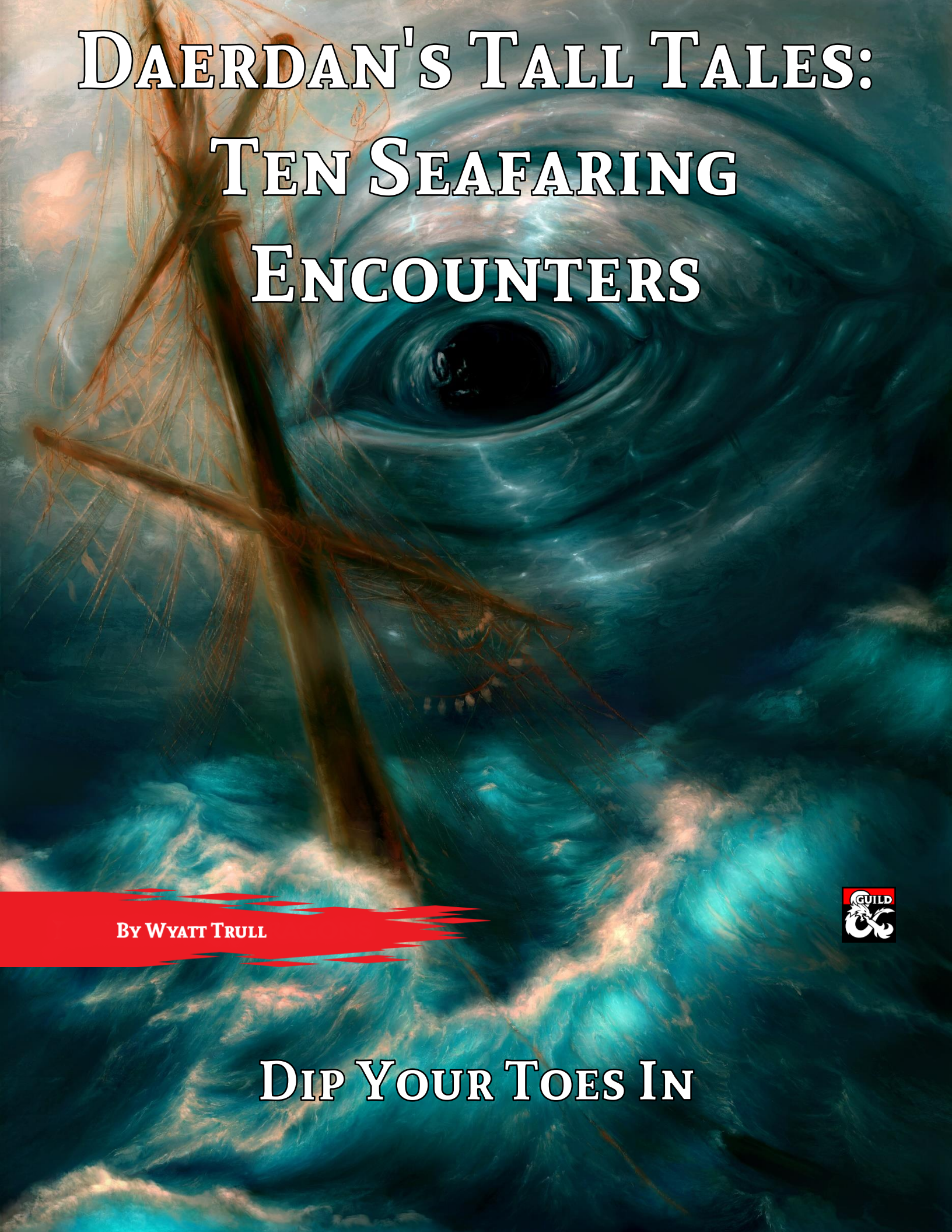




DAERDAN'S TALL TALES: TEN SEAFARING ENCOUNTERS

BY WYATT TRULL



DIP YOUR TOES IN

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Daerdan "the Yarnspinner" is quite the unusual raconteur. When we, his publishers, asked for a little biographical information, such as from whence he hailed, he replied, "From the proud land of none of yer gods-damned business! And another thing—!"

We have thus had to fill in the blanks, so to speak. Daerdan seems to be a crass dwarf approaching a venerable age. He claims to be "sandwiched" between two centuries. We estimate him to be approximately 270 years old. Divinations to confirm such have seemingly failed, as have all other attempts to verify his past and certainly his tales. For all we know, he could be a shapechanger, a fiend in disguise—jury's still out. All we know for certain is that this dwarf has spent centuries as an explorer, storyteller, and, as he insists, "one heap of a coward."

Nonetheless, we at *Wake House* have decided to publish Daerdan's litany of tales. This publication concerns his seafaring days. He swears on his soul that each and every tale, no matter how tall, is true. We could not justify the expense of truth serum nor other magics to verify this claim. Someone, at one point, suggested less... savory methods, but alas, the idea was scrapped. At any rate, whether this is fact or fiction, we hope you enjoy Daerdan's *Tall Tales*.

ART CREDITS

All hail our glorious artists:

Dean Spencer, *Explorer* et al. (© Dean Spencer)

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HOW TO USE THIS SUPPLEMENT

Tall Tales features over one hundred fleshed out, seafaring encounters. This particular supplement features ten encounters as a preview. Lower tier encounters are meant to be dropped into your session, whereas higher tier encounters are designed to be dropped into your *campaign*. These high-level encounters provide plot points and boss fights that you can integrate into your story with minimal foresight.

Sample Encounters. This supplement allows you to dip your toes into *Daerdan's Tall Tales* without purchasing the entire 100-page tome containing one hundred and one seafaring-based encounters. You can find the complete edition on DMs Guild.

Daerdan the Yarnspinner. Despite this supplement's name, you are by no means bound to any outcome implied by the titles to any encounter or the quotes from Daerdan. He's but a framing device for this litany of encounters. You need not include him in your campaign at all, or even mention him—although it'd be comical for the adventurers to wrap up an encounter, hit the port taverns, and find a dwarf spinning a yarn of their tale (having already inserted himself in the story) to drunk patrons.

Monsters. This product makes heavy use of the *Monster Manual* and *Volo's Guide to Monsters*. To find a creature's statistics or lore, consult Appendix A for the page numbers in these respective manuals.

Items. Items used throughout this supplement can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, if not featured in a sidebar for that encounter. See Appendix A for these items' page numbers.

SYSTEM & SETTING AGNOSTICISM

This supplement operates without any assumption to your sailing or ship-to-ship combat rules. You can use them with the rules described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, *Ghosts of the Saltmarsh*, or any homebrewed rules. In the same vein, it makes no assumption about the setting you play in, whether it's the high fantasy Forgotten Realms setting or a low magic world of your own design.

The supplement sometimes assumes that the adventurers are merely passengers on the ship, part of the crew, or hired guns, especially amongst low tier encounters—but with enough authority to stop the ship long enough to explore some phenomena, like a deserted island. This can easily be rectified: instances that refer to the ship's captain are instead altered to fit the adventurers' leader, if any.

Ship Statistics. Basic ship statistics have been extrapolated from the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for your convenience, serving as a baseline for these encounters for DMs not using the rules found in *Ghosts of the Saltmarsh* or any third-party rules.

SHIP STATISTICS

Ship	Cost	MPH	Crew	Pass.	Cargo	AC	HP	DT
Galley	30k	4	80	-	150	15	500	20
Keelboat	3k	1	1	6	1/2	15	100	10
Longship	10k	3	40	150	10	15	300	15
Rowboat	50	1.5	1	3	-	11	50	-
Sailing	10k	2	20	20	100	15	300	15
Warship	25k	2.5	60	60	200	15	500	20

Cargo is measured in tons.

Cost is measured in gp

DT refers to damage threshold: the ship has immunity to all damage unless it takes an amount of damage equal to or greater than its damage threshold, in which case it takes damage as normal. Any damage that fails to meet or exceed the damage threshold is considered superficial and doesn't reduce the ship's hit points. All ships are immune to poison and psychic damage.

MPH refers to miles per hour, the speed of the vessel

Pass. refers to the number of Small and Medium passengers the ship can accommodate.

CANNONRY & GUNPOWDER

Given this supplement's setting agnosticism, no encounter relies on or assumes the existence of cannonry or gunpowder, but you can easily add that into any encounters. See Chapter 8 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for further details on firearms, gunpowder, and cannonry. The latter has been included below:

Cannon. Cannons have an AC 19, HP 75, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. It requires one action to load a cannon, one action to aim it, and one action to fire it. It is a ranged weapon attack (+6 to hit, range 600/2,400 ft., one target. *Hit*: 44 (8d10) bludgeoning damage).

