

# PYRAMID<sup>®</sup>



Issue 3/26 DECEMBER '10

## UNDERWATER ADVENTURES



### **GURPS FATHOM FIVE**

by Roger Burton West

**THE WRECK OF THE SAVOY**

by Ken Spencer

**THE YONAGUNI MONUMENT**

by J. Edward Tremlett

**THE OCEAN'S LORDS**

by Alan Leddon and Bekki Leddon

**THE FUTURE OF THE U-42**

by Timothy J. Turnipseed

**THE HOTEL NETHUNS**

by Andy Vetromile

**STEVE JACKSON GAMES**

Stock #37-2626

# CONTENTS

COVER ART

Igor Fiorentini

INTERIOR ART

Greg Hyland

FROM THE EDITOR .....	3
<b>GURPS FATHOM FIVE</b> .....	4
<i>by Roger Burton West</i>	
<b>THE WRECK OF THE SAVOY</b> .....	9
<i>by Ken Spencer</i>	
<b>THE YONAGUNI MONUMENT</b> .....	15
<i>by J. Edward Tremlett</i>	
<b>THE OCEAN'S LORDS</b> .....	19
<i>by Alan Laddon and Bekki Laddon</i>	
<b>THE FUTURE OF THE U-42</b> .....	22
<i>by Timothy J. Turnipseed</i>	
<b>THE HOTEL NETHUNS</b> .....	28
<i>by Andy Vetromile</i>	
<b>RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE:</b>	
<b>FATHOMING WATER</b> .....	36
<i>by Steven Marsh, Pyramid Editor</i>	
<b>ODDS AND ENDS</b> .....	38
<i>featuring Murphy's Rules</i>	
<b>ABOUT GURPS</b> .....	39

*You can't cross the sea merely by  
standing and staring at the water.*

*– Rabindranath Tagore*

## Article Colors

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

*Pale Blue:* In This Issue

*Brown:* In Every Issue (letters, humor, editorial, etc.)

*Dark Blue:* **GURPS** Features

*Purple:* Other Features

# IN THIS ISSUE

For all of us, water is in our blood – literally. The sea can be the birth of new adventures, or death in a blue-green grave.

In the same way that water is the foundation of all life, so too do aquatic adventures need to be built on firm ground. To that end, *GURPS Fathom Five* collects, updates, and expands on the rules needed to explore – and fight! – beneath the waves. Grab your scuba gear, and dive right in.

No doubt many a sleepless night has been devoted to which is scarier – ghosts or sharks? Both sides of the debate get new evidence in *The Wreck of the Savoy*, an adventure with *GURPS* stats and enough danger and mystery to rattle Davy Jones' Locker.

Too spooky for you? Then come back to the real world – *The Yonaguni Monument*, to be exact. This actual enigma might be natural, human-made, or constructed by *other* forces. Regardless, this generic article provides a great springboard suitable for any undersea-exploring adventurers.

While beneath the waves, beware the eight-limbed entities who seek to exact revenge on the surface-dwellers who have harmed their habitat. The *GURPS* ghastlies presented in *The Ocean's Lords* might be reasoned with in time – but they're definitely not *armless*.

With all these unreal threats presented so far in this issue, there's one modern-day realm that's perhaps even *less* realistic: reality television. In *The Future of the U-42*, a routine security mission leads to the unraveling of a six-decade mystery – and the fate of New York may hang in the balance.

After all this excitement, what could be more relaxing than a stay in a luxury hotel? Well, perhaps *anything*, if it's *The Hotel Nethuns*. This near-future wonder is a hotbed of diplomacy and intrigue. The billions of gallons of water behind the walls of this deep-sea destination may be its least dangerous feature . . .

Finally, we wring out the towel with a few more drops of fun that wash up on every issue, including a watery *Random Thought Table*, a swimmingly fun *Murphy's Rules*, and other odds and ends.

This issue's thrills aren't out of your league, so *water* you waiting for?!

Editor-in-Chief ■ STEVE JACKSON  
Chief Operating Officer ■ PHILIP REED  
Art Director ■ WILL SCHOONOVER  
e23 Manager ■ STEVEN MARSH

**GURPS** Line Editor ■ SEAN PUNCH  
Editorial Assistant ■ JASON "PK" LEVINE  
Production Artist ■ NIKOLA VRTIS  
Prepress Checker ■ MONICA STEPHENS

Page Design ■ PHIL REED and  
JUSTIN DE WITT  
Marketing Director ■ PAUL CHAPMAN  
Director of Sales ■ ROSS JEPSON

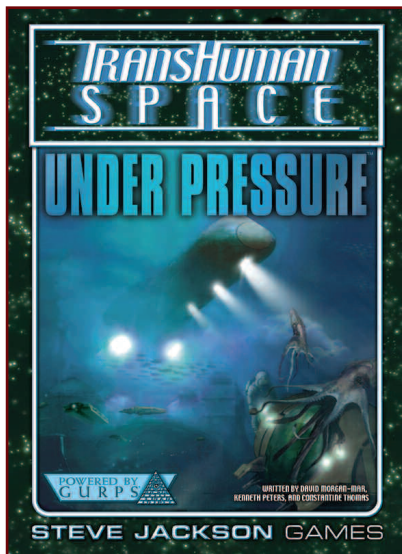
# FROM THE EDITOR

## I'D LIKE TO BE UNDER THE SEA

In some ways, this is an odd theme. The application of the articles herein run the gamut from realistic to horrific to action-packed to espionage. Cynically, a theme of "underwater" threatens to have no more cohesion than a theme of, say, "chocolate."

Still, if you mention "underwater adventures" to players, it's likely a common set of themes and a collective atmosphere will form in their minds. From *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* to *The Abyss* to *The Deep* to *Waterworld* (okay, maybe not *Waterworld*), they all promise a certain flavor – primarily "man against nature," "the futility of imposing one's will on an elemental force," etc.

In addition, the articles in this issue all work well together. Obviously, the rules in *GURPS Fathom Five* (pp. 4-8) can be useful in any aquatic adventure. But the Hotel Nethuns (pp. 28-35) feels like it could be located next to the Yonaguni Monument (pp. 15-18); the heroes, having solved the mystery of the *U-42* (pp. 22-27) could be invited to investigate Fisherman's Cove (pp. 9-14); and so on. In fact, it might be interesting to have a campaign revolve entirely around aquatic-based issues, and otherwise have the theme ping-pong



wildly. Horror, action, espionage? Who knows? All that's certain is that it will involve the fearless crew of the [YOUR SHIP NAME HERE]. Anchors away!

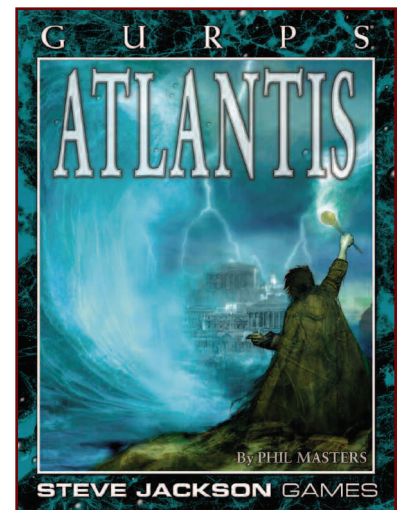
(And, having formulated the thought in my head, I confess that I'm more than a little interested in a chocolate-themed issue . . .)

## WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Do you think we made a big splash with this issue? Or do you think we're wet behind the ears with anything we're doing? If you want us to *sea* what you think, send a note to [pyramid@sjgames.com](mailto:pyramid@sjgames.com), or start a conversation with other aquatic adventurers at [forums.sjgames.com](http://forums.sjgames.com).

If you'd like to get your feet wet and try your hand at writing for *Pyramid*, our Writer's Guidelines can be found at [sjgames.com/pyramid/writing.html](http://sjgames.com/pyramid/writing.html) and the wish list is at [sjgames.com/pyramid/wishlist.html](http://sjgames.com/pyramid/wishlist.html)

(Also, would-be writers are welcome to submit the quotes that will appear in their issues. We can't pay you for them – they're not your words! – but they make your article look better, and it's a big help to us. Oh, and completely unrelatedly, big thanks to Andy Vetromile for supplying us with a bunch of quotes that were used for this issue!)



*Additional Material:* Steve Jackson, David Morgan-Mar, Kenneth Peters, Sean Punch, David Pulver, and Constantine Thomas

*Pyramid*, *GURPS*, Warehouse 23, and the all-seeing pyramid are registered trademarks of Steve Jackson Games Incorporated. e23 and the names of all products published by Steve Jackson Games Incorporated are registered trademarks or trademarks of Steve Jackson Games Incorporated, or used under license. *Pyramid* is copyright © 2010 by Steve Jackson Games Incorporated. All rights reserved.

Submission of your photos, letters, humor, captions, and marginalia constitutes permission to Steve Jackson Games Incorporated to use them in all media. All such submissions become the property of Steve Jackson Games Incorporated and will not be returned.

The scanning, uploading, and distribution of this material via the Internet or via any other means without the permission of the publisher is illegal, and punishable by law. Please purchase only authorized electronic editions, and do not participate in or encourage the electronic piracy of copyrighted materials. Your support of the authors' rights is appreciated.

# GURPS FATHOM FIVE

BY ROGER BURTON WEST

The underwater environment is as challenging to humanity as Earth orbit. Humans, equipped to function reasonably well on land, suffer physiological and psychological difficulties

when working below the sea. This article codifies rules for underwater activity in *GURPS Fourth Edition*, including revisions and compilations of previous rules.

## PHYSIOLOGY

A human underwater needs to take part of the land environment with him. For an aquatic adventurer to be effective, he needs to overcome several obstacles.

*Can ye fathom the ocean,  
dark and deep, where the  
mighty waves and the  
grandeur sweep?*

– Fanny Crosby

There are two basic approaches to supplying air to the sub-aquatic adventurer: ambient pressure (keeping the pressure of air inside the body equal to that of water outside it), or surface pressure (placing the whole body inside an armored suit that maintains the same environment as on the surface). Each method has its own problems.

### Ambient Pressure

Using ambient pressure (either with air tanks, *GURPS High-Tech*, p. 74, or with a hose from the surface) risks a variety of physiological disorders.

### Nitrogen Narcosis

Those who are breathing normal air at more than 3× their native pressure (that is, diving below about 66' for humans on Earth) must make periodic HT rolls to avoid becoming “drunk” on high-pressure nitrogen; this is also known as “rapture of the deep.” The details depend on depth; the *Nitrogen Narcosis Table* (below) shows the HT modifier, as well as how frequently the roll must be made. Any level of Pressure Support removes this hazard completely.

If the diver’s modified HT roll is successful, his intoxication level (see *Intoxication Levels*, p. 5) does not increase, and he does not have to make additional rolls unless he descends further.

## PRESSURE

Pressure underwater increases rapidly: Every 100' of seawater, or 102' of fresh water, corresponds to a rise in pressure of three atmospheres. This is not immediately dangerous to humans, but it does have implications for the gases they breathe.

### Nitrogen Narcosis Table

Depth	Pressure	Period	Roll	Max. Intoxication
66'-75'	3.0-3.25	30 minutes	HT+4	Tipsy
75'-83'	3.25-3.5	15 minutes	HT+3	Drunk
83'-91'	3.5-3.75	10 minutes	HT+2	Drunk
91'-100'	3.75-4.0	5 minutes	HT+1	Unconscious
100'+	4.0+	5 minutes	HT	Unconscious

*Access to these rules might be limited only to those with Scuba or Diving Suit skill. Training reveals limitations!*

## Intoxication Levels

For purposes of nitrogen narcosis (pp. 4-5), here are the levels of intoxication.

- *Sober*: The default condition. No game effects.
- *Tipsy*: You are slightly intoxicated: -1 to DX and IQ, and -2 to self-control rolls except those to resist Cowardice. Reduce Shyness by one level, if you have it.
- *Drunk*: You are highly intoxicated: -2 to DX and IQ, and -4 to self-control rolls except those to resist Cowardice. Reduce Shyness by two levels, if you have it.
- *Unconscious (drunken stupor)*: You are knocked out, just as if you had suffered injury.

If the roll fails, his intoxication increases by one level, and he must continue rolling periodically. If the high-pressure nitrogen is removed (which is usually done by ascending above 60'), the diver's drunkenness is cured within seconds.

### The Bends

Another hazard of ambient-pressure diving is the bends (p. B435, reprinted here for easy reference).

When you are breathing air that has been compressed (e.g., using scuba gear), your blood and tissues absorb some of the nitrogen gas in the compressed air. When you return to normal pressure, or "decompress," this nitrogen escapes, forming small bubbles in the blood and muscles. This can result in joint pains, dizzy spells, possibly even death. These symptoms are known as "the bends."

You risk the bends if you return to normal pressure after experiencing pressure greater than twice your native pressure

(or 10 times native pressure, with Pressure Support 1). To avoid this, you must decompress *slowly*, spending time at intermediate pressures to allow the nitrogen to escape harmlessly.

Divers use precise tables to determine decompression times based on time spent at a given pressure. For game purposes, see *Decompression Table* (below) to figure out the time. At up to 2 atm. (about 35' underwater), a human can operate for *any* amount of time and return without risk, while at 5.5 atm. or more (150' or greater depth), there is *no* safe period.

Safe decompression involves slowly lowering the pressure, either naturally (e.g., a diver deliberately taking hours to reach the surface) or in a decompression chamber. The time required increases with both pressure and exposure time. It can be several hours – or even *days*.

If you fail to decompress slowly enough, make a HT roll. *Critical success* means no ill effects. *Success* means severe joint pain, causing agony (see *Incapacitating Conditions*, p. B428); roll vs. HT hourly to recover. *Failure* means unconsciousness or painful paralysis; roll vs. HT hourly to regain consciousness, with each failure causing 1d of injury. Once conscious, you suffer joint pain, as described above. *Critical failure* results in painful death. Recompression to the highest pressure experienced lets you roll at HT+4 every five minutes to recover from all effects short of death.

### Oxygen Toxicity

A third hazard is oxygen toxicity, which becomes progressively more dangerous with depth. Between 3x and 7x native pressure, roll HT once per four hours or suffer from continuous coughs, giving -2 to DX. Once these symptoms begin, roll vs. HT every ten minutes to avoid taking a point of damage. At higher pressures, roll vs. HT once per two hours to avoid suffering from muscle twitches, dizziness, and nausea, giving -4 DX (not cumulative with the penalty from coughing) and -2 IQ.

## Decompression Table

This table gives some of the salient decompression times for diving with compressed air (78% nitrogen). This table assumes the diver is decompressing to 1 atm. (sea level on Earth). For divers decompressing to lower atmospheric pressures (at altitude, or on Mars), use an effective

water pressure equal to actual pressure divided by atmospheric pressure.

*This is a highly simplified table for game purposes and not a substitute for professional dive tables – this table **must not** be used to plan real-life dives.*

<b>Depth</b>	35	50	75	100	125	150	200	500	1,000	1,500	2,000
<b>Pressure</b>	2.0	2.5	3.3	4.0	4.8	5.5	7.1	16	31	47	62
<b>No Decompression Time</b>	Unlimited	80	40	22	10	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Saturation Time</b>	–	2.5	5	8	12	18	24	24	24	24	24
<b>Maximum Decompression</b>	–	16	21	29	43	49	66	130	240	350	450

*Depth* is in feet, on Earth.

*Pressure* is the water pressure in atmospheres. Use this instead of Depth if calculating dive times on other worlds.

*No Decompression Time* is the maximum time in minutes that can be spent at that pressure without requiring a decompression routine.

*Saturation Time* is the time in hours after which the body is saturated with nitrogen.

*Maximum Decompression* is the length of decompression required for a saturated diver, in hours.

*These rules are all realistic; cinematic heroes often don't need to worry about the bends.*

A critical failure on this HT roll leads to convulsions, doing 1d-3 damage per minute. If you are wearing a breathing system with a mouthpiece, make a DX roll every minute to avoid dislodging it. Once symptoms begin, roll vs HT every five minutes to avoid taking a point of damage.

Those with Pressure Support 1 enter the coughing zone at  $\times 10$  native pressure and the twitch zone at  $\times 25$ . Higher levels of Pressure Support remove this hazard completely.

To avoid these problems when diving deep, you can switch to an alternative gas mix, which is usually done if going much below 60' to 90'. The amount of oxygen is reduced to avoid oxygen toxicity, and nitrogen is gradually replaced with non-narcotic helium, often using a rebreather system. (For greater depths, hydrogen replaces helium as the inert gas component of the mix.)

## The Psychology of Diving

The subaquatic environment triggers a variety of instinctive responses in humans. In air, they could be useful, causing a flight reaction from a predator. Underwater, they can be more deadly than the physical hazards.

Becoming entangled in seaweed or a net, suddenly seeing a shark, or losing a facemask or breathing gear can quickly cause panic. Any unexpected event, particularly one that seems to interfere with a diver's air supply, may at the GM's discretion require a Fright Check (p. B360). Depending on the equipment you are using, you may substitute a Will-based roll against Scuba or Diving Suit skill for Will in such Fright Checks.

If this Fright Check is failed, roll vs. HT or start *hyperventilating*. If no air supply is available, make a Will-4 roll to avoid inhaling water immediately (see *Swimming*, p. B354).

While hyperventilating, the diver may take no action other than to attempt a Will-2 roll every 10 seconds to recover. Depending on the specific Fright Check result, he may bolt for the surface or flail wildly; the GM may require DX rolls to avoid losing or damaging equipment, including breathing gear.

Helium brings with it the risk of High-Pressure Nervous Syndrome; someone breathing helium at  $10\times$  native pressure or higher must make an HT roll, with a +1 bonus for using slow compression or a triple mix of oxygen, nitrogen and helium. *Critical success* restricts the effects of HPNS to minor muscle tremors. *Success* indicates obvious tremors, giving -2 to all DX-based rolls. *Failure* results in dizziness, nausea, and tremors, giving -4 to DX and -2 to IQ. *Critical failure* means -4 to both DX and IQ, with the possibility of Bad Temper, Paranoia and/or Extra Sleep 4 at the GM's option.

Setting up any gas mix other than air requires a Scuba roll before the dive for planning and rigging (possibly by the divemaster if working in a group), and another during the dive to operate the equipment. The current record for an

ambient-pressure dive is 1,752 feet of sea water, though the equivalent of 2,300 feet was achieved in a hyperbaric chamber.

## Surface Pressure

Descents of extreme magnitude require a great deal of preparation and training; it is often easier to take surface pressure along with you. Atmospheric or hard-shell diving suits are built to withstand the external pressure of water, while still allowing the occupant to maneuver.

Wearers of such suits can change their buoyancy, descending to the bottom for better traction or floating (or being winched) above obstructions. Present-day models – made of aluminum or glass-reinforced plastic – are used to 2,300' ( $70\times$  surface pressure); they are supplied with gas and power by an umbilical from the surface. For futuristic technologies, assume that each 100' (or three atmospheres) of safe depth requires DR 3 (multiplied by the user's Size Modifier, if greater than 1); a diving suit built from the same materials as a TL9 Combat Walker could descend to 6,600'. Crush depth is double this; the suit should make an HT roll once per hour when below test depth, or suffer a variety of minor leaks and malfunctions. For extra realism, *subtract* 3 from the effective DR of a suit for each 200' descended; a diving suit near its rated depth is more vulnerable to explosions and other damage than it would be on the surface.

## HEAT AND COLD

A normal human has a comfortable temperature zone between 35° F and 90° F . . . in air. Water conducts heat much more readily: The default comfort zone there is 75° F to 85° F, or 50° F to 85° F for Amphibious (p. B40) or Aquatic (p. B145) creatures. These zones may be recentered at different temperatures as a 0-point feature, and each level of the Temperature Tolerance advantage expands them by HT/2 degrees (at the top or bottom, chosen when the advantage is bought).

When in water colder than your comfort zone, roll as for cold (p. B430) once per minute to avoid losing 1 FP. This assumes you are wearing a wetsuit. A drysuit gives +5; a heated drysuit gives +10; a normal swimming costume gives -5. For *sudden immersion*, see p. B430 for *Thermal Shock*.

Water *hotter* than your comfort zone is treated the same way: Roll vs. HT once per minute to avoid losing 1 FP. At 40° F above your comfort zone, also take 1d-4 burn damage per minute; at 50° F, take 1d-4 burn damage per second. Use modifiers for clothing as above; the +10 bonus is available only with a specially designed chilling suit, probably requiring an external supply of cool air.

*If the GM would like to introduce these rules into a game that hasn't used them previously, he can always introduce an (NPC) fatality or injury at the start of the adventure – killed by the dangers of the depths.*

# UNDERWATER ACTIVITY

Once you've established air and heat, it's time to think about why you entered the water in the first place: how to get to where you're going, and how to do what you came for.

## MOVING IN WATER

The basics of swimming are covered on p. B354. Swim fins (*GURPS High-Tech*, p. 60) give Enhanced Move 0.5 (Water) but restrict Move to 2 on land. You may instead choose to wade, if you are able to make contact with the bottom. Shallow water (up to 1/6 your height) adds 1 movement point per hex entered; water deeper than this reduces you to Move 1. (If you have the Cannot Float quirk, whether intrinsically or from carrying ballast, you suffer a reduced penalty: +2 movement points per hex entered in water 1/6 your height or deeper.)

## ACTIONS IN WATER

If you are not Amphibious or Aquatic, are swimming, and wish to roll against DX or a DX-based skill, you should roll against the lower of your Swimming skill and your actual skill level. The 3D Spatial Sense advantage adds +2 to Swimming skill for this purpose only.

If you are Amphibious (p. B40) or Aquatic (p. B145) or are standing on the bottom, there is no intrinsic penalty to activity. The GM may wish to assign a -1 or -2 penalty for actions that require fast movements (e.g., taking rock samples with a hammer).

## FINDING THINGS

Even in crystal-clear water, add a -2 penalty to spot a target with a Vision roll. Most water will be murky enough to incur further penalties: -1 for most seawater, and -10 is certainly possible where a silty bottom has been stirred up (most usually by people walking across it or swimming too close to it). Unless there is a strong current bringing in clear water, such obscuration can persist for an hour or more. Judging distance is particularly challenging; make Vision rolls for this purpose at an extra -2.

Multiply by 10 the distances on the *Hearing Distance Table* (p. B358) for detecting sounds underwater. Sound carries well, but because it travels so much faster in water, it's hard to tell the direction it's coming from. This is possible only if you succeed in your Hearing roll by at least 4, or possess Enhanced Time Sense.

Speech in water is not normally possible, though advanced diving masks (that enclose a bubble of air in front of the mouth rather than relying on a mouthpiece) allow it from TL7.

## FIGHTING IN WATER

As if the environment weren't dangerous enough, humans inevitably bring their conflicts below the water's surface.

## Melee

Underwater, melee weapon attacks are made at -4 for every yard of *maximum* reach; e.g., a spear is at -8, even if used to attack someone within one yard. Any weapon with Reach C can be used at no penalty. The GM may allow fighters to learn a new technique, Underwater Combat, to buy up to *half* of this penalty off.

Water drag also affects underwater damage. Thrusting weapons do -1 damage per yard of maximum reach, calculated as above. For swung weapons, use the same penalty, but assess it *per die* of damage! Again, Reach C weapons take no penalty.

*Example:* A ST 20 merman is wielding a glaive (Reach 1-3). Out of water, he would do 2d+2 imp or 3d+5 cut. Underwater, he attacks at -12, and his glaive does 2d-1 imp (-3 damage) or 3d-4 cut (-9 damage)!

Some martial arts maneuvers will be entirely useless, and the GM must adjudicate special effects: Throwing a foe will not damage him unless he lands on something dangerous, but joint locks will be just as restrictive as in air. Quick tactical movement is more difficult than on the surface: Whether swimming or supported, someone without the Cannot Float quirk or Aquatic or Amphibious traits must succeed in an Aquatics roll to make a retreating defense when he has nothing to push off. Aquatic Dodge may be used just as Acrobatic Dodge would be on the surface.

A bang-stick, designed for use against sharks but rapidly adopted for attacking humans, consists of a pistol or shotgun cartridge mounted on the end of a pole (Reach 1; ST 8); attack with Spear skill, doing the damage of the cartridge if you hit.

## Thrown Weapons

All thrown and other muscle-powered weapons divide their ranges by 10 underwater, and do half their normal damage (unless they have explosive warheads). Bows and crossbows will generally not work at all, unless built with materials that will not stretch or warp when wet. Shots through the water surface also suffer from refraction across the boundary; add a -4 penalty to hit. Speargun statistics are given in *GURPS High-Tech*.

## Guns

Divide all ranges of guns by 1,000; round 1/2D range down and maximum range up. Reduce Malf. numbers (p. B407) by 2 for automatic and semi-automatic weapons, and by 1 for other weapons. Guns that do not use sealed cartridges and primers (such as black-powder weapons) will not work at all. Hollow-point ammunition will expand in the barrel, jamming and often damaging the gun. Some specialized weapons (such as the H&K P11) have been built to fire fin-stabilized dart ammunition, in which case underwater ranges may be divided by only 25 (double cost per shot).

*"Poor guy; why haven't we ever suffered from nitrogen narcosis before?" "I guess we've just gotten lucky."*

However, this range reduction also applies to shots fired in air as the dart is not held sufficiently stable by air pressure. The first hybrid weapon was the ASM-DT amphibious rifle in the 1990s, which could load both darts and AK-74 magazines.

Gyroc used at a range of less than 10 yards halve Acc, but do the same damage that they would on the surface; outside that distance divide their ranges by 100. Micro-torpedo launchers can be bought, with the same statistics as the various sizes of gyroc: They have a speed of 50 and a base damage of 1d-4, but can still usefully carry non-kinetic warheads (typically HE or shaped charge).

Missiles divide both range and speed by 25. For the same cost as missiles and launchers, torpedoes and launchers may be purchased, with the same maximum range but 1/10 speed. Homing weapons of this size are generally not useful, because of the difficulty of spotting underwater targets at any range, though the various self-guiding robot missiles (*GURPS Ultra-Tech* pp. 168-169) can be built in underwater versions – with 1/10 the speed and sonar homing in place of radar – for the same price.

At TL10, actively stabilized supercavitating bullets become available: Double cost per shot, and divide ranges in water by 20 and in air by two. Versions also exist for electromagnetic, grav, and gyroc weapons.

While TL8 and later firearms usually recover from immersion when the water is drained out of the barrel, older weapons can be more finicky. Retain the Malf. penalty until they are next stripped, dried, and cleaned.

When firing into or out of water, prorate the penalties: A shot from a rifle that travels five yards in water and 1,000 yards in air is a 6,000-yard shot for purposes of 1/2D and maximum range. As with thrown weapons, add a -4 penalty for shots through the water surface.

## Explosions

The range of blast effects is increased: Divide rolled damage by range in yards, rather than 3× range. (For attacks with Explosive 2, divide damage by 2/3 of the range; for Explosive 3 attacks, divide damage by 1/3 of the range.) However, fragmentation is less of a hazard; the maximum range of fragments is just one yard, no matter how big the explosion.

## Energy Weapons

Most energy weapons are ill-suited to underwater use. Infrared lasers have a maximum range of one yard and do half damage. Rainbow lasers have a maximum range of two yards. X-ray and gamma ray lasers are entirely useless. The best laser for underwater use is visible light, tuned to blue-green, which can typically reach 60 yards (150 in crystal-clear water, 15 if murky). For a more realistic but time-consuming approach, apply -10% to range for each -1 penalty to vision for murkiness. All of these beams can be field-jacketed at TL10<sup>+</sup> (*GURPS Ultra-Tech*, p. 133), allowing them to be used normally underwater.

Sonic stunners must be built for underwater use, but gain double range. Sonic nauseators are useless, as are electrolasers. Microwave weapons divide range by 1,000, as do neutrino particle beams.

Using particle beam weapons underwater is most often an expensive form of suicide. Charged particle beams, omniblasters in that mode, anti-particle beams, flamers, and plasma

guns all produce a steam-blast effect as their energy is dumped into the water. Half Acc, divide range by 1,000, and calculate maximum possible damage. For each of the two range segments, from the weapon's muzzle to its new 1/2D range and from the 1/2D range to the new maximum range, take half of this damage and divide it by the number of yards in the segment; this is the number of points of explosive damage done at that point (the blast hazards of being underwater apply; see *Explosions*, above). Reduce damage to the target by the proportion of the weapon's maximum possible damage done in the steam blast.

*Example:* A blaster pistol has a new range of 0/1. All the damage goes into one segment, so it generates an explosion doing 18 points of crushing explosive damage at the muzzle when it is fired.

*Example:* A TL11 blaster cannon has a new range of 120/360. Its maximum damage is 600 points. Divided among the range segments, 300 go into the first range segment, for 2.5 per yard (assume 3 points per yard out to 60 yards, 2 points per yard out to 120); 300 go into the second segment, for 1.25 per yard (assume that this is 2 points per yard out to 180 yards and 1 point per yard out to 300). The firer suffers a 3-point crushing explosive attack. A target struck 10 yards away has damage multiplied by 90%, and suffers the explosive attack, too.

*Mike Rogo: If the corridor's underwater what about the engine room?*

*Reverend Frank Scott: It's in the clear. It's one deck up. It's above us. We'll swim through the bulkhead, down a short corridor and up a companionway. It can't be more than thirty-five feet at the most.*

*– The Poseidon Adventure*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Previous underwater rules for *GURPS* were adapted from *GURPS Atlantis* by Phil Masters; *Transhuman Space: Under Pressure* by David Morgan-Mar, Kenneth Peters, and Constantine Thomas; and *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*, by Steve Jackson, Sean Punch, and David Pulver. Demi Benson collated energy weapon effects and wrote the steam blast rules.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Roger Burton West is a British computer wrangler, scuba diver, and roleplayer, whose players have learned to avoid going into water over their heads. His gaming website is [tekeli.li](http://tekeli.li).



# THE WRECK OF THE SAVOY

BY KEN SPENCER

*Saucy Tim gazed across the water at the small beach, wistfully dreaming of landing there and maybe meeting up with some pretty island girls. The past three days had been harrowing, as his ship, the **Savoy** barely managed to ride out the hurricane that had nearly sunk her. Captain Ayres spotted the entrance to this cove the day before, and the small crew had bent their backs to the oars to tow their battered ship into the safe harbor. Now they could get to the business of patching the damage and plugging the many leaks in her hull.*

*Iniko pulled again on the chains that bound him to the wooden walls. The ship their captors had placed them in had been buffeted and battered by some sort of storm. Those chained alongside him had screamed until they were hoarse, then screamed some more. Water cascaded down the wooden walls, and a few men claimed to be able to reach between the planking and feel water rising from below. A few more pulls and his chains will come loose, and then he would see to the others.*

*Jean approached his captain cautiously, hating to be the bearer of bad news. "Captain, the men are manning the pumps day and night, but the water is still rising in the bilge, at least a quarter of an inch an hour. We may have to lighten her or she'll go down."*

*"What, lose some of the cargo? You are the master carpenter, you fix the hull and don't give me any excuses."*

*"But captain, the damage," Jean's reply was cut short by screams from below deck and the sound of men shouting and fighting. The "cargo" had escaped, and the battle for the **Savoy** had begun.*

On the sandy bottom of Fisherman's Cove rests the remains of a sunken ship. Diving down below the warm waters and swimming nearly 100' down to the wreck, the first faint hints of a debris field are visible, sticking out of the sand. Here and there a piece of metal or wood, perhaps even a fragment of bone shows itself. The cove is quiet and protected from the weather, but even so, tide and the movements of sea life bring an artifact or two to the surface. The wreck itself is surprisingly well preserved, its wooden sides rotted but still whole, though covered in clinging weeds, encrusted in places with growths, and sporting several entangled fishing lines and nets. Both of its great masts have been snapped off, and the tallest now

stands a mere 30' above its silent decks. Its brass fittings and four deck guns are heavily corroded, though the ship's bell still shines in the wan light, an oddity for so old and deep a wreck. Anyone approaching the bell can clearly make out the name etched into its surface, *Savoy*.

*Farming as we do it is  
hunting, and in the sea we  
act like barbarians.*

– Jacques Yves Cousteau

*The Wreck of the Savoy* is an adventure location for a modern supernatural horror setting. The article describes the location of the wreck, Fisherman's Cove, its interesting inhabitants, and the wreck itself. The heroes can hear about the wreck through various means depending on their web of contacts.

Fisherman's Cove has been tied to six deaths in the past three years. Two years ago a group of spring-break partiers put into the cove. One couple went skinny-dipping, and they were attacked by a large hammerhead shark. Residents of the neighboring islands warned them that the cove was dangerous, but can you tell a bunch of *yanquis* anything? Nineteen months ago, two local fishermen were at the cove at the same time. They chose to spend the night there, and by morning they were both found dead on the beach. An investigation soon followed, and concluded that they had killed each other in a drunken quarrel. Two months ago, a wealthy Texas businessman threw enough money around the local communities to convince a fishing guide to take him to this legendary cove. Reportedly, he hoped to find the wreck and loot it. During his first dive, he entered the between decks and lost sight of the rest of his party in a cloud of silt. Once the water cleared, he was found with his tank ripped off and his head bashed in. No suspects were arrested, and his family has offered a million dollar reward for anyone who can solve the crime.

*Name-dropping Fisherman's Cove before this adventure can introduce some verisimilitude into the game. Mentioning it again in a future adventure adds continuity. "You see your contact; he's wearing a Fisherman's Cove T-shirt."*

An aerial survey of the islands will pick up not just the unusual shape of the cove, but also that something lies on its sandy bottom. The *Savoy* can be found through research, it is listed in probates, customs documents, ship's logs, and other sources as a ship that was lost at sea. At least one amateur treasure hunting web site has listed the Fisherman's Cove as a possible "pirate" wreck site. As an interesting side note, the Afro-Pirate All Stars, a reggae/sea chantie fusion band, has recently released a song "The Ghost of Fisherman's Cove," which has become a hit on campus radio stations. The lead singer is from the area and has turned a local folk legend into a funky and fun song.

Outsiders asking about the cove will be gently warned away, at first, but the local fisherman can easily be provoked into becoming physically protective of their secret fishing spot. They are willing to help in small ways for the money, but soon the investigators may find themselves unable to buy supplies in local communities. The tension can escalate to vandalism, sabotage, and – if the adventurers are particularly obnoxious – violence. If the party has inside friends or contacts, or handles things in a delicate manner, they can uncover a few of the rumors about the cove. Locals have long told tales about the "pirate ship" that lies at the bottom of Fisherman's Cove and snags lines and anchors. They also talk about the abundance of game fish in the cove and how easy they are to catch. Fishing guides avoid the area, however, due to the difficulty in negotiating the passage into the cove, as well as their reluctance to bring outsiders into one of their few secret spots. Also, some locals will hint that the place is haunted, while others say that such talk is nonsense spread by toothless old men.

## FISHERMAN'S COVE

The cove itself is located on a small and out of the way island in the Anguilla Cays between Florida and Cuba. The island itself has no name, and appears on maps as Fisherman's Cove. The entrance to the cove faces away from the prevailing winds in the region, one of the factors that help to make it a safe anchorage. Spotting the entrance from the outside is difficult as it is narrow and shaded by flanking cliffs. The entrance is a narrow passage between high cliffs that leads from the surrounding waters through two turns and into the brightly lit cove itself. This passage is close to 80' wide through most of its length, but narrows to 64' in width between the first and second turn. The turns are not terribly sharp, the first being a 5° bend and the second a paltry 3°. An experienced helmsman should easily negotiate the entire passage, however since accidents can occur, successful Boating roll is necessary (with additional penalties levied for weather and tide). The tide rushes through the passage four times a day, creating a strung pull into and out of the cove. During periods of high tide, the current sucks any object in the passage out to sea, making swimming and boating challenging (-2 to Swimming and Boating). At low tide, the reverse occurs, sucking objects into the cove and levying similar Swimming and Boating penalties.

Once inside, the cove opens up to form a broad expanse of quiet blue water. From the mouth to the far shore is a span of

342 yards. In breadth the cove is much greater, running 800 yards from cliff face to cliff face. Most of the perimeter of the cove is lined with steep cliffs that stretch from 80' to 150' above the water. These cliffs are rough sandstone and supports a large number of cliff-dwelling birds. Opposite the entrance is a small sandy beach that has formed in a break in the cliff walls.

Landing on the beach, which is only 30' or so long, an explorer is presented with a small stream that runs between the cliffs and splits the beach into two approximately equal halves. The cliff break is wide enough for three people to walk abreast, especially if one doesn't mind wading in the knee-deep stream. Toward the shore end of the beach is a small skiff tied to a tree.

Following the stream up leads into the island, a tropical paradise populated by brightly colored birds, gibbering monkeys, and the occasional feral pig. After 200', the cliffs give way to the broad plateau of the island proper.

The cove is not as teeming with life as the locals would have outsiders believe. There are plenty of fish, but no more than might be found in a similar body of water. What makes the fishing so good is that the fish are highly aggressive. They readily take the bait, often hook and all.

In addition to the usual splendor of tropical sea life, the cove is also the home of a rather large smooth hammerhead shark that the locals call Big Tom. Whereas most of his species are known to migrate, Big Tom prefers to remain in Fisherman's Cove, a place he has found contains all that is needed in life. The shark is aggressive and territorial, and will investigate and possibly attack anyone swimming in his waters, especially near the grotto (see below). This behavior is very unusual, and should be a clue that things here are truly not right.

The floor of the cove slopes toward the entrance, with the shallowest part toward the beach, and the deepest portion at the mouth. The surrounding cliffs make leaving the water difficult along their length, especially toward the entrance where the sandy floor lies 134' below the surface. The floor is largely clear, save for piles of fallen rocks along the cliffs, and the wreck stands out as the only visible feature. The water is warm and clear, though heavily shaded along the cliffs.

In one cliff wall, an opening to an underwater cave that stretches back 50'. This cave is the grotto that contains a mystic nexus that fuels the entire cove with mana. The nexus appears as a narrow fissure in the rock at the back of the grotto. The water escaping from this fissure is slightly warmer and has a slight tingling feel, a phenomena that can be felt for 30 yards beyond the grotto's entrance.

*Russell Franklin: What does an eight thousand pound mako shark with a brain the size of a flat-head V8 engine and no natural predators think about?*

*– Deep Blue Sea*

*If the heroes successfully bring this adventure to a resolution, it would probably be enough to build their reputation as supernatural problem-solvers. (This assumes any evidence remains, of course . . . supernatural proof is so ephemeral.)*

# THE WRECK OF THE SAVOY

The *Savoy* was a slave ship out of La Havre, France. It was owned by three wealthy French merchants, and captained by one Henri Ayres. As a slave ship, it regularly ran the triangular trade, carrying manufactured goods from Europe to Africa, trading them for a cargo of slaves, selling the slaves in the West Indies, and then returning to France with a load of rum, indigo, and sugar. This trade was very profitable for the ship owners and captains, less profitable for the crews, and an atrocity for the Africans sold into slavery.

## *The Savoy Then*

The *Savoy* left La Havre on April 16, 1724 for the Canary Islands. There she took on water and supplies before sailing on to Dakar. There they traded beads, cloth and other goods to the French slave dealers in exchange for a cargo of 134 men and women. The slaves were placed securely in the between decks part of the hold, a cramped, filthy, and dark pair of half decks. Although some would die during the crossing, enough would make it to turn a profit for Captain Ayres and the ship's owners.

Leaving Dakar on May 5, the *Savoy* encountered some bad weather crossing the Atlantic. This, combined with a navigational error, caused the ship to miss the planned landfall at Port-Au-Prince on Haiti. Tacking about and heading back toward the French colony, the *Savoy* sailed into the teeth of an early-season hurricane. Buffeted by the winds, and never a great sailor, the ship was severely damaged.

