Because of the danger of catching on fire, the Salty Dog is equipped with large barrels of water on her deck, with buckets hanging nearby. Depending on the level of magic in your setting, she may also have wands of create water handy and other items to extinguish fires.

#### Pirates

- The pirates attempt to disable any personnel on the Salty Dog by firing rocks instead of boulders from the mangonels. The pirate ship "Altasha", has one large mangonel, two small mangonels and 2 small ballistae. The large mangonel fires searing hot metal shrapnel that has been heated using the spell, Heat Metal, for increased damage.
- As the Altasha approaches, grappling hooks with ropes are thrown, and as she is brought up alongside the Salty Dog boarding ramps and ladders are also joined. 25 pirates storm the Salty Dog with rapiers/shortswords, studded leather armor, etc. Four archers remain on the Altasha and snipe at the crew and/or PCs. The Altasha is captained by a sea wizard that assists with the assault at range from the deck of the Altasha. The wizard may use the following spells (in addition to his normal spells) in combat, depending on the CR of the Encounter:
  - Ice Storm
  - Confusion
  - Gust of Wind
  - Major Image (to create an image of the rear of the ship on fire from a fireball, seeking to pull sailors/PCs there in an attempt to extinguish the fire)

If the pirates lose 2/3 their numbers or if the wizard falls, they throw down their weapons and give up.

#### **The Twist:**

If the pirates are repelled, the sea wizard escapes via dimension door into the hold of the Salty Dog. He suffered damage from the spell (for the unknown location), and is recovering there, waiting for the perfect chance to exact revenge.

## **II. The Mutiny**

During the journey, the PCs learn that the Salty Dog isn't merely a merchant ship. Her arsenal and marines seem overkill for such a vessel, and the sailors are salty and shady. The Captain seems upstanding and normal, but the PCs should get the hint that this vessel isn't exactly legitimate and legal.

At sea, the Salty Dog encounters a huge cog that is slowly circling. The Captain surveys the ship for a few minutes before closing and positioning the ship within communication range. He soon learns that the cog was damaged by sahuagin and that the rudder is broken, but otherwise, they are fine. The captain wishes them good luck, and resumes course. The crew is visibly restless, but otherwise mute.

#### **The Gist**

- The Salty Dog also moonlights as a small

- time pirate ship herself. She preys on other merchant ship occasionally to increase profit, sparing the enemy ships and her crews of a normal pirate attack fate, but otherwise robbing them. The crew wishes to participate more often in this lucrative business, but the Captain is trying to walk the straight path, especially with the PCs onboard.

#### **The Murder**

The crew mutinies and murders the captain one night after encountering the cog, hanging him from the crow's nest with a sign around his neck reading "Coward".

The first mate, a loyal friend of the captain, is imprisoned below decks, and the second mate, an untrustworthy sort, is now the captain.

The PCs may be caught in a power struggle between the two mates, or may suffer the crew's mutiny.

#### **The Passenger**

The PCs aren't the only important passengers aboard the Salty Dog. A beautiful, young woman named Persiphily and her entourage and bodyguards board the ship. Persiphily takes the finest cabin on the ship and tries to befriend the PCs without revealing too much about herself. She claims to be the daughter of a nobleman, moving across the Sea for a new life. Her excessive baggage and entourage of 9 guards certainly support her claims.

#### **The Liar**

Persiphily has deceived both the Captain and the PCs about her past. She is a noblewoman, but her story is about to endanger the PCs and the ship. Persiphily has killed her husband, a local noble of some power and value, and is fleeing the country now with his fortune in tow. The gold is carried onboard in 4 huge trunks by the 8 mercenary guards she has hired. Persiphily also has a personal bodyguard that is a lover, and he should be of similar level to the PCs.