WITHOUT GUNPOWDER

The supplement assumes the worst: men must take to the seas without the firepower of sulfur and saltpeter. In these settings, most ships (especially sailing ships) come with these weapons:

Ballista. Ballistae have an AC 15, HP 50, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. It requires one action to load it with a bolt, one action to aim it, and one action to fire it. It is a ranged weapon attack (+6 to hit, range 120/480 ft., one target. *Hit*: 16 (3d10) piercing damage).

Mangonel. With an AC 15, 100 HP, and immunity to poison and psychic damage, a mangonel can hit a target behind cover. It takes two actions to load it with a stone, two actions to aim it and one action to fire it, making a ranged weapon attack (+5 to hit, 200/800 ft. (can't hit targets within 60 ft. of it), one target. *Hit*: 27 (5d10) bludgeoning damage).

RUNNING ENCOUNTERS

In its most basic form, an encounter happens to the adventurers. The adventurers, however, can happen across other characters or locales. Every encounter revolves around one of the three Pillars of D&D: Combat, Exploration, or Social Interaction. Thus, running an encounter requires more foresight on your part than just a die roll. Many feature Skill Challenges (see below) in addition to their preexisting themes.

The hundred-and-one encounters in this encounter can't be boiled down to a single table; they include characters, loot, and events that can't be kept at such a small scope.

ENCOUNTER TIERS

Encounters are designed with a party of four adventurers in mind, with the expectation that few to none NPCs are available to assist them. These encounters are ranked in tiers:

Tier I encounters are best described as "one-offs" or "pit stop" encounters that you can drop into the adventure. They can seed a larger plot. These encounters are built to challenge a 1st to 4th level party.

Tier II encounters are built for 5th to 9th level adventurers. These encounters feature greater threats to seafolk. Because a ship may have several dozen combatants, most hostile ship encounters are rated as Tier II or above.

Tier III encounters feature mythic or otherworldly creatures of CR 8 to 13, often accompanied by minions. They are designed for 10th to 14th level adventurers. Of this supplement, Tier III encounters best fit the description of a "one-shot."

Tier IV encounters are balanced for a party of four 15th to 20th-level adventurers. These titanic events are best used as plot points and penultimate (or ultimate) acts of your campaign. They often are precipitated by lower tier encounters of a similar theme (i.e., a kraken cult's attempt to awaken their leviathan overlord). They can best be described as multi-phase boss encounters featuring a legendary monster.

ENCOUNTER TYPES

Encounters are further divided into the following categories:

Character encounters are the most versatile, geographically speaking. These iconic characters can be met in a variety of locations: port taverns, deserted islands, or among a fearsome (or laughably timid crew), et cetera.

Crew encounters are typically centered on the adventurers' own ship. While external forces may be in play, such as blooming madness or a rampaging disease, these encounters fall more along the lines of potential mutiny, accidents, political and social events, and more. Because they're essentially bottle episodes that rely more on roleplaying than combat, crew encounters are especially useful whenever a player of yours cannot make it to a session.

Island encounters require a landmass, most often a coast or a small isle. They might occur on atolls, in marshlands, upon a sea stack, or a deserted island. The size of each island is of little concern to you.

Port encounters occur within dock wards of a city or town where sailors and cutthroats congregate.

Ship encounters deal with other vessels that the adventurers might happen across, be they mundane, magical, or fantastic. These ships may be anchored or in transit themselves.

Surface encounters involve events that happen near or above the water's surface, such as weathering storms, the attack of a kraken, an aerial monster, or some strange phenomena.

Underwater encounters include shipwrecks, kelp forests, reefs, and more. The depth of the encounter rarely matters, but adventurers might find it necessary to be equipped with magical or mundane means to breathe underwater.

TOOLS AND FRAMEWORKS

Many of these encounters actually provide the framework for designing a generic seafaring encounter, such as how to weather a storm, enter and leave the Plane of Water, smuggle goods into port, and survive a maelstrom. You can mold these events to fit your own scenarios. These framework encounters are:

Avast: Corsairs & Cutthroats provides quick guidelines for mashing together a pirate crew with races and statistics that break the usual "human bandit" mold.

Foes of Old Found on the Sea provides detailed tactics and compositions of adventurers' most traditional foes, now met on the high seas: orcs, kobolds, drow, gnolls, and goblinoids.

Mercy for the Screamers is an example on how to design a Skill Challenge about slipping past a blockade and delivering aid to a quarantined, infected isle.

Portal to the Plane of Water provides several methods for a party to be drawn in and escape from the Plane of Water.

Smuggling: A Gentleman's Art features a two-variant Skill Challenge for smuggling goods into port.

When the Sea Touched the Sky is a modular Skill Challenge involving weathering a storm at sea, no matter the intensity.

SAMPLE STORYLINES

Many encounters in the complete *Tall Tales* edition can form a sample storyline, with one often precipitating another. Using these, you can mash together a storyline for your campaign, changing names around as you see fit. These storylines are:

Cult of the Deep One. The Cult of the Deep One seeks to awaken their dread master who slumbers in the black depths of the sea. See *Idol of the Deep One*, *The Door to Nowhere*, and *Risen Ruins of the Corpse City*.

Release the Kraken! The kraken cult devoted to Lyskesh works to usher in a new age of destruction. See *The Sea Stones*, *The Blue Abyss* and *Release the Kraken!*

Sekolah Lives! The vile sahuagin intend for their shark god to drown this world and must search for his legendary Fang. See the encounters *Mandala of the Quiet Mind*, *Darfellan Shark Hunters*, *Palmbeard's Vigil* and *The Avatar of Sekolah* for details.

SKILL CHALLENGES

This supplement makes heavy use of Skill Challenges, a relic from 4th Edition that has yet to be officially made in 5E. Skill Challenges, as the name attests, are designed to test a character through their skills and creativity, not their combat prowess.

A Skill Challenge boils down to these tenets:

- The characters encounter a series of obstacles that can't be solved solely through combat, but by utilizing their skills. Only one character makes an ability check for an obstacle.
- The goal of a challenge (think of it as a montage) is to reach X number of successful checks before hitting three failures. X is determined by the challenge's difficulty.
- Skill Challenges are about collaborative, creative storytelling. You present the obstacle to your players and allow them to suggest solutions utilizing skills. When they can't, however, come up with one of their own, you can call for ability checks relevant to the obstacle. The Skill Challenges in this tome always include several suggestions.
- Failure is not a wall; failure represents dawdling or struggling. While consequences might be doled out for each individual failure, the challenge continues until three have been accrued. Failing a Skill Challenge might entail lost lives, an escaped target, destruction of the adventurers' ship, or failing to stop an eldritch ritual.

CHALLENGE DIFFICULTIES

Difficulty	Successes	DCs	Example Encounter
Easy	3	10-14	<i>The Bastard Had It Comin'</i>
Medium	5	14-18	<i>The Fires of Atafu</i>
Hard	8	18-22	<i>The Bay of Storms</i>
Insane	10	22-25	<i>When the Sea Touched the Sky</i>

RULES

The rules throughout a Skill Challenge are constant:

- All players roll initiative but aren't bound by it. By having a turn order, it helps them think ahead.
- The DM describes an obstacle, hazard, or event necessitating the adventurers' interference, like a sailor falling overboard, a raging fire, or a gushing wound. The player then suggests a skill, tool, or spell; if appropriate, they roll against the DC you set—which is fluid within a set limit; every obstacle in the same challenge can have a different DC within that limit.
- Once a player has applied a skill towards an obstacle, they can no longer use that same skill for the rest of the challenge. This is to spur creativity and prevent the rogue from using his +11 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to trivialize or circumvent the entire Skill Challenge.
- **Variant: Proficiency Only.** Under this rule, a character can only apply a skill they're proficient in towards an obstacle. This is to highlight a character's expertise and make their selection of skill proficiencies matter more. It is only recommended you use this rule with parties that have a wide and diverse repertoire of skills, otherwise players might find themselves powerless and frustrated by what can seem like an arbitrary rule.
- Tool proficiencies are legal to use in a Skill Challenge, provided they logically apply towards an obstacle. This ability check is often in an Intelligence check using the character's proficiency bonus, though other ability scores might apply. For example, an Intelligence (carpenter's tools) check can be used to identify that a spar supporting a mast is damaged and due to fall. A Wisdom or Strength (carpenter's tools) check might be used to quickly fashion a support for the spar so that the crash is staved off until later (such as when the Skill Challenge ends).
- Magic is also legal, provided the spell used can logically apply to the situation. Whenever a spell of 1st level or higher is cast that can logically best an obstacle, the check automatically succeeds, as the character has just expended a vital resource.
- Cantrips can also be used, but since they cost no resources, a spellcaster must succeed on an ability check using their spellcasting ability (adding their proficiency bonus) against the DC of the obstacle. Like a skill, that same cantrip can't be used again throughout the challenge.
- **Variant: Higher Difficulties.** Under this variant, spells of 1st level or higher can only automatically succeed in Easy Skill Challenges. At Medium difficulty and up, they too require an ability check using that adventurer's spellcasting ability, with their proficiency added. However, unlike cantrips, the same spell can be used repeatedly, if applicable, even if you use the "One and Done" rule described above.

