

ALLIES & ADVERSARIES CREEPS IN THE STORM

THE ALLIES AND ADVERSARIES series details NPCs that can be quickly and easily inserted into any adventure or ongoing campaign. Each NPC receives a detailed treatment of character traits, ideals, bonds, and flaws, as well as game statistics, physical description, backstory, and tips on how this NPC may be used in play. The only story/setting requirement needed to use any of them is a storm, some kind of inclement weather that forces characters to seek shelter. A location close to the ocean is also helpful, especially a fishing village.



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A storm has come. Most retreat from its biting rain, but a twisted foursome revel in it, for they are themselves are twisted. Some are a dark reflection of the maelstrom that pounds at the coast, the wind and the rain and the cold. Others are creatures borne of or shaped by the unfathomable deep itself: inhuman abominations that know not the light of the gods ... or are indifferent to it.

FISHER GRETCHEN

A young woman heaves a soaked bundle over her brawny shoulders. On her freckled face is a wide toothy grin that's manic with excitement. She upends the bundle onto a table with a wet smack: the sound of fish, but with the crunch of bone and ... something else. "Wellsir, I expect you'll be believing me about the shallows now, eh?" she giggles.

Physical Description

Gretchen is a young woman of 17, and stands almost 6 feet tall. She's ginger, freckled, and ties her long dry hair up in a messy ponytail. She grins toothily much of the time, which unnerves some people. Her hands and feet are well worn and calloused. She has small scars over her arms and legs from a hard life on boats. She smells strongly of salt and fish.

Background

Gretchen has lived her whole life in a small fishing community on the coast. She was orphaned at age 12 when her father was taken by the sea. The community raised her from that point on. She makes a living on fishing boats and as a scavenger, cleaning up and selling anything valuable that washes up on shore.

Gretchen is fascinated by the sea and what lies beneath its glassy surface. Her fishing community thinks her eccentric, so when she tells stories of

seeing strange creatures under the water, they don't believe her. Even when she begins to fish up foul things like the Thing the Sea Vomited Up, they dismiss her as crazy.

Statistics

Medium humanoid, chaotic neutral

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

Details Gretchen is a human **commoner** with the above ability score adjustments. She is also trained in Nature (+2) and Athletics (+5).

Possessions Gretchen wears a plain fisher's outfit, carries a net, a large hook (treat as a dagger), and has a day's worth of dried fish rations. She also carries a large wet bundle that carries the thing the sea vomited up.

Roleplaying Gretchen

Gretchen is looking for belief and validation of her curiosities and her findings. She desperately wants someone to believe her that there's something wrong with the sea itself, and that the misshapen oddities it belches forth are indeed real and a pressing matter. She will eagerly accompany anyone who believes her, acting as a hireling.

Gretchen speaks with a Newfoundland islander accent, and has a salty wisdom about her. She's strong and independent, but will follow orders (unless those orders go against her Ideal of pursuing knowledge).

- **Traits:** I can't leave a mystery alone; the unknown gnaws at my mind like a fish nibbling bait.
- **Ideal:** Knowledge. Always look for answers, even if they're not pretty.
- **Bond:** My village. Most there think I'm a little mad, but I've got to prove 'em wrong!
- **Flaw:** I get easily over excited, which leads to me acting without thinking.

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CAPTAIN MORDECAI GRAVES

He sits at a table in the back of the taproom, smoking a pipe in the dim light. His long pointed ears are canted to window, listening to storm. Perhaps he hears things mortals can't. If your gaze meets his, he beckons you closer. The maps in front of him, and the sizeable coin purse, suggest he has work for you.

Physical Description

Captain Mordecai Graves is a severe looking elf, tall and swarthy with a long nose and wide-set eyes. His hair is black and short, but well-coiffed. He carries himself with an air of importance and superiority.

Background

Mordecai Graves was born to a seaside elven kingdom, a fey prince set to inherit the throne. However, Graves had little interest in the duties of a monarch. He grew up fascinated by the ocean and its depths. When a sea monster emerged one day and laid waste to his coastal city, he poured every last coin of his family's royal treasury into chasing after it to get revenge. He has created a vast ship capable of exploring the depths of the ocean: the *Aleph-Tide*.

Statistics

Medium humanoid, lawful evil

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+2)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)

Details Captain Mordecai is an elf **noble** with the above ability score adjustments. As an elf, he has darkvision to 60 feet, as well as the Fey Ancestry and Keen Senses traits.

Possessions Captain Mordecai wears a long, weather beaten naval coat, and carries with him a scroll case (various maps), a wooden pipe, a certificate of royal pedigree, a spyglass, and a coin purse containing 500 gp in precious stones. He is unarmed.

Roleplaying Captain Mordecai Graves

The captain is a stern and direct man with little patience for ignorance or a lack of imagination. He speaks in a calm placid tone at all times,

The Thing the Sea Vomited Up

Gretchen carries a wet bundle with her, proof of her belief that something twisted swims in the deep. The thing recently washed up on shore by her village, and she's proudly displays the monstrosity.

The "thing" has the body of a large sea bass, but has sprouted spindly, carapaced legs like a spider or crab. Its face is covered in round glassy eyes, and its gills are spread open, bloated with slimy cancerous growths. It is clearly dead, and smells horrible. Spells determine it is an aberration. If cut open, dozens of inky black nematode-like creatures wriggle out, biting and seeking blood.

Gretchen is certain there are more of these "things" in the nearby surf. She swears she's seen bigger ones emerge from the water at night.

Adventure Hook: Hunting the Kraken

Captain Mordecai Graves needs to expand his crew. He desires a party of strong-willed adventurers willing to come aboard his submersible, the *Aleph-Tide*, and join him in hunting a kraken. He believes his vessel can force the abominable creature to the surface, but he needs able-bodied courageous people to help kill it.

He offers 100 gp to each adventurer who joins him for the journey, and a 10% share of whatