

ENCOUNTERS ON THE SAVAGE SEAS ~~III~~ FREE



Expand your game with this collection of nautical-themed encounters and mini adventures, creatures, and magic items for the world's greatest roleplaying game



ENCOUNTER ON THE SAVAGE SEAS III FREE

Background: Nimgyu

Cover Artist: Dean Spencer

Internal Art:

Dean Spencer, Bradley O'Hanrahan, Purple Duck Games: Gary Dupuis, Jacob E. Blackmon, Wizards of the Coast

Cartography:

Elven Tower, Dyson Logos

Editor: Brent Sweany

Produced by: Jeff C. Stevens

Layouts: Jeff C. Stevens

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ABOUT THIS SUPPLEMENT

Thank you for downloading *Encounters on the Savage Seas* ~~III~~ FREE!

I've been very successful publishing D&D adventures and supplements on the Dungeon Masters Guild, and I couldn't have done it without the support of the DMs Guild customers. This is my attempt to say 'thank you' for supporting me and the other creators who publish our passion on the Dungeon Masters Guild.

I hope you enjoy the encounters and mini adventures contained in this supplement. I think the writers did a fantastic job!

Again, thanks for helping me reach some fantastic career goals. I couldn't have accomplished my dream without your help and support!

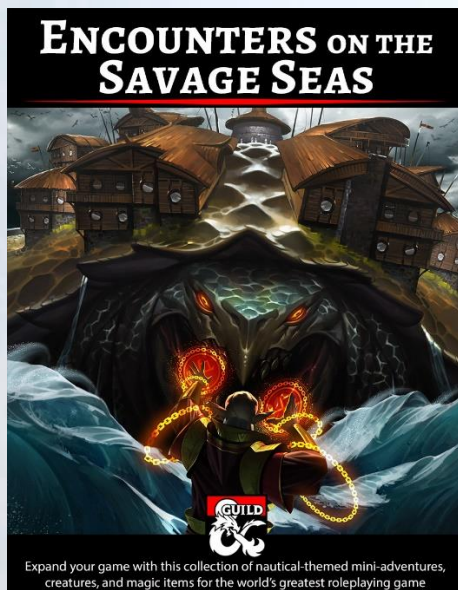
Now – go play D&D!

- Jeff C. Stevens

Questions or comments? Email me at jcorvinstevens@gmail.com or on Twitter: [@jcorvinstevens](https://twitter.com/jcorvinstevens)

MORE SAVAGE SEAS!

If you haven't already, be sure to check out the other *Encounters of the Savage Seas* supplements:



USING THIS SUPPLEMENT

Although some encounters mention specific locations, with a little adjustment, each could be used in nearly every campaign and setting.

Text in these yellow boxes is to be read to players.

Text in these boxes is additional information for the DM, some of which may be shared with players.

Most of the creatures in these adventures are found in the 5th Edition *Monster Manual*. Page numbers have been included for easy reference but depending on the printing edition of your *Monster Manual*, they may not match.

This supplement uses creatures from:

Monster Manual (MM)
Volo's Guide to Monsters (VGtM)
Tomb of Annihilation (ToA)
Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes (MTof)

In addition, several new creatures have been created for this supplement. You can find these creature stat blocks at the end of the adventure in which they are mentioned.

Unless otherwise noted, all NPCs have the stats of a **commoner**.

SHIP STATISTICS

As there are several ships mentioned in this supplement, it is advised that you review **Chapter 5: Adventure Environments** of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, which gives details about Waterborne Vehicles and their Damage Thresholds – the amount of damage required per attack before the ship is damaged.

AVERAGE PARTY LEVEL

The **Average Party Level** (APL) can be used to calculate the appropriate challenge level for your party. To calculate the APL, add the total levels of all characters and divide the sum by the number of characters (rounding up for .5 or greater).

SKILL CHECKS AND SAVING THROWS

Specific DCs are written for each of the encounters. You may wish to change these DCs based on the APL of the adventuring party. We suggest the below range:

APL	Check / Save DC
1 st thru 3 rd	11
4 th thru 6 th	13
7 th thru 9 th	16
10 th thru 12 th	19
13 th thru 15 th	22

In addition, if you feel a skill check or save is too low or too high, feel free to adjust the DC as you wish.

MAPS

Unless otherwise noted, for all maps:
1 square = 5 feet.

YOU ARE EMPOWERED

As mentioned above, you do not have to run these encounters as written. You (as the DM) are empowered to make changes as you wish – adjusting the encounters as the game is played, if you like. You are part of the collaborative storytelling that is Dungeons & Dragons and you know best how to adjust the encounters so that your adventurers get the most out of the session and story.

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GRAY MATTER

By Bryan Holmes

@FallenWyvern

Artist: Gary Dupuis

Estimated run-time: 30 minutes

Gray Matter is a short, combat-focused encounter and is designed for five characters of any level. This encounter works best when the players have a rival that has the resources to sneak a crate of supplies onto the players' ship.

BACKGROUND

No hero can adventure without picking up a rival or two. While some confrontations with their foes might be direct, it is wise to beware the more cunning foe.

One such foe has left a crate with two presents for the players: a puddle of gray oozes and a farewell note.

PLOT HOOK

A crew member approaches a player character, informing them that the hold is taking on water. The characters have been at sea for a few days, so it's currently unknown what has caused the leak, but water is rushing in from under some crates in the hold where it's now waist deep in water.

A BIG PROBLEM

The sound of hurried feet are audible long before you see one of the crew rushing in your direction.

"We've got a problem! We thought that there was a small hole to patch up when we found water leaking in the hold. But each time we fixed it, two more holes would appear.

There were more and more holes going back towards a crate, so we opened it up and found shards of broken glass and a note.



THE NOTE

So glad my agents were able to slip in unnoticed while you were last docked and added these gray oozes to your cargo. Consider it a gift, a final gift, from your greatest arch-enemy!

The hull harbors a number of **Black Puddings** (CR 4; MM, page 241). The number of puddings can be adjusted based on the level of the group.

SCALING THE COMBAT

APL 1-3: Use one **Ochre Jelly** (CR 2; MM, p 243)

APL 4-6: One black pudding and one ochre jelly

APL 7-10: Two black puddings

APL 11-16: Four black puddings

The puddings moved to the outside of the ship and will continue to create holes in the hull. They try not to place a hole within 5' of another hole, instead trying to make a checkerboard pattern instinctually. Each round, a pudding will move and then damage the hull. Since they are on the outside of the ship, characters will need to hold their breath and fight underwater, which is difficult to do if the ship isn't stopped first. If the ship is still moving during combat, characters have disadvantage of their attack rolls. Puddings will ignore the players until they are attacked.

The hull has already been partially consumed, resulting in 1d6 hole for each pudding on the hull to represent how long it took before someone noticed the destruction. Each round a pudding goes without fighting burns a new hole into the hull (this is true even if the pudding splits, with each of the split puddings creating holes of their own).

REPAIRING THE HOLES

The holes are patched with a successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Insight)** check, or by using the mending spell if the hole is small enough. This requires spare wood, nails, and hot tar which are all things a ship should have aboard. Holes take an action to patch if attempted during combat.

Water flows into the ship freely through the holes. Each round, the ship takes on 1 litre of water. 1000 litres of water is equal to 1 tonne. If the ship starts taking on more weight than it can support with its cargo capacity, it begins to sink. Once all the holes are patched up, the crew can use buckets to get the water out of the ship. How much water a ship can take on (cargo) can be found in **Chapter 8: Adventure Environments** of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

A good way to manage this is initiative:

When initiative is rolled, determine how many holes exist (1d6 for each pudding).

- **On a count of 20**, all oozes that did not fight in combat last turn create a new

hole on the hull. The DM should not make new holes on the first round of combat.

- **On a count of 10**, all un-patched holes leak 1 litre of water into the ship. For every 500 litres of water, add 0.5 tonnes of cargo to what the ship is already carrying.
- **On a count of 1**, all non-player crew members try their hands at patching a hole. If you do not have stat blocks for your crew, presume to just roll 1d20 plus the highest proficiency modifier of the players minus one. Thus, if the highest proficiency modifier amongst the players is 3, all the crew roll 1d20 + 2. If two crew work on the same hole, you can grant them advantage.

THIS WAS A TRIUMPH

Presuming the ship did not take on too much water and sink, read or paraphrase the following:

With the threat of oozes dispatched and the holes in the hull fixed well enough to get you to port, it's clear that allowing your mysterious foe the room to plot, plan, and sabotage your ship cannot happen again. You have questions to be answered: did someone from the ship help this dastardly deed? Are there more surprises lurking in your cargo from this vile villain?

Certainly, while the immediate threat is gone, a greater evil still looms over the adventurers.

TREASURE TRAP

By Jay H Anderson

Artist: Dean Spencer

Estimated run-time: 60 to 75 minutes

Treasure Trap is a single area adventure designed for five characters of 8th level. Scaling instructions are included to run the adventure for characters from 5th to 10th level.

BACKGROUND

Kiriell Greywood is a devout paladin and revered member of the Bahamut faith. Wielding her dragon slayer longsword, *Dragonchaser*, she hunted evil dragons and their minions across the land. After defeating many draconic foes, her journey led her to a sea cave where an adult white dragon laired. Kiriell fought bravely, successfully killing the dragon, but not before receiving grievous wounds herself that would prove lethal. Days later, other priests of Bahamut came to the cave and found Kiriell's body. They built and warded a burial place for Kiriell and left *Dragonchaser* with her, a monument to her sacrifice.