COFFIN ON THE TIDE

Crew Encounter, Tier III

On a moonlit night, two crewmates on watch duty noticed a coffin floating near the ship. Curious, they brought it aboard—the damned fools. Trapped inside was a **vampire** by the name of Claudia Orlei. Now no longer surrounded by running water, Claudia intends to seize control of the crew and return to port so that she may be free to run amok. She wastes no time feeding on one crewmate, and charming the other. She then sneaks into the captain's cabin and binds him to her will as well and has her coffin hidden therein.

The First Day. On the next morning, the first victim, Mr. Reed, fails to report for duty. Mr. Dryden, Claudia's slave, insists that Reed is sick or fell off and the captain comes in to dismiss the watch officer's temper tantrum. The captain also orders a change of course towards the nearest port. This provokes confusion from the ship's officers and protest from the navigational officer. The quartermaster likewise insists that the ship is good on supplies and doesn't need to take on more. The captain, however, is inexplicably unphased. Later that night, at dusk, Mr. Reed rises as the first of Claudia's new **vampire spawn** in the cargo hold. There's a 10% chance this occurs whilst an adventurer is inside the hold.

Days Go By. Claudia could easily overwhelm the crew overnight, charming each sailor and raising whomever she wished as spawn—but that would be too easy; Claudia has spent far too long in her coffin at the mercy of the tides. Bored and sadistic, she begins a game: each night, the captain "invites" a sailor to his cabin to either be fed on by Claudia or bound to her will. Corpses intended to rise as her spawn are kept in the hold. Adventurers might find these bodies, each with twin pinpricks in their necks, stuffed into crates. See the table above for the numbers of sailors charmed and raised. Her minions have either the statistics of **bandits** (with the captain as a **bandit captain**) or **vampire spawn**.

As unnatural fog consumes the ship's halls, the shadows lengthen, and the corpses pile up, the party might find themselves into conflict with Claudia's brood—or even invited one by one to the captain's cabin to be charmed or turned.

Landfall. After eight days, the ship reaches the nearest port. In the dead of night, Claudia and her spawn disembark, sparing any survivors. Her spawn on the *Red Maiden* (see *Ship of the Damned*) can sense where their master is once she's set foot on dry land and rendezvous with her, if they aren't already here, (giving the adventurers a glimpse of the vampire's vessel).

Treasure. Claudia wears a platinum necklace adorned with a ruby (250 gp) and four bejeweled rings worth 100 gp apiece. Her other finery is aboard the *Red Maiden*.

IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Claudia is also featured in the *Ship of the Damned* encounter, wherein she commands the *Red Maiden*. If you intend to run both encounters, she might have been bested by her foes earlier and escaped death by hurling her coffin into the sea, leading to this encounter.

CLAUDIA'S MINIONS

Night	Spawn Created	Sailors Charmed
1	0	2
2	1	4
3	2	5
4	3	6
5	4	8
6	5	10
7	6	12
8	7	15

MERCY FOR THE SHRIEKERS

Island Encounter, Tier I

An outbreak of Cackle Fever on Hare's Isle has led to its liege lord quarantining the entire populace. Word spreads quickly of "the shriekers" and more sympathetic factions seek to hire those willing to secretly deliver food and aid to the isle's inhabitants.

The adventurers may be offered this job, either by a faction sympathetic to the villagers' plight, such as a clergy order or a merchant's guild that has a vested interest in the isle's survival. The adventurers can then hire a captain willing to transport them to the isle, if they don't already have their own means to get there. Alas, they must slip past the imperial blockade in the dead of night via rowboats—and *never* can they afford to make physical contact with the populace. They're even warned to stay at least "ten yards away" at all times.

THE BLOCKADE

Slipping past the blockade at night without being detected is an Easy Skill Challenge: the party must accrue three successes before three failures, lest they be detected. You can call for or suggest the following checks to the party (DCs 10-14):

- The night is without moonlight and so the navigator can make an Intelligence (navigator's tools) check to guide the boat by the stars above.
- An Intelligence (Nature) check recalls the night's weather and the flow of the tide. Armed with this knowledge, the crew can better handle their boat and slip past the blockade.
- As the boat nears a ship, a Dexterity or Intelligence (Stealth) check can guide the crew into keeping quiet and time their passage accordingly.
- The boat enters rough waters, requiring an Intelligence or Strength (vehicle (water)) check to navigate the water or work the oars as the tide accosts the boat.
- A character can make a Wisdom (Perception) check to hear water lapping against a sandbar, rocks, or other obstacles.

Failure. If the adventurers fail the Skill Challenge, the navy notices them and sends a boarding party to apprehend them. If captured, they're charged with violating the blockade. If the sailors believe they haven't visited the island yet, they take them aboard to be charged by the captain and thrown into the brig. They each face a 25 gp fine when brought back to the mainland.

ON THE ISLE OF THE SHRIEKERS

Once the adventurers reach the isle, they need to unload the crates. They can leave them at the beach at the risk of the tide or scoundrels stealing them away. Otherwise, they must head to the docks and risk contamination from the locals who are desperate to escape the isle.

Additional Skill Challenge. Another skill challenge can be ran, regardless of where the party unloads the goods. Failure here means attracting the attention of the locals, who are desperate to escape the isle, the quarantine be damned. This too is an Easy challenge (DCs 10-14):

- A Wisdom (Medicine) check accurately recalls the symptoms and dangers of Cackle Fever. Armed with this knowledge, the party knows to remain 10 ft. away from villagers.
- The goods are heavy and unwieldy. A Strength (Athletics) check is enough to hold tight. A Dexterity (Acrobatics) check can also be made to keep balance as the porters shamble up the beach or bring the crates up to the docks.

CACKLE FEVER

This disease targets humanoids, although gnomes are strangely immune. While in the grips of this disease, victims frequently succumb to fits of mad laughter, giving the disease its common name and its morbid nickname: "the shrieks."

Symptoms manifest 1d4 hours after infection and include fever and disorientation. The infected creature gains one level of exhaustion that can't be removed until the disease is cured.

Any event that causes the infected creature great stress—including entering combat, taking damage, experiencing fear, or having a nightmare—forces the creature to make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 5 (1d10) psychic damage and becomes incapacitated with mad laughter for 1 minute. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the mad laughter and the incapacitated condition on a success. Any humanoid creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of an infected creature in the throes of mad laughter must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or also become infected with the disease. Once a creature succeeds on this save, it is immune to the mad laughter of that particular infected creature for 24 hours.

At the end of each long rest, an infected creature can make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a successful save, the DC for this save and for the save to avoid an attack of mad laughter drops by 1d6. When the saving throw DC drops to 0, the creature recovers from the disease. A creature that fails three of these saving throws gains a randomly determined form of indefinite madness.

- To remain undetected by the locals, the party can make a group Dexterity (Stealth) check while they work.
- Someone blunders across the party. They can be persuaded or intimidated to keep their distance and their silence via a Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check or charm spell.
- Someone believes the party to be escaping villagers; they demand a spot aboard, if the boat is seaworthy. A Charisma (Deception) check can fool them, perhaps offering a lie such as "She's full of holes friend. Useless now."
- Without torchlight, the party might be blinded. A Wisdom (Perception) check allows them to avoid pitfalls or mistakes while moving the crates ashore.

Failure. Failing this Skill Challenge incites a mob of starving, desperate villagers into storming the party's landing site. They hope to commandeer their vessel or seize as much food and supplies as possible. These 2d8+6 **commoners** are armed with improvised weapons, clubs, or their own fists. The party is then vulnerable to Cackle Fever.