A lookout spotted the opening to Fisherman's Cove, and Captain Ayres decided to lie in for repairs and refresh the ship's dwindling water supplies. After using the ship's boats to tow it through the narrow passage, the crew was set to work patching leaks in the hull and going ashore to refill the water casks. The damage was too great, and the old ship had sprung many small leaks below the water line. The accumulated leaks proved to be too much for the pump system to handle. The crew, undermanned as it was (a common practice on merchant ships at the time) and already exhausted by the storm and towing the *Savoy* into the cove, were unable to make repairs fast enough to save the ship.

At this moment, the slaves (led by Iniko) managed their escape. After freeing himself and several others, Iniko managed to break through a bulkhead and gain entrance to the lower decks. Grabbing what weapons they could (mostly improvised knives and clubs) the slaves raced on deck and attacked the crew. The resulting battle was particularly bloody, as neither side gave or asked quarter. Indeed, all parties knew that the fate of the ship and all aboard hinged on the outcome of this fight.

As the slaves and the crew fought, the pumps were abandoned, and the ship began to take on water at a greater rate. The bloodshed drew in Big Tom, who feasted on any who tumbled over the side. Meanwhile, the *Savoy* began to sink in earnest, titling to port as she went down. The slaves still in the between decks were the first to drown, screaming in terror as the seawater rose about their shackled limbs. The situation did not go unnoticed on deck, but at that point, little could be

done. Some choose to dive into the cove and risk a swim to shore, while others were either too involved in the fight, or too wounded to escape. Ayres and Iniko battled to the last, neither giving up even after the waters of the cove had claimed them. Big Tom, sated like never before, simply swam back to the grotto to sleep.

## *The Savoy Now*

The wreck lies in 85' of water, partially covered by silt and sand, and tilted 13° to its port side. It is angled with its bow to the northeast, and thus the tilt is to the northwest. Both masts are gone, though one can be found 20 yards away on the cove floor. An artifact scatter stretches toward to northwest for 30 yards, and a debris field surrounds the wreck. Its two portside cannons rolled off during the sinking and now lay 15 yards away toward the northwest.

Most of the wreck is in a state of repair one expects for a ship that has rested in seawater for centuries. Adding to the general tangle of plant life and encrustation of barnacles, numerous broken fishing lines stream up from the wreck, waving like strange vines in the water. The hull has been attacked by various wood-eating parasites, and is rotten in most places.

A thick layer of silt and sand covers the deck. If disturbed, it creates a cloud that obscures all vision for at least 30 seconds. Investigating the deck at a short distance reveals two sets of footprints in the silt, both leading from the gangway to below decks and from the stern hatch. One set is of a man in soft shoes, and the other is of a larger barefoot man. The footprints cross and recross in several places, and at some points where they meet, the silt is heavily disturbed as if by some sort of scuffle. One of the sets leads to the clean ship's bell. A closer investigation and Scuba or Physics skill checks reveals that the footprints are not consistent with the normal movements of a person underwater. Clearing away the silt uncovers broken or dropped weapons and skeletal remains that show signs of violence.

There are several options for entering the ship: A person could swim down the gangway, in through the broken windows in the stern, or through one of the two large hatches on deck. The gangway leads to the lower decks, and is difficult to negotiate. Little light penetrates into the ship, and explorers must rely on their own illumination sources. The passage below decks were tight when the ship was still sailing, and a Scuba encumbered explorer will find it very difficult (-2) to enter many areas of the ship. Most of the interior is covered in a layer of silt and rotten wood (punching through the wood is possible - DR 2, HP 24 for rotten bulkheads). The silt in places shows footprints of both types, the shoed set leading to the stern cabin, and the bare foot set leading to the broken bulkhead. Aside from the artifacts of life during the age of sail, more broken weapons and victims of violence will be found. Eventually, the investigators will come across the bulkhead that Iniko broke through in order to start his escape.

Passing through the broken bulkhead or the stern-most hatch leads the explorers into the between decks. This area is even tighter than the other lower decks of the *Savoy* (-3 to Scuba and Swimming rolls), and the space is only 2' to 3' high.

*GURPS Supporting Cast: Age of Sail Pirate Crew offers details on being a pirate in their heyday, as well as stats for a fast vessel and a crew to go with it.*

Here the remains of the men and women who died in their chains can be found. The skeletons are chained no longer, and each has been carefully cleaned, moved, and placed as if sleeping. The silt in the between decks is heavily tracked by signs of a person crawling through.

Swimming in through the broken windows of the aft cabin, the adventurers find that this room is well-kept, though obviously still part of a long submerged wreck. Signs of use are apparent: Books are moldering neatly on their shelves, rubble is cleared, and a cleaned small sword hangs from a hook on one wall. Under the bed is a small locked wooden box contains the ship's treasure, 85 silver ecús, cleaned and stacked neatly. Tracks mark not just the floor, but also the bed and a small fold-down writing desk and chair. The tracks here are of the shoe-clad variety, and there is no sign of any other occupation.

When not active, the remains of Captain Ayres and Iniko "rest" in the aft cabin and the between decks respectively. Captain Ayres' skeleton is that of a man in his early middle ages, clad in rotten cloth and bearing a large silver cross. Iniko's remains have only a few shreds of clothes on them, whatever he could scrounge from the wreck. Neither shows any signs of violence.

## THE MYSTERY OF FISHERMAN'S COVE

The grotto tucked away in one corner of the cove is a nexus for the earth's natural mystical energies. As such it is full of magical potential, a potential that can be easily influenced by nearby events. For centuries, the native Arawak and Carrib had made Fisherman's Cove a sacred site, but they were long pushed out before the *Savoy* sailed in. The events of the ship's sinking have tainted the nexus, and indeed tainted the surrounding waters. What was once potential is now realized, and the mystical energy that seeps out of the grotto now bears a distinct resonance. The energy of the conflict to gain control of the *Savoy* has instilled a spirit of aggression into the nexus, one that is manifested in the bizarre behavior of the natural life. The greed that motivated the slavers has also influenced the energies of the cove, a factor in both the possessiveness of the local fishing guides as well as Big Tom.

Two of these souls have enough strength of will and a powerful enough driving purpose to animate. Captain Ayres and Iniko continue their battle for the ship. Some days, they spend their time tending to their charges – Ayres, the ship and his money; Iniko, the remains of his fellow slaves. Other days, they seek each other out, hoping to finally lay their foe down, and hopefully themselves to rest. The strain of manifesting forces both ghosts to spend time in a spiritual slumber, resulting in periods of low ghostly activity.

Both Iniko and Ayres have adapted to their life as disembodied spirits. However, they have not figured out that they can effect each other when not materialized. Thus, their battle continues only on days they both are assuming a physical presence.

Also, their manifestation is tied to their remains; when manifesting, they inhabit their old bones and grow ghostly flesh over them. Sadly, neither can permanently defeat the other, and so the cycle continues.

### The Cove's Taint

The cove can gradually influence anyone who spends enough time there. Each day spent in the cove requires a Quick Contest of Will between each person and the cove. The cove's effective Will varies for each person; it starts at 3, grows by 1 for each day (or portion thereof) he spends in the cove, and shrinks by 1 (to a minimum of 3) for each lunar month he spends *not* in the cove.

Failure means he becomes more and more aggressive. First, he gains Bad Temper (15), then it worsens to (12), then (9), then (6); he then gains Berserk in the same manner, then Bloodlust, then Uncontrollable Appetite (Violent Fighting). Subjects who already have any of these traits jump right to the next lower self-control number when that disadvantage's "turn" comes up. If he leaves the cove, he must continue to make a daily Quick Contest of Will – failure means the disadvantages remain for now, while success reverses the most recent change. Enough successes will eventually restore the victim's personality.

### Solving the Mystery

There are several ways to resolve the situation, depending on the resources at the party's disposal. First, they can exhume the bodies and return them to their homelands for burial. Merely burying them elsewhere will only disperse, though weaken, the problem. Determining the homelands of the crew will be difficult – most people of their time, especially the lower classes, left little paper record. A new adventure could revolve around sifting through centuries-old documents in an effort to locate reliable names, much less places of birth. The slaves present a further set of problems, as the only documents that could be found are manifests that list them as having been purchased from French slave traders at the mouth of the Senegal River. This means that they could be from anywhere in west or central Africa. Most of the slaves would be happy if simply returned to familiar ground, though there might still be restless-soul trouble later.

Another option is to close off or redirect the nexus. This would only be feasible for a party of a very high power level; after all, redirecting the earth's natural mystical forces is near godlike in scope. A better option would be to counteract the negative energies with more positive energies, which may be a rather large undertaking. If the party has the means to exorcise spirits they could simply drive away the ghosts of the crew and slaves. This would no doubt require a large amount of magical energy, but is possible.

The party could simply choose sides in the struggle, assisting Iniko or Captain Ayres in laying their foe to eternal rest. As the focus of the lost souls' anger and longing, these two entities have a great deal of psychic sway over their fellow deceased.

*Without too much adjustment, this adventure could be used by a cliffhangers campaign (especially if a gadgeteer can make "cutting edge" undersea-appropriate gear).*

The loss of one of these leaders would cause his faction to suffer a great setback in the struggle. This may weaken the restless spirits enough to make a mass exorcism pragmatic. If the investigators find other means to aid one side or another, they may even be able to rely on their new ghostly allies to eradicate the opposing spirits. In this case, much of the psychic bond that holds the victors in this world would disappear, allowing them to fade away and pass on to whatever afterlife awaits them.

Of course, the party might not need to resolve the situation at all, depending on their goals. If all they desire is to loot the wreck, than the use of aggressive and intrusive methods would allow them to do so. However, they would still need to deal with Big Tom, as he would not take kindly to intruders messing with his cove. Also, the effects of the tainted nexus will begin to tell on any who spend more than a few days in the

cove (see *The Cove's Taint*, p. 12), a situation that could very well lead to a set of lively encounters between the investigators and any NPCs they may have with them.

An expensive, time consuming, and ultimately destructive option would be to seal off the grotto. Without the constant influx of mana infused water, the ghosts would lose their energy, possibly even slipping into the restful slumber one expects of the dead. Big Tom has already been altered, and would not change back into a normal shark. However, the emotional effects of the cove would diminish over time (give a bonus of +1 to resist each lunar month for three months, at which point the effects have dissipated entirely). Some means of letting off the pressure that will build up inside the grotto needs to be found, possibly by drilling a new outlet and allowing the mana-rich water to drain away (or bottling it).

## THE INHABITANTS

There are several key entities that adventurers might encounter in Fisherman's Cove.

### BIG TOM

#### 201 points

Big Tom was once a normal shark, but decades of exposure to the mana stream from the grotto has changed him. He is far more intelligent than a normal shark, but that intelligence is heavily tempered by his natural "sharkness." Although capable of complex reasoning, Big Tom sees the world much as a normal shark does, being mostly interested in eating, swimming, and procreation. He is very protective of his cove, and does not appreciate trespassers in any way. Other sharks that try to enter are attacked, unless they are particularly attractive female smooth hammerheads. Humans swimming in his waters are also perceived as a threat; they are large predators after all (any completely vegetarian human will be treated as food).

Big Tom is smart enough to know that guns and boats often go together, and he will not attack when it is not to his advantage. He also avoids the wreck as the humans that live there do not smell right and taste horrible. Besides, the humans of the wreck don't act like normal creatures, a thing that disturbs Big Tom and rattles him to his cartilage. You could bite them in half, and they'll just come back next month. Sometimes you just swim right through them. If the world can be that flat-out wrong, what else lurks out there? Better stay in the cove and defend it from outsiders.

When not patrolling, eating, or resting in the grotto, Big Tom has turned his limited intelligence to "tending" to his grotto, moving rocks about, counting and managing the fish populations, and in general making it how he envisions it should be (more food, better hunting grounds, and enticing to female smooth hammerheads).

When roleplaying Big Tom, the GM should keep two things in mind. First, he is coldly calculating in his actions and very

experienced with humans. Second, the cove has not just made him more intelligent, but also very territorial and aggressive. Given a decent chance, Big Tom will ambush swimmers, though he won't interfere with anyone straying to close to the wreck – that place just gives him the willies.

Age 368; silvery-grey skin; white eyes. His bite does 3d-1 cutting.

**ST** 25 [90]\*; **DX** 13 [36]\*; **IQ** 10 [0]; **HT** 16 [60].  
Damage 2d+2/5d-1; BL 125 lbs; HP 25 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 18 [40]; FP 16 [0].

Basic Speed 10.00 [20]; Basic Move 10 [0]; Dodge 14†.  
23' 9"; 855 lbs.

#### Social Background

*TL*: 0 [-40].

*CF*: None [0].

*Languages*: None [0].

#### Advantages

Combat Reflexes [15]; DR 4 (Hardened 1, +20%) [24]; Discriminatory Smell [15]; Doesn't Breathe (Gills) [0]; Peripheral Vision (Easy to Hit, -20%) [12]; Pressure Support 2 [10]; Sharp Teeth [1]; Subsonic Hearing [5]; Unaging [15].

#### Disadvantages

Bad Sight (Farsighted) [-25]; Bad Temper (9) [-15]; Ichthyoid [-50]; Wild Animal [-30]; Bloodlust (9) [-15]; Cold-Blooded (50° F) [-5]; Obsession (9 or less; Defend his cove) [-15].

#### Skills

Area Knowledge (Fisherman's Cove) (E) IQ+2 [4]-12; Naturalist/TL0 (H) IQ [4]-10; Brawling (E) DX+3 [8]-16; Survival (Open Ocean) (A) IQ [2]-10.

\* Cost reduced -40% from No Fine Manipulators.

† Includes +1 from Combat Reflexes.

*For information on adapting the GURPS Action rules to two-fisted 1930s globetrotters, check out Sean Punch's Pulp Action!, from Pyramid #3/8: Cliffhangers.*

# CAPTAIN HENRI AYRES

206 points

Ayres wants his ship back, and he's willing to do anything to get it, even hang on as a ghost. He was born in 1687 in La Havre, the son of a sea captain. Ayers spent his early years working his way up on his father's ship, from cabin boy to mate. At the age of 32, he became captain of the *Savoy*, and worked his men twice as hard as anyone else. Ayres turned a large profit on his first voyage, and consistently performed better than other merchant captains. He was very proud of his record in the slave trade, and this pride helped lead to the errors that wrecked his ship. It was Ayres' mistake in navigation that put the *Savoy* off course, and his failure to promptly address the damage after the hurricane that led to her sinking. Privately, he blames himself for the unending twilight existence he and his crew face, but he turns this internal rage outward against Iniko and the slaves. What Ayres does not understand is that by blaming the slaves for the loss of his ship, he helped create the situation he now finds himself in.

Age 323; black hair and eyes; pale skin.

**ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 11 [20]; **IQ** 12 [40]; **HT** 10 [0].  
Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0];  
FP 10 [0].  
Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 6 [5]; Dodge 8.  
5'6"; 156 lbs.

## Social Background

*TL*: 4 [-20].

*CF*: Western (18th century) [0].

*Languages*: French (Native) [0].

## Advantages

Amphibious [10]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Enhanced Parry 2 (Knife) [10]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Insubstantiality (Usually On, -40%) [48]; Invisibility (Substantial Only, -10%; Usually On, +5%) [38]; Status 2 (Merchant captain) [10]; Unkillable 2 [100].

## Disadvantages

Compulsive Behavior (12 or less; Clean the Ship) [-5]; Dependency (Mana-rich area; Rare; Constant) [-150]; Greed [-15]; Obsession (12 or less; Kill Iniko and save the ship) [-5].

## Skills

Accounting (H) IQ [4]-12; Area Knowledge (Atlantic North America) (E) IQ [1]-12; Area Knowledge (French Coast) (E) IQ [1]-12; Area Knowledge (West African Coast) (E) IQ [1]-12; Area Knowledge (West Indies) (E) IQ [1]-12; Boating/TL4 (Unpowered) (A) DX [2]-11; Brawling (E) DX [1]-11; Climbing (A) DX+1 [4]-12; Knife (E) DX [1]-11; Leadership (A) IQ [2]-12; Merchant (A) IQ+2 [8]-14; Navigation/TL4 (Sea) (A) IQ [2]-12; Seamanship/TL4 (E) IQ+2 [4]-14; Shiphandling/TL4 (H) IQ+1 [8]-13.

# INIKO

216 points

Iniko was a young man when Arab slavers captured him. His village was a small one in central Africa, and his people, the Buganda, were a major power in the area. To this day, Iniko does not know why the normally friendly Arabs chose

to attack and enslave his village, one of the many confusing injustices that drive him. Many of his village died on the long march to the slave pens on the Senegal River, and many more died in the pens waiting for the ships. Iniko was auctioned in a block of slaves from different parts of Africa, all speaking wildly different languages.

The middle passage took its toll, and the man to Iniko's left died, but was left chained to him. Others were lost to illness or despair, but Iniko kept one thought in his head: He will escape and get revenge on those who had taken him. The hurricane turned out to be a blessing in disguise, as it allowed him to break his chains, and those of other strong men as well.

In the chaos of the escape, Iniko was overcome with bloodlust, turning the pent up fear and pain of slavery on the crew. With savage brutality (and righteous anger), Iniko smashed through the few crewmen who stood in his way, aiming for the better dressed man who seemed to be in command. Iniko and Ayres met on the quarterdeck, small sword against belying pin, in a battle that still goes on to this day.

Age 303; black hair and eyes; dark skin.

**ST** 12 [20]; **DX** 11 [20]; **IQ** 10 [0]; **HT** 12 [20].  
Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs; HP 12 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 12 [10]; FP 12 [0].  
Basic Speed 5.75 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8.  
5'11"; 175 lbs.

## Social Background

*TL*: 2 [-30].

*CF*: Central African (18th century) [0].

*Languages*: Buganda (Native) [0].

## Advantages

Amphibious [10]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Fearlessness 2 [4]; Fit [5]; Hard to Kill 2 [4]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Insubstantiality (Usually On, -40%) [48]; Invisibility (Substantial Only, -10%; Usually On, +5%) [38]; Outdoorsman 1 [10]; Unkillable 2 [100].

## Disadvantages

Dependency (Mana-rich area; Rare; Constant) [-150]; Intolerance (Europeans) [-5]; Obsession (12 or less; Kill Ayres) [-5]; Sense of Duty (Fellow slaves) [-5]; Stubbornness [-5].

## Skills

Axe/Mace (A) DX+2 [8]-13; Brawling (E) DX [1]-11; Camouflage (E) IQ+1 [1]-11\*; Fishing (E) Per+1 [1]-13\*; Intimidation (A) Will-1 [1]-9; Naturalist (H) IQ+1 [4]-11\*; Navigation/TL2 (Land) (A) IQ+2 [4]-12\*; Running (A) HT+1 [4]-13; Sex Appeal (A) HT-1 [1]-11; Shield (E) DX+2 [4]-13; Stealth (A) DX [2]-11; Survival (Plains) (A) Per+2 [4]-14\*; Tracking (A) Per [2]-12.

\* Includes +1 from Outdoorsman.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ken Spencer is a freelance writer and stay-at-home dad. He greatly enjoys writing for *Pyramid*, as well as for Chaosium and Alephhtar Games. Somehow, he also finds time for a monthly column, "A Bit of History," on [rpg.net](http://rpg.net). Ken lives near the Wabash River in southern Indiana, with his wife, their son, his cat, and everybody's fish.