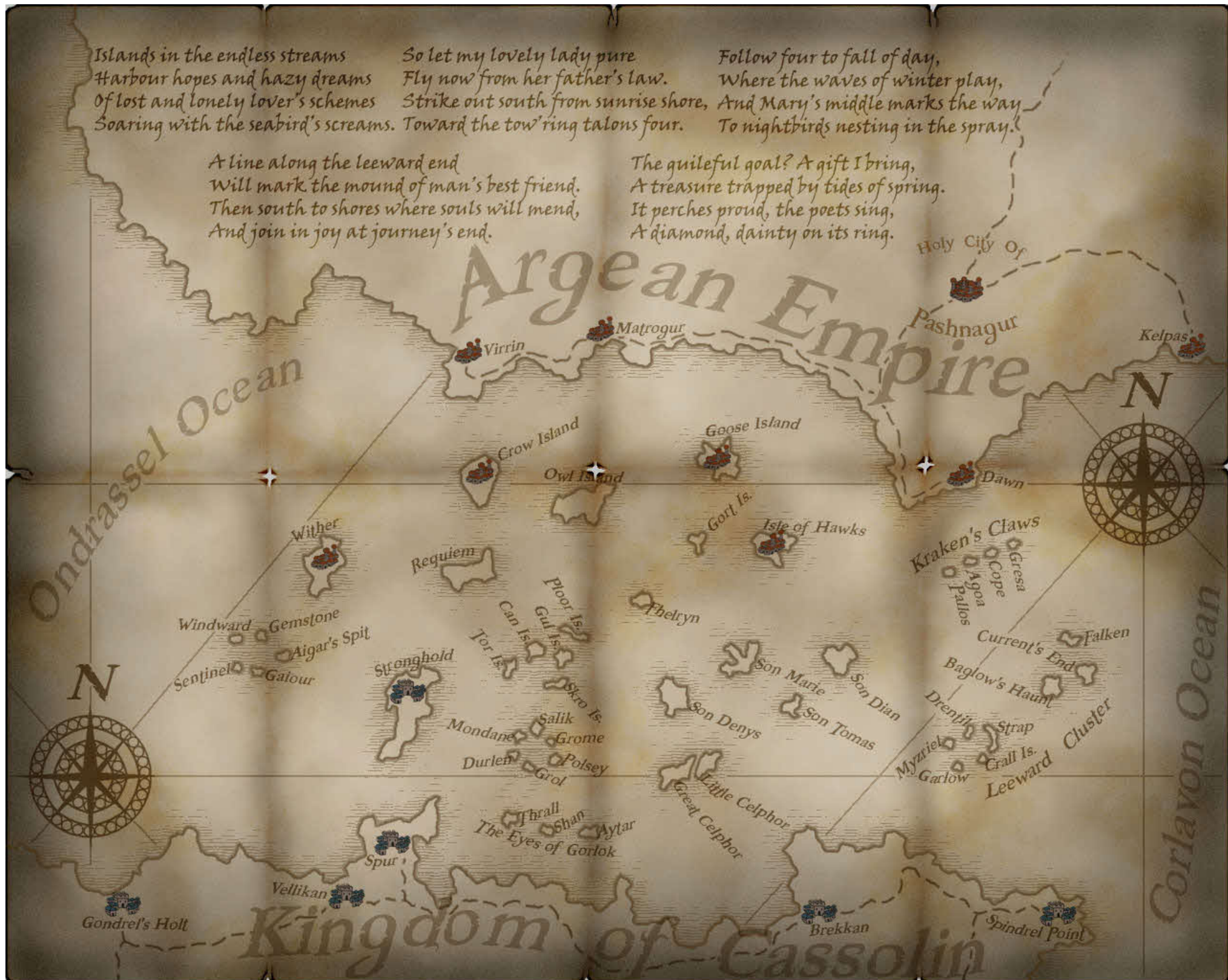
#### **The Gold:**

The players should not find out about the gold until the Salty Dog is at sea and engaged. A war galley bearing the flag of the country they recently departed closes on the Salty Dog one morning. The captain attempts to stop the ship, and Persiphily objects, sinking to bribery, threats, and whatever means necessary to convince him to run. The war galley is a royal ship, sent by the nobleman's family and friends, armed and prepared to assault the Salty Dog if necessary to secure the gold and exact justice on Persiphily. The war galley is faster than the Salty Dog and deadlier at a distance. A five way power struggle should develop between the PCs, the Captain and crew of the Salty Dog, Persiphily and her entourage, and the chasing war galley for the gold and the Passengers.