Yet Kiriell found herself unable to rest. She wished her sword borne into battle against dragons by a new wielder. Her unrest has risen her into a powerful **eidolon** with the god Bahamut's blessing. She waits alone in the cave for a worthy successor to her blade, with only her husband's solemn visits to break the monotony. Though she has never appeared to him, her husband grieves as he speaks to her. He speaks to her about many things, including their daughter Zuri and the skillful pirate she has become.

Zuri felt nothing when she learned of her mother's death, more concerned about the next target to plunder. After the successful plundering of a temple, Zuri took a priest captive for ransom. The priest had been present at the burial of Kiriell and told Zuri of her

mother's burial and final resting place, hoping to appeal to a merciful side. Yet, Zuri had no love for her mother or care for her faith. Zuri killed the priest and made plans to recover her mother's sword. Ever cautious, Zuri is planning to hire adventurers to plunder the tomb with her, alert for wards and traps.

PLOT HOOK

Zuri Greywood, the captain of the keelboat named *Wasp*, hires the adventurers for a treasure hunt. Armed with a map she tells the adventurers that the treasure is buried near a statue in a sea cave only a few hours away. Zuri does not elaborate on how she got the map, saying only that her information "comes from a reliable source she trusts." If she believes that it will be to her advantage, she'll tell them that the treasure belonged to her mother who is now dead.

For payment, Zuri offers a suitable reward plus 25% of the found treasure or of what she can sell it for. (Regarding the suitable reward, that detail is left to the DMs discretion, an example could be a common rarity magic item that Zuri "recovered" in past outings, or 500 gp total for more coin-oriented groups.)

THE SEA CAVE

The journey to the sea cave is left for the DM – with the adventurers possibly traveling with Zuri on the boat, or the adventure can simply begin as the adventurers enter the cave. The sea cave is housed in an enormous rock that juts up from the sea unremarkably. As the party enters, summarize or read:

The wide and tall cave opening allows plenty of light inside the cavernous space. The sea outside floods the space inside with only a few rocks peppering the water's surface. On the far wall, there is a steep sloping path from the water leading to a promontory overlooking the cave. A coffin next to a statue rests on the overlook.

In addition, there are various small ledges around the cave. Characters with a **passive Perception 16** or higher also notice that some of these ledges have rusting suits of armor lying on them (see The Ledges).

Zuri orders the crew to dock at the sloping path.

GENERAL FEATURES

Terrain. Deep water covering the floor, numerous stone ledges on the walls around. The cave is roughly 150 feet in diameter.

Weather. Cloudy outside. Just above freezing temperatures inside the cave.

Light. Bright light from the outside fills the cave.

Smells and Sounds. Plunks from water dripping from the ceiling. A salty sea breeze blows through the cave.

INTERACTING WITH ZURI AND HER CREW

Zuri is the confident, practical-minded leader of this band of experienced pirates. They make pleasantries with the adventurers but mainly speak among themselves during the trip, seeing the adventures just as hired help to tolerate. In the cave, they defer to the adventurers first, privately wanting them to deal with any traps.

If needed, their statistics are detailed in the section: A Daughter's Greed.

THE SLOPE

The steep incline is 15 feet long, rising 30 feet, and is difficult terrain for those moving up the slope. Dripping water slicks the surface. Any creature on the slope that has moved more than half their speed in a turn must make a **DC 10 Dexterity** saving throw. On a failure, they fall prone and slide down the slope 5 feet. If they fail by 5 or more, they fall off the slope into the water.

IN THE WATER

The water descends 30 feet to the bottom, though poor water clarity distorts visibility past 20 feet. The decaying skeleton of an adult white dragon lies along the rocky bottom covered in

seaweed. The dragon's hoard is long gone, save for a few trinkets and rusted weapons which also rest on the bottom.

THE LEDGES

Four rusting suits of heavy armor lie on the different ledges of this cave. Their swords still in their 'hands'.

Over the years, many others came to fight the dragon here and were killed. When the priests of Bahamut arrived for Kiriell, they found the remains of the others. The priests buried the bodies at sea the best they could. They left their suits of armor here as an effigy to all those who also fought against the evil dragon.

THE PROMONTORY

At the top of the sloping path, a roughly 30-foot wide, 20-foot long ledge overlooks the cave. A stone coffin rests 10 feet from the far ledge, with the statue of a kneeling warrior in heavy armor behind it. A **DC 12 Intelligence (Religion)** check identifies the statue bears the holy symbol of Bahamut, the god of good aligned dragons. **DC 20** on the same check recognizes the statue as a **sacred statue** (MTof, p 194).

Kiriell rests inside the coffin. She becomes aware of the group when they come onto the promontory, but takes no action until they lift the coffin's lid or damage the sacred statue. Kiriell is an **eidolon** (CR 12; MTof, p 194).

The coffin's lid is heavy, requiring a **DC 13 Strength (Athletics)** check to move it. The coffin is also protected by a *Glyph of Warding*. The remains of Kiriell lie within the coffin, dressed in her full plate armor and holding her dragon slaying sword, Dragonchaser.

GLYPH OF WARDING TRAP

Simple magical trap (Levels 5-10, moderate threat)
When Kiriell was laid to rest, the priests of Bahamut cast a protective spell to guard her.

Trigger. A living creature that is a non-worshipper of Bahamut opens the coffin or a creature touches the runes.

Effect. A *flame strike* spell is called down on the center of the promontory. All creatures within 10 feet of the coffin must succeed on a **DC 15 Dexterity** saving throw or take 14 (4d6) fire damage and 14 (4d6) radiant damage. The glyph resets after 10 minutes.

Countermeasures. A successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana)** check as an action notices the *glyph of warding*. A successful **DC 15 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools)** check mars the runes of the glyph without triggering it. A *dispel magic* (**DC 16**) or similar magic effect removes the glyph for 24 hours.

Once the coffin is open and it is clear to Kiriell that the group intends to take Dragonchaser, she attacks with surprise. She also attacks if they damage the sacred statue. She appears out of the coffin in front of the party and uses Divine Dread. Afterwards, she finishes her movement into the statue, animating it as a sacred statue. Her goal inside the statue is to defeat the adventurers and to stop Dragonchaser from being taken.

During the combat, Zuri retrieves Dragonchaser if possible and waits to watch the outcome of the battle. The crew waits as well.

After the sacred statue is defeated, Kiriell descends into the rock below and eventually into the water, hiding from the party for a few minutes. Proceed to Unworthy Child after the adventurers have a few moments to recover.

SCALING THE BATTLE

- **Levels 5-6:** Reduce the **sacred statue's** hit points to 60. Reduce the damage of its slam attack to 30 (4d12+4) and its rock attack to 26 (4d10+4).
- **Level 10:** There are 2 **sacred statues**.

TREASURE

The coffin contains Dragonchaser, a longsword.

UNWORTHY CHILD

Though Kiriell knows of Zuri's intentions, she is unaware of the adventurers' nature. With her protections defeated, she's left to plea with the adventurers against Zuri. Paraphrase or read the following:

Rising solemnly out of the water, the knight's spirit glares towards Zuri, yet holds up her hand in a sign of truce. Once level with the promontory overlook, she speaks, still staring at Zuri, "that one, Zuri, brought you here. Know that she is a pirate, a thief and yet my own daughter. She knows that, in life, I was a fervent warrior for Bahamut and that my sword is meant only for those of my mission. It is not meant for her who would only sell it for coin to the first illicit fence she found!"

Zuri and Kiriell argue back and forth a bit at this point. Kiriell tells the adventurers that Zuri lied to them about any other treasure being here; that Zuri knew that it was only her sword at this cave that had any value. Zuri argues that listening to the spirit of a dead woman is pointless, and someone else would just take the sword later, if not them. Neither contradicts the other, verbally quarreling more animatedly as time goes on.

Eventually, Kiriell makes a plea to the adventurers to return the sword back to its resting place and to take Zuri far away from here. Zuri counter offers to increase the adventurers pay to 50% of the sword's value (though she might offer 40% at first). After this, both Kiriell and Zuri look to the adventurers for their answer.

If the party sides with Zuri, Kiriell screams in anguish; proceed to A Mother's Grief.

If the party sides with Kiriell or are simply taking too long to make a decision, Zuri gets impatient and attacks; proceed to A Daughter's Greed.

A MOTHER'S GRIEF

Kiriell despairs when the party sides with her unscrupulous daughter. Willing to sacrifice her soul, she makes a desperate prayer to Bahamut. Paraphrase or read the following:

In seconds, the spirit's face transforms from defiance to shock to despair. Her form trembles as she lets out a wail of anguish. In response, several suits of armor begin standing up drawing their weapons.

Kiriell mentally called out to Bahamut for aid offering her own soul. Bahamut has answered his faithful servant's prayer, bringing to life 4 suits of armor (treat as **helmed horrors** CR 4; MM, p 183) around the sea cave, including the armor in her coffin. Kiriell moves to inhabit the armor that arose from her coffin.

Zuri orders her crew to set sail but waits for the adventurers. Once everyone has returned to the ship, Zuri orders the crew to row the ship away. The ship moves 30 feet per round.