THE HOME STRETCH

Once the goods are delivered, the adventurers must slip past the blockade again. If you didn't run the first Skill Challenge, you can run it now. Otherwise, their return is smooth sailing—unless the ship from which they launched has elected to betray the adventurers. Possibilities and motives include:

- The captain fears contamination of Cackle Fever; the longer the party was gone (which can be calculated by their number of failures in the Skill Challenge), the likelier he is to deny them permission to board.
- The ship was caught by the blockade and were offered some clemency if the crew turned over the adventurers. A boarding party is present on the ship (2d6+1 **guards**, 1 **veteran**).
- The ship is simply gone, scared off or arrested by the navy.

Reward. If the adventurers return to collect their reward from the faction that hired them, they receive 100 gp. Additionally, the faction might bail them out from jail if they were caught by the blockade on their way back from Hare's Isle.

...and I kid ye not: thar whale was dead—but, alive still! And from her bloated blowhole she spat corpses that too had yet to quit living.

MOBY DEAD

Surface Encounter, Tier II

Under a swollen moon, an undead whale surfaces to attack the ship. Within its cavernous maw lie 1d8+4 **zombies**, 2d4+1 **skeletons**, and two **wights**, all commanded by a **wraith**. On its turn, the whale can spit out up to eight Medium-sized creatures, hurling them up to 120 feet in distance. Alternatively, the whale can open its maw, allowing the undead to pour out.

Once aboard, the undead assail the crew, their dread overlord determined to swell its army and exact its rage upon the living.

Wraith. While the wraith yet remains, the undead fight as an intelligent, tactical unit. If the wraith is destroyed, the undead (with exception to the wights) become unhinged, losing their cohesion. The undead whale is the first to flee, seeking to sate its hunger in the depths. The wights fight until destroyed.

Whale. The beast has the statistics of a **killer whale** with the following changes:

- It is a CR 5 (1,800 XP) Gargantuan-sized undead creature.
- It has resistance to necrotic damage and immunity to both poison damage and the poisoned condition.
- If damage reduces it to 0 hit points, the whale must make a Constitution saving throw (DC 5 + the damage taken) unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, it drops to 1 hit point instead.
- It has the following attack, in addition to its Bite:

Swallow. The whale makes one Bite attack against a Medium or smaller target it is grappling. If the attack hits, the target is swallowed, and the grapple ends. The swallowed target is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the whale, and it takes 5 (2d4) acid damage at the start of each of the whale's turns. The whale can have up to six targets swallowed at a time. If the whale dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse using 10 ft. of movement, exiting prone. If the whale takes 25 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside its gullet, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10 ft. of the whale.

FROM HELL'S HEART I STAB AT THEE

Creatures swallowed by Moby Dead pass through its cavernous maw and can catch sight of 1d8+4 trinkets (see the *PHB*), a golden crown (150 gp), and a preserved elf leg, all buried in odd, rotting pockets of flesh. A creature passing through to the whale's gullet can make a DC 10 Dexterity check as a reaction to snatch at one of these objects.

Ahab's Leg. The half-elf's deranged obsession with Moby Dead has resulted in strange magic: his leg is preserved by a *gentle repose* spell and can be used as a mace. Its attacks are magical, so long as Captain Ahab is alive and has been denied his vengeance. Once he learns that Moby Dead is vanquished, the leg loses its magic and begins to rot.

IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

To foreshadow this encounter, plant a deranged whaler captain named Ahab at a tavern or the docks of a port. This one-legged half-elf is obsessed with catching "Moby Dead," which bit off his leg and has eluded him for centuries. He describes the whale as a "killer of men" and a "great white whale crawling with waterlogged maggots." He offers 300 gp if the adventurers have a credible, recent sighting of the whale or 1,000 gp if they bring him the whale's carcass. He doesn't actually have this money.

THE PRETENDER

Crew Encounter, Tier I

Unbeknownst to the crew, the captain, and the adventurers, one man aboard the ship is not who he pretends to be. Crewman Scott Kelsey, a boatswain with a drinking problem, has been murdered and replaced by a **doppelganger**.

Somethin' Just Ain't Right. Kelsey has always been a drunk, but now he's quit the bottle. He's performing his duties without an abundance of adequacy. Once respected for his encyclopedic knowledge of sailing, he can hardly answer a question these days—and never mind him quitting the bottle, he's actually made *nice* with the cook, Carl, despite their years' long grudge. Something just isn't right about Scott Kelsey.

One Shot. It's the first mate, Sam Hammet, that approaches the adventurers. He suspects that Kelsey's had some sort of revelation, perhaps from Umberlee, the evil sea goddess all sailors know better than to not honor. Perhaps he's reached a turning point, decided to bury the hatchet with his old grudges. Sam Hammet doesn't like this "respectful" version of Kelsey one bit and is sure something is up. The adventurers get only one shot at confronting "Kelsey," for if the doppelganger fears for its safety, it might shapeshift into another crewman. Once it has to cause to do this, there's almost no way to hunt it down without setting off mass hysteria and paranoia.

Ripping Away the Mask. The doppelganger is no stranger to fleeing (incidentally, running afoul of a band of adventurers is what drove it to board this ship in the first place) but its disguise isn't infallible. If the adventurers don't put it down in their first confrontation, a chase ensues. The pretender constantly changes its appearance and uses its Read Thoughts action to pass any questioning put upon it by the adventurers.

Identifying and catching the doppelganger can be ran as an Easy Skill Challenge. You can call for or suggest any of the following ability checks (DCs 10-14):

- An Intelligence (Arcana) check to peg this as a doppelganger and confirm that they can read someone's surface thoughts.
- A Wisdom (Insight) check to recognize its breathing patterns and mannerisms, no matter what face it's wearing.
- An Intelligence (Investigation) check narrows down suspects and determines where on the ship it might hide.
- A Charisma (Deception) check can be made to convincingly think false thoughts as the doppelganger reads their mind.
- During a chase, a Charisma (Intimidation) check cuts through the chaos, forcing passerby to move out of the way. Likewise, a Persuasion check convinces someone to tackle the creature.

Aftermath. Once it knows the jig is up, or if it finds one of the adventurers alone, the doppelganger attacks. If bested, it isn't above begging for its life. However, already it's murdered before, so what guarantee is there that it won't again? Even if the adventurers are willing to relent, the captain, once he's been appraised of the situation, orders its death.

SEA ELF VIKINGS

Ship Encounter, Tier II-III

A horn sounds in the distance. The wind carries jeers while the men shiver—for sea elf vikings have come for what they're owed: everything. These fearsome raiders pillage coastlines without mercy and honor combat above all else.

Ship. The elven drakkar uses the statistics of a longship.

Crew. The longship is oared by forty sea elf **commoners**. Its combatants consist of:

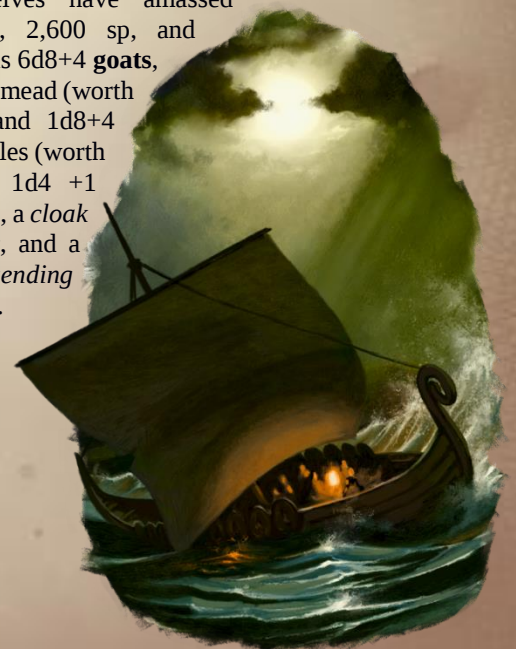
- Shieldmaiden Sigrunn Hlodvir, a CN **gladiator**. She carries a *silver horn of Valhalla* (see the sidebar) and captains the ship.
- Ærin Trudsson, an CN **enchanter** with *counterspell* prepared instead of *stoneskin*.
- Hallbjorn Ornlolfsson, a CN **bard** working on his epic
- Orn Iorundsson, a **priest** of Deep Sashelas (CG), Umberlee (NE) or Valkur (LE), if not a deity from the Norse pantheon.
- Svinulf Bretakollrsson, a **swashbuckler** with a Strength score of 18 and Dexterity score of 12 armed with handaxes (+6 to hit, 1d6+4 slashing damage, 20/60 ft.) and an AC of 14. He can make up to three handaxe attacks.
- 1d6+2 **veterans**, 2d6+4 **bandits** and 1d4+4 **archers**
- 2d4+2 **berserkers** (summoned only by the *horn of Valhalla*)

Statistics. All sea elves have the following racial traits:

- They have advantage on saving throws against being charmed and magic cannot put them to sleep.
- They have darkvision out to a range of 60 ft.
- They speak, read, and write Aquan.
- They have a swimming speed of 30 ft. and can breathe both air and water.