# Argean Empire

By Spamvaliant

(To find the answer to the riddle of the Map please go to the original post)



# A'Jhön Empire

By Chris McDaniel



# Pen & Ink

## Basic Guidelines and Tips for hand drawn maps with pen, ink and paper.

By Chris McDaniel

This is by no means a definitive article on Pen and Ink drawing. I wanted to pass on some basic knowledge of my years of rendering maps in pen and ink, as well as pass on a few tips that might help some of you avoid the mistakes that I've made in the past. There are some things in this particular field that aren't easy to find and come through a process of trial and error. I would also like to point out that I've never had any formal training in art, architectural, drafting and design, or cartography. It has all been self-taught and I would never consider myself an expert by any definition of the word. In fact, every time I sit down to start a map, it's a learning experience and I look at it as such. The best advice I could probably ever give you is this: Patience, Practice and Practice.



There are of course three essential tools in this trade: Pens, Inks, and Paper. There are other tools and supplies that are worth mentioning here. First and foremost are pencils. Every final map I draw has been outlined (lightly) in pencil; I prefer wooden Staedtler brand sketching and drafting pencils, I usually a light to medium grade (2B, B, HB, H 2H 3H). They are easily erased from most sheets with a gum eraser or a flexible, polymer eraser (soft white), once the ink has been laid down. Other supplies might include: compass, ruler, t-square, all manner of stencils for drafting and design, masking tape, pen knife or razor, soft brush, lint-free cloth, erasing shield, white out, scaling compass, drawing boards, thumb tacks, and Jolt cola (for those extended sessions).

### *PENS*

Felt-tip and fiber-tip pens I use the least, but the one of the handiest has been a brush pen. These are most commonly used for Asian character lettering, but I have found they can be used for more finesse where a quill pen cannot. Relatively cheap and fun to use I suggest at least one in every

cartographer's arsenal. Most other felt-tips do not mesh well with the india ink we'll be using in our other pens.

Dip pens or quill pens do come in handy, especially when you need to build lines for mountains, or cliffs, or need varying width in your strokes. I love working with them personally, and have been using them in some form or another since age 10. Speedball makes a good quality and quantity of nibs at affordable prices. There tends to be a wide vari-



ance in user preference on which is used when doing various projects. I find that the most frequently used in my maps are the crow quill 107, 108 and 102, hunt 104, 107, 103, 99 and 512. Rotring makes a cartridge 'quill' nib Art Pen in fine, medium and large sizes that come in handy, sadly the ink does have somewhat of an offset with india ink on certain sheets.

The drawback with most dip pens is you limited in stroke direction (meaning you turn your wrist and paper more) and they do have a tendency to drip or splatter if not careful. Having to re-dip the pen has a tendency to interrupt your rhythm. It also takes quite a bit of time gaining adeptness at using dip pens if you've never really used them.

Cleaning quills are quite easy. I use rubbing alcohol to get the ink off and then wash the nibs in warm soapy water. I suggest not doing this over an open drain. Nibs can get slippery when wet and soapy. Rinse and let air dry or if you need to immediately reuse it, wipe it off with a lint-free cloth. A paper towel can be used if your careful not to get it torn and stuck in the ink chamber (the split in the nib).