The helmed horrors fight the adventurers, prioritizing whoever has Dragonchaser. While Kiriell inhabits one of them, that helmed horror has advantage on the first attack roll it makes each round. If the helmed horror that Kiriell inhabits is defeated, she immediately flies into a new one. Once the last helmed horror fails, Kiriell reappears briefly before she dissipates along with the last vestiges of her spirit.

If the ship exits the cave, the helmed horrors do not pursue. The magic that created them ties them only to this cave. They become inert suits of armor if they leave.

Once the *Wasp* leaves the cave, proceed to the Conclusion.

SCALING THE BATTLE

- **Levels 5-6:** Remove 2 **helmed horrors**, add 2 **animated armors** (CR 1, MM; p19)
- **Level 7:** Remove 1 **helmed horror**, add 1 **animated armor** (CR 1, MM; p19)
- **Levels 9-10:** Add one **helmed horror**

A DAUGHTER'S GREED

Zuri cynically thought the adventurers might turn on her eventually. She and her crew did not want to split the loot with them anyway. Paraphrase or read the following:

Zuri scoffs at this turn of events. "She's dead! It's my inheritance now and I'm going to take it!" Zuri whistles towards her crew and on cue, they draw their weapons to fight with their captain.

Zuri, a **master thief** (CR 5; VGtM, p 216), orders her crew to attack the adventurers. In addition to her stat block, Zuri carries a *potion of invisibility*. The crew consists of 2 **swashbucklers** (CR 3; VGtM, p 217) and 2 **archers** (CR 3; VGtM, p 210). The swashbucklers move forward to engage and guard the ship, while the archers target anyone threatening Zuri. Zuri drinks her *potion of invisibility* and then uses her bonus action to hide during the first round, moving a bit afterwards. On subsequent rounds, she acts as a sniper, shooting while invisible, moving a bit and hiding again. If she doesn't have Dragonchaser, she focuses on whoever has it until they drop unconscious and she can take it from them.

When Zuri returns to the ship the crew attempts escape, with the swashbucklers rowing the ship out, moving 30 feet per round as archers cover them. They know that escape is not possible if the adventurers are still able to effectively attack them.

Without the sacred statue, Kiriell knows she is vulnerable and can be easily destroyed. As the adventurers fight, she moves to a hiding place, hoping for their success. If Kiriell believes they will kill her daughter, Kiriell asks them to spare her life and only knock her unconscious.

Once Zuri and her crew are defeated, proceed to the conclusion.

SCALING THE BATTLE

- **Levels 5-6:** Remove 2 **swashbucklers** and 2 **archers**, add 1 **bandit captain** (CR 2, MM; p244) and 2 **scouts** (CR ½, MM; p349)
- **Level 7:** Remove 2 **swashbucklers**, add 2 **bandit captains** (CR 2, MM; p244)
- **Levels 10:** Add one **swashbuckler**

CONCLUSION

At the battle's end, use the appropriate conclusion or create one based on the information provided below.

THEY SIDED WITH ZURI

The trip back to the mainland is left up to the DM. Upon arrival, Zuri is true to her word and gives the agreed upon reward to the adventurers. Zuri sells Dragonchaser and gives 50% of the value to the adventurers, 1000 gp. If the adventurers wish to buy the sword from her, she'll sell for 2000 gp.

THEY SIDED WITH KIRIEL

Kiriell thanks the adventurers for their help and bravery. She doesn't want to see her child killed, but knows the sword cannot remain here for Zuri to come back for. Kiriell asks the adventurers take it to the clergy of Bahamut. If, instead, a non-evil adventurer wishes to bear Dragonchaser into battle, Kiriell gives her approval and ask they continue her mission against evil dragonkind.

The adventurers can loot the initially agreed upon reward from Zuri and the crew. In addition, they also have their keelboat, the

Wasp! They can keep the keelboat or sell it, receiving 1000 gp if sold (the boat isn't in pristine condition). If they keep the keelboat, they could use it for personal voyages or operate a business with it for fishing, ferrying travelers, or ironically, piracy (see the Running a Business section in the DMG).

THEY WERE DEFEATED

Regardless of which side they fight for, the adventurers find themselves waking up in an inn on the mainland. The innkeeper informs them that a ship's crew (either Zuri's crew or followers of Bahamut) dropped them off here and did not say where they were next headed.

NOTE: If the adventurers were returned by Zuri's crew, they did not rob the adventurers fearful that the adventurers, or powerful allies of theirs, would just come after Zuri and the crew. Essentially, they felt that it wasn't worth the potential trouble.

TREASURE

If they sided with Zuri, they received the agreed upon reward, including the sold value of Dragonchaser. If they sided with Kiriell, they receive Dragonchaser and a keelboat named the *Wasp*, along with the initially agreed upon reward by looting Zuri's crew.

DRAGONCHASER

Weapon, Rare (longsword)

This longsword bears bands of gold, silver, brass, bronze, and copper around its handle and hilt. Prayers to Bahamut are engraved in draconic along the sword's blade. This sword is well known to all dragons as well as its history of being wielded by hunters of evil dragon-kind.

This weapon is a *dragon slayer* (DMG, p 166) longsword. In addition, while attuned to this weapon, the wielder is immune to being frightened and once per day can cast the spell *fly* targeting only themselves.



THE WRECK OF THE IQUIACRESS

By Paige Leitman

@PaigeLeitman

Art: Bradley O'Hanrahan

Map: Cartography by Dyson Logos

Estimated run-time: 45-60 minutes

The Wreck of the Iquiacress is an exploration and roleplaying encounter designed for five characters of 3rd level. Scaling instructions are included to run the adventure for characters from 1st to 4th level. The DM may have to adjust as needed for other party makeup options.

Very weak party: three 1st level characters.

Weak party: four 2nd level characters.

As written: five 3rd level characters.

Strong party: six 4th level characters.

BACKGROUND

In Waterdeep: Dragon Heist one of the Force Grey (Grey Hands) missions is to confront a young bronze dragon that has taken up residence in Deepwater Harbor, and to learn its intentions (W:DH, p 36). This adventure expands on that quest.

Zelifarn, the bronze dragon, is young and just starting her independent adult life. Her priority is to establish a proper hoard. Like many others of her kind, she's interested in storing away rare items that reflect her persona, tell her story, and will help solidify her legend. She's digging around the reputed last resting place of a relic of Umberlee (a chaotic evil sea goddess) called "The Net of Pain". However, she's too young to shapechange, and she needs some help getting the item out of a barnacle-covered shipwreck.

If you are not playing Waterdeep: Dragon Heist, this adventure can be set in any coastal city or town. Replace Vajra Safahr with any other high-ranking wizard who would be curious what a dragon is doing in her coastal

waters and replace the Net of Pain with any minor relic of an evil deity in your campaign.

PLOT HOOK

Vajra Safahr, the High Wizard of Waterdeep (the Blackstaff), has heard from her network of informants that a young bronze dragon has moved in and startled some sailors. Obviously, the dragon is metallic, so the wizard isn't worried about the dragon sacking the city, but its presence could be disruptive. She challenges the heroes to confront the dragon and learn its intentions.

If the adventurers face the dragon, and make sure it won't cause any undue problems in Waterdeep, Vajra Safahr offers her patronage as a reward. For instance, adventurers who are arrested are released into her custody with charges dropped or an incredibly helpful uncommon or rare magic item appears in their gear at just the right moment, then mysteriously disappears later. She can also send her lieutenants to help the adventurers in tough situations.

GETTING TO DEEPWATER HARBOR

The heroes can hire a boat big enough to hold eight people for a few coppers at the harbor, and a sailor to row it for them. As the party approaches the area where the dragon has been sighted, read or summarize:

The brisk sea breeze and waves are enough to make the boat unsteady, but the water here is crystal clear. A coral-covered shipwreck is visible dozens and dozens of feet below. A large yellowish-green shape swims rapidly around it, and then off towards a stone pinnacle nearby.

Zelifarn will surface, shake the water off her hide like a dog, and sun herself on the pinnacle of rock to warm up for a while before going back to the wreck.

GENERAL FEATURES

Terrain. Seawater, sea floor at 60 feet, coral, stone outcrops, and a shipwreck coming up nearly 20 feet from the bottom.

Weather. Cool and sunny, breezy, light chop on the water. The sea is cool, but not cold.

Light. Bright light above and below the surface through the clear water.

Smells and Sounds. Sea breeze, waves lapping, underwater bubbles.

A DEAL WITH A DRAGON

The dragon, Zelifarn, doesn't want any trouble with a band of well-armed, armored, and determined adventurers... nor does she wish to quit her explorations of the wreck of the *Iquiacress*.

WHAT ZELIFARN KNOWS

Zelifarn is happy to talk to the adventurers and wants their help in exploring the wreck.

- She's too big to get into some of the interior spaces without destroying the ship.
- She doesn't want to destroy the ship because it's a lovely example of barquentine naval architecture.
- She hopes someday she's big enough to lair nearby or move the wreck to someplace near her future lair.
- There are a few large sharks that she's had to chase off and they keep harassing her.
- She can't explore the wreck and deal with the sharks simultaneously.
- She offers them one half of the treasure on the ship if they'll retrieve the Net of Pain while she risks life and limb keeping the sharks at bay.
- She's willing to negotiate down to offering the heroes 80% of the treasure as long as she gets the Net.
- She says it's probably in a metal box with the symbol of the evil sea goddess on it, which is a wave divided going left

and right. She would strongly prefer that the box is brought to her unopened. She says that it's dangerous to open it.