# THE YONAGUNI MONUMENT

## AN ARCHITECTONIC UNDERSEA MYSTERY

BY J. EDWARD TREMLETT

*Satsuki Takemura checked her remaining air supply and cursed. Only 10 minutes left? She wouldn't get another chance to examine this astounding thing she'd found for weeks, maybe months, and someone else might come here before then.*

*Her partner, Michio, was gesturing at his watch – **time to go**. She shook her head. Just one more minute.*

*The two members of the Tokyo Amateur Undersea Archaeology Club were the only divers here, today. They'd brought a camera, but it didn't seem to be working too well. By the time they could afford another trip, someone else might chance upon it, and then it would be **their** discovery, not hers.*

*Satsuki would not let that happen.*

*Could this be the lost land of Mu?*

*The outcropping was between the main monument and the "stadium." Sunk into the sea bed, it must have escaped detection until now. However, a chance movement of her flippers had revealed its seemingly cyclopean edges. Subsequent brushing had revealed strange glyphs – ones eerily similar to those found on the monument, only deeper and more well-defined.*

*This could be the discovery to put their small organization in the news! If only the camera had been working . . .*

*There was a flash of sudden movement, off to her left. At first, she thought Michio had gotten spastically angry, as always, but when she looked, he was gone. There was a cloud of blood in the water, right where he'd been. In the distance, she could see his reflective strips as he flew away, trailing blood and small bits of himself as he went.*

*Something large had carried him off – something far larger than the hammerheads they'd been warned about.*

*Satsuki didn't even have time to panic before a shadow loomed over her. She turned to look to her right and saw something unbelievably grotesque swimming right for her. There wasn't even time to scream, and then she was dying . . .*

Just off the westernmost part of Japan lurks an undersea mystery: A strange, temple-like rock formation lies only 130 feet down, not far from the southern shore of the island of Yonaguni, in the Ryukyu archipelago. Only recently discovered, the sunken "ruins" have stirred controversy between those who insist that it is manmade, and those who say it is only a natural formation of rock, however much it may echo other human structures.

If it was constructed on land by humans, fully or partially, it could be the oldest manmade structure ever found – possibly even outdating the Pyramids at Giza. However, that assumes it was built by *humans* and not something entirely different. For ancient legends speak of the Pacific Ocean being replete with vanishing lands and civilizations, not all of them were made by men.

Is it possible that this "natural" formation is an eroded remnant of one of those long-gone places, such as Mu? Is it just a geological curiosity, as many scientists say? Or is it something else entirely?

The Yonaguni Monument has a large number of unknowns associated with it, making it a great location for numerous kinds of campaigns, with or without a supernatural element. What follows is the concrete information known about the extraordinary formations, along with possibilities of how they might have been made, and why. It also highlights numerous local enigmas, myths, and supernatural elements of the area, and gives ideas for stories involving both the monument and the island it sits beside.

*For another adventure featuring a hammerhead shark, see *The Wreck of the Savoy* on pp. 9-14.*

## MYSTERIES CLOSE TO SHORE

The “monument” is the most notable undersea rock formation in a widespread series of similar formations, all jutting up from a seabed that’s only 130 feet deep. It’s only 16 feet from the surface at its highest point, and is 490 feet long and 130 feet wide. It garners the most attention due to its size and many distinct features. It looks something like an irregularly rectangular conglomeration of titanic steps, terraces, and channels.

There are other, smaller formations around the monument, and more formations along the shores of Yonaguni and other islands in the Ryukyus, including Okinawa. The widespread nature of the “ruins” has helped lead its champions to declare it a city of sorts, but whose city it was is not quite clear, as only the rock has remained. Any other structures would have decayed ages ago, and as only one piece of “writing” has been discovered, its exact origins remain elusive.

The monument was discovered in the mid-1980s, when a local diver chanced upon it while observing the hammerhead sharks that migrate past the island in the winter months. Excited at the prospect of having found an underwater archeological site, he contacted a scientist from the University of the Ryukyus, who came out to explore the find. By the end of his initial encounter, Dr. Maasaki Kimura decided that the complex was clearly manmade.

Among the features that could indicate human construction are:

- A large “face” on one side, with deep (if uneven) eyes and no mouth.
- What appears to be a carved glyph in Kaida – the native script of Yonaguni.
- Vaguely shaped animal “statues.”
- A triangular pool with two 2’ wide holes.
- A straight line of regular holes, possibly indicating an attempt to break off a line of rock.

Kimura’s initial hypothesis was that the complex had to have been created around 10,000 years ago, during the last ice age. At that time, the area would have been dry land, and it could have been done by any group of people who had moved through the area. However, within the last few years, Dr. Kimura has backpedaled quite a bit, saying that the complex – now dated to 5,000 years ago – could have been mostly natural with some help from humans, and might have been swamped around 2,000 years ago by an earthquake.

Critics of the complex having been fully or partially manmade are many, and are undeterred by Dr. Kimura’s enthusiasm. They point out that the island itself features many similar sandstone structures along its shorelines, and that the “architecture” does not have as many regular angles and features as it would if it was artificially constructed. They believe the most likely explanation for the monument’s architectonic appearance is fracturing due to earthquakes, which are quite common in that area. All other “features,” such as the holes, face, and statues, were most likely caused by erosion, and mankind’s tendency to see patterns where there are none doubtlessly filled in the blanks.

*Lindsey Brigman: So raise your hand if you think that was a Russian water-tentacle.*

– *The Abyss*

## RISING FOR ANSWERS

It goes without saying that the naysayers might be absolutely correct, and that the “monument” and all associated undersea structures are entirely natural – no more created by human hands than the Giants’ Causeway in Ireland. It also goes without saying that there’s no fun in that, except to marvel at how amazing terrestrial geology can be.

But what if the monument and its satellite structures *were* fully or partially constructed, thousands of years ago? One fact in favor of this argument is that the Japanese islands have clearly been populated by a sedentary people since 14,000 B.C., as evidenced by the Jomon-era pottery found there. This timeframe corresponds with the hypothesis that the monument could have been made 10,000 years ago, in 8000 B.C., and would most likely have been done by actual settlers, rather than migrant tribes.

The question is why the people would settle *there*, as opposed to somewhere else. Was there some natural resource or treasure nearby that made that area desirable? Did something about the geography provide excellent shelter or defense? Or did they not care to ford the sea to what are now the major islands of the Japanese archipelago, and preferred to stay on what was then dry land?

Another question concerns whether it was built 10,000 years ago or 5,000 years ago. If it was the latter, there is still a possibility that it could have been done on dry land. Yonaguni Island may have been much larger and could have lost most of its bulk in an earthquake, including the areas where the now-undersea monuments are. This might account for the broken nature of the monument, and the “natural” structures on the land that the naysayers point to. Plus, if the island was destroyed by a catastrophic natural disaster, the survivors could have abandoned it and moved elsewhere, though the more recent date makes it unlikely that such a cataclysm would not have been recorded in the legends and histories of the people of the Ryukyu islands.

There’s also the possibility, however remote, that the monument and its associated structures are remnants of a long-lost empire of myth – namely, Mu. The ancient continent was supposedly located within the Atlantic Ocean, though more recent research (or speculation, if you prefer) puts it somewhere in the Pacific. The legends say it was cast beneath the waves for angering one or more of its many gods, but it’s conceivable that it was wracked by a series of devastating earthquakes, or pushed down by the same cataclysm the West refers to as the Great Flood. If the timeframe holds up, then all or part of the Japanese archipelago could be all that remains of Mu.

*Perhaps the octopods described in *The Ocean’s Lords* (pp. 19-21) live near Yonaguni Island.*



Another, more exotic explanation is that the monument has *always* been underwater. Perhaps it was part of a city constructed ages ago by a seaborne or amphibious race of beings. The monument's proximity to the surface suggests a location to worship the great mysteries of the land above the waters. It may have also been a place to venerate dead land creatures that sunk below the waves, or an area to ritualistically sacrifice human sailors to curry favor with the gods of the deep – or the land.

If so, there may be more to the monument than what has been seen. There could be hidden chambers or secret passages. The “statues” could be pointing to secret doors, or may be covers to ancient portals into and out of the monument. The monument and its accompanying “ruins” could be the visible portions of a vast complex of tunnels and rooms underneath the sea bed. Anything could be hidden down there: ancient treasures, lost records of a submerged civilization, sleeping alien gods, or a very alive and active community of aquatic beings that will gladly kill to keep their secret safe.

## SUBMERGED ENIGMAS

Yonaguni Island itself has many interesting mysteries, the monument notwithstanding. The native language of its long-lived people is Japonic, which is mutually unintelligible with the languages of its neighboring islands. Was the tongue and its accompanying writing system – *Kaida* – merely formed in isolation before its annexation by the Ryukyu Kingdom in 1522? Or were they inherited from a much older source, now lying beneath the waves?

There's also the question of *Sanninudai* – a staircase-like structure at the shoreline, possibly leading to the ruins below. A rock bearing ancient inscriptions lies near the “staircase,” and these inscriptions have no resemblance to *Kaida* script. Some say the characters resemble Phoenician, but if so, how did that script get all the way from the Mediterranean to the Japanese Archipelago? Do they share a common ancestor?

The religion of the Ryukyu islands also has some intriguing aspects in relation to water and lost islands. The three “ultimate ancestors” are Heaven, Earth, and Sea, the latter being the birthplace of all life. Of course, this is true from an evolutionary standpoint, but might it have a more literal meaning to the peoples of that area?

There's the notion of the *Nirai Kanai*: the legendary island from which all life came, which is worshipped facing the west, and whose godlike occupants are said to have brought new skills and technology to the Ryukyuan people from time to time. Since Yonaguni is the westernmost island in the chain, it's not hard to wonder if *Nirai Kanai* once resided upon it, or just beyond its shores. It's also not hard to speculate as to what gifts its inhabitants handed out – writing and long life, perhaps?

Another point of interest is the folktales concerning magical creatures of the islands. The *kijimunaa* sprite resembles a small boy with a shock of red hair that lives in banyan trees, and is well-known to play harmless pranks. While this isn't too significant in and of itself, it is worth noting that the tyke has a reported antipathy toward octopuses; given that Mu is often

connected to, or conflated with, a certain sunken Lovecraftian continent, the myth suddenly takes on a whole new meaning.

Tales of sea dragons are widespread throughout the islands. They are rumored to live in a kingdom under the waves, somewhere, perhaps with or alongside the *Kojin* – also known as *Samebito* (shark men) – who appear as mer-men with the bearded, fierce faces of dragons. Is the monument a broken outcropping of their undersea kingdom? Or is it possibly some far-flung outpost?

In addition to the aforementioned mer-men, Japanese culture is rife with notions of other sea-dwelling humanoids, any of whom might be the true creators or current inhabitants of the monument. The bowl-headed, turtle-like *Kappa* are well known for their sinister nature, though their tendency to drown swimmers by gruesomely pulling out their intestines is often glossed over in Western sources. There is also the *Iso Onna*: hideous “mermaids” who entice humans with their voice, but then trap their prey with their hair, drag them beneath the waves, and drink their blood.

There's also the Japanese tradition of ocean-plying ghosts. The most ominous are the *Umi-Bozu* – the Sea Monks – that appear as large, dark spheres of solid water with two glowing and featureless eyes. Some say they are the spirits of the drowned, while others say they are oceanic monsters or possibly the animated dreams of some terrible, sleeping creature. Whatever their true origins they are rightly feared for their immense size, which they can increase at will and use to swamp large vessels and small islands. Are they the beings the monument was created to worship – or placate? If so, is its having been “destroyed” responsible for their occasional rampages?

Another notable sea-going ghost is the *Funa-Yurei*. These “ship ghouls” are infamous for stalking fishermen in the night and filling their boats with an inordinate amount of water, thus drowning them. What's interesting is that the ghosts are purported to wear distinctive triangular headgear, common in Buddhist funerary rituals. But what if the headgear was actually the kind worn by the priests of Mu? Are these ghosts actually temporal projections from that ancient empire? Or are they the live, contemporary remnants of that vanished civilization, out to find victims for ancient, abhorrent rites still conducted on or near the sunken monument?

On a more portentous note, consider the regular schools of hammerhead sharks that the island is famous for. Fossil records indicate that the species has existed since at least the Miocene period, and have come down through the millennia with apparently few changes. However, the waters surrounding Japan are known to spit up the occasional large, prehistoric shark from time to time, and there is always the question of what the hammerheads may have evolved from – or evolved *into*.

If so, is there more to the legend of the *Samebito* than Lafcadio Hearn's misappropriation of their name for a moralistic tale about interspecies friendship? Are the schools just passing by Yonaguni, or are they checking up on something? Is something large, ancient, and misshapen watching the undersea ruins, possibly waiting for someone to discover the wrong thing? Could it be the sea dragons of local lore, or the hideous shark men that the *Samebito* legend only hints at?

*GURPS Banestorm offers templates for hellsharks, kraken, merfolk, octopus folk, sea elves, shark men, and intelligent dolphins.*

## FLOATING POSSIBILITIES

Given the number of unknowns and enticing possibilities surrounding the Yonaguni Monument, both it and the mysterious island it sits alongside could be adapted to most campaigns. It could be an important archaeological riddle to solve, local color in an offbeat Japan-based scenario, a place of importance for an occult-based campaign, or a stop along the way in a series of world-spanning stories. Some ideas are given below, all of which presuppose that there's something spooky going on or around the monument and/or the island itself.

### Modern Japan

Yonaguni, present day. The Tokyo Amateur Undersea Archaeology Club has finally made the newspapers, but for the wrong reasons. Two of their members are missing, presumed dead, after a foolhardy dive off the shore of Yonaguni. They have apparently joined the significant numbers of those who've died while executing a poorly planned dive there (getting caught in strong currents, shark attack, etc.). But the group's *otaku* bankroller doesn't accept the authorities' version of events, so he has secured the services of the heroes to look into the matter.

Yonaguni's police are helpful if dealing with respectful professionals, but they can't say much; two idiots went on a dive by themselves with no backup – what more needs to be said? However, they remain curiously tight-lipped on how often people go missing around this time of year at the main monument.

If the investigators retrace the steps of the missing, they may find the same thing they found: a massive, disc-like outcropping with *Kaida* glyphs around the edges. But they will also be attacked by the same creatures that attacked the amateurs – grotesque monsters out of ancient legend. Clearly the beasts are protecting the outcropping, but why? What is down there?

Stranger still is the reaction of the islanders. Why will no one on the island believe the survivors of any attack? Why do the authorities refuse to believe their wounds, or even photographs? Are they afraid of the consequences of word getting out? Or is there some other mysterious and sinister dynamic at work?

One thing's for certain – the longer the heroes stay on Yonaguni, the less welcome they are. If the creatures under the sea don't kill them, the islanders will. Can they overcome adversity on land and sea to reveal the mystery of the monument?

### Weird War

Japan, March of 1945. Nazi Germany lies in ruins, and the Allies are all but triumphant in Europe. The Imperial Prophets say that Hitler will soon be dead, and then it's only a matter of time before the full-scale invasion of Japan begins. Intelligence confirms that plans are already in motion, and all castings say it will end in a terrible twin holocaust.

Desperate for some slim hope, the Guardians of the Eight Corners – the cabal of eugenically engineered mystic warriors that led Japan into war – turn to the Ryukyuan islands. Their researches have led them to believe that the *Umi-Bozu* all emanate from mysterious ruins off the shores of lonely Yonaguni. If they can be communicated with, and possibly placated, the Guardians could harness a force to make the “divine wind” of myth a powerful reality – swamping enemy carriers, landing craft, and possibly even bombers. There is also the possibility they could be persuaded to attack the Pacific shores of America and the USSR!

Do the Guardians have their finger on something, or are they just chasing superstitions? The Allies don't care. When word of what the holy warriors are planning gets to their intelligence, they quickly dispatch a small strike force of frogmen to Yonaguni to put an end to the matter. The upcoming attack on Okinawa – scheduled for April 1 – *must* succeed. To that end, the PCs are ordered to sneak onto the small island, see what is transpiring there, both above and below the waves, and deny the enemy any supernatural advantage. Can they survive against the assembled might of the desperate Guardians long enough to uncover the secret of Yonaguni Island?

### Martial Arts

Okinawa, June of 1489. Trouble in the neighboring western islands has led King Sho Shin to send troops of soldiers to put down unrest. The move has been seen as a lead-up to annexing those islands into the Ryukyu Kingdom, and is not entirely popular. So when a well-placed noble and his entire family are attacked in their home and dragged off the island by strange-looking fishermen from the westernmost island, Yonaguni, some see this as a test of the king's resolve. Does he send an entire fleet to rescue one house?

In his wisdom, the king dispatches a small group of “capable men” – all versed in the martial arts that Okinawa is well-known for. They are instructed to travel to the island, find any survivors, and rescue them with as little fuss as possible. Of course, if they get the chance to deliver a serious beating to those responsible for this outrage, all the better.

Thoughts of attaining glory through crushing a wave of ill-trained fisher-folk vanish as soon as they make landfall. The island is a strange and dreary place, filled with men who speak an unknown language. They have odd, fishy eyes, and far too many teeth in their mouths. It would seem the legends of the *Samebito* are not only horribly accurate, but that they come from this very island. Generations of interbreeding between shark men and human has created an island of evil.

Worse, the family are being held underwater, at a “temple” off the southern shore, and being prepared for sacrifice. A local herb allows ordinary humans to breathe underwater for a time, explaining how the unholy union between undersea creature and humans came about in the first place. Getting hold of the plant is no problem, as it grows wild. Getting the family back from the strange temple, overcoming its many defenders, and uncovering an even darker secret of the island will be much more difficult.

What was the Temple of Yonaguni made to protect? Why was this family targeted? What might their deaths raise from the depths of the sea? Only a massive undersea martial arts battle against numerous, terrible foes will answer these questions.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

By day an unassuming bookstore clerk, J. Edward Tremlett takes his ancient keyboard from its hiding place and unfurls his words upon the world. His bizarre lifestyle has taken him to such exotic locales as South Korea and Dubai, UAE. He is a frequent contributor to *Pyramid*, has been the editor of *The Wraith Project*, and has seen print in *The End Is Nigh* and *Worlds of Cthulhu*. He's also part of the *Echoes of Terror* anthology. Currently, he writes for Op-Ed News, and lives in Lansing, Michigan, with his wife and three cats.

# THE OCEAN'S LORDS

BY ALAN LEDDON AND BEKKI LEDDON

The Pacific Ocean covers 30% of the Earth's total surface, over 65 million square miles, and reaches 35,800 feet deep. It has never been fully explored – this would be a Herculean task! Now, something that has long dwelt within that mysterious vastness wishes to teach humanity a lesson: “What you don't know can hurt you very badly.”

The Symmetry has ruled the floor of the Pacific for nearly 95 million years. For most of that span, the Symmetry has been unconcerned with affairs above the low-tide mark.

The state of unconcern changed when great metal ships began to sink into their ocean, bursting beneath the surface and spilling poison into the water. Mild concern became anger when the Evil Hurting was released above coral atolls in their domains. When, that led to birth deformations decades later, the anger became a rage that burned as hot as the Evil Hurting. The Symmetry selected females from each of the Castes of the Society they ruled, and mingled the best lines to produce two new Castes to defend their home.

*How inappropriate to call  
this planet Earth when it is quite  
clearly Ocean.*

– Arthur C. Clarke

## THE OCTOPODS AREN'T LIKE US!

The two castes that come up from the ocean, the Scouts and Revengers, have yet to be “discovered” by humans, but have a lot of specialized traits.

By human standards, they are deaf mutes. The vibration sense of the Scouts makes them aware of nearby movement, but they can't hear. Both castes do communicate by using their illusion abilities to “write” in their language across their bodies, or,

*rarely*, in the air or water above themselves. Others of their species (regardless of caste) can read the signals. The Scouts and Revengers also can increase the contrast and brightness to make the signals legible over greater distance. The most significant implication of this is that humans cannot communicate with them. When the Symmetry decides to come ashore and exterminate the human race, no amount of diplomacy, negotiation, pleading, or threatening is going to make a whit of difference. Naturally, applying potent weapons is only going to confirm everything that the Symmetry already believes about humans.

Like many octopuses, they are able to shift their skin coloration to match their surroundings, offering many stealth benefits. They may also use illusions to appear as other objects; Scouts can mimic other sea creatures in form. They may remain concealed by their chameleon power while using their illusions (projected away from themselves) to distract or frighten people, call for help, or perform other tasks.