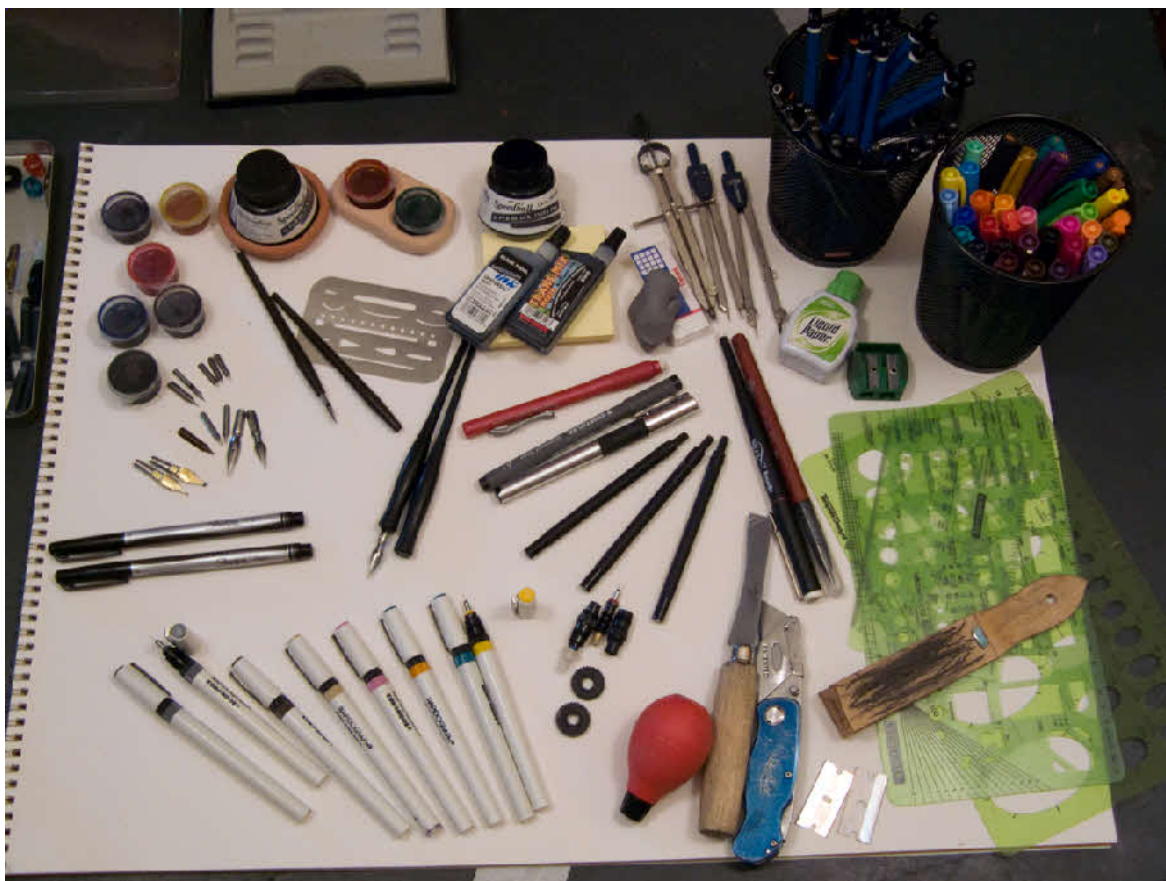
Last, but certainly not least, are technical pens. My opinion is that this is the best instrument to ink with. The one downside to technical pens is the cost, they are probably the most expensive of all pens, and with this expense

comes a bit more care and cleaning. I have also found that even the slightest type of abuse can damage a pen. I'm here to save you some money by giving you some helpful information on these pens. My favorite brand is Koh-I-Noor Rapidograph, it is dependable, refillable, and the best pens I've ever owned or used.

There are disposable technical pens that are similar to regular technical pens. They differ in the way the inner workings are sealed and have no refillable cartridges. I found the Staedtler Mars professional to be a decent choice. I like that you can sketch fairly fast with these pens and the nib sizes are quite close to the Koh-I-Noor.

The technical pen consists of a hollow metal nib, a refillable ink cartridge, and a plastic holder. The hollow nib contains a very delicate wire and weight which shifts back and forth bringing the ink supply forward as you move it across the page. NEVER, NEVER remove this wire from the nib. Doing so will have most likely rendered that nib completely useless.

The sizes of nibs range from (largest to smallest) 7/2.00mm; 6/1.40mm; 4/1.20mm; 3½/1.00mm; 3/.80mm; 2½/.70mm; 2/.60mm; 1/.50mm; 0/.35mm; 00/.30mm; 3x0/.25mm; 4x0/.18mm; and 6x0/.13mm.



A 1 is about as big as I use for any map. I usually work with 0 or 00 for most everything, and use the 4x0 and 6x0 for very detailed work and thatching. The 6x0 and 4x0 are even more delicate than the other pens and care should be taken when using them. No extra jarring or dropping of the pen, don't tap them to try and restart an ink flow, or if you must a very, very light tap. When in doubt, just clean the pen and refill it.