Zelifarn is a bit cagey about why she's after the Net of Pain. She will say that it's an important ritual item for Umberlee, but that it's only a minor relic and probably doesn't have any magical powers, and she just wants it for its historical significance. She's hedging her bets - her Charisma is at +3 versus the characters' **passive Wisdom (Insight)** for the characters to sense she's not saying everything she knows. Given her research, she suspects it's cursed, or could be used to empower a cursed item. She feels that she can keep that out of the hands of innocent blunderers as well as intentional villains. She knows the Net of Pain was being transported on the *Iquiacress*, and that it foundered outside the city in a storm about seventy years ago. She learned this information by rescuing several sages on their way to Candlekeep from sahaugin marauders.

If the adventurers tell her to leave, she will very politely decline until she finds the relic. It's too dangerous to be left in place. If the adventurers attack her, she'll flee and use her repulsion breath to shoo the adventurers out of her way. After that she'll start exploring the wreck at night and enlisting the aid of local fisherfolk to serve as lookouts in return for fish she catches.

If the characters just report back to the Blackstaff without offering to help Zelifarn, the Blackstaff sends them right back out with a strong suggestion to help the nice dragon get the bad relic out of the harbor, posthaste!

ROLEPLAYING ZELIFARN

Young bronze dragon, lawful good

Zelifarn is just starting out her life independently of her parents (who live far to the south). She's brash, earnest, a little too trusting, and generally kind and empathetic.

Quote: "It's important that we do the right thing here."

Ideal: I need to make sure that no one gets hurt by this cursed item!

Bond: I believe that those less powerful than me deserve my protection. Also, nearly everyone is less powerful than me because I'm a dragon!

Flaw: Sometimes I forget that I'm new at this.

APPROACHING THE WRECK

Zelifarn just happens to have as many *water breathing potions* (DMG, p 188) as there are party members who need them to explore the wreck. She offers to lure the sharks away so the heroes can explore the wreck without interruption. She spends a few minutes fishing for a large silvery fish and chums the waters a quarter mile to the west. Within a few rounds, the **three hunter sharks** (CR 2; MM, p 330) are drawn away.

If Zelifarn is prevented from drawing the sharks away, the sharks attack the heroes when they are about 15 feet above the wreck. Zelifarn will assist the heroes in the fight but will also be fighting a very large shark that prevents her from giving the heroes substantive aid.

SCALING THE BATTLE

- **Very weak party:** use two reef sharks (CR ½, MM, p 309).
- **Weak party:** use one reef shark (CR ½, MM, p 309) and one hunter shark (CR 2; MM, p 330).
- **Strong party:** use five hunter sharks (CR 2; MM, p 330).

UNDERWATER COMBAT

When making a melee weapon attack, a creature that doesn't have a swimming speed (either natural or granted by magic) has disadvantage on the attack roll unless the weapon is a dagger, javelin, shortsword, spear, or trident.

A ranged weapon attack automatically misses a target beyond the weapon's normal range. Even against a target within normal range, the attack roll has disadvantage unless the weapon is a crossbow, a net, or a weapon that is thrown like a javelin (including a spear, trident, or dart).

Creatures and objects that are fully immersed in water have resistance to fire damage.

If the heroes hired a boat, the crew has normal unmagical daggers, shortswords, spears, javelins, tridents, darts, and crossbows that they are happy to lend to the heroes.

TREASURE

Water breathing potions (DMG, p 188) equal to the number of heroes that need them. These potions only last an hour, so if the adventurers are using them, have them track time carefully.

THE UPPER DECK

As the party gets to the top deck of the ship, read or summarize:

The deck of the ship has lumps of colorful corals. Small critters and colorful fish peep at newcomers curiously. Sunlight flickering through the water causes a few coins on deck and within the coral to glimmer. A large hole in the middle of the deck offers access to the belowdecks area. On the side of the ship, a name plate reads "Iquiaccess".

Characters can make a **DC 8 Intelligence (Religion)** or **(History)** check, to recall that sailors leaving the harbor often throw coins or other valuables overboard to placate the evil sea goddess. A **DC 12 Intelligence (Religion)** check enables them to ascertain that dumping the sacrificed goods onto a shipwreck is a particularly appropriate gesture to acknowledge

her command of the seas. A **DC 15 Intelligence (Religion)** check lets the heroes know that taking treasure that was given to the sea goddess is bad luck. Characters who worship water deities, as well as all aquatic elves and half elves, tritons, and characters with sailor or pirate backgrounds make this check with advantage. Any clerics or paladins of Umberlee or equivalent sea deities know these things, no check required.

TREASURE

There are 4,170 copper pieces, 1,123 silver pieces, 476 gold pieces, and 37 platinum pieces on the deck (a total of 1,000 gp). Characters can retrieve coins by making a **Dexterity (Acrobatics)**, **Strength (Athletics)** or **Wisdom (Perception)** check (or **passive Perception**). Each check takes 10 minutes to make.

Check Result	Coins Found
<5	none
5–10	25 gp worth of coins
11–15	50 gp worth of coins
16–20	75 gp worth of coins
>20	100 gp worth of coins

When the characters have found 1000 gp worth of coins there are no more to find. It takes a relatively long time to search for coins, and the water breathing potions only last one hour.

CURSE OF THE SEA GODDESS

If a character chose to collect coins that were meant for the sea goddess, they are under the effects of a mild curse.

- The character suffers disadvantage on saving throws during a partial ship collapse of the wreck of the Iquiacress.
- The character suffers disadvantage on saving throws on spells under the ocean.
- The character takes one level of exhaustion during the night of the spring tide (the tide right after the full moon).
- Any other effects that suit the DMs needs.

The curse can be diagnosed with a **DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana)** or **(Religion)** check. Any cleric or paladin of any aquatic god can identify the curse automatically.

The curse can be removed with a *Remove Curse* spell or by dumping twice as much gold as was stolen back into the ocean, never to be recovered.

MAIN DECK

If the party chooses to enter the hull, read or summarize:

The interior of the Iquiacress is a dark, cool, maze of rotted wooden timbers. A few dark brown and red fish scatter for cover and an eel pokes its fanged mouth out of a niche in the rubble. The sounds of creaking timber echo faintly through the water.

GENERAL FEATURES INSIDE THE IQUIACRESS

Terrain. Cramped corridors of rotting wood and rusted metal, a few un-crushed cabins. Some areas require squeezing through.

Light. The interior of the ship is dark and unlit, though there are some areas of dim light where there are holes in the wreck.

Smells and Sounds. Underwater bubbles. Squeaks and groans of shifting timbers. Water currents swooshing. Clicking of claws of crabs moving around in the ship.

The characters can move through the wreck looking for the Net and anything else they'd like to keep. Any spell you feel would damage the

rotting wreck (like *shatter*, *thunderclap*, or *thunderwave*), or rolling a natural 20 while using a melee weapon inside the wreck, or rolling a 1 on a check to search inside the ship, will cause a partial collapse of the wreck. Once the ship partially collapses three times, it has completely collapsed and becomes a pile of rubble.

Ship Partial Collapse Hazard. The characters must make a **DC 10 Dexterity** saving throw every time there is a partial collapse. Characters who collected any treasure on the upper deck make this check with disadvantage because the sea goddess is angry with them. On a failed save, characters take 14 (4d6) damage, or half as much with a successful save. They will need 10 minutes to dig out of the wreckage and find each other, or only 5 minutes if the entire party made the check.

SCALING THE DAMAGE

- **Very weak party:** 3 damage (1d6)
- **Weak party:** 7 damage (2d6).
- **Strong party:** increase the DC to 13.

The main deck has a series of half-crushed crew and passenger cabins, the ship's kitchen, a dining area, and a passage to the cargo area below. There are crabs and eels among the human and demi-human skeletons and red and brown sponges grow thickly here. The characters can spend 10 minutes making a **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception)** check to find one of the below interesting items in listed order. Because of the cramped quarters, goliaths and dragonborn (and other characters who are on the larger end of medium size) make this check with disadvantage as they squeeze through small spaces while searching.

- Rotted clothes that include a very fancy suit embroidered with gold thread. The thread can be recovered and is worth 10 GP.
- A pair of gold earrings with pearls and small diamonds worth 15 gp.

- A book on the military history of Waterdeep (or another important metropolis) written by one of the first major military commanders of the city stored in a waterproof box. This would be worth 25 gp to the right historian or scholar.
- A *potion of healing*. This is automatically found if someone casts detect magic because it radiates weak evocation magic.
- An unlabeled bottle of Evermead. Identifying it requires a **DC 12 Intelligence (History)** check, which elves and half-elves make with advantage. This is a fine elven mead, aged for hundreds of years, worth 30 GP.
- A framed portrait of the first Open Lord of Waterdeep. It's an oil painting on preserved wood. With very careful handling it could be brought to the surface without disintegrating if the person carrying can make **DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** checks every time the painting might get jostled (at the DMs discretion). It's worth 200 gp, minus 50 gp for every failed check.
- A spyglass in a fragile waterproof case. As long as the person who is carrying the case doesn't make an attack roll with a weapon, and is not hit by any attacks, the case will not break. If the case breaks it's only worth 200 gp.