All octopuses are venomous, but the venoms of both Scout and Revenger castes are weak and largely harmless; they are good for paralyzing fish, but will barely make a mammal itch. Their ink, however, was enhanced by the Symmetry; it works equally well in air or water, floating as a dark cloud in either.

The Symmetry has made them resistant to injury and to radiation. This is because these are the major hazards that the Symmetry is worried about; some of their number have been crushed in shockwaves from exploding vessels, smashed beneath sinking ships, annihilated in atomic blasts, and killed horribly or been born deformed due to radiation. Petroleum products are worrisome, and can even strip powers from the potent Revengers, but seem to be less of a threat than the nukes and the ships. Plans for a petroleum-resistant Caste of killers have been discussed.

Octopods of the Symmetry do not (*yet*) have a policy on the human consumption of non-sentient octopuses, squids, cuttlefish, and nautili. Members view those creatures like humans view monkeys and apes; their antics may be entertaining, but they aren't *people*. Nevertheless, some Scouts take a dim view of humans eating octopus, and will abscond with a human's *sanakji*, *he'e*, or *tako* dinner if the opportunity arises. Consumption of a servant of the Symmetry, however, is to be met with swift reprisals.

*Octopuses move very strangely compared with what we're used to – too many limbs to keep track of, with movement too seemingly random and erratic. Watching YouTube videos with these creatures can help wrap your mind around octopod mannerisms.*

## Scout Caste

200 points

A member of the Scout caste resembles a normal octopus with a pale gray color. It is about 7" in diameter, but *very* strong and fast for its size. A Scout's bite and tentacle strikes are unlikely to harm humans or their pets, so they prefer to use their excellent hiding and camouflage abilities and great speed to avoid conflict.

Like some of their less intelligent cousins, Scouts habitually pick up and transport items they can hide inside themselves, such as discarded seashells, coconut shells, empty turtle shells, and the like. For reasons fathomable only to themselves, their favorite items are helmets and human skulls. Most frequently scavenged from the wrecks of U.S. and Japanese warships and aircraft dating to World War II, skulls may also be dug from seaside graves, and helmets may be stolen from boats or construction sites. Scouts aren't picky; soup bowls and washbasins will serve equally well.

Scouts fit completely inside a human skull. They observe through the eye sockets, scuttling around when unobserved. They freeze if humans approach or look in their direction (withdrawing tentacles into the skull or other object), and will move to other locations when not observed by humans; humans may sometimes glance away, then look back to find the skull has moved several feet! Those picking up a skull, helmet, basin, etc., and looking inside will likely be confronted by an illusion that makes it look like an empty object (Halloween greetings from the Pacific Ocean!).

Scouts represent the need of the Symmetry to have information about their land-dwelling enemies. They are tasked with observing humans and reporting to the Symmetry; the Symmetry wants to know why the humans pour oil and nuclear weapons into the Pacific Ocean, why they overfish the Ocean and sink ships into it . . . in general, *why* do the humans hate the ocean and try to kill everything? The Symmetry also wishes to discover weaknesses that will enable the complete destruction of the humans. Scouts come ashore, watch the strange land creatures, and then rush back to report.

**Attribute Modifiers:** ST-5 [-50]; DX+2 [24]\*; IQ+2 [40]; HT+2 [20].

**Secondary Characteristic Modifiers:** Per+2 [10]; Basic Speed+1.00 [20]; SM -6.

**Advantages:** Amphibious [10]; Chameleon 5 [25]; Clinging [20]; Enhanced Move 2 (Water) [40]; Extra Legs (8 legs) [15]; Illusion (Visual Only, -30%) [18]; Injury Tolerance (Damage Reduction/2; No Neck) [55]; Obscure 5 (Vision) [10]; Radiation Tolerance (PF 5) [10]; Striker (Tentacles; Crushing) [5]; Teeth (Sharp Beak) [1]; Vibration Sense [10].

**Disadvantages:** Callous [-5]; Cold-Blooded (50° F); Deafness [-20]; Duty (Service to species; 15 or less) [-15]; Incompetence (Navigation (Land)) [-1]; Low TL 6 [-30]; Mute [-25]; No Fine Manipulators [-30].

**Skills:** Artist (Illusion) (H) IQ+1 [8]-13; Brawling (E) DX+4 [12]-16; Camouflage (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Climbing (A) DX+1

[4]-13, Navigation/TL 2 (Land) (A) IQ-5 [1]-7†; Navigation/TL2 (Sea) (A) IQ [2]-12; Observation (A) Per+1 [4]-13; Survival (Island/Beach) (A) Per [2]-12; Swimming (E) HT+4 [12]-16; Tracking (A) Per-1 [1]-11.

**Features:** Like some normal octopods, a Scout can position and move its body to resemble other sea creatures, such as a shark, squid, flounder, etc. This requires a successful Artist(Illusion) roll. Scouts can remain on land comfortably for about two hours; this is a 0-point feature.

\* Cost reduced -40% from No Fine Manipulators.

† Includes -4 from Incompetence.

*But more wonderful than the  
lore of old men and the lore of  
books is the secret lore of ocean.  
Blue, green, gray, white or black;  
smooth, ruffled, or mountainous;  
that ocean is not silent.*

*– H.P. Lovecraft,  
“The White Ship”*

## Revenger Caste

487 points

Revenger caste members look much like oversized octopuses with a dull, asphalt-like color and texture. They can extend themselves to 9' long, and can also fold themselves into a volume of just 50 cubic feet – less than one-half of their usual size!

Revengers typically wait in shallow water while Scouts go ashore. If signaled by a Scout, they come up on the shore to attack and kill humans who are alone or in small groups. Bodies are taken to sea and fed to . . . whatever other creatures are nearby.

Scouts also summon Revengers to carry off interesting bits of human technology, and Revengers sometimes tow flotsam ashore and return it to those who made it. Revengers reserve painful deaths for those who are caught polluting the sea; all humans must die, but those actively harming the water must regret it.

Revengers are very tough and extraordinarily strong. They make formidable opponents under the best of circumstances. They represent the Symmetry's need to stop the human activities that lead to pouring toxins in the sea, causing underwater explosions, and testing nukes in or above Pacific waters – and they intend to meet this need with extreme prejudice.

*The politics and history of these entities are kept deliberately vague, to allow them to be incorporated into many different kinds of adventures. The realities of why they do what they do can be kept a mystery (allowing them to be used as “monsters of the week”), or they can be introduced to allow diplomatic resolutions.*

A GM planning to use Revengers in a battle should carefully consider their abilities as compared to PCs (unless the adventurers are supers or similarly powerful). Revengers might enter battle with a spear, a stave, two daggers, and a sack full of “homemade” grenades.

Spears and staves are made from metal pipes found ashore or on sunken ships. Knives may be made from bent metal, shaped coral, or may be taken from human ships or dwellings. Grenades were discovered on sunken warships; the Artifice caste has been able to reverse engineer and replicate them. Fragmentation grenades are preferred by the Revengers; those made by Artificers are often made from coral-encrusted glass bottles. Rocks, dangerous animals (like lionfish or large lobsters), and undersea refuse are thrown if other weapons aren't available.

They can strike multiple times per turn with weapons that can potentially kill unarmored PCs with a single hit – they can do 4d+7 crushing with bare tentacles and 4d+2 impaling with a broken pipe used as a spear. They can be killed by the concentrated firepower of several characters, but can potentially decimate an adventuring party before the characters realize how resilient they are. They are vulnerable to toxins, attacking less frequently and resisting capture less willfully when feeling ill, but remain dangerous even when poisoned.

**Attribute Modifiers:** ST+25 [125]\*†; DX+2 [24]\*; IQ+1 [20]; HT+5 [50].

**Secondary Characteristic Modifiers:** Per+2 [10]; Basic Speed+1.00 [20]; SM +1.

**Advantages:** Amphibious [10]; Chameleon 3 [15]; Clinging [20]; Enhanced Move 2 (Water) [40]; Extra Attack 3 (Biological -10%) [68]; Extra Legs (8 Legs) [15]; Flexibility [5]; Hard to Kill 3 [6]; Hard to Subdue (Biological -10%) [9]; Higher Purpose [5]; Illusion (Visual Only, -30%) [18]; Injury Tolerance (Damage Reduction/3; No Neck) [80]; Obscure 5 (Vision) [10]; Radiation Tolerance (PF 5) [10]; Striker (Tentacles; Crushing) [5]; Teeth (Sharp Beak) [1].

**Disadvantages:** Callous [-5]; Cold-Blooded (50° F); Deafness [-20]; Duty (Service to species; 15 or less) [-15]; Incompetence (Navigation (Land)) [-1]; Low TL 6 [-30]; Mute [-25]; No Fine Manipulators [-30].

**Skills:** Artist (Illusion) (H) IQ+1 [8]-12; Brawling (E) DX+4 [12]-16; Camouflage (E) IQ+1 [2]-12; Climbing (A) DX+4 [4]-16‡; Navigation/TL 2 (Land) (A) IQ-5 [1]-6; Navigation/TL2 (Sea) (A) IQ-1 [1]-10§; Spear (A) DX+1 [4]-13; Staff (A) DX+2 [8]-14; Survival (Island/Beach) (A) Per [2]-13; Swimming (E) HT+3 [8]-18; Throwing (A) DX [2]-12.

**Features:** Revengers can remain on land for about 90 minutes; this is a 0-point feature. Biological is a power modifier from **GURPS Powers**; it means the advantage is susceptible to special, chemical countermeasures *and* that the Revenger loses 1 FP every time it's used.

\* Cost reduced -40% from No Fine Manipulators.

† Cost reduced -10% from Size.

‡ Includes +3 from Flexibility.

§ Includes -4 from Incompetence.

## ADVENTURE SEEDS

**Divng:** The heroes are hired to work on a deep-sea expedition – fishing, research, scuba diving, or whatever. Their employers begin to run afoul of Revenger caste octopods: Swimmers come up dead, spears (or grenades!) are thrown from the water onto the vessel, the vessel is rammed by something *big*, and there are those odd sonar contacts . . .

**Fight:** The adventurers are visiting in an ocean-side town. A storm rolls in, but the town is prepared. The weather causes some damage, including the loss of all communications and power, but it's nothing the town can't handle. However, a dozen or so Revengers come ashore and wreak havoc, blowing up cars, killing people, and collapsing buildings.

**R&R:** The heroes have come to a seaside resort for some needed relaxation. The drinks are strong and inexpensive; the food, excellent; the people, scantily clad . . . and the weird occurrences abound as Scout caste octopods use the resort to study humans. Mobile coconut shells and wash basins, unusual lights, and a missing plate of *polipo* are just the beginning of the poltergeist effects.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Alan and Bekki Leddon have been gaming together for seven years and have been married for five. They are the parents of five-year-old Raven, and plan to relocate from Madison, Wisconsin, to R'lyeh in order to enroll Raven in a school district able to better serve her unique needs. On Tuesday nights, the pair can be found at a local game store, surrounded by snack-hungry and bloodthirsty gamers who seem to like fictional explosions.

*The Ocean's Lords* is Bekki's first published work, and it is based on one of Bekki's original ideas.

*Captain Nemo: On the surface there is hunger and fear. Men still exercise unjust laws. They fight, tear one another to pieces. A mere few feet beneath the waves their reign ceases, their evil drowns. Here on the ocean floor is the only independence.*

*– 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*

# THE FUTURE OF THE U-42

BY TIMOTHY J. TURNIPSEED

Franz drove his beer truck down the wide streets of modern Frankfurt, Germany, the name of a famous imported beer gaily emblazoned upon its sides. Personally, he despised American beer – thinking it “rat urine” – but a job was a job.

A sudden, thunderous earthquake threw the back end of the truck sideways, and Franz struggled desperately to keep control. He finally came to rest among the tables and chairs of a thankfully closed sidewalk café.

Furious, Franz leapt from the cab to confront the **dummkopf** who had crashed into him. He saw aluminum cans still skittering over the road while three cars skidded helplessly down the suddenly beer-slick street. But there was no sign of the vehicle that must have struck him. Smoke rose from the ruined cargo of Franz’s truck.

The **polizei** initially determined that a shaped charge from an anti-tank weapon had been fired into the truck. They found it strange for a terrorist to attack beer when there was a tanker full of poisonous chlorine not one block behind . . .

“It was right here Wednesday,” the young woman insisted, peering at the screen. Her exasperated voice cut through the cool-wet, salty air.

A brawny, gray-haired man with weathered skin took an unconscious step for stability as the deck pitched beneath them. He rubbed his grizzled chin and grunted, “Maybe it’s busted. Again.”

“I know when it’s working!” the woman snarled then added, “Captain. Sir. The GPS coordinates match the prerecorded site of the wreck. It should be here!”

“GPS could be busted, too. Things ain’t been right since we had to replace all the equipment with this second-hand crap. Damn pirates!”

“Relax, Pops,” said a younger version of the weathered man. “When they raise the **U-42**, we’ll have enough to replace everything, including the ship. The finder’s fee alone will make us so rich you’ll never have to treasure hunt again. Like that’s gonna happen.”

“Will we make enough to pay those greedy assassins inhaling my grub with the camera crew below deck?”

“Pops, we’ve been through this. Our reputation is attracting every pirate in the sea, and when it comes to security, you get what you pay for. Don’t forget what happened to Stephanie.”

“It’s too deep for the storm to have moved it,” the woman continued, mostly to herself. “Where can it be?”

“Mother Duck, this is Ducky,” barked the radio. “Nothing here. We’re on our way up.”

“Roger that, Ducky,” the captain said into the radio. “Come on up.” Then he muttered as he hung up the mike, “Waste of time to send them in the first place.”

“But it’s got to be here, Cap!” the woman whined, almost in tears. “It’s just gotta!”

The men ignored her and waited till the submersible broke the surface, water pouring from its bright yellow sides.

“What the hell is that coming up behind Rubber Ducky?” the younger man exclaimed, and pointed to a line of white froth closing rapidly on the submersible.

“Ducky, Ducky!” the captain shouted into the radio. “Something’s coming at ya. Get out of the way. Lou! Kevin!”

He shook the mike, growling. “It’s all just static. I don’t think they can hear me.”

“Uh, Pops . . . ?”

There was a flash where the line of froth met **Rubber Ducky**. It shattered the submersible with a thunderclap, like an M80 shoved into a plastic toy. Nothing was left of the vessel or its two-man crew save for a sucking whirlpool and cloud of smoke. When that dissipated, there was nothing but the sea, and the awful feeling in the crew of **Mother Duck** that they were next.

*Escape an undersea prison, and save the world!*

The *Future of the U-42* is an adventure set in the modern world. The heroes are trapped beneath the sea, prisoners aboard a World War II-era German U-boat. Escaping an undersea prison is only half the problem. How do you stop a crew of Nazis from unleashing a horrific bio-terror weapon upon the planet? To save the world, the investigators must somehow outwit or overcome the crew of the *U-42*.

*As foreshadowing, introduce the mysterious damage caused by the earlier time-traveling tests in a previous adventure.*

# THE STORY OF THE U-42

The recently found German submarine has a more mysterious origin than most people realize.

## Dr. Frederic Kaltstein

Dr. Kaltstein was a professor of Antiquities and Folklore at Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany. His specialty was pre-Christian cultures of Western Europe. He was widely regarded as a true genius, but his volatile temper and poor personal hygiene ensured that he remained essentially friendless.

When the war that would become World War II seemed eminent, Kaltstein offered his services to the Nazi regime, promising a mystical “cloak of invisibility” if he were given enough funding and human test subjects. He specified that the test subjects had to be Roma (more commonly known as “Gypsies”) due to what he said was the “unique arcane power flowing within the blood of that ancient race.”

Most dismissed the foul-smelling professor as a crackpot, but there were some in Hitler’s inner circle that had great faith in magic. Kaltstein got a few million marks and a couple dozen very unfortunate Roma to play with.

At the end of the Ardennes Offensive, victorious Western Allies were pressing on the Fatherland from the West while endless hordes of the vengeful Red Army swarmed from the East. All but the most delusional Nazis could see the handwriting on the wall. Hitler was desperate enough to try anything . . .

## A Cloak of Darkness

The dreaded SS showed up at Kaltstein’s home, parked a Panther tank in his courtyard, and demanded that he make it invisible. They hoped to demonstrate the doctor’s failure, dispose of him, and then direct the money invested in his work to more hopeful directions like jet fighters, improved rockets, and the nuclear bomb project.

Kaltstein came out with two assistants dragging a bound, struggling Roma between them. One of the assistants cruelly slit the prisoner’s throat and drained his blood into a silver bucket. The doctor chanted and waved his hands intricately over the bucket, then painted a large pentagram made of blood around the tank. Then he chanted some more, and dense black clouds like tire smoke billowed up from the pentagram and writhed about the tank until it was totally concealed.

It wasn’t true invisibility, as the mystic black cloud was clearly visible in the daylight. But it would do for nighttime operations, and further experiments proved the cloak made an object undetectable to both sonar and radar. Best of all, cloaked subjects proved immune to attack; Dr. Kaltstein went so far as to fire a *Panzerschreck* into a cloaked tank. When the smoke faded from the hastily applied ritual, the target displayed no damage.

## The Führer’s Revenge

Fortunately for Germany’s remaining Roma, it was far too late to equip thousands of Nazi tanks, planes, and ships with the Cloak of Darkness. There was time only for a final gamble

to win the war, or at least make the world regret they had the temerity to stop the Führer.

The Nazis had already been working on a terrifying bio-weapon: a virulent, highly contagious disease pathogen named “*Götterdämmerung*” that could be deployed by explosives such as aerial bombs and artillery shells. The original plan was to simply unleash it upon the enemy during the final battles for Berlin (which would also infect their own population), but now – with the Cloak – Hitler authorized a change of plans.

The U-42 was the *Kriegsmarine*’s largest, most advanced submarine, crewed by veterans and led by Germany’s most successful living sub ace. Unfortunately for Germany, it had been trapped in port, for the wolf packs that had once terrified the North Atlantic and all but starved Britain were now easy prey for greatly improved Allied anti-sub tech and techniques.

However, now the U-42 – under the protection of an improved Cloak – would slip out of port, cross the Atlantic, surface in New York harbor, and begin to shell downtown Manhattan with the *Götterdämmerung* virus.

## Effects of the Virus

*Götterdämmerung* begins with flu-like symptoms and is 80% fatal in seven to 14 days. The disease is exceedingly virulent, meaning anyone exposed to the ailment is almost certain to catch it. Finally, the disease was designed to resist all attempts to develop a vaccine against it (though modern medicine has a much greater, if still small, chance of producing an effective vaccine).

The disease is not incurable, but it does require a cocktail of difficult to produce (and thus very expensive) antibiotics to treat successfully. This is by design. First, the Nazis needed a way to protect their leadership should the disease get away from them. Second, they hoped to undermine and perhaps even collapse the governments of their enemies via violent riots when it became clear that the rich were able to save themselves and their loved ones while those of lesser means were left to die.

## The Pros and Cons of Secrecy

The Cloak of Darkness is extremely useful for stealth and defense purposes, for it covers an object in a mobile dome that nothing can penetrate, not even light (the bottom is open, allowing air – or water – to get to the cloaked object).

The U-42 had a state of the art (for 1944) “gill” system for extracting oxygen from the water, giving it the ability to stay under water many times longer than any submarine of its day. However, because the cloaked traveler cannot see (light cannot penetrate), every night the sub had to surface to get its bearings. Someone would jump off the deck, carrying a small deflated raft on his back. He then swam under the dome, inflated the raft, and entered the raft to take star measurements. Once finished, the sailor deflated the raft and swam back under the dome.

*A map of a World War I sub can be found in Going Places! from Pyramid #3/11: Cinematic Locations.*

Although incredibly inconvenient, it allowed them to maintain the Cloak.

Additionally, attacks do not penetrate the Cloak in *either* direction. Thus, the dome must be dispersed before the *U-42* can fire its torpedoes or deck gun.

### *An Unexpected Detour*

Yet the greatest surprise was yet to come. On its way to New York, something went wrong, and the *U-42* began to pass through the dome from the inside. Now Kaltstein's secret was revealed: The mystical Cloak of Darkness transports anything that penetrates the barrier into the future!