The best way to start the pen is to hold it, nib upright, gently thump it to let excess air escape and then turn the pen nib down to let the ink flow to the nib. Technical pens are gravity fed, so hold the pen more upright than at an angle. Use a steady, light pressure and move across the surface in smooth strokes. Too much pressure will most likely stop ink flow and will pick up 'fuzzies' from the (some) paper. DO NOT shake the pen, this will flood the air channel and create a vacuum that will prevent ink flow. Flooded pens must be cleaned. Always cap the pen when not in use, even if you stop inking for more than 15 or 20 seconds to take a drink of your Jolt. Some inks dry fast and can clog the nib.

You should probably clean your pen at least once a month and before storing it for more than a month. When you aren't actively using the pen, I always keep the pen strait up and down with the cap up. If you lay them down flat for any length of time, I've found they clog more frequently. If I'm storing the pen I do so unassembled from the pen holder, the body and nib still connected, usually in a small tin or in an empty pill bottle or film canister. I should also note that when you screw the pen together, barely hand tight is all that is necessary, that is to say, snug.

Disassemble the pen and remove the nib from the body of the pen. Again DO NOT REMOVE the wire from the nib. Rinse the nib, pen body and cartridge under running water. I use a small strainer to hold the pieces so I do not accidentally drop them in the sink. You can use brand pen cleaning solutions, but I don't think it's necessary. I use a diluted solution of 1 part ammonia and 10 parts water, or 1 and 5 if a pen is really clogged or dirty. I do recommend a pressure cleaning syringe so you can thread the pen nib to and flush it out. I then finish with another straight water flush and then air dry.

While this was probably more than you ever needed to know about technical pens, I promise if you invest in them, this information is invaluable.





## *Inks*

I primarily ink my maps in black and white. I only use black India Ink and use either speedball brand for my dip pens and rapidograph brand for my technical pens. Past that, my knowledge on inks is limited. I almost always use something that is waterproof and when working with an open ink bottle, always keep it fixed to the table with some tape or other restraining device. Spilling ink all over what you are working on is no fun at all.

I actually bought a small deal of Crayola Model Magic which I molded into little holders for my ink bottles. The texture was perfect because even on my drafting table at an angle it doesn't slide. I however, always stick tape underneath to ensure that it will not slide or move. I also molded a stand to keep my dip nibs in as well as one for holding pens and pen-holders.

My experience with colored inks is somewhat limited. Most every colored ink I've used for dip pens aren't waterproof. I'm sure there are inks out there are. I know that there are colored inks for the rapidograph pens that are waterproof. But as it depends on what kind of effect you want to end up with, such as ink washing.

## *Paper*

Paper comes in so many shapes and sizes. An absorbent paper with a firm polished texture provides the best surface for pen and ink. Your pen should glide over the paper with snagging or stuttering.

For finished works I like a Bristol board, because it's smooth and allows you to draw in any direction without stubbing a rough place. It stays flat and doesn't have a tendency to buckle unless vast amount of ink is applied.

For practice work and rough drafts, I use any old piece of paper I have handy. A sketch book is a good thing to have around as well. For most of my large maps I use a 24" x 18" sketch pad, Pencil in a rough draft, then doing a final rough before moving on to a my Bristol (and more expensive) board. As long as you keep a black and white final copy, most copy and print businesses can turn it into a digital PDF file or other popular formats (JPG, PSD, etc.) for a nominal fee.

When working with your final copy, it's a good idea to keep either a set of light cotton gloves with the thumb, fore and middle fingers cut out, leaving the ring and pinky finger intact so that you do not leave oily or dirty stains from the natural oils your skin produces. It also helps prevent smudging and smearing if one is careful. You can use a lint free cloth wrapped around the edge of the hand to help if you don't like cotton gloves. I like to use latex,

powder free gloves; they fit skin tight so that it doesn't feel like you're out of contact with the work you are doing.

I hope that you found this article at least mildly useful. The art of Pen & Ink is a wide and versatile one that not even a whole book could cover all of it. The advice I give is mainly directed towards cartography and mapping; even then it only covers the technical aspect. Covering the artistic aspect of shapes, shading and thatching and the finer details of overland, buildings and cities is far too great of a subject to broach here. But to those who wish to take up this gratifying and fun media, I can only say practice, practice,