BELOWDECKS

As the party enters the cargo area belowdecks read or summarize:

This area has no natural light. Lumpy, half-rotting crates and barrels encrusted with sponges fill the area. Small, shy fish flee the approach of larger creatures.

THE LOCKED LEAD BOX

The characters can make **Wisdom (Perception)** checks to sort through the crates and boxes. Because of the cramped quarters, goliaths and dragonborn (and other characters who are on the larger end of medium size) make this check with disadvantage as they squeeze through

small spaces while searching. Each check takes 10 minutes to make. Add the results of all the wisdom checks together. When the heroes have a total value of 100 on their checks, they find a locked lead box marked with the “diverging wave” symbol of the evil sea goddess. (The lead box prevents the *Detect Magic* spell from finding the item.)

Scaling the **Wisdom (Perception)** check to find the box

The DM should consider this number carefully, and adjust based on number of party members, and how many are at disadvantage due to size.

- **Very weak party:** total score of 40.
- **Weak party:** total score of 75.
- **Strong party:** total score of 120.



DEVELOPMENT

If the heroes decline to open the box, they can return to Zelifarn and work out the treasure allocation with her. She takes the box, puts it in a carrier bag on her harness and takes off, winging her way to the north. As the DM you might consider having her contact the heroes again to help her learn more about the Net of Pain or to find another item for her.

If anyone other than a cleric, paladin, or person who devoutly worships the evil sea goddess opens the box, continue to the next section.

WHAT'S IN THE BOX?!

If the party opens the box, read or summarize:

There is an explosion of bubbles, water, and tentacles that splash ten or fifteen feet from the box. Several shapes materialize with hostile intent.

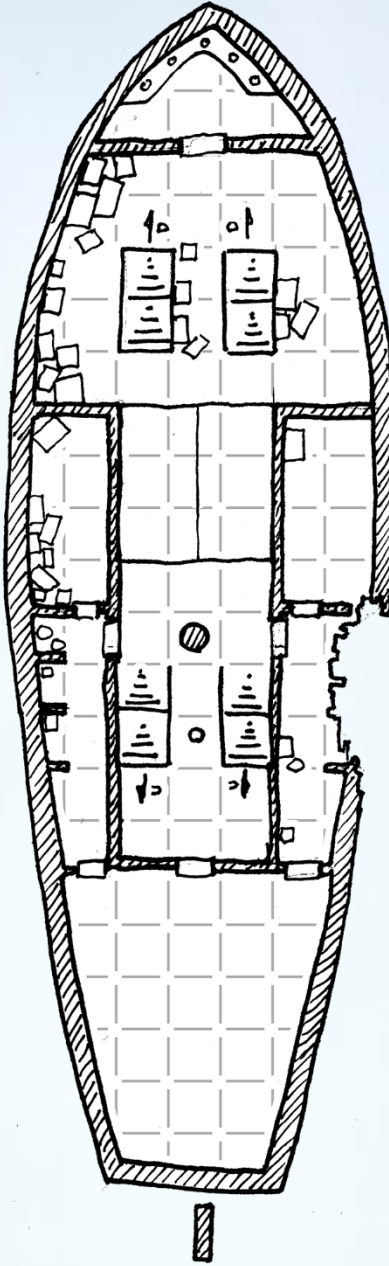
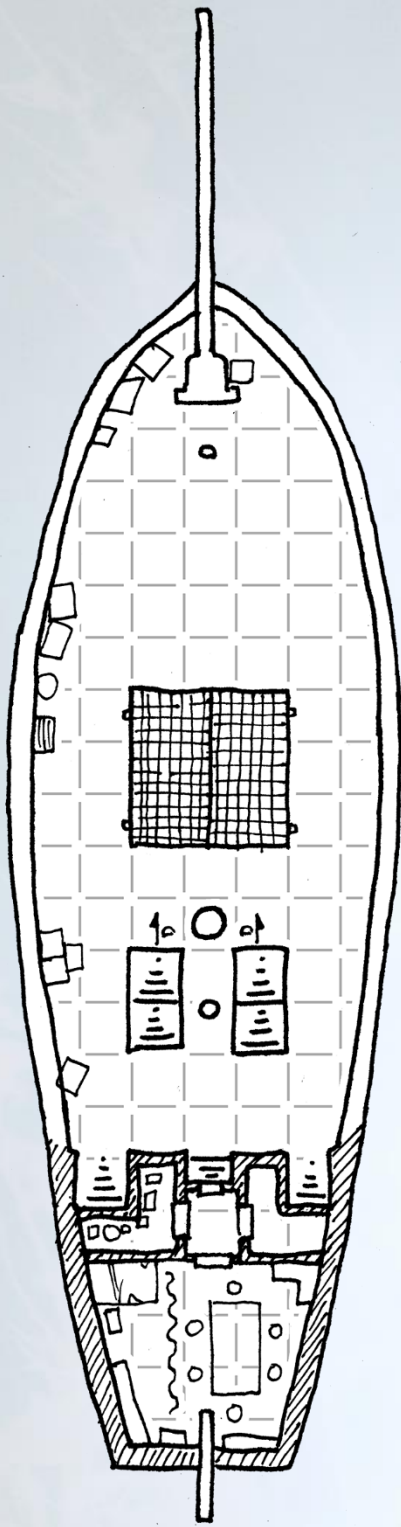
Several things happen immediately. If this box is opened underwater on the wreck of the Iquiacress, the ship undergoes a “Partial Ship Collapse Hazard” (see above). Regardless of where it is opened, Umberlee’s wrath is made evident by the appearance of a **water elemental** (CR 5, MM, p 125) and **three giant octopi** (CR 1, MM, p 326) who fight to the death to try to kill anyone who was present when the box was opened.

SCALING THE BATTLE

Be careful scaling this fight as the giant octopus can be a serious combatant and water elementals are resistant to non-magical damage.

- **Very weak party:** use three steam mephits (CR ¼, MM, p 217) and one giant octopus (CR 1, MM, p 326).
- **Weak party:** use one water weird (CR 3, MM, p 299) and one giant octopus (CR 1, MM, p 326).
- **Strong party:** use a water elemental myrmidon (CR 7, MToF, p 203) and three giant octopi (CR 1, MM, p 326).

Once the foes are dealt with, the only thing left in the box is a simple rope net that is adorned with wickedly sharp copper fishhooks and various charms and trinkets (symbols of Umberlee, skeletonized fish heads, marine creatures). It radiates weak necromantic magic if inspected with a *Detect Magic* spell. At this time, it has no magic powers other than being a sacred relic of the evil sea goddess.



WAR BENEATH THE WAVES

By Emily Smith
@EmilyJeaSmith
Map: Elven Tower

Designed for a party of four to five characters of levels 1st thru 4th.

OVERVIEW

While travelling overseas, characters encounter a young sea elf being attacked by a throng of sharks. After rescuing the elf, he introduces himself as **Prince Seaque** (LG), the soon to be ruler of **Xalanthia**, a sea-elf kingdom in the Moonsea, off the shore of Phlan. Prince Seaque is on a coming-of-age pilgrimage to find a mystical pearl, prophesied to rest in an enormous clam in the ruins of an ancient undersea city. Once he returns home with the pearl, he will be crowned king.

Unbeknownst to Prince Seaque, his uncle **Zavar** (NE), the acting steward of Xalanthia and worshipper of Umberlee, has sabotaged his mission. The “ancient ruins” are actually a recently constructed underwater replica of Phlan, used by Zavar and his armies to conduct battle simulations. Zavar has laid traps and stationed monsters throughout the complex, to ensure that Prince Seaque does not survive this quest. Once the prince has been disposed of, Zavar plans to seize control of the lands above and beneath the waves- all in the service of Umberlee.

DM NOTE: This adventure is set in the Moonsea, near the city of Phlan. However, it can be adjusted to fit any coastal setting: simply replace “Phlan” with the name of a nearby coastal city and the “Moonsea” with the name of the ocean or other body of sea water.

THE ENCOUNTER

While adventurers are travelling on the Moonsea, they see the following:

The water nearby begins to churn and froth, as shark fins surface and swirl around a humanoid figure, clearly struggling to stay afloat.

A frenzy of sharks (1 **Hunter Shark** (CR 2; MM, p 330) and 3 **Reef Sharks** (CR 1/2; MM, p 336)) is attacking a young sea elf (**Noble** (CR 1/8; MM, p 348)), who cries out to the party for help.

After being rescued, the sea elf introduces himself as Prince Seaque (“*Q for short*”), the soon to be ruler of Xalanthia. He informs the characters of his quest and asks for their assistance. Normally, he would happily complete the quest on his own, but he suspects something is afoot; sharks are normally indifferent, rather than aggressive, and they do not congregate in groups of different species. A **DC 12 Intelligence (Nature)** check confirms this information. A **DC 11 Intelligence (Investigation)** check discovers the blood vessels in the eyes of the sharks have unnaturally ruptured.

JOURNEY TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA

The “ancient ruins” are 60 feet beneath the water, situated roughly 300 yards away. Prince Seaque offers each character a 3-inch sea cucumber, which tastes like a bitter, salty pickle and grants the effects of the spell *water breathing*.