The shock of time travel left the crew unconscious, and almost all mechanical functions onboard the sub ceased, at least temporarily. That's how modern-day treasure hunters aboard the *Mother Duck* found "a surprisingly intact World War II-era German U-boat" resting on the ocean floor in the relatively shallow waters off the south of Ireland. The hunters' high tech gear almost certainly would have detected life and mechanical function on the sub with time, but a violent storm was coming . . .

The storm came in within a minute of the discovery, blowing the treasure hunters far off course. When they returned to the site, the *U-42* was nowhere to be found.

## **MOTHER DUCK CALLS**

The heroes receive a letter typed on letterhead of a reality-TV show producer (see p. 27). It could be hand-delivered by a bike courier or a lawyer.

## **CREW OF THE MOTHER DUCK**

The PCs might join the crew (and the TV series) well before the fateful day, having a few other adventurers in which they thwart would-be thieves. Alternatively, they might show up a few days before the *U-42* captures everyone, so they haven't had a chance to work with the rest of the crew yet.

### *Captain Nemo Blasing*

Nemo is the no-nonsense leader of the *Mother Duck's* crew. A former Navy SEAL, he used his retirement pay to rent a ship and equipment. Then he, his son, daughter, brother, and nephew used it to search the world's oceans for sunken treasure. Blasing's first big find earned them enough to buy both the ship and the equipment, even after all the legal wrangling. It also earned them the attention of television network, which eagerly broadcast the story of the treasure hunting family.

Captain Nemo, quite muscular for his age, comes across as a cranky old man. A recent pirate attack that ended with nearly all his equipment stolen and his daughter assaulted has not improved his attitude. Nemo is generally hostile to the PCs, because they are a continuous reminder that he is unable to adequately protect his family alone.

Nemo's SEAL training is only slightly faded by age; he is still formidable in combat.

### *Icarus "Ike" Blasing*

The first mate of the *Mother Duck*, Ike – the son of the vessel's owner and Captain – has a reputation as a prankster and "class clown." Ike comes across as a laid-back slacker on the show, but that is only to provoke confrontation with his father and the rest of the crew; away from the cameras, he actually works hard.

Ike despises sailing and treasure hunting. His dream is to be a Hollywood actor. He thus considers *Voyage of the Mother Duck* his extended audition.

Ike's Uncle Lou campaigns heavily to have him replaced as first mate (and heir to the *Mother Duck*) with his own son, Kevin. Ike is well aware of the conspiracy and constantly provokes the rivalry between him, Lou, and Kevin for this sake of ratings.

Ike and Kevin also vie for the affections of the only woman on the crew, the beautiful "Cousin" Abby Gail, who replaced Ike's sister when the latter left the show after being assaulted by pirates. The attack convinced Ike to hire the PCs over his father's objections.

While not a wimp, Ike has no combat training.

### *Lou Blasing*

Nemo's younger brother Lou is the head mechanic of the crew and pilot of *Rubber Ducky*, the team's submersible. Lou's devotion to the captain borders on sycophancy. He entered SEAL training with his brother, but failed and ended up a marine mechanic in the Navy.

Lou considers Ike an immature, worthless slacker and wants his brother to replace him with Kevin, his own son. He shares the captain's antipathy toward the security team. Lou is an excellent mechanic with decent combat skills. Unless the party manages to radically change the plot, he will die when a torpedo erases *Rubber Ducky*.

### *Kevin Blasing*

Kevin is Lou's son, Nemo's nephew, and Ike's cousin. He is currently on parole for selling marijuana and assault. Kevin's volatile temper makes him extremely susceptible to Ike's practical jokes. He also has a youthful tendency to glorify violence; thus Uncle Nemo is "cool" because he was a SEAL, and the heroes are likely to be cool because they are professional mercenaries (in his eyes).

Kevin has a powerful schoolboy crush on "Cousin" Abby, which causes a bitter rivalry with Ike. Walking in the steps of his father, he is a good marine mechanic and a passable fighter. Barring major party plot alteration, he will also die with his father on *Rubber Ducky*.

### *"Cousin" Abby Gail*

The departure of Stephanie Blasing from the crew following the pirate attack sent the network producers into a panic, for now there was "no hot chick on the show." They immediately sent out a call for attractive young women who were also smart and at least looked like they could be related to the Blasings.

*As a bit of atmosphere, find a song that serves as the theme for Voyage of the Mother Duck.*



*Billy Sunday: The Navy Diver is not a fighting man; he is a salvage expert. If it is lost underwater, he finds it. If it's sunk, he brings it up. If it's in the way, he moves it. If he's lucky, he will die young, 200 feet beneath the waves, for that is the closest he'll ever get to being a hero.*

*– Men of Honor*

The producers had initially researched the careers of beauty pageant contestant winners until they eventually found Abby, who has earned a masters degree in computer engineering from MIT. Coincidentally, she really is distantly related to the Blasings. So they dyed her hair (to match the hair color of the rest of the cast) and “Cousin” Abby was born.

Abby's technical skills are ideal for operating and maintaining the *Mother Duck's* electronic equipment like the computers, sonar, radar, communications gear, and the GPS. But she has no experience whatsoever in sailing or treasure hunting. Indeed, she can't even swim.

Many of Abby's frequent screw-ups can be attributed to her ignorance, but others are the result of Ike's deliberate (though secret) attempts to sabotage her. He does this for two reasons. First, Abby's screw-ups and the confrontations they cause make for better “reality” show drama and thus higher ratings. Second, her failures increase her status as an outsider, sending her into the “understanding” arms of Ike Blasing, her “only true friend on the crew.” Abby is becoming increasingly frustrated and frequently tries much too hard, which actually leads to even more mistakes.

Abby is an accomplished kickboxer. She did it more for the exercise than the actual combat skills, so she's not much good in a real fight. However, she's not totally helpless either, and is canny enough to try and surprise an obviously tougher opponent.

If any of the security team takes a romantic interest in the beautiful Abby Gail, they become an instant enemy of both Ike and Kevin. Further, Captain Blasing will not appreciate mercenaries causing increased strife among his crew. Then again, it'll make for riveting “reality” television!

### **The Camera Crew**

This pair of professionals record the action for *Voyage of the Mother Duck*. In addition to the main camera, they have planted smaller versions all over the ship and the submersible, including a few secret devices that record without knowledge of the crew.

## **THE CAPTURE**

The crew of the *U-42* revive during the storm and re-activate the ship's systems. Some of the crew had awakened before the storm and reported hearing the engines of a ship maintaining its position directly above them. The U-boat commander, Kapitän zur See (Captain) Adolf Haie, now orders that the sub to pull some distance out of her original position and wait for the searching ship to hopefully return. As Dr. Kaltstein was down to his last Roma, Haie decides not to engage the Cloak of Darkness.

Through the periscope, Haie sees *Mother Duck* – proudly flying an American flag – return to his sub's previous position and deploy its submersible. Immediately, the U-boat captain realizes he is looking at ship types that he has never seen before. Had these strange ships done something to disable his Cloak of Darkness and detect his undetectable ship? He needs prisoners to interrogate.

The *U-42* sinks the *Rubber Ducky* with a single torpedo, surfaces, closes with the main ship, and broadcasts a surrender demand from its powerful megaphones. Haie also sends up the deck gun crew. The *U-42* possesses state of the art (for 1944) radio jammers; he engages them to keep the crew of *Mother Duck* from using the radio to call for help.

Ideally, the GM can make the situation hopeless enough for the heroes to surrender. This may be a tough sell, as many players view surrender as losing. However, the *Mother Duck* cannot outrun or outfight the *U-42*; given any opportunity, either Nemo or Ike will surrender (even if the mercenaries are unwilling). In the unlikely event that the PCs *don't* surrender, the GM is on his own for the rest of the adventure . . . but it's likely the heroes will regret this decision.

The leader of the deck gun crew has an MP-40 submachine gun, and the rest have daggers and “Luger” (Walther P-38) pistols. These men throw out ropes attached to floatation devices, then order the party and the crew of *Mother Duck* to jump into the ocean. The prisoners will not be hauled aboard immediately – Haie's plan is to let them marinate in the cold water until hypothermia makes them more manageable.

*As a campaign-changing complication, the sub might strike the inside of the Cloak again (with the heroes aboard) – they're now in the future!*

The prisoners (helpless and shaken from hypothermia) are thoroughly searched on deck before they are brought below for a slow revival in a warm bath along with hot, medicated drinks. To give everyone a sense of real danger and loss (plus evidence of the ruthlessness of their adversaries), one of the camera crew and perhaps a treasure hunter does not survive the processes due to rewarming collapse.

Once the prisoners are secured, the deck gun shells *Mother Duck* until she sinks beneath the waves. Then the U-boat dives and continues on its original 1944 mission.

## RESOLUTION

Unless the party can stop it, this adventure ends with the *U-42* surfacing and firing its six plague shells from its deck gun into the heart of the Big Apple. Of course, the PCs should be able to stop it – that’s why they’re heroes!

### *The Doctor’s Plan*

Dr. Kaltstein is the only one who knows that the ship has entered its future (modern day for the party), though Haie is sure to discover the truth through his interrogations of either the PCs or the crew of the *Mother Duck*.

Kaltstein himself arranged the “accident.” With the Nazi regime collapsing at the end of the war, he knew full well that the victorious Allies would try him for war crimes. So he punched the eject button, so to speak. Ironically, he could become a party ally, because destroying his new world with a plague is not part of his plan, and modern transportation would spread *Götterdämmerung* further and faster than ever.

### *The Harbor*

Kaltstein is down to his last Roma, a beautiful girl with long raven hair he brought along for nefarious purposes. Assuming she is not rescued, this gives Haie one 24-hour period of the Cloak’s effects once activated.

Ironically, the *U-42* does not have to be cloaked to complete its mission unless it enters a sensitive military installation, and New York harbor is not it. NATO is monitoring primitive diesel-powered submarines from threat nations too poor to acquire modern nuclear subs (North Korea, Iran, and others); however, even those are more advanced than the *U-42* – plus the U.S. knows where they are. Thus, if anyone detects the U-boat, curiosity alone will prevent attack it unless it does something transparently offensive (like shelling downtown

Manhattan). Of course, by then it will likely be too late. In short, no one is expecting a WWII-era sub, and if they do detect it, they won’t attack it!

*Mike Nelson: We were searching underwater for the remains of an ancient temple, which Jim felt was more than a legend. Suddenly, Jim’s wife, Anne, tossed our slate overboard. The slate said, “Come up.” That could mean only one thing – trouble.*

– *Sea Hunt* #2.26

### *Radio Killed the Submarine War*

The easiest thing the heroes can do once they escape is take over the radio room, which is not as well-guarded as the bridge. From there, they can sound a warning to the world; as unbelievable as the *U-42* is, the vessel has no prayer against modern warships. Escaping the ship is another thing entirely.

### *A Bridge too Far*

The party can take over the bridge, but that is a much tougher nut to crack. If they do capture the bridge and barricade themselves inside, then they have control of the vessel until the rest of the crew finds a way to get in.

### *We’re Revolting!*

The party can lead a revolt if they convince enough German sailors and/or their key leaders (not Haie!) that the war is long over and their mission is nothing but a pointless waste of life. Every man on the crew loves Germany, but only a tiny percentage are die-hard Nazis. The trick is turning them before Zero Hour . . .

## Escape

The *U-42* has a virtually unguarded escape pod that will immediately float to the surface once activated. It is designed to hold six passengers (it will transport nine in a pinch) with a whistle, a flare, a little radio transmitter/receiver (five-mile range), fresh water for six people for three days, a filter device for recycling urine (extending the water supply four more days), and enough freeze-dried food to sustain six people for a week at sea.

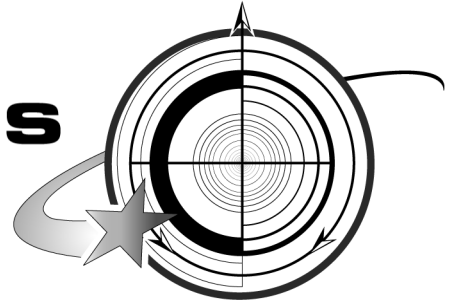
The pod has no means of self-propulsion. If they use the pod, the party must be strategic about when and where they surface; otherwise, the *U-42* will simply come up and recapture them.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

If you’re anything like Timothy J. Turnipseed “indeed,” you’re a large African-American man from Mississippi; that, and you enjoy a good story. Lieutenant Colonel Turnipseed’s extensive experiences have taken him to such exotic locales as London, Egypt, Mexico, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and of course, some particularly . . . interesting times in Afghanistan and Iraq. He’s been gaming since junior high and is an enthusiastic *Pyramid* contributor. In his day job, he teaches military history at a local university in Texas, where he constantly urges his students to run the race, keep the faith, and endure to the end.

# SNVM Productions

*Reality television that engages the mind*



Dear Awesome Dudes:

My name is Ike Blasing. Yes, that Ike Blasing, or “Junior” if you prefer. You might have seen me and the others on *Voyage of the Mother Duck*, the popular television show about a family of treasure hunters who search the sea for her rich secrets. And if you’ve been watching the news, then you also know about our unfortunate run-in with pirates not too far back. Well, we’ve heard about you, and we think you’re the kind of people who know how to take care of pirates.

This season we’re searching the North Atlantic for the precious cargoes of merchant ships sunk by Nazi U-boats during the Second World War. We could sure use some security, so why not come with us? Free room, free grub, and a fair cut of the treasure. And hey, you’ll even get to be on TV! What do you say?

*Ike*

Icarus Blasing  
First Mate, *Mother Duck*

sjm  
BCC

# THE HOTEL NETHUNS

BY ANDY VETROMILE

*"Here is your key, sir," said the concierge, passing a thick slip of metal to Ambassador Petlin.*

*"Thank you . . ." he glanced at the man's nametag ". . . Edward."*

*"Is this your first time staying with us at the Hotel Nethuns?" he asked. Petlin nodded, knowing that information had to already be in their systems. "Then a few helpful tips if I may, ambassador?"*

*"Sure." The diplomat stared absently out a thick window at the almost alien, fish-filled, undersea world beyond. Concierges always had a speech to make, some advice to offer, in hopes of getting a better tip.*

*"Relax. Security here is great, and incidents are almost unheard of. I know your security detail will want to track you, but we'll assign you a locator should you want them to know where you are anywhere in the complex.*

*"If you're a gambler, keep away from the private game on 11. Jack Philips is the best I've ever seen, and he'll take everything you have.*

*"And Maybriar's downstairs carries the entire line of Popup Pets. I thought your daughter might like to fill in a few holes in her collection."*

*Petlin stopped fiddling with his key for the moment. "How do you know . . . ?"*

*"It is my job to know, sir." A pause, then Edward smiled. "Plus I saw her cuddling a Ramey Rabbit on the newscast last weekend."*

*It was Petlin's turn to smile. "You people have earned your reputation. My bags will be sent to my room?" Edward nodded. "Anything else?"*

*"Just the windows, sir."*

*"What about them?"*

*"Don't open them." Edward winked.*

Welcome to the Hotel Nethuns, where every view is a scenic one.

True, the world is not always a pleasant place these days: The nations of the world have seen the wisdom (and in some cases the necessity) of cultivating the undersea world, and they do so sometimes to the detriment of the environment or their relations with other powers. As bases are built, fortifications seem to follow, and everyone views their neighbors with a guarded and jealous eye. Traffic beneath the waves has increased manifold, and submersible craft of all shapes and sizes trawl the darkness. Few people have any illusions about

the conventional weaponry these vessels must possess, but it's the nuclear capability that has everyone really worried. Arms that once were meant to explode from the depths of the oceans toward their enemies now have new targets, but these are foes they can meet nose-to-nose.

From this hotbed rises the Hotel Nethuns. While it has no official standing on the world stage, this structure – both large and showy – enjoys a hands-off policy akin to sovereign soil. It may be that everyone sees the value of a safe and untouched breathing space, or they're convinced they use the location to better effect than their foes and have no wish to give up that advantage. However, most likely (aside from the threat of retaliation from the owner), everyone wants to see how things will play out in the hotel. Acting like indulgent parents patting a precocious child on the head, they think if the time ever comes that it outlives its usefulness, they can simply do away with the whole thing. What not everyone realizes is that others have already tried and paid the price. So who would be stupid or crazy enough to build a hotel on the disputed seabed of a world on the brink of war? Samuel Brennan, that's who.

*American public  
opinion is like an  
ocean: it cannot be  
stirred by a teaspoon.*

*– Hubert H.  
Humphrey*

*Steampunk settings often incorporate dozens of impossible elements. That fact – coupled with the genre's love of social conflicts, espionage, and nautical themes – make the Nethuns a natural to use in such a campaign.*

# SAMUEL BRENNAN WELCOMES YOU TO EARTH'S LAST FRONTIER

The man remains a mystery in most ways. Samuel Brennan is known to have many holdings – most of them on the surface – and he's probably worth billions . . . “probably” because no one seems to have ever met him in person, and pinning down the extent of his empire is like counting fallen autumn leaves. Those in closest contact with him claim to never have met him. This is a prudent claim, since anyone who *does* know him might be kidnapped in order to extract information concerning Brennan. Even so, few threats are made against Brennan. His employees have been abducted and demands made on three occasions, but in all instances, the cases were either solved by local law enforcement or the criminals negotiated to give themselves up to the police and no ransom was ever paid. A small group of common muggers did attack one of his janitorial staff at a facility on dry land one night, leaving the worker in a coma. They were assigned remarkably good lawyers who – working pro bono – got them acquitted, much

to the surprise of everyone. One year later, the thugs disappeared, only to resurface in a Turkish prison. Rumor has it the legal proceedings were all orchestrated by Brennan himself because he wanted to send a message about interfering with his staff, one that was not fully served by a simple assault-and-battery charge.

Office space has been set aside for Mr. Brennan, and he always has a vehicle on call and a table open for him in whatever portion of the hotel he might choose to frequent, but no one ever finds him in any of those places. All anyone ever gets are memos, e-mails, representatives, and terse warnings from those who are in a position to say the boss wants things done a certain way.

Of course, that also raises the question: Why would a man with that much money build a hotel in what is rapidly becoming an underwater hot spot, one that must represent merely a fraction of his income or expenses?

## THE HOTEL

The Hotel Nethuns sits on an open shelf of seabed northwest of the Canary Islands, within a few miles of the edge of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. Debates about international waters only increased once people found the technology to get under the waves instead of just on them – most governments hold that ownership of the undersea goes to those with the equipment needed to set up shop there. Many bases and settlements sit perilously close to disputed territories, with less advanced nations telling the bigger kids to stay off their lawn because they own it and they're going to build a base of their own Real Soon Now. However, the hotel made sure to cleave close enough in the briny deep to an area not yet contested with any vigor. There are other bases in these waters, some actually close enough to be called neighbors to the complex, but most of them have arguments on a daily basis with *other* groups about who owns what. Thus far, the hotel is neutral and in the clear.

Construction began 10 years ago, but it was more than halfway through to completion before anyone realized what was going on. Much of the structure uses innovative prefabricated modules that allowed a lot of work to be done in a short amount of time. Those who wandered too close or felt they were in a position to demand information were easily rebuffed – Brennan's staff ignored empty and pompous bluster, and those who were able to make credible threats couldn't back them up without pulling forces away from their other half-dozen confrontational standoffs. Nations accused each

other of creating this wolf in sheep's clothing, and by the time they were civil enough to one another to admit it was an outside agency and held their first “what should we do about it” meetings, Brennan's people were holding the ribbon-cutting ceremony – with representatives from most nations invited to attend.

### FEATURES

The Nethuns has a number of aspects that affect interactions with it.

#### *Weapons Policy*

Security details that accompany the government officials on their visits are allowed to keep their firearms and such, though they are required to attend a brief training session before arrival. They can go through one run by a private company or use the hotel's service, and most choose the former. That way they can ignore it and say they went through it. Those folks are then required to sign a ream of paperwork that says, in effect, “You break it, you bought it.” Anyone who does not wish to sign that and tries to pull rank on the hotel staff to remain with their assigned charge are generally offered the choice between free transportation back to the surface or a leisurely swim home.