Living Figurehead. The drakkar's figurehead is carved as a horned dragon. On her turn, the captain can animate the figurehead as an action so long as she's aboard the ship. On that turn, the dragon exhales a 60-foot-cone of fire. All creatures in that area must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes 24 (7d6) fire damage, or half as much on a success. This fire ignites flammable objects not being worn or carried. Once the figurehead has exhaled its fiery breath, it cannot do so again until the next dawn.

Cargo. Fresh from pillaging, the elves have amassed 4d100+1,200 gp, 2,600 sp, and 5,400 cp as well as 6d8+4 **goats**, 2d12+28 casks of mead (worth 25 gp a cask) and 1d8+4 crates of rare textiles (worth 50 gp a crate). 1d4 +1 *potions of healing*, a *cloak of the manta ray*, and a *spell scroll of sending* can also be found.



SILVER HORN OF VALHALLA

Wondrous Item, Rare

You can use an action to blow this horn. In response, warrior spirits from the plane of Ysgard appear within 60 feet of you. These spirits use the **berserker** statistics. They return to Ysgard after 1 hour or when they drop to 0 hit points. Once you use the horn, it can't be used again until 7 days have passed.

The silver horn summons 2d4+2 **berserkers**. The berserkers are friendly to you and your companions and follow your commands.

When it comes time to deliver their spoils back to their homestead, the vikings simply pitch them overboard while above their underwater settlement.

LEVIATHAN HUNTING

Tier III

Under this variant, the adventurers aren't the target of the sea elves—a sea serpent of old is. The crew has been tracking this leviathan for weeks and have finally engaged the beast. The party's ship happens across this feverish battle and might be compelled to join the fray. They'll have little choice if the serpent attacks their ship as well.

Statistics. The sea serpent has the statistics of a **purple worm** with the following changes:

- It has a swimming speed of 50 ft. and lacks a burrowing speed.
- It lacks its Tunneler feature.
- It can breathe air and water.

Aftermath. If the leviathan is slain, Sigrunn Hlodvir shows her gratitude by sparing the party's vessel. The skald, Hallbjorn Ormolfsson, promises to immortalize the adventurers in his recount of this battle. Sure enough, 1d4 years later, *Hallbjorn's Epic* hits the press, but two adventurers have been forgotten and the others' names are misspelled—and their exploits are stolen by Hallbjorn, who paints them as lambs cornered by a wolf.



TOLL OF THE DRAGON TURTLE

Surface Encounter, Tier I-IV

The adventurers' ship passes through the territory of a **dragon turtle** by the name of Sashinel. Ship captains that sail this route know that so long as they pay the beast's toll, they won't be accosted. The adventurers may be ignorant of this fact if they're the new owners or captains of the ship; or they might be unwilling to part with the treasure they just risked their lives for, especially if they've just found a priceless artifact vital to their quest.

Territory. Sea stacks along a forbidding coastline mark the dragon turtle's territory, one of which tunnels down to her undersea lair. This shipping lane is popular for vessels on their way to distant lands with exotic silks and newly minted silver. Often their holds are full of gold coins to be traded.

The Messenger. Sashinel is served by a clan of kobolds, many of which are winged kobolds. Having sighted a new ship, a winged **kobold scale sorcerer** (with a flying speed of 30 ft.) flutters onto the deck to present his master's demands. He is escorted by six **winged kobolds** and a **kobold dragonshield** (also winged). They demand to inspect the crew's cargo to pick out the best loot for their "sunken master." They claim that even now their master watches, ready to destroy them at a moment's notice (a DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check suggests the kobold is exaggerating). If denied, the kobolds shrug and leave to inform their master. One kobold drops a piece of coral aboard so that they can scry the ship's location later with their *crystal ball*. If attacked, the dragonshield holds the line as the others escape.

Throughout the exchange, other kobolds are watching from nearby sea stacks or from the water in case the crew shoots the messenger. They return to Sashinel's lair in forty minutes.

Paying the Toll. If the crew decides to pay the toll (which the captain is in favor for, if the adventurers don't own the ship) the kobolds take sixty percent of all loot, prioritizing ostensible magic items or artifacts of obvious value.

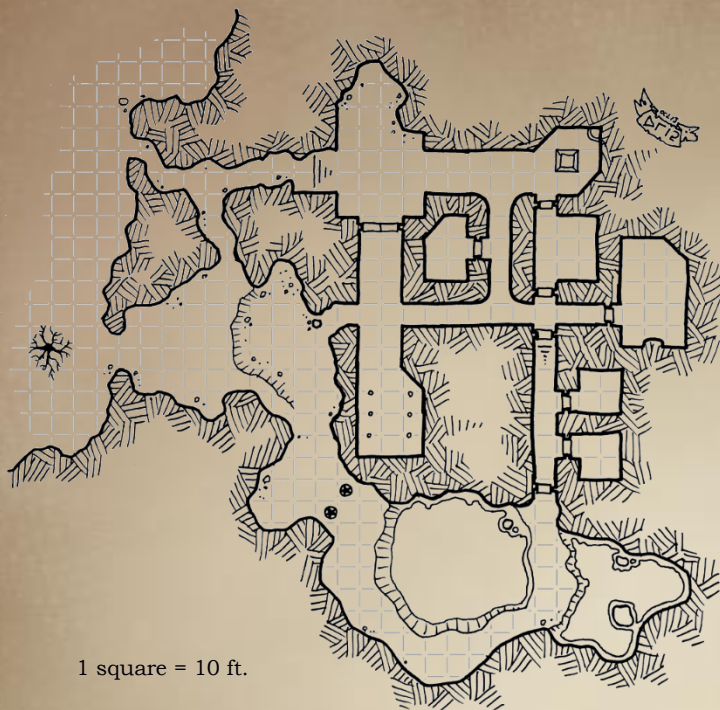
Denying the Toll. Sashinel's wrath is swift. Once the messenger is slain or sent back, the other kobolds return to their master's lair. Sashinel returns 1d4 hours later and the kobolds use their pilfered *crystal ball* (save DC 17) to divine the ship's location. The **dragon turtle** then sets out to destroy the vessel, arriving in 1d4 hours. Even if the adventurers promise her a toll, Sashinel doesn't relent: they already had their chance to pay up. Once the ship is sunk, Sashinel swallows any treasure she can find, regurgitating it in her lair 1d4 hours later. The adventurers might escape by the skin of their teeth—or awaken in her lair.

LAIR OF THE DRAGON TURTLE

Tier III-IV

Sashinel hoards her stolen treasure in an undersea cavern at a depth of nearly 800 ft. below the surface. Finding it is a trial all its own, as is even reaching it. The adventurers might deign to visit this lair to reclaim their loot or collect a toll of their own from Sashinel's hoard.

Finding the Lair. Any of Sashinel's craven minions can be forced into divulging how to find the dragon turtle's lair with a DC 18 Charisma (Intimidation) check. The kobold describes the cavernous entrance that yawns from the side of a trench at a depth of 800 ft. They also might reveal "the dry route," a long staircase hewn into a hollow shaft in the sea stack that the ship passed by when the kobolds first identified their vessel.



1 square = 10 ft.

Diving. On their dive to Sashinel's lair, the party's forced into 1d4+1 Underwater encounters over the course of an hour.

Dry Route. The kobolds have engineered a crude elevator that traverses the 840 ft. shaft; otherwise they climb the stairs for an hour, after which they must make a Constitution saving throw against exhaustion (DC 12 when descending, DC 18 when ascending). The shaft is 20 ft. on a side.

The elevator descends at a rate of 20 ft. per round at an initiative count of 10 (losing initiative ties) for a total of 42 rounds or four minutes and twelve seconds. The platform is 10 ft. on a side. The elevator, built for kobolds and loot, can only support up to 250 lbs. at a time. Once it's forced to bear more weight, there's an aggregate 10% chance each round that it breaks and crashes to the bottom of the shaft, subjecting all creatures to appropriate falling damage. Characters aboard can make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw as a reaction to leap onto the nearby staircase; on a failure, they fall to their doom.