AREA A: UNDERWATER PHLAN

The characters enter at Area A. Read or summarize:

These underwater ruins resemble a vast city, constructed of coral, stone, and shells. Swarms of colorful fish, eels, and jellyfish flit between the buildings. Twenty-foot tall coral walls surround the complex, topped with enormous, jagged shark teeth, strung in place with braided seaweed. A pod of dolphins swims playfully among a forest of wavering kelp to the east of the city.

As characters explore the ruins, they may see the following:

- A **DC 12 Intelligence (History)** check reveals these “ruins” are a perfect replica of Phlan. Characters with the Urchin background make this check at advantage.
- With a **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception)** check, characters notice score marks along the walls. A **DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation)** or **DC 11 Smith’s Tools** check determines these marks are made by weapons.
- A **DC 10 Wisdom (Survival)** check reveals the area is heavily trafficked. A **DC 12 Wisdom (Survival)** check reveals these tracks are made by humanoids: sahuagin and sea elves.
- If characters go inside any of the buildings, they find graffiti scrawled onto walls, left behind by bored soldiers. Samples include:
 - ✓ An image of a pair of twin waves. A **DC 10 Intelligence (Religion)** check reveals this is the symbol of Umberlee.
 - ✓ *“The wave rises to engulf the earth.”*
 - ✓ *“Those who cannot swim, deserve to drown.”*

- ✓ *“A new king rises. Long live Zavar.”*

AN AMBUSH

Zavar has sent guards to patrol the city and, if necessary, kill Prince Seaque before he can recover the pearl and return to Xalanthia. The guard patrol consists of 6 **Guards** (CR 1/8, MM, p 347) led by a **Cult Fanatic** (CR 2, MM, p 345) and his pet **Reef Shark** (CR ½, MM, 336).

With a **passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 13 or greater**, characters overhear the guards talking about the planned invasion and discussing their promised promotions, to be received once Xalanthia conquers Phlan. Characters may then choose to fight the guards, stealth around them, or talk with them. A **DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion)** check convinces the guards to abandon Zavar’s plan and pledge allegiance to Prince Seaque.

If none of the characters have a **passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 13** or higher, the guards sneak up and attack the characters.

AREA B: THE TEMPLE

The pearl is housed on the opposite side of the city from the entrance that Prince Seaque guides the characters to. It is housed in a temple of Umberlee, which exists in place of Phlan’s temple of Gond. When characters approach this area, read the following:

A large stone tower, carved in the shape of a trio of spiraling stone tentacles, towers 50’ above the surrounding buildings. A large, stone archway at the front of the structure reveals a circular inner chamber beyond. Inside, a group of large sharks swims lazily around a giant shimmering clam, which sits at the center of the room. A spiraling stone staircase extends upwards.

The **Giant Clam** (actually a **Mimic** (CR 2; MM, p 220)) is guarded by 3 **Hunter Sharks** (CR 2; MM, p 330). When characters enter the room, the sharks attack.

After the mimic dies, it melts away to reveal a *Pearl of Power*.

The spiral staircase leads to the second floor of the tower, which houses a war room used by Zavar and his generals to plan battle tactics. A large table with a 3D map of Phlan, Melvaunt, Thar, and the Dragonspine Mountains dominates the center of the room. Small tokens made of shells are placed around the map, representing detachments of troops. A **DC 11 Intelligence (Investigation)** check reveals a hidden compartment in the table. Inside are several official documents, signed by Zavar, ordering the construction of Underwater Phlan and detailing his plans to take over Phlan and the surrounding area.

EPILOGUE

Prince Seaque takes the documents and thanks the characters for their help. He offers them the *Pearl of Power* and a delicate shell necklace worth 200 gp in exchange for their help. He plans to return to Xalanthia and, using the documents, depose Zavar and take his place as rightful king.



THE WOMAN BY THE CLIFF

By Beatriz T. Dias

@BiaTDias19

Art: Jacob Blackmon

Estimate run-time: 35 to 90 minutes

This encounter is meant to be played by a party of 4 level 5 characters.

SYNOPSIS

A woman asks the party to help her retrieve a necklace that she dropped in the ocean. If the party collects her necklace and give it back, she'll reward them, if they keep the necklace, she'll curse them.

PLOT HOOK

A woman awaits the party as they walk on a cliff near an ocean or similarly large body of water.

APPROACHING THE WOMAN

Read or paraphrase the following:

Standing near the cliff is a person, covered in golden robes that flow with the wind. It looks like a human woman, looking into the sea as if she's waiting for something.

The woman is **Adney (Mage CR 6; MM, p 347)**, a follower of *Tymora* that spends her time testing would be adventurers. Right now, she is setting up a new test and is looking for adventurers daring enough to clear it. But she'll keep those intentions a secret.

Adney claims that a necklace very dear to her fell into the water (she dropped it on purpose) and is willing to give 100 GP to whoever retrieves it.

The cliff has 35 ft. of sheer rock face until it reaches the water, and the water below is dark and 80 ft. in depth.

NOTE: While some parties can come up with clever ideas to stay underwater for a long-time, others will not. At the DM's discretion Adney can know the spell *water breathing* and use it to help the party.

DIVING

After getting into the water there is an 80 ft. swim straight down until the bottom can be reached. Apart from small waves on the surface the water is calm.

The necklace emits a soft blue glow and can be spotted from 30 ft. away. If someone wants to spot the necklace from further away, they must succeed on a **Wisdom (Perception)** skill check based on their distance to the necklace. See table below for the values needed.

Distance to the necklace	Perception DC needed
40ft.	10
50ft.	12
60ft.	14
70ft.	16
80ft.	18

As soon as someone can look beneath the waves in the water, they will be able to see 4 **Reef Sharks** (CR 1/2; MM, p 336) swimming at 40 ft. of depth. These sharks attack as soon as someone dives more than 10 ft. (and the sharks notice them).

IN THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA

The necklace is laying on the soft sand near the cliff, but beside it, in a big hollow on the cliff wall, is a sleeping **Pollvu**.

Pollvus are a dangerous type of giant octopus. If disturbed the Pollvu's first reaction is

to attack, but it won't pursue an intruder outside of its lair.

The necklace is well within reach of the Pollvu's tentacles (it's 5ft. away from the beast). A successful **Dexterity (Stealth)** check vs the beast's passive Perception is enough to grab the necklace without waking up the Pollvu.

RETURNING THE NECKLACE, OR NOT

Once the necklace is in the party's hands a simple **DC 11 Intelligence (Investigation)** check reveals that the necklace is worth more than what Adney promised. The golden necklace is worth 1,000 GP.

If the party returns the necklace to Adney she reveals herself to be an agent of *Tymora* and rewards the party with the promised 100 GP and a **Charm of Adventure** to each one of the party members.

CHARM OF ADVENTURE

This charm has 3 charges. You can use an action to spend a charge and give yourself the benefits of a *potion of vitality*, or a *potion of heroism*. Once all the charges have been expended the charm fades from you.

If the party doesn't return the necklace to Adney she curses each one of them with a **Curse of the Liar**.

CURSE OF THE LIAR

While this curse is on you, all Persuasion and Deception checks you make have disadvantage. The curse can be removed by a *remove curse* spell.

To detect that you are under this curse, someone must succeed on a **DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana/Religion)** check. The party can also make Adney think they returned the necklace while still keeping it. There is no magic in the necklace, so if the party gives her a fake and she doesn't realize it, she'll grant the blessing, though perhaps with disastrous effects when Adney discovers the forgery later

Whatever choice the party makes, at the end of the encounter award 2,000 XP equally divided amongst party members.



POLLVU

Large Beast, unaligned

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 127 (15d10 + 45)

Speed 5ft., swim 20ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	4 (-3)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages none

Challenge 5 (1 800 XP)

Hold Breath. While out of water, the Pollvu can hold its breath for 2 hours.

Underwater Camouflage. The Pollvu has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made while underwater.

Water Breathing. The octopus can breathe only underwater.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Pollvu can make 3 Tentacle attacks per attack action.

Tentacles. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 15). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, the Pollvu can only grapple 3 creatures at the same time.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (3d12 + 4) piercing damage.



THE BLOODY BOOTLEG

By Cameron Ackerson

@thedndcoalition

Art: Courtesy Wizards of the Coast

Estimated run-time: 60 to 90 minutes

The Bloody Bootleg is a short exploration adventure designed for five characters level 3-5. This adventure can be adjusted to suit higher-level characters.

BACKGROUND

Out on the open seas, the looming threats are endless. There are deep-sea creatures and fierce, winged beasts capable of flying long distances, but one of the most menacing and feared among the myriad dangers are the legends of undead pirates forever haunting the Sword Coast. The *Bloody Bootleg* is a haunted ghost ship whose captain is capable of much worse than just pillaging the treasures of unsuspecting travelers. He steals their blood, sometimes leaving them with a debt to pay...

PLOT HOOK

This encounter may be used as a solo encounter, or you can plant it in your adventure as a part of a side quest/character background development. It is meant to be difficult enough to instill the fear of a TPK within your players but with the safety net of not actually ruining the entire campaign. If the players are defeated in combat, **Captain Von Balthazar** will recognize their potential and let them leave with their lives, but with a debt owed.

The party may have heard rumors about the pirate ship the *Bloody Bootleg*, as its legend has stood for centuries. The ship's leader, Captain Von Balthazar, is a cursed undead, unfailingly loyal to his beloved wife. She is a vampire, slumbering below deck, who only returns to the waking world once a year. Captain Von



Balthazar scours the seas all year, preying on men and creatures alike, seeking enough blood for her resurrection.