*Adventure idea: The heroes (perhaps on security detail) learn that seemingly innocuous components from six different groups staying at the hotel can be combined into an incredibly deadly weapon. The heroes learn about five of the six components – too late – and must now find out where the sixth is . . . before it's too late!*

## Who Is Samuel Brennan?

The architect of this oasis (literally – Brennan is credited with the plans for the hotel) is an unknown variable, but some possibilities for the GM to consider include the following.

*Time Traveler:* A benevolent being, Brennan has come back to this critical point in history – when the world sits on a flashpoint – to rescue humanity from itself. His hotel is meant as a meeting place where saner heads may prevail (or at least make themselves heard instead of yelling on the broadcasts as part of the political posturing). Even if that doesn't work, he'll have gathered enough data that he might be able to effect change some other way. Blackmail of key figures springs to mind.

*Alien:* He's interested in human relations, as might be others of his race. Humanity could be too close to destroying itself, but it's just as possible this strange species was what gently guided people toward this looming disaster. In this case, the aliens need nothing in the way of water, so the loss of the oceans means nothing to them. They want only slaves (however short-lived) and minerals to further their galactic goals. Once the planet's native dwellers eliminate their armies and infrastructure, conquest of the survivors is child's play.

*Mad scientist:* Brennan is the worst kind of experimenter, and he's using 70% of the Earth's surface as his Petri dish. He doesn't have to be the author of the world's woes, but he's willing to take advantage of them. He could be trying out new weapons (slipping them to connected guests on the side), or he might be more interested in social experiments, seeing if a little prod gets two men in a roomful of gasoline to fire their guns. The hotel isn't overly armed but it is well defended, so he would live to write down his findings when the shooting match starts.

*Kingmaker:* He has all the information, holds all the cards, and knows all the players. Once he figures out which way the waves flow, he throws his lot in with that

principality, removes the opposition, and watches his power base grow.

*Religious zealot:* The GM can drop hints and clues about an apocalypse cult awaiting the Day of Judgment (which doesn't look too far off), only to reveal Samuel Brennan as the leader and the Hotel Nethuns as Ground Zero. Did he orchestrate the end of the world, or just take advantage of events as they played out? Regardless, power might not be his aim; he's plain-vanilla crazy and just wants to ride high on the way to kingdom come.

*Diplomat:* Tired of the talking heads, one man decided diplomacy was the way, if only anyone would actually put it to use. In whatever guise Brennan pleases, the owner drops a hint here, reveals a secret there, salves a wound, soothes an ego . . . and soon he has people thinking maybe this thing can be saved after all. Brennan may have been one of the idealistic but disillusioned diplomats at one point, or this calling may be something that occurred to a mournful financier; but either way, he could be humanity's last hope.

*Computer:* An artificial intelligence is in a good position to evade detection and surveillance, and to send pursuers on a wild goose chase. Then again, Brennan might not be artificial – he may have spent the last several years as a very real human download to prolong his involvement in world affairs and to keep an eye on where things were headed. In life, he might have been one of these hateful warmongers, pushing an agenda of violence to get what he wants, only to have his heart soften on his deathbed. Now he works behind the scenes, using his knowledge of the game to his advantage and trying to keep people from self-destructing. Or maybe he just likes vexing his enemies by outliving them.

*Council:* What if he's not one man but several people, a secret cabal of power brokers? This could fit in with most of the above scenarios, but when a chess player thinks he has the real Samuel Brennan nailed down, another someone pops up to lend doubt to his identity.

Certain weapons may be retained if a valid-sounding reason can be provided, but few people can relate why they "need" an RPG or a Claymore. The hotel has its own armory should it become necessary, though no emergency has ever demanded the assignment of weapons to anyone but staff – and even then, no one has ever seen them carry more than a pistol. Outside these strictures, weapons are prohibited as standard operating procedure.

### Security

Visitors are welcome to bring protective services, but the hotel has its own and they don't like people getting in the way. Everyone is instructed to work together, and so far that's been enough to keep people from doing more than gritting their

teeth as they shake hands. If it comes down to it, Nethuns staff handle Nethuns' problems.

### Airlocks

There are portals to the outside, but opening them is just about impossible without triple-redundancy checks with the hotel staff and the engineering team. If someone wishes to exit the building (presumably to get into a submersible), he must pass through several airlocks operated by trained personnel. There are also many escape pods that detach from the hotel and bring the patron to the surface or the nearest underwater base, depending on where the device is launched and what the weather is like topside. If there is no discernible emergency, the pods won't launch without following an on-board computer program's instructions and suffering a small delay.

*The Nethuns could easily intersect in some strange way with the Black Chamber (see Pyramid #3/5: Horror & Spies).*

(That makes use possible in an emergency while still giving the hotel time to override if some yahoo is drunkenly trying to pull a prank.) Using these without detection isn't easy, but they have less oversight than the airlocks.

## *Parking*

Travel to and from the Nethuns is by sub, or some variation on them. (Some military teams use one- and two-man propulsion tubes and underwater protective gear.) Most visitors use a commercial transport to get down, but rich or high-ranking VIPs have their own watercraft. There are several bays for bringing in people or storing their goods, though most craft are subjected to a search in an "ante-bay" before they are allowed into a chamber that actually permits them access to the hotel proper.

## **SERVICES**

If there's something a visitor needs at the Nethuns, the hotel staff provides it. Should someone have a request they've not heard before, they create a service to administer to that need.

### *Concierge*

The staff at the Hotel Nethuns is top-notch. Admittedly there's not much demand for them to procure show tickets on the ocean's floor; but as servers, they're without peer. No matter the hour of the day, anything the guests want is theirs for the asking – provided it won't cause an international incident, anyway. There are shows, sporting matches, and the like to attend, and they're all concentrated here, under one very well-reinforced roof. With a limited number of people staying at one time, it's easier to get them access to the events they might want to experience. Some events pull in workers, employees, and officials from nearby bases, and in those uncommon cases, some hot tickets may be sold out.

Edward Edmonds is the public face of the Nethuns, and seems to know everything about everyone. (Edward is not the man in charge, however; the hotel is actually run by Felix Berg, from his comfortable Portuguese offices on dry land.) Edward manages the concierge and the front desk. He always seems to know what Mr. Brennan wants or would do in any given situation, so much so that many suspect him of being Samuel Brennan. Edward seems genuinely surprised at the suggestion, but then everything about the man rings as genuine. He's well-respected, not at all stuffy, and goes out of his way for his guests.

### *Swimming Pool*

Yes, there is one, and even after all this time, the staff will politely laugh at jokes about the irony.

### *Shops*

Like an enormous mall, most anything a guest could want can be found within the Nethuns complex. The lower levels are dedicated to fine dining and shops; even here the atmosphere is one of cosmopolitan camaraderie. Average citizens may be able to hobnob with the sorts of people they only see on the news.

Some people find this really unnerving, since it suggests anyone with a grudge can target a famous face they dislike, but such moments are exceedingly rare. Diplomats and high-ranking executives want to peruse the same stores and experience the same things, so it's not out of the question that someone might find himself beside such a public figure on an afternoon sub tour or the small but thrilling roller coaster.

### *Gift Shop*

The gift shop has maps of the surrounding seas, posters of the rare aquatic life found at this depth, figurines, snow globes, and small models of the Nethuns. The shop does an exceedingly brisk business, and almost every official involved in negotiating the undersea tensions has one of these maps or models in his office. One (potentially true) urban legend relates that early versions of these representations were more detailed than they should have been, giving away what should be trade secrets or security flaws, and that later production runs were altered to be less helpful to malefactors. Whether true or not, this makes those early models valuable to some people, and rumors circulate about thefts and violence that have occurred to get them.

### *Sub Rides*

Anyone who wishes to explore the area around the hotel can hire a mini-sub. These come as small as two-seaters and as large as 10-person craft to accommodate anything from romantic get-aways to small scientific expeditions. It is recommended that anyone who wants to go out take along some sort of professional guide or security detail, but this isn't required (so long as you're willing to pay to insure against losing a submarine and file the phone book-sized paperwork that excuses the rental service from any indemnity). The smaller ones provide thrust for navigating about the hotel, while the larger ones can travel greater distances. The more people a craft carries, the greater the amenities and the longer it lasts – the small ones are good for an hour or two, but the upper-end vehicles can go a week before needing to return (and they can be restocked in a pinch by requesting another; smaller vessel bring them more materials).

The hotel offers scuba diving, but it's done in re-created aquatic environments indoors. Outside the hotel, somewhat bulky equipment is still used; better technology isn't quite commonly available yet.

### *Rooms*

Even the smallest rooms in the Nethuns are fairly lavish; no one gets shoved into a closet at this hotel. Accommodations are offered to anyone who wants them, sometimes at ridiculously low rates.

No one can account for how the system works. A poor farmer wanting to bring his wife here for their honeymoon might be told by the company that they have just what he needs . . . stunningly, at a price he can afford. Conversely, many bigwigs have demanded to speak to Mr. Brennan when they found out they couldn't get a booking even a year in advance.

*Double irony: The heroes survive deadly threats in the surrounding sea, only to have a final firefight in the pool.*

## Still Waters Run Elsewhere

Some details have been left to the GM to decide about the Hotel Nethuns. First, its location is flexible. Taking into account the high technology needed to create the building, just about anywhere in this environment is plausible. The assumed site is close enough to Europe to offer easy access, and not up on the doorstep of any superpower, but the identity of entire nations may change in an alternate setting. The important thing is to make sure it's somewhere where it can get into all sorts of trouble with locals without being foolhardy about it. If control of African nations is part of your world's conflict, anywhere along the coasts of that continent can be parlayed into adventure. Since it's deep underwater, it's harder to make diplomatic claims that it's not in international waters and is therefore subject to a particular political entity's laws.

Second, its tech level is up for debate. It's assumed this is at least late TL9 so that such a feat of engineering is

possible. It may be a near-future effort, leaving several bugs in the system that can be used to generate tension and excitement, or it could be far enough ahead of the technological curve that structural integrity is no longer an issue and guests can leave using advanced scuba gear alone. That allows the hotel to defend itself against more mundane or human threats. The higher the TL, the fancier the tech gets and the more believable it is the building even exists . . . and the more the GM has to work to create his own problems.

Finally, the actual shape of the complex isn't set in stone (just the foundations). Here it is presented as a multistory tower much like any other terrestrial suite, but it could also be a dome or series of domes; a floating globe held in place by magnets (if the GM is using *GURPS Space* it might be a massive vehicle that can float about and reposition itself); or a set of tubes and orbs arranged like an intricate molecule.

(It's somewhat like the *Titanic* in that way, though hopefully the similarities end there.) Somehow, the mix of patrons always ends up being rather egalitarian; once checked in, not many people worry themselves about it. Everyone is certain there must be some sinister purpose to making sure the average man can get in once in a while, but why Mr. Brennan would insist on a broad policy like that no one can say.

### Gambling

Casinos are easy to find here. All the usual games are available, as well as a few esoteric items the hotel developed itself, including racing strange forms of sea life. If someone is close to his credit limit (as happens with guests without a big bank account), they'll be asked to leave before they bankrupt themselves . . . though it's never stated in such cold terms.

## A MILLION AND ONE USES

There are as many ways to use the hotel as there are people in it. Some uses are intentional, while others are unfortunate side effects of the hotel's popularity.

### MEETING PLACE

As things fall apart in the world, diplomats try to keep the pieces together. Great conference rooms (and small, intimate ones well away from prying spies) are provided to any guests who stay here, and all come with plenty of audio-visual media for use in presentations. No one can ever agree on whose base the diplomats should use, so the hotel becomes the *de facto* meeting place for any difficult issue. Brennan and his staff don't always require that someone from the delegation technically be a guest – they're happy to do their part for world peace.

Workers' unions meet here a lot as well. There's always construction going on in the surrounding area, and they come to discuss what their contracts should look like for the next project. If there's a dispute between management and labor,

Brennan and his staff are once again happy to step in and keep the peace. They may even offer to act as mediators.

Some people don't want to meet with others; they just want all their targets in one convenient place. If the heroes work any kind of security detail, they'll have plenty of opportunities to stop plots against visiting VIPs and rooms full of controversial figures.

### TARGET

It might not be the organizations meeting inside the hotel that grab a terrorist's attention – maybe it's the meeting place itself. Lots of people would like to see the hotel leveled and the inordinate favoritism shown to the place dispersed on the currents. Something has thus far kept the place safe – supposedly some action on the part of Brennan or the staff. Is his security system really that good? They could just keep getting lucky, or the truth might be darker still – like Brennan making attempts on his own property to give it an aura of invulnerability when he "stops" a plot.

*An all-expenses-paid trip to Hotel Nethuns can make a great perk or reward for a group of heroes (and serve as a perfect intro to this locale).*



While the list of suspects knows no bounds, some of the more likely culprits for a plot against the Nethuns are:

- Those not invited to any given talk.
- Third-world nations (or their equivalents) that are so poor that their actions are largely ignored, and don't stand to lose anything by not engaging in diplomacy.
- Competing hotel owners who cannot figure out the purpose and success of this rival location.
- Impatient civilians who want the bickering to stop and somehow think dead diplomats will improve the chances for successful resolutions.
- Eco-warriors.
- Terrorist factions who would warm themselves by that bonfire for quite some time to come.

## STORAGE

Got a huge submersible vehicle and nowhere to put it? Brennan can help you there, though there are a lot of hoops to jump through. Obviously, he's not going to let anyone park a potential bomb under his nose, so he could call upon adventurers to investigate the craft before it's brought in to port – no clean bill, no parking privileges. His bays can accommodate all but the largest vessels, and even then, some of the big ones come by because they need to refuel.

Scientific research crews pass through the doors all the time, and they have gear that needs stowing especially if they're carrying materials for a resupply or just dragging about enough equipment for a group many times their own size. So long as there are no questionable chemicals, unaccounted-for explosives, or suspect pieces of kit, they should be fine. This often means more ambitious (read: baffling) scientific plans have to reveal some of their purpose to the staff. Of course, the workers at the Nethuns have no problem telling those who balk at the idea of sharing at least the bare bones of their experiments to find alternative lodging.

With construction almost a constant in the nearby area, there's a flow of building materials coming into and out of the

area. Huge metal plates and great skeletal girders are just some of the toys found here. There are also aquatic versions of dozers, backhoes, and other vehicles that must accompany such an endeavor. Parking worker apartments (in the form of long trailers) before sending them to the work site isn't unheard of; the workers themselves are often housed at the hotel until they're ready to go to work on-site.

## LIVING QUARTERS

Setting aside the petty politics, people often visit the hotel to stay and vacation. The bulk of the people in attendance are just on holiday . . . although this doesn't preclude them from having nefarious ideas. Sneaky thieves are convinced that, with all the distractions of the outside world, no one notices if a guest is actually robbed. Pulling off a heist – big or small – at the Nethuns is a feather in any career criminal's cap. No one has enjoyed much success up to now, but the PCs could be the first if that's the sort of persona they play.

Some guests are more important than others, not just to the hotel but to the world. If presidents or prime ministers come to attend peace talks, they'll be sure to stay at the Nethuns. Not only do they think it's safer (not that they'll admit that on any broadcast), but few people miss a chance to lodge here. They always bring security details with them, but the hotel doesn't leave anyone like that unattended. It's happened more than once that someone tried to kill a dignitary and found himself subdued by a hotel house detective before the actual security team even knew what was happening.

Furthermore, if there's a disaster or even just a hiccup on the ocean's floor, the Nethuns always offers to house those who might be endangered or displaced by tragic events. (Twice the hotel has hosted a group from a nearby outpost when the atmospheric scrubbers went on the fritz in their facility.) In the course of the campaign, this may happen because someone wants to draw the occupants out of their military base, or because they want the Nethuns to gladly accept someone into the building they might otherwise not have allowed in.

# CAMPAIGNS

The Nethuns already plays host to a lot of strange, exotic, and important people and organizations, but it can host them in a variety of settings.

## SPACE

In a *GURPS Space* campaign, technology necessary to create underwater dwellings is probably commonplace (though here the ocean in question might not actually be "water"). The future should have its share of tensions to sort through, but there are a couple of other aspects to consider when using the Nethuns in such a setting. First, higher TLs make living here

much safer (see *Still Waters Run Elsewhere*, p. 32), and safe isn't always exciting. Second, there may be qualitative differences about how it was built. Heavy doors and shifting metal plates would give way to force fields to maintain the pressure inside the hotel, changing some of the flavor. Third, if the campaign involves far-flung star systems and diplomatic maneuvers on a galactic scale, justifying its use for anything other than local events requires additional considerations. Why would someone who can reach another star care about the nuanced politics of one world – indeed, not just that world, but the society playing out its games beneath the waves in a particular spot?

*For a surreal game of high weirdness, simply have the Nethuns spring into existence overnight. Only the PCs remember otherwise: "Sure, there's always been an impossible 16-story hotel in the Mediterranean . . . where have you been?" Uncovering how this came into being (or why they don't remember it) could form a campaign.*

There might be a very rare mineral located on the hotel's planet, and hence the whole world is on edge trying to decide who mines it, who gets it, and who uses it. Even then, such magnificent, spanning colonies aren't likely to play games with one little hotel unless it has some serious firepower or a tough backer (Brennan might play a more visible role in such a case). What if the big secret was some artifact – perhaps alien in nature – that everyone wanted to get his hands on? The governments of the world might be more inclined to have the neutral hotel around to keep things on a steady keel, if for no other reason than that one false move could initiate hostilities that would consume the device. (In this case, it might be that the hotel was built here before anyone knew about the relic, and it only finds itself at the center of events because it's sitting on the biggest find in history.)

Moreover, fictional fauna tend to be far more dangerous and fun than those in the real world.

*Professor Hubert Farnsworth:  
Dear Lord! That's over 150  
atmospheres of pressure!*

*Fry: How many atmospheres  
can the ship withstand?*

*Professor Hubert Farnsworth:  
Well, it's a spaceship, so I'd say  
anywhere between zero and one.*

– *Futurama* #2.12

## ESPIONAGE

This is what the hotel was built for. The adventurers may be spies in the employ of a nation, trying desperately to get the edge over their competition, or they may simply be sightseers who find themselves dragged into international politics when they pick up the wrong piece of luggage at check-in. The easiest task to set for the heroes is finding information that will, if not broker a peace between their country and another, at least force an enemy to back off or return to the table for additional talks. (Until that country gets its own blackmail material, naturally.) If they're innocents in the Great Game, it's going to be tougher on them. Assuming they can survive things with no formal training in subterfuge, they still have to establish that they know nothing, or give what they find out to the proper authorities – something that lets them return to their normal lives.

Taking things further, the GM may assign each player a spy from a different nation. This requires a lot more preparation than the tried-and-true, but it's a potentially richer game. While they begin the adventure with a wide gulf between their

individual goals, as the story progresses, they find they hold certain concerns in common. They may be the low-level functionaries on this totem pole, carrying water for the more public faces, the diplomats, but those bureaucrats tend to see things through blinders. The spies could be the true heroes, agents smarter than their environment who continually defuse international incidents before they get started. Ultimately the spies might even combine their delicate skills, knowledge, and findings to force a solution to the war of their own.

## ZOMBIES

What's worse than the walking dead? Being trapped with them and knowing that escape could mean death for the world. The zombies might be the result of a disease released from an undersea sample that a scientist found. Or, they could have been created by something a terrorist snuck onboard. Or, something about the combination of building materials, lighting, and pressure caused a bizarre mutation.

## DISASTERS

Everyone needs a break now and again from the routine. If the heroes are tired of the plot-of-the-week formula, throw something different their way in the vein of man vs. nature. They live in one of the most inhospitable places on Earth – almost *under* the Earth. The water pressure is always a problem, trying to crush a man's inventions, and problems with the integrity of the hotel cannot be ignored. Routine maintenance may become a fight for survival: Someone needs to weld the south-most pylon within the next hour, but those who go out there to do it have to find a way to distract or destroy the wildlife that takes too great an interest in their activities.

The natural creatures out here could themselves be the problem. Reports are coming in that tourists are being savaged by things outside the hotel – the party must go out and find what it is and how to stop it. Is it one of the unknown leviathans that plumb these depths, or a mutation from a lab set loose to destroy the enemy? Perhaps humans are encroaching on a species' territory or unknowingly stealing its food supply for routine experiments. Maybe it's mating season for a rare species. Or maybe Mother Nature thinks we've just outlived our welcome. Opportunities abound to rescue the injured and stranded, and gain favor in the eyes of many, perhaps even setting an example that eases tensions in the region.

Earthquakes occur on the sea floor like anywhere else on the planet. It won't help anyone if the topography changes on everyone, so someone has to go map it anew (or fix the drones that are programmed to do it automatically). What if the quake wasn't natural? The quakes might get stronger as time goes on, taking on a decidedly unnatural aspect. Soon surrounding bases, not just the hotel, are being shaken down from their positions, falling into crevices or imploding under the pressure. A team of experts must go out and find how this is possible. If it's not a natural occurrence, those responsible must be confronted and, hopefully, negotiated with.

*In the event of zombies, travel from the Nethuns would probably be cut off until the situation was resolved. It'd be like the Towering Inferno, only underwater. And with zombies. And no fire. Okay . . . there'll probably be fire.*

## ULTRA-TECH

Ignoring the chaos around them, the heroes want only to pursue science – surely the advancement of knowledge is something worth ceasing the violence for. A hot discovery could make all the difference in this cold war. Then again, it might tear everyone apart in a fit of envious rage. New creatures exist to be discovered down here, and some might unlock the secrets of medicine – venom that could cure cancer, perhaps. There are ecosystems that thrive on an entirely different level from what land-dwellers are used to seeing, strange gases bubbling up from the earth's core, maybe even minerals no one has ever laid eyes on or a new race of alternately evolved humans.

Not everyone has the same moral compass when it comes to experiments – competitors from other countries don't have to answer for what they do down here, least of all to the PCs. That leaves the heroes to clean up any messes someone else leaves, or to sabotage what they try to do if they foresee disastrous effects looming large. Brennan will certainly watch these developments with great interest.

Other possibilities include attempts to terraform (aquaform?) the seabed, stress tests on the equipment and workers, and good old weaponry, to name a few. Problem solvers may be here to work on issues like how to light the area surrounding the hotel or improve transit from one base to another. See *Space* (pp. 33-34) for more on the changes in a campaign wrought by advanced technology.

## SUPERS

In this setting, the eggshells one steps on involve the relations between the surface-dwellers and the “mer-people.” As the waters are polluted, relations become understandably strained, and now things are getting to the breaking point. Surface machines are sabotaged, and underwater craft are attacked, mostly as warnings to those who think the planet exists merely for their exploitation. Down here the advantage goes to the water-breathers, and diplomacy may fall to other super-endowed heroes who hail from the sea but have taken to living on the surface; navigate water well; or have the strength needed to ignore the conditions.

# ADVENTURE SEEDS

To get the GM started, here are a few potential storylines to play with.

## LURE HIM INTO THE OPEN

Brennan is on record as having designed the hotel, so if something were to go wrong with it, if some portion of it was faulty, he would be held responsible. Figuring out under whose purview he falls would be trouble, but the case could be made he'd be indictable under the policy of universal jurisdiction. Even if no one could force him to reveal himself in open court, attacks against him and his holdings become easier. Dry-land properties might be seized or subject to searches and investigations, and authorities can begin to hem him in. All the trouble-makers need is someone able to cause what looks like an accident in the hotel; all Brennan needs is someone who can foil such a plan.

## GET BRENNAN

The search for the man of mystery becomes more direct. Someone thinks they have a small clue as to his identity, and they ask the heroes to follow up on it. It pays well, of course. It has to. Anyone set on Brennan's trail has a new and powerful enemy. Nevertheless, Brennan might attempt to co-opt the heroes and use them as double agents in one of his schemes to ferret out one of his many enemies.

## UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

The investigators pat themselves on the back for doing the impossible – they found Samuel Brennan. Except they didn't find him; he let himself be found. He's a wheezing, aged man in a wheelchair who's ready to give up the position to the heroes,

his replacements. The role of Brennan has been passed down from one man – or woman – to another for years, and now he's retiring so that someone new can take over. What does the chosen leader and his companions do when they find themselves in possession of a vast empire worth billions? It won't be as much fun as they'd hoped because now the fate of the free world rests on their shoulders . . . but at least they have a Jacuzzi.

## YES, WONDERFUL THINGS

Submersibles cruise about the hotel all the time, some exploring further than others. The party has occasion to take a craft out. In doing so, they uncover something amazing. It may be a stash of treasure, a crashed alien vehicle, or an artifact of some bygone civilization, but everyone is going to want it. Can the heroes keep it a secret? Even if they don't tell anyone, a camera attached to every sub for safety and insurance purposes might have recorded the incident without anyone aboard knowing . . . and once that story is out, the race begins. This could even be the real reason Brennan erected the hotel, though whether that makes him the heroes' ally or enemy is anyone's guess.

*A hotel with a perpetually wet view.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andy Vetromile is a freelance writer and editor with an insatiable taste for games. He's been reviewing them for over 10 years and still can't wait for the next release. He has also contributed to *Pyramid* and edited several *GURPS* books.

# RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

## FATHOMING WATER

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

An undersea adventure can lead to all kinds of new and interesting possibilities. To help you brainstorm what you can do with an aquatic escapade, here are a number of morsels to consider.

### **WATER IS CONTRADICTIONS**

It feels like a cliché, but water is a study in contradictions. It's essential for life – comprising more than half the human body – but it's more than capable of killing. The “one teaspoon of water is enough to drown someone” factoid may be an overstatement, but the truth remains that a trivially small amount of water in the wrong spot can prove fatal.

It covers 70% of the planet, but a huge percentage of the world's population can go months or longer without seeing any significant amount of water. Humanity needs rain, but precipitation is arguably the elemental condition we most commonly seek to avoid.

It's hard to mistake the presence of water, but given enough time, it can disappear into thin air.

Playing up these dualities and contradictions can make for good thematic contradiction. Although undersea adventures are similar to space adventures – inhospitable conditions, unbreathable environment, inky blackness – these contradictions give it a different flavor. Everyone knows space is dangerous; they childproof the airlocks for a reason. However, water feels like it *should* be safe; you look out the porthole and see exotic fish swim by – the same kind that swim in the safe aquarium back home! People pay good money to frolic beneath the waves, but one wrong move can turn a vacation into a nightmare.

Or, to put it another way, we'll always have a healthy respect of space. However, thousands of people die at sea every year, yet most parents wouldn't think twice about letting a 10-year-old play at the ocean's shore.

### **WATER IS A MATTER OF SCALE**

It's usually difficult to see underwater (see p. 7). Plus, it can be difficult to see *above* the water; if you're swimming in a

large body of water – and it doesn't have to be terribly big – you may have no idea where to swim to get to safety. Likewise, the act of swimming itself can prove disorienting; it's not uncommon for people to swim too far out to sea, get confused, and find themselves unable to get back to shore.

Plus, swimming is a lot slower than most other human-propelled forms of transport. If you're a runner, being able to complete a 26-mile marathon in about two hours (13 mph) is enough for a world record. Yet if you're able to swim the English Channel's 21 miles in about seven hours (3 mph), that's enough to make the news.

### **WATER IS PERCEIVED DIFFERENTLY BY DIFFERENT PEOPLE**

For the most part, those who think about space think the same things about space: dark, cold, dangerous, inaccessible. Similarly, a huge percentage of the world views (say) mountaintops almost identically: Those dangerous things way up there.

However, a uniformity of opinion isn't something enjoyed by aquatic pursuits. People in different areas can have different ideas of what the water means to them. For Michigianians, their proximity to the Great Lakes means a common recreation source, news topic, and travel feature. More modest-sized lakes don't generally have as much of an impact on those who live close to them.

Similarly, those who live near the ocean tend to view aquatic undertakings differently than their landlocked counterparts. This disconnect is often most evident during environmental incidents; inland areas may view a catastrophe off the Gulf Coast as an annoyance or a theoretical problem, while those who live within a few miles of the beach are likely to feel firsthand the economic and sociological impacts.

As a final example, it's almost unheard of for Floridians to not know how to swim. For those who don't know how, learning to swim is often a task that's picked up quickly. Conversely, in landlocked locales, it's common for entire *cultures* not to know how to swim.

While this may seem obvious, it can lead to interesting tensions from a gaming standpoint. For example, three PCs who are invited on an underwater adventure might have three completely different viewpoints: One who doesn't know how to swim might be terrified, one who grew up near the beach may be ecstatic, and one who spent a lot of time in swimming pools as a kid might be cautiously optimistic. (The latter is likely to be in for a surprise; ocean swimming is a fair bit different from swimming in a freshwater pool.)

For campaigns that will have undersea adventures introduced at some point, working out the heroes' attitudes toward the water can make for more dynamic gaming.

## WATER IS UNFORGIVING

Land-based travel – walking or running – is fairly straightforward. As a bonus, it comes with a built-in Plan B: *not* walking or running. If you're in reasonably good shape and decide on a lark to walk for a few miles, you'll be able to do it . . . even if you need to stop several times along the way and rest for a spell.

Conversely, swimming is usually an all-or-nothing decision. The act of not swimming is more colloquially known as “drowning”; even treading water requires a fair bit of physical exertion, so the idea of taking five minutes to catch your break while you cross the ocean just isn't going to work. And, as every mother knows, if you only rested 58 minutes after eating a meal before entering the water, you'll sink to the bottom like a stone, writhing in cramp-tied agony. (Or something like that.)

Any nontrivial interaction with the water is major undertaking, as you need to make sure you have air (and possibly food and water), communication, navigation, and other survival needs. (Even “trivial” interactions with the water can be a major undertaking, as anyone who's ever taken a three-year-old to a pool can attest.) A significant mistake in any of these calculations can result in serious injury or death. Water doesn't mess around.

## WATER IS ACCESSIBLE

If you woke up this morning and decided, “You know, I think I'm going to go into space today,” you are almost certainly unable to fulfill that whim. (If you are reading this fine publication aboard the International Space Station, we stand corrected and thank you for your patronage!)

Meanwhile, almost anyone with relatively modest first-world resources and the inclination can decide to do some underwater exploration. While it might not be possible as a day trip – although for a large number of people, it may! – it's certainly more accessible than outer space, despite presenting much the same alienness and many of the same dangers.

This attainability means that adventures centering on watery locales can incorporate a much wider range of heroes and backgrounds than more exotic locales. Subsistence-level fishermen and billionaire yachtsmen both have reason to be on the open sea, and even light underwater exploration is an approachable vacation goal for middle-class people.

## Swim!

One assumption this essay makes is that the would-be underwater adventurer is an air-breather. If someone can breathe water, is amphibious, or has otherwise been designed for undersea life, almost all these problems evaporate (admittedly, quite possibly with the caveat that there are *other* problems inherent with being a mer-person).

The upshot of this is that interactions between land- and sea-dwellers should be almost completely alien. Imagine if our society suddenly encountered a world of different people for whom a walk up to the corner store a mile away would be a highly risky venture – and a 10-mile walk would nearly be a death sentence. That's the kind of inexplicable disconnect that's likely to color the perceptions of water-breathers. “What's the big deal? If you need to rest, just stop swimming and allow yourself to float underwater for a bit. No, wait; you'll die. I keep forgetting.”

It's these kind of perceptual disconnects that also taint relations between air- and land-dwellers. A 20-mile overseas distance might be a major undertaking for landlubbers, while it's a pleasant jaunt for natural-born swimmers. For those on land, the ocean might be a good out-of-sight-out-of-mind solution for dealing with its waste, while for those in the sea it's the equivalent of setting the air on fire. And so on.

The point is, those who exist in the water natively should almost certainly not be portrayed as “just like air-breathers, only with gills.” (Unless, of course, you're trying to go for a “modern stone-age family”-style vibe and make them totally human; that can be fun in the right kind of campaign . . .)

Of course, campaigns involving true underwater adventuring require one of two things:

- A true planned expedition (which necessitates more resources and . . . well, plans).
- A MacGuffin or Plot Train of some sort that will enable an unplanned underwater expedition. This might mean the acquisition of a water-breathing amulet, being rescued (or kidnapped!) by mer-people, discovery of an undersea kingdom (hopefully with air), etc.

Of course, there's nothing that says the heroes are the ones who need to do the planning. It's just as likely they're piggybacking onto the schemes of someone else! Thus, if the heroes are hired as security detail aboard a ship (pp. 22-27) or part of a diplomatic entourage (p. 32), they may find themselves exploring one of the last frontiers on Earth as a relative neophyte.

Regardless of how the heroes get involved, the possibility of a sea-based adventure can open up a new frontier for excitement. Get wet!

## ABOUT THE EDITOR

Steven Marsh is a freelance writer and editor. He has contributed to roleplaying game releases from Green Ronin, West End Games, White Wolf, Hoghead Publishing, and others. He has been editing *Pyramid* for over nine years; during that time he has won four Origins awards. He lives in Indiana with his wife, Nikola Vrtis, and their son Sam!, who is a little force of nature entirely worthy of his exclamation mark.

# ODDS AND ENDS

## WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

It's hard to surprise a group of heroes with a trip to space, but it's fairly easy to spring an undersea adventure on them. Here are a few possibilities.

### *Tunnel of "Fun"*

If the heroes are exploring an underground complex (especially – say – a dungeon), they might find themselves moving underneath a body of water. This body is unlikely to be an ocean (they're usually too big to tunnel under), but with super-science and/or magic anything is possible. Regardless, plenty of underwater mischief is possible with a large lake.

To spring this surprise, the GM simply needs to introduce a transitional room – perhaps one containing scuba gear, a bathysphere, magical breathing amulets, or the like – and deny re-entry into the “dry” side of things. For an exciting escalation of this, have the heroes discover the transition room; then, shortly thereafter, an explosion causes the dry area to start to flood. The adventurers need to move *fast* to save their necks!

### *Ship Happens*

A vessel that's large and stable enough on relatively calm water can be indistinguishable from a building on land.

### *10 Translations of Gigantic Runes*

Invariably, you unearth gargantuan ancient underwater ruins, only to discover 200-foot “words” in an alien language. So what do they say?

- “This End Up.”
- “I have discovered a truly marvelous proof; sadly, this monument is too narrow to contain it.”
- “Warranty Void if Submerged in Water”
- “The word that imbues unfathomable power to the reader is SNARBLEVO.”
- “Warning: Side effects of unfathomable power may include madness and homicidal tendencies.”
- “The word that restores sanity and removes unfathomable power from one so afflicted i . . .”
- “Some Assembly Required.”
- The ruin is actually a gigantic pivoting arrow that unerringly points at the moon. The glyphs upon it say, “I'M WITH STUPID.”
- “Contents Under Pressure.”
- “I still say there is no proof of global flooding.”

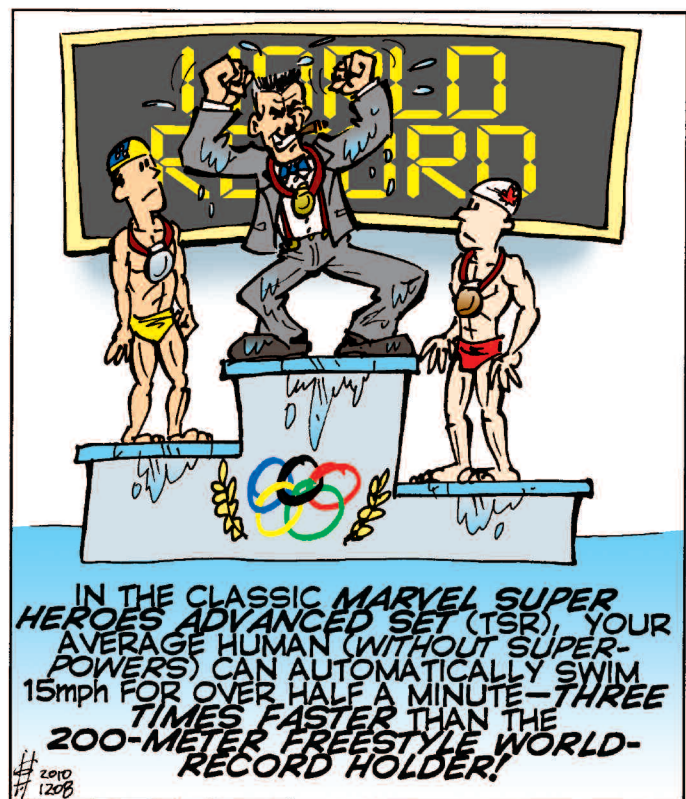
If the heroes enter (say) a castle or an office complex, they might be surprised when the thing pulls away from port. (This is technically an above-water adventure, but those can turn into underwater adventures easily enough . . .)

### *Your Own Private Ocean*

Humanity's ability to contain water is astounding. The world's largest aquarium has over 8,000,000 gallons of water and encompasses a half-million square feet. In a world with ultra-tech or magical methods, these can get even more incredible. The upshot is that the heroes can be practically anywhere (especially somewhere large and enclosed), only to find themselves in the middle of an aquatic adventure.

## MURPHY'S RULES

BY GREG HYLAND



Got a Murphy's Rule of your own? Send it to [murphy@sjgames.com](mailto:murphy@sjgames.com)

## ABOUT *GURPS*

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be reached by e-mail: [info@sjgames.com](mailto:info@sjgames.com). Resources include:

*New supplements and adventures.* *GURPS* continues to grow – see what’s new at [gurps.sjgames.com](http://gurps.sjgames.com), or visit [www.warehouse23.com](http://www.warehouse23.com).

*e23.* Our e-publishing division offers *GURPS* adventures, play aids, and support in PDF form . . . digital copies of our books, plus exclusive material available only on e23! Just head over to [e23.sjgames.com](http://e23.sjgames.com).

*Internet.* Visit us on the World Wide Web at [www.sjgames.com](http://www.sjgames.com) for errata, updates, Q&A, and much

more. To discuss *GURPS* with SJ Games staff and fellow gamers, come to our forums at [forums.sjgames.com](http://forums.sjgames.com). The *Pyramid* web page is [pyramid.sjgames.com](http://pyramid.sjgames.com).

*Bibliographies.* Many of our books have extensive bibliographies, and we’re putting them online – with links to let you buy the resources that interest you! Go to each book’s web page and look for the “Bibliography” link.

*Errata.* Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases are available on our website – see above.

*GURPS* rules and statistics in this magazine are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book.

## STUCK FOR AN ADVENTURE? NO PROBLEM.

**e23 sells high-quality game adventures  
and supplements in PDF format.**

- Get complete sample adventures free for *GURPS*, *In Nomine*, and *Traveller*!
- PDFs from the major players in online publishing: Ronin Arts, Ken Hite, Atlas Games, and 01 Games.
- New gems from up-and-coming publishers, like Atomic Sock Monkey Press and Expeditious Retreat Press.
- Digital editions of out-of-print classics, from *Orcslayer* and the complete run of *ADQ* to *GURPS China* and *GURPS Ice Age*.
- Fully searchable files of *GURPS Fourth Edition* supplements.
- Original material for *Transhuman Space* and *In Nomine*, with new *GURPS* supplements from Phil Masters, David Pulver, Sean Punch, and William Stoddard!
- Buy it once, have it always. Download your purchases again whenever you need to.



Download ● Print ● Play  
**STEVE JACKSON GAMES**

e23 is part of Warehouse 23, the online store at Steve Jackson Games.  
Warehouse 23 is also the official Internet retailer for Dork Storm Press, Atlas Games, and many other publishers.  
Visit us today at [www.warehouse23.com](http://www.warehouse23.com) for all your game STUFF!