Traps. The kobolds maintain a vigil throughout the shaft. Tunnels sized for Small creatures weave in and around the shaft and 1d8+4 chambers lie just behind the rockface, drilled with lookout holes. A fourth of the chambers are inhabited by either a **kobold inventor** or **kobold** armed with a hand crossbow (+4 to hit, 1d6+2 piercing damage, 30/120 ft.). They have horns they blow to alert the next station above and below.

The kobolds are guerrilla fighters armed with traps. They can unleash any of the following tactics:

- A poison darts trap (*DMG* pg. 123, +8 to hit, 2 (1d4) piercing damage, DC 15 Constitution save against 11 (2d10) poison damage, half damage on a success); these traps are often grouped up in fours to fire from all faces of the shaft at once.
- Alchemist's fire (+4 to hit, 1d4 fire damage, *PHB* pg. 148)
- Drop rocks from above (+4 to hit, 1d6 bludgeoning damage)
- Drop a **gelatinous cube** from above after wheeling it out from a hidden chamber and tipping the box overboard
- Cut the elevator's lines (as a last resort, even if only to point out to Sashinel that they tried everything in their power)

In the Lair. A total of 8d12+22 **kobolds** make their home in Sashinel's lair; they've carved out rooms and constructed stone doors over the years. Eighteen are **kobold dragonshields**, eight are **kobold scale sorcerers**, and five are **kobold inventors**. The northwest and southern portions of the lair are flooded to a depth of 40 ft. All other chambers lie above the water line. The dry route's shaft is located in the most northeast chamber and Sashinel's hoard is found in the trench in the southern cavern. All doors are sized for Small creatures and all carved chambers have a ceiling of 5 ft., disadvantaging taller creatures.

The lair's also overseen by a half-black dragon sailor that swore allegiance to Sashinel after the *Raven Queen's Revenge* went up in flames (see *Devil of the Deep Blue*). This Olben Matel has the statistics of a **half-red dragon veteran** with these changes:

- He has resistance to acid damage & can breathe air and water.
- His Fiery Breath action deals acid damage instead.

Sashinel has also fashioned two **black guard drakes** from Olben's blood and ancestry, which join him in battle.

Divination Room. Within the eastern most chamber, the kobolds use a *crystal ball* to locate ships that have denied their master her rightful toll.

Hoard. Sashinel's hoard lies in the 60-foot-deep trench in the submerged southern cavern. It is guarded by 1d3 **water weirds**. Were Sashinel's hoard be amassed under the sun, its glittering light would surely blind those lucky enough to gaze upon it. Within her hoard, free for the taking, is:

- 44,000 gp, 28,000 pp, 62,000 sp, and 814,000 cp. Fifty coins equal one pound—a necessary reminder when faced with such unimaginable wealth.
- A masterpiece painting of the heavens, a gold circlet with four aquamarines, and a fine gold chain with a fire opal, each worth 2,500; and a jeweled platinum crown worth 7,500 gp.
- +3 *leather armor*, an *iron flask*, a *belt of fire giant strength*, a *berserker's axe* and a set of *plate armor of etherealness*.
- 1d4+1 *spell scrolls of water breathing*, 1d8 *potions of healing*, a *potion of superior healing*, and a *potion of vitality*.

IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Sashinel can make quick work of just about any ship, providing for you the age-old shipwreck plot point. The adventurers either wake in Sashinel's lair, wash ashore of an island, or are rescued by merfolk. Likewise, an otherworldly entity might offer the party salvation—for a price. See *Devil of the Deep Blue*, *The Blue Abyss* and *Aventus: Born Again* in the complete *Tall Tales* supplement to shake up your campaign.

THE WAVE RIDER

Character Encounter, Tier II

Penelope, the estranged daughter of a marid, has known nothing but persecution for all her life. As a water genasi (and an orphan to boot), she's had to bear the brunt of countless slights: the scorn of superstitious sailors and the desperation of the down-trodden who hunger for a single wish to right their wronged lives. With no people to call her own, no brethren, no friends, no family, and not a single day's break from it all, it's no wonder she's grown to be one of the seas' most fearsome bounty hunters.

Fall from Grace. When Penelope came of age, she visited the Oathstone (see the *Oaths Sworn on the Stone* encounter) and swore the Oath of the Ancients. She swore to protect this world from otherworldly horrors from the Plane of Water and beyond. Alas, she could not keep the light in her own heart from dying, not while enduring the endless slings and arrows of persecution. Her fall from grace was all but foredoomed after her mentor forsook her for the violent tendencies she not only displayed but nursed with a passion.

Killer for Hire. Penelope's starting price for a head is 500 gp. She's since graduated from petty revenge and chasing fugitives. Now she's got her eyes on bigger fish: magi, pirate lords, and the like. Unlike other hunters, she can command the very sea to act as her mount, riding the tide to intercept ships all across the sea. Hers is a one-track mind bent only to milking out her own satisfaction by triumphing against the very mortals that left her out in the cold for all these years.

Statistics. Penelope has the statistics of a LE **blackguard** with the following changes:

- She can breathe both air and water and has a swimming speed of 30 ft. Additionally, she has resistance to acid damage.
- She can speak Primordial. Her Aquan is spoken with scorn.
- She can innately cast the *shape water* cantrip. Once per day, she can also cast *create or destroy water* as a 2nd-level spell. Constitution is her spellcasting ability for these spells.
- She has the following ability:

Ride the Tide (3/Day). As an action, Penelope can fashion a disc of glassy water that she can ride atop water at a rate of 30 ft. After 10 minutes of riding atop water, she can achieve a maximum speed of 5 mph. The disc has an AC of 14, 25 hit points, resistance to nonmagical bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing damage, and immunity to acid, poison, and psychic damage. If destroyed, Penelope falls into the water.

IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

As a character encounter, Penelope can be placed anywhere. If the adventurers or the ship's captain have crossed a far-too-scorned foe, that foe might hire Penelope to see them dead. Otherwise, she might arrive amidst their encounter with an ally or villain of your story. The scorned merchant prince described in *The Girallon! It's Loose!* might send Penelope after the party. See the complete *Tall Tales* supplement for details.

*No matter the distance I put from
that infernal port, I still hear Its voice:
"We all float down here, Daerdan.
You will too."*

WE ALL FLOAT DOWN HERE

Port Encounter, Tier II

One drunken night in port, the adventurers—perhaps on their way back to the ship or the next tavern—attract the attention of It, a murderous **oni** that stalks the young, the drunk, and the gullible. It prefers to devour children and teenagers but will go after prey that spark its curiosity.

As the party makes their way through the port, one catches sight of something glinting in the distant lamplight. Something shiny, something gold. This gold coin is found either within a rowboat tethered to the docks, the mouth to the sewers, or in a darkened alleyway. It is hidden nearby via an *invisibility* spell. When a character goes for the gold, It makes its move: most likely readying its action to grapple the first character that enters within range—a ploy sure to rip the arm off of lesser men. If the target's companions are still about, It casts *sleep* so as to strand its prey. If bested in combat, It unleashes a *cone of cold* before casting *gaseous form* to escape through a crack or hole.

By Boat. If the trap is lain in the boat, the oni emerges silently from the water to drag the character deep into the water. It casts *darkness* centered on itself while grappling the character to obscure the area from onlookers. Characters with darkvision will be able to pick out Its patch of *darkness* with a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check.

By Sewer. If the trap is lain in the sewer and the target dares not approach the entrance, It casts *sleep* on the party and follows it up with a *charm person*. Once the target reaches the sewer, It tries to wrench them inside. If successful, It guides them on to see its collection of balloons deeper into the sewers.

By Alleyway. If the trap is lain in an alleyway, It is in the form of a dirty street urchin, calling out in a reedy voice for help. Once the target obliges, the urchin rounds the corner and It reverts to its true form. It casts *invisibility* upon itself again and attacks once the character follows around the corner.

Its Lair. The oni's lair sits at the heart of the labyrinthine sewer system. The most direct route includes going forward for twenty minutes from the most central storm drain where most of the port's filth is washed out into the harbor. It cares little for baubles, but has amassed 6d12+150 gp, 8d10 sp, and 12d10 cp along with a handful of waterlogged journals, ratty romance novels, a gold monocle (worth 25 gp) and a captain's bloodied tricorn—the possessions left on Its many adult victims. Most abundant are toys that the port's youth enjoy: yoyos, dice, cards, balls, and the like.

If the port lacks a sewer system, It lairs at the deepest point possible underneath its dock ward, likely on a sandbar or in any natural cave.

WE MUST GO DEEPER!

Underwater Encounter, Tier I-III

Slaves of science and morbid curiosity, a crew of explorers have launched several missions into the sea with the aim of exploring wrecks, mapping the seabed, and proving their emergent diving technology is up to snuff. The explorers in the field are all **deep gnomes** (specifically sent to the depths given their backgrounds in isolation, darkness, and deep delving).

Choose one of the three variants below, each a mission with greater dangers than the last. The adventurers encounter the gnomish diver during their missions.

Delver Extraordinaire. The **deep gnome** involved in each of these missions, unless he dies, is Drackir Castfield, the self-reputed Delver Extraordinaire. His fame as an explorer of the Underdark carried him towards a lopsided deal with the team: a bloated salary, insurance payments to his next of kin, and "first dibs" on anything of worth. Drackir's selfish ego has grated the team these last few weeks and many hope that an octopus swallows him whole. Drackir has taken to calling himself the "pioneer of the briny depths."

In all his diving missions, Castfield has an emergency *spell scroll of water breathing* that he can use if his equipment fails.

GREED GOETH BEFORE THE FALL

Tier I

Castfield's first mission is experimentation with a diving suit in the shallows of the sea. Having ignored his crew's advisement not to dive past 200 ft. in depth, he's now roaming the seabed. A shipwreck or cave (your choice) caught his eye—and greed once again has become his downfall.

Nautilus Suit. Castfield's suit is a marvel of engineering and magic. Oxygen has been condensed into fuel canisters, giving the gnome 1 hour of air, though if he panics (DC 14 Wisdom saving throw whenever he enters combat or is frightened), the amount of oxygen left is reduced by 1d10 minutes. The gloves have small sconces built into the back and have been enchanted with *continual flame* spells to provide light underwater. As an action, Castfield can cover each scone with a small plate, hiding the flames.

The suit has an AC of 14, 22 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. If reduced to 0 hit points, the glass in the helmet cracks, flooding the suit in 1 round. It can only fit a Small-sized character and is worth 300 gp.

In a Pickle. By when the adventurers cross paths with him, a **giant octopus** has grappled Castfield. It's curious as to why this prey cannot be eaten. His nautilus suit is at 5 hit points; one more attack from the octopus is sure to break it.

Treasure. Whatever treasure Castfield found has been lost, scattered about as the octopus thrashed him around. He has, however, squirreled away one platinum coin (1 pp) by hiding it under the disc that covers one of his *continual flame* sconces. A DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check is enough to confirm he's defensive and cagey and that his eyes always dart down to the back of his left hand.

Ship. The explorer's keelboat, the *Discovery*, is anchored half a mile away in the water. They've since reeled in the line that was connected to Castfield's suit (which he disconnected) and are embroiled in a fierce debate as to what happened. If the party meets them before finding Castfield, they're quick to ask for aid, not fearing that Castfield's dead, but that his equipment and findings are lost to the sea.

"SPRUNG A LEAK, WILL LOOK FOR CRABS"

Tier II

With the nautilus suit proven a success, next is the bathysphere, a steel sphere with portholes on every side and a cable of woven steel connected to the *Discovery* above.

The bathysphere has since been abandoned by Castfield after he was attacked by 1d3 **chuuls**. Its starboard porthole is cracked and the sphere has flooded. A *continual flame* spell lights the wreck, guttering in the water, which cannot quench it. If the porthole is analyzed, a character can make a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check to confirm that the break patterns match chitinous protrusions, as if a crab's claw—a big, *big* crab's claw—cracked the glass.

Cable. The steel-mesh cable that linked the bathysphere is extraordinarily stronger than any hempen rope used aboard a ship. Chuuls, however, severed it. The remains snake around in the water. Every 10 ft. of length is worth 50 gp. 5d4+10 ft. can be recovered if reeled in over a minute. The currents have curled the cable around coral or rocks, requiring a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to wrench free and recover the last 10 ft.

Castfield's Note. The gnome left a handwritten note inside the bathysphere; the enchanted ink and paper is waterproof. The message, written in Gnomish, is close enough to Common to be roughly translated as "Sprung leak, will look for crabs." Characters that speak Gnomish, however, will know it means, "Sprung leak, attacked by freakish crabs." A character that doesn't read this language can make a DC 14 Intelligence check, recalling that the verb "look for" and "attacked by" sound dangerously similar in Gnomish.

Castfield Astray. As the bathysphere flooded, Castfield broke out his emergency *spell scroll of water breathing* and is now roaming the depths. Luckily for him, he brought his war pick and poisoned darts into the depths. He's since escaped the chuuls. The adventurers can make a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check, a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, and a DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check to triangulate Castfield's location by deducing where he might have gone; noticing signs of his passage; and following the underwater currents towards the nearest caves. Each success reduces the amount of time to find him by 1d4 minutes. Thereafter, they find him in an undersea cave, waterlogged and desperate. 1d3 **chuuls** arrive behind the party one minute later.

Returning Castfield. With the chuuls slain or scared off, the gnome can make a break for the *Discovery*. Once he surfaces, he fires off a waterproof flare (another marvel of engineering) and the ship arrives in 2d8+4 minutes. The crew is noticeably disappointed that Castfield survived and the bathysphere didn't.

THE MIDNIGHT DEPTHS

Tier III

Years ago, the *Discovery* crew found a broken *apparatus of Kwalish* and have since repaired it through mechanical and magical methods. They're ready to send their star explorer, the one and only Delver Extraordinaire, Drackir Castfield, into the black depths to chart out the seabed and determine what exactly lies in the Midnight Zone of the ocean. Castfield is... less than enthused about this mission but couldn't pawn it off—the crew has had it with him and many were already foaming at the mouth to send this arrogant son of a bitch down into the depths.

What Castfield found down in those depths.... Well, some things are not for mortal men to find. Things that even tritons, natives of the horrific Plane of Water, dare not speak of. By when the adventurers find him, Castfield is on the run from an **aboleth** that is none too happy that it couldn't enslave and add this **deep gnome** to its harem. The horror arrives in 1d3 rounds.

Castfield can project his voice through a contraption added to the *apparatus*. Creatures within 60 ft. of the *apparatus* can hear him clearly. He warns the adventurers, "A tentacled horror is after me—the Delver Extraordinaire! Pioneer of the depths!"

The Aboleth. The aboleth, Drauun, has just emerged from the Plane of Water and is trying to rebuild its fiefdom of old. Its chuuls have answered the call and a tribe of kuo-toa are already under its sway. Slain so many times over the eons, Drauun has grown obsessed with its own flawed concept of love. It's deluded itself into equating tyranny to love; obedience to love; and worship to love. It seeks to unite all creatures under its command ("love") and, armed with that power, overthrow the gods themselves one day.

Drauun has the following traits:

Ideal. "All will know my love. All will love me."

Bond. "Together we will be invincible."

Flaw. "No god may rival me."

Drauun's Harem. The aboleth arrives with 2d4 **kuo-toa**, a **kuo-toa whip** and two **chuuls** close behind. Each loves Drauun with all their heart and look forward to welcoming these new brothers and sisters into their master's harem.

IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

This encounter chain has the potential to be some comedic relief with a recurrent character. As your adventurers comb the depths they repeatedly happen across the same gnome again and again. Hopefully, this gnome becomes a beloved character and his appearances become a welcome and coincidental surprise.

WHEN THE SEA TOUCHED THE SKY

Surface Encounter, Tier I-III

Whenever the adventurers face a storm at sea, you can use this framework encounter to run a Skill Challenge whose difficulty matches the storm's intensity. In this regard, the adventurers can influence the fate of their ship.

Difficulty. First determine the intensity of the storm, which determines the number of successes and the DCs needed to win the challenge. As always, they must succeed on a number of ability checks before failing three.

Failure. There must be consequences to failing a Skill Challenge and in this one, failure represents damage to the ship and lost lives. Quantifying failure is necessary when no other punishments can be measured

Damage. During a storm, accruing even a single failure inflicts damage to the crew's vessel. The amount is determined by a challenge's difficulty. Any damage inflicted by a failure bypasses a ship's damage threshold, no matter how low it is. This damage is most often bludgeoning. See the Failure Damage table for damage inflicted by failures, which grows more punitive for every failure accrued.

Death. Opportunities for death or disfigurement abound in a storm. Crewmen fall overboard, crash from the rigging, or even bash their brains in against a wall from a violent lurch. Cabins might flood or equipment might break loose, crushing limbs. How many poor sailors lose their lives is likewise determined by the storm's severity. See the Challenge Difficulties table. When determining this number, not all must die; some might be wounded or permanently crippled instead.

Shipwrecks. Once their vessel is reduced to 0 hit points, crews are shipwrecked and they're left to the mercy of the gods and tides to see if they live another day. Always, *always*, have a plan prepared for what comes next—for no mundane storm ought to kill player characters. Shipwrecks are plot devices first and foremost; the show must go on. If you have no plans for what occurs next, have the adventurers wash up on an island or an undersea cavern. Run your choice of encounter thereafter.



CHALLENGE DIFFICULTIES

Type	Difficulty	Successes	DCs	Deaths
Squall	Easy	3	10-14	1d4+1
Storm	Medium	5	14-18	1d8+2
Tempest	Hard	8	18-22	1d12+5
Hurricane	Insane	10	22-25	2d12+3

FAILURE DAMAGE

Difficulty	1st	2nd	3rd
Easy	18 (4d8)	52 (6d8+25)	86 (8d8+50)
Medium	43 (5d10+15)	69 (7d10+30)	115 (10d10+60)
Hard	64 (6d12+25)	102 (8d12+50)	140 (10d12+75)
Insane	113 (6d20+50)	159 (8d20+75)	225 (12d20+99)

SCENARIOS

Below is a near-exhaustive list of scenarios you can use, calling for an ability check for the challenge. Even at the highest difficulty, you'll never need more than 13 scenarios.

- The winds are fierce, the waves high. The helmsman must make an Intelligence (vehicle (water)) check to stay true and perform maneuvers necessary to navigating the storm.
- The helmsman has been wounded by a hailstone, a slip, or an object hurled about by the wind. A Wisdom (Medicine) check stabilizes him whereas a Strength (Athletics) check can hold the wheel steady and an Intelligence (vehicle (water)) check can pilot the ship through these rough waters.
- An Intelligence (Arcana) check confirms whether the storm is magically influenced; if it is not, neither a success or failure can be accrued from this check. If so, the magical effects can be identified, empowering others with the knowledge of what might occur.
- An Intelligence (Nature) check can identify an oncoming storm or an existing one's intensity and windspeed; it can predict whether hail or lightning will be a significant factor, and whether the storm is waning or waxing in strength. This knowledge is enough to inform others on what to expect.
- Whenever something aboard the ship splinters or breaks, such as a mast or other vital structure, or whenever holes must be tarred and planked, carpenter's tools (often paired with Intelligence or Wisdom) can be used to identify and fix these issues before disaster strikes.
- Rigging above has become tangled or come undone. To reach it safely, a Dexterity (Acrobatics) check is necessary to keep one's balance up in the rigging. Alternatively, an Intelligence (Sleight of Hand) check can be made to retie the knots if an Acrobatics check isn't necessary to climb up there.
- Crates and equipment have broken free from their moorings and are rolling across the ship, smashing into structures and imperiling crewmen. A Strength (Athletics) check can hold these objects down whereas an Intelligence (Sleight of Hand) check ties them down. An Intelligence (Sleight of Hand) check can be made prior to the storm to ensure that the cargo was strapped down properly; or made during the storm to secure them again.
- When whirlpools or waterspouts form, a Wisdom (Survival) check provides practical knowledge as to how escape these hazards or evade them altogether.
- When beasts aboard the ship panic, they can be soothed with a Wisdom (Animal Handling) check before bursting free from their moorings or quarters. Only beasts such as horses and the like are large enough to imperil the ship, making this

skill applicable. Creatures like panthers or wolves might also need soothing lest they lash out at crewmen.

- A crewman falls overboard. A Wisdom (Perception) finds the character; a Strength (Athletics) check is enough to bear their weight in the rough water or make it back to the ship; they can be calmed with a Charisma (Persuasion) check. Any sharks or other beasts in the water can be handled with a Wisdom (Animal Handling) check. If the sailor has drowned, a Wisdom (Medicine) check revives him or her.
- An Intelligence (History) check or an Intelligence check with cartographer's tools or navigator's tools can recall where the nearest port or shelter is, or if any dangerous landmarks such as reefs lie nearby that might imperil the ship.
- The crew is scared witless! A Charisma (Persuasion) check can rally them to their stations or an Intelligence (Religion) check leads them in a quick prayer to a deity of the sea—and that sudden faith calms their nerves.
- During the chaos, an opportunistic sailor is attempting to steal from, sabotage, or attack another crewmate. There's no time for combat, but a Charisma (Intimidation) check will force him into backing off.
- A fire has been ignited by a stray spark, bolt of lightning, or a gunpowder keg's explosion. An Intelligence (Investigation) check can determine the source and how to best fight the fire.
- A spar snaps from its mast above: a Wisdom (Insight) check intuits that the storm has done severe damage above; to hear it snapping is a Wisdom (Perception) check; an Intelligence (Investigation) check deduces that it's about to come crashing down; a Dexterity (Acrobatics) check pushes someone out of the way of the crash; and a Strength (Athletics) check can be enough to move the debris or even catch the spar before it comes crashing down to the deck.
- A Wisdom (Insight) check is enough to intuit that there's far too much strain on the rigging above; if it isn't loosened, the brace will part and the entire yard will swing free—or the masts themselves might snap off.
- In the chaos, the anchor's capstan gets unlatched! A character must make a Strength (Athletics) check to hold it steady or reel in the anchor before it cracks the ship in two or catches any obstructions below.
- A mechanism, such as the capstan, jams. A Dexterity check with thieves' tools or tinker's tools can fix it.
- A fierce wind has hurled a vital character overboard! They or another character can make a Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to balance along the rigging to rescue themselves or another.
- The winds threaten to tear apart the very sails! A spell of *control winds* or similar magic protects the sails, otherwise an Intelligence or Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check is necessary to quickly pull down the torn sails.
- A massive wave crashes into the ship! A *control water* spell tames the wave, otherwise the characters on that deck must make a group Strength (Athletics) check to hold fast.

SPELLS

As described in the Skill Challenges section of this supplement, magic is fair-game in a Skill Challenge, so long as the spell can logically address an issue. Cantrips require a successful ability check using the caster's spellcasting ability (and adding their proficiency bonus) to accrue a success whereas spells of 1st-level or higher automatically succeed.

Spells that are useful in the context of a storm are organized by purpose below:

Clearing Debris. When a mast snaps or equipment blocks a vital passage, *enlarge/reduce*, *Bigby's hand*, or *telekinesis* can remove the obstruction. A spell of *enhance ability* likewise can empower a character enough to move the debris themselves.

Communication. Spells such as *message* and *thaumaturgy* are useful to shout over the howling wind, allowing orders to be communicated to the entire crew.

Bailing. A spell of *create or destroy water* or even *shape water* is useful to bail out water if the ship springs a leak.

Falling. *Featherfall* will stop a crewman from falling to his death or being flung off the ship by the wind.

Fire Fighting. Should a stray spark or lightning bolt set the ship or an area ablaze, *control flames*, *gust of wind*, *shape water* and *tidal wave* can douse the fires and mitigate the damage.

Healing. It goes without saying that healing magic, or even a *spare the dying* cantrip, can save the life of a vital crewman.

Illumination. *Daylight*, *dancing lights*, and *light* is useful for illuminating the deck if the storm has darkened the sun or if it occurs at night.

Mobility. Spells such as *haste*, *expeditious retreat*, *jump*, and *misty step* can lead to one sailor pulling more than his weight.

Rescue. When crewmen fall overboard, *locate creature* will find them, whereas *water walking* or *water breathing* will spare them from drowning.

Resolve. A spell of *heroism* can galvanize the crew in such a dire time, focusing their minds and cutting through their fear.

Weather Control. Spells such as *control water*, *control winds* and *control weather* can quell the storm or mitigate its wrath. In *control weather's* case, it takes 1d4 x 10 minutes for the new conditions to occur—which may be too late, or it might just end the encounter all together.

Spells That Ought Not Be Cast. Spells such as *levitate*, *fly* and any spell that ignites a fire are downright suicidal during a storm at sea. Strong winds will batter airborne creatures or hurl them into the sea; so too can winds spread embers across the ship, setting off a raging inferno.

IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

While this encounter is rated up to Tier III, inevitably mundane storms will prove little hindrance to high level parties that can simply teleport away to another locale or plane or even end a storm altogether. Magic might be necessary to spruce up this encounter, otherwise plot must necessitate the adventurers sticking to their ship. Pull on their heartstrings to stand by the crew or contrive circumstances that necessitate a ship.

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