Rather than killing the party, the Captain will make a blood pact with them, offering them freedom in exchange for enough blood to resurrect his wife before the next full moon.

APPROACHING THE STORM

As the party sails the open seas, read or summarize:

After several days of clear blue skies and calm waters, it is almost cruel fate that dark skies and rougher waters are up ahead. Several miles off into the distance, the sun hides behind dark clouds of a squall or storm. It soon becomes clear that this isn't a normal storm.

Any adventurer can attempt a **DC 14 Wisdom (Survival)** check to see if they can notice the difference in these clouds. Consult the below table to determine what they see.

D20	Result
14-16	The storm seems to be small and localized enough that they can attempt to go around it
17-19	It seems that the storm is traveling directly towards their position
20+	It seems that the dark clouds contain a deep crimson hue

ENVIRONS OF THE STORM

GENERAL FEATURES

Terrain. Very rough waters.

Weather. The temperature becomes much warmer, despite the normal climate of the continent.

Light. The low, thick clouds have caused it to become very dark and slightly foggy, putting visibility at 60 feet.

Smells and Sounds. The sounds of the waves crashing against the party's boat makes communication difficult. The air becomes thick and hard to breathe.

GOING AROUND THE STORM

If the party tries to go around the storm, read or summarize:

It appears the storm is still headed straight in your direction, regardless of your heading. As the storm looms nearer, it appears to pick up momentum and approaches faster and faster. The light rain and calm waters quickly shift into a torrential downpour as the waves become treacherous. The rain falls in heavy sheets, cutting visibility. The roar of the violent winds and the sound of waves crashing into the boat are so fierce that even yelling may not be loud enough to communicate with each other. The air becomes moist, thick, and hard to breathe.

The storm quickly intensifies. Party members who are not used to the dangers of storms in

the open waters attempt a **DC 10 Wisdom** saving throw. On a success, they can continue to help man the ship. On a failure, they become **frightened** of the storm. A frightened character can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with a success ending the frightened effect.

DM FLAVOR WITH CHARACTER BACKGROUNDS

If you have party members with a sailor background, you may allow them to roll with advantage. You can allow this with all Perception, Investigation, or Survival checks if you choose.

EMBRACING THE STORM

As the party continues through the storm, read or summarize:

Now completely engulfed by the storm, the hull of the bucking ship groaning in protest against the rough waters. Some of the hired crew crouch and cower in fear, while others tie ropes around the main mast of the ship to hang on to. Barely audible amongst the chaos and roar of the crashing waves sounds a **crack!** The smaller mast closer to the bow of the ship has been struck by lightning, and the base is consumed with an unnatural blue flame that is growing by the second.

The base of the front mast is currently on fire, and adventurers must put it out in order to prevent the flames from burning down into the deck of the ship. Time is of the essence here: after 3 failed attempts to extinguish the flames, the fire burns through the floorboards enough to expose the cargo hold containing the ships supplies and food stores.

The flames can only be put out by smothering (blanket, dirt, sand, etc.), or if targeted by a *dispel magic* spell. If smothering the flames have the party preform a **DC 12 Dexterity** group check. If the party succeeds three times before failing three times, they successfully smother the flame before that food stores and supplies are damaged.

WHERE DID THEY GO?

After the party extinguishes the flames, read or summarize:

After the commotion of putting out the flames, a nearby crew member points out that the wooden figurehead at the front of the ship appears to be missing.

THE FIGUREHEAD

Allow party members to take a brief moment to inspect what has happened to the figurehead. A **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation)** check reveals a thin line of scorched wood travels from the burnt mast where lightning struck to the missing figurehead (which was previously a carving of two women. It appears that the wood surrounding where the figurehead had been is scorched and contain small claw marks; but otherwise the damage was minimal. There are no remnants to be found.

SEA HAG ON DECK

The magical blue flames have caused the two women in the figurehead to turn into **sea hags** (CR 2; MM, p 179).

Allow the encounter to happen after they get the chance to inspect the area. Unless a party member is actively performing a **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception)** check or has a **Passive Perception of 12** or higher, the sea hags surprise the adventurers.

ALTERNATIVE MONSTERS

Your characters ship may have a different figurehead, or even no figurehead at all. In which case, you may choose a different creature or creatures appropriate to your party's level.

For example; if there is no figurehead, the blue flames crawl over to a few barrels or crates which animate into a **mimic** (CR 2; MM p 220, or a coil of rope creating a **roper** (CR 5; MM p 261)

As the party kills off the hags, they revert into their wooden forms on the deck of the ship, in

the position they were in while in their original figurehead form.

A SLIGHT REPRIEVE

After the party defeats the last remaining sea hag, read or summarize:

After delivering the killing blow to the last remaining sea hag, her body shudders and reverts to back the original weathered wood of the figurehead, then lays motionless on the deck. Hope is briefly restored as there seems to be a slight break in the rage of the storm. One of the crew members suddenly comes bursting out from the Captain's chambers, panting and covered in seaweed. He cries, "*The Captain, he's gone!*"

If the party chooses to see what is going on with the storm, allow a **DC 10 Intelligence (Nature)** check to discover that they have found a pocket of calm air within this massive storm cloud. It is not the eye of the storm, but a break, nonetheless.

As the party rushes to the Captain's chambers, allow a **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation)** check to determine the following:

D20	Result
12-14	the window at the stern of the ship, located in the Captain's chambers has been shattered. Broken pieces of glass lie all around. No signs of blood
15-18	this glass was built to withstand storms like this, and should not have shattered. By the amount of water in here caused by the exposed window they can tell that the kidnapping likely happened during the encounter with the sea hags
19+	around the Captain's desk and on some of the exposed shards of glass, there are a few slimy pieces of green flesh, along with small pieces of coral on the floor

The Captain was nabbed by a **sea spawn** (CR 1; VGTm, p 189). The attack on the bow of the ship was a distraction in order to kidnap the Captain.

At this point there is nothing the adventurers can do but try and find the Captain with visibility still less than 60 feet. The slight break in the storm isn't too long but long enough to allow for a short rest.

STORM'S VENGEANCE

As the ship drifts slightly in this small pocket of calmer waters, a bewildered cry comes from the crow's nest as the ship starts to rock intensely once again. It seems that the reprieve in the storm's anger only caused it to come back with vengeance. As the crewmember frantically makes his way down the mainsail from the crow's nest, there is a look of sheer terror on his face as he points to the starboard(right) side, **"BLOOD!"** Looking out, you see in the near distance that the dark, ever-looming fog has a deep crimson hue to it and is quickly heading in your direction.

Captain Von Balthazar and his crew are heading towards the ship that the adventures are on. They roam the seas preying on wayward adventurers, oftentimes completely destroying their ships after collecting the crew's blood to *feed* the captain's vampiric wife. The Bloody Bootleg is a massive ship, much larger than the one that the adventures are currently on. The ship itself serves as the eye of the storm; carrying a crimson cloud overhead wherever it goes.

The weather quickly takes a turn for the worse as the wind begins to pick up. As the crimson fog ahead overtakes the adventurers, allow a **DC 14 Intelligence (Nature)** check and consult the following table.

D20	Result
14-16	The ship is being drawn into the eye of the storm
17-18	Getting out of the storm is not an option. At this point if they don't try to fight the storm, and let the sails down it will cause less damage to the ship. This will hopefully give them a better chance of surviving once the storm passes. (That is, if it passes).
20+	This is not a natural storm or hurricane. There is a supernatural force compelling them into the eye

Adventurers can let the sails down and allow themselves to be sucked into the eye of the storm, or they can attempt to escape the storm and risk sinking the ship. Either way, they are doomed to suffer the fate of the *Bloody Bootleg*.

OPTION A. FIGHTING THE STORM

Have the party tell you what they are going to do to try to escape the storm. Let them be creative and award inspiration for clever ideas. Their ideas may be resourceful enough to allow them to escape the storm this time but, ultimately, their efforts will prove futile.

The captain of the ship needs to feed his hungry wife. He becomes a menace to the adventurers, stalking them from a distance until he sees they are unprepared or anchored for the night. He and the storm eventually overcome the adventurers and damage their ship, snapping the mainmast in the process, which causes them to travel at half-speed.

Once completed, read or summarize:

Hope for survival wanes as the omnipotent thrashing of waves crashes against the side of the ship. The hull groans and creaks in protest against the destructive waters and the main mast groans against the powerful winds until it finally succumbs from the strain. Crew members barely jump out of the way as the mainstay lets go and the top half of the main mast cracks, collapsing and toppling down onto the deck of the ship before sinking down into the depths of the ocean.

Move on to ***Brace for Impact!***

OPTION B. LETTING THE STORM OVERCOME

The crew have experienced storms like this and know that surviving it requires reducing sail drastically and running with just a storm jib. With the buffeting winds and waves it becomes increasingly more difficult to see due to the thickening fog. As crew members work together to preserve the sails, the wind and crashing waves become so intense that you are forced to hold onto the nearest secure part of the ship.

The Bloody Bootleg causes the water around the characters' ship to change. A creature succeeding on a **DC 8 Wisdom (Perception)** check notices the water surrounding the ship has turned to blood.

Move on to ***Brace for Impact!***

BRACE FOR IMPACT!

The mist from the waves crashing against the ship starts to feel warmer as it lands on your skin. The darkness caused by the fog has made it hard to make out details on the ship deck. You wipe the moisture that has accumulated on your face from the mist but as you look down you see your hand is covered in blood.

Across the deck you see that the mist coating the deck is blood. Suddenly, there is a cry from the front of the ship, ***"BRACE FOR IMPACT!"***

The limited visibility due to the thick fog has made it impossible to see much farther than 30 feet ahead. Immediately in front of your boat is the hull of a much larger and older looking ship. A ship in which you are on a ... ***Crash!!!*** The impact is severe.

Have each character make a **DC 12 Strength (Athletics)** or **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** saving throw and consult the below table:

D20	Result
8 or less	The adventurer is knocked prone and falls into the water
9-11	The adventurer is knocked prone
12+	The adventurer manages to hold on to something on the ship

Adventurers who fall into the water do not land in seawater, but blood instead. Have those who fell into the water roll a **DC 10 Strength (Athletics)** or **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check to climb back on board. Should other adventures choose to help by throwing a rope overboard, allow them to roll with advantage.

For every round after two rounds that a character is in the water, a successful **DC 11 Constitution** saving throw is required. On a failure, the character suffers one level of exhaustion after fighting the crashing blood waves.

THE BLOODY BOOTLEG

Once all party members have recovered from the impact with the *Bloody Bootleg* and are back on deck, read or summarize the following:

As waves continue to crash around the two ships that have now collided together, it becomes evident that your ship is the smaller of the two... ***much smaller***. The deck of the imposing ship stands about ten feet higher than that of your own. Written on the heavily weathered boards on the side of the ship you can make out a name: *Bloody Bootleg*. It takes you all a moment to realize that no one appears to be currently onboard the ship and that your boat is heavily damaged and foundering.

The ships have collided in a manner that both of them are still floating, but the one the adventurers are on is heavily damaged. They can jump over to board the *Bloody Bootleg* with

a successful **DC 10 Strength (Athletics)** or **Dexterity (Acrobatics)**. Failed checks will result in players falling into the rough waters below (see above for consequences). This roll may be done with advantage if players use a rope or ladder to assist them.

GENERAL FEATURES OF BLOODY BOOTLEG

Hull. Very weathered, sea worn wood with missing planks in various spots.

Mast and sails. The three masts of the ship stand tall and proud, boasting a ripped, tattered black sail that lies almost motionless, even though they are in the middle of an intense storm.

Deck. Using the deck of the party's ship as a point of reference; the middle section of the three-tiered deck rests 10 feet above the deck of the adventurers' ship, the bow of the ship is 15 feet higher, and the stern is 20 feet higher.

Once the adventures board the ship, the boat looks completely abandoned and stripped of anything valuable other than very detailed and intricate carvings of pirates and skeletons on the walls, masts, and banisters throughout the ship.

The goal is to get the adventurers to search the Captain's quarters on this ship. There they will find their Captain hanging from the ceiling in the center of the room, currently unconscious and bleeding out above what looks to be a funnel that has been built into the center of the room, leading into the chambers below.

They can easily untie and stabilize him. With a **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation)** check some information about the Captain's cabin can be learned:

D20	Result
12-14	The hole in the floor seems to be a funnel that leads into the lower chambers of the ship
15-16	There is a portrait of a beautiful woman above a desk along the back wall of the room
17-19	There is the same type of slimy pieces of green flesh, along with some small pieces of coral on the floor. Footprints lead to a wardrobe on one wall in the room
20+	Adventures find a secret door that is locked. It leads down to the room where the Captain's beloved's coffin is.

THE WARDROBE

Inside the wardrobe is the **sea spawn** (CR 1; VGTm, p 189) that initially captured the Captain. Before he is found, he will burst out of the wardrobe and try to run out of the room, using his *Poison Quill* ability on whoever is closest to the wardrobe. Allow for *opportunity attacks* for those who are in range.

If the sea spawn manages to survive the round of combat while running out of the room, he will join the awaiting undead crew on the deck of the *Bloody Bootleg*.

THE SECRET DOOR

As the adventurers attempt to open the secret door, the Captain barges into the room from the main door (see **Meeting the Captain**).

CAPTAIN VON BALTHAZAR

When the adventures leave these chambers, they are met on the deck of the ship by Captain Von Balthazar, an undead male humanoid who is currently wiping blood from his wickedly curved scimitar. Behind him stands his crew of

undead pirates. The party can look down at their ship and see that nearly all of their crew members have been brutally slaughtered. The surviving few are being held with blades at their throats by Captain Von Balthazar's crew.

MEETING THE CAPTAIN

When the adventurers meet Captain Von Balthazar for the first time, read or summarize the following:

The decaying figure standing before you wipes the blood of your allies from his curved blade with his hand, and then proceeds to wipe it on some carvings on the vessel. As he does so, the intricate carvings of the undead pirates on the wood begin to move and crack out of the mast itself, forming into yet another one of the unsavory captain's henchmen. With a deep guttural laugh, the Captain gloats before he says, "Well, well, it appears that our fresh blood could withstand a little storm."

As he says this, members of his undead army begin to circle and herd you to the center of the main deck. Giving you a thorough look of admiration and contempt, the Captain says, "'Tis nearly a tenday away from my beloved's resurgence. Will you aid in my hunt for blood, or quench her thirst with your own? What say you?"

This question presents two possible scenarios. The party can solve their problem by diplomatic means and pledge allegiance to Captain Von Balthazar, aiding him in his hunt for blood, or they can attempt to battle it out with him and his crew.

A BLOOD OATH

If the party agrees to help aid Captain Von Balthazar, he tells them that it is their mission

to return to him with the blood of 20 souls, delivered in casks or barrels.

He will share with them the tale of his beloved, cursed wife, who can only come to life once a year after her blood oath has been fulfilled. She resides in a coffin below deck where the funnel in the Captain's chambers leads to.

He will also repair their ship using the bodies of his cursed crew who can transform into wood at will.

The Captain will demand a small drop of blood from each of the characters before letting them go as a means to track them and to make sure that they deliver what they agreed upon. To find the Captain once they have collected the blood and hold up their end of the bargain, all they have to do is "seek out the Crimson Storm." If they hold up their end of the bargain, you can consider their debt paid and reward them appropriately. If they do not, then they have created a powerful enemy, an enemy that can always find them and their blood.

NON-DIPLOMATIC MEANS

If the adventurers decide to attack Captain Von Balthazar and the crew, they will fight to the death. Captain Von Balthazar's statistics are below and the crew members are **skeletons** (CR 1/4; MM, p 272). Adjust the encounter accordingly:

SCALING THE COMBAT

- **Levels 1-2:** fight only Captain Von Balthazar; the remaining friendly crew members will jump in and fight the skeleton crew
- **Levels 3-4:** Captain Von Balthazar and 6 skeletons
- **Level 5-6:** Captain Von Balthazar, 10 skeletons, and 1 priest (CR 2; MM, p 348)
- **Level 7+:** Captain Von Balthazar, 10 skeletons, and 1 mage (CR 6; MM, p 347)

BELOVED'S COFFIN

The Captain's beloved is located in a coffin in a secret chamber below deck in the hull of the ship below his personal chambers. The blood

that funnels down from his chambers pours directly on top of her coffin.

The only way into the coffin's chamber is a secret door in the Captain's cabin floor. If the coffin chamber's secret door is found and they have not yet encountered Captain Von Balthazar, he will storm in to his cabin with his crew – Read dialogue in the "Meeting the Captain" section of Captain Von Balthazar.

If the adventures successfully open the coffin:

Without the appropriate blood sacrifice, they will see the beautiful pristine body awaken and rise to attack them, but she will quickly turn to ash before getting the chance.

Upon her body turning to ash, the *Bloody Bootleg* will start to crumble apart and sink very quickly. Roll 2d6 for number of combat turns before the ship falls apart and dissolves, sinking all remaining treasures within.

TREASURE

Below deck is a treasure horde from all of the other items Captain Von Balthazar has collected over the years.

50 pp, 300 gp, 500 sp, 900 ep, and 1,000 cp

12 gems worth 25 gp each

A *potion of heroism* (DMG)

A *bag of beans* (DMG)

A pair of *sending stones* (DMG)

HOWEVER: If Captain Von Balthazar is defeated and the adventurers successfully open his beloved's coffin, the *Bloody Bootleg* begins to crumble apart over the course of 5 days. On the 6th day, the ship can no longer float and sinks to the bottom of the sea.

This effect can be stopped if the ship is targeted by a *remove curse* spell.

CONCLUSION

If the adventures make a deal with the Captain, you can use him as a plot device later on.

Perhaps the party kills him and steal the coffin of his beloved and auction it off once they get

to port. Maybe they never find the coffin and his beloved will one day return for revenge.

CAPTAIN VON BALTHAZAR

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (splint)

Hit Points 58 (9d8+18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Immunities poison, necrotic

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Skills Athletics +5, Perception +2

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive perception 12

Languages common

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Undead Fortitude (optional). If damage reduces the Captain Von Balthazar to 0 hit points, he must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, Captain Von Balthazar drops to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

Multiattack. Von Balthazar makes two scimitar attacks.

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10+3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

I HOPE YOU ENJOYED THE ENCOUNTERS!

YOU MAY ALSO ENJOY A FEW OF MY OTHER PRODUCTS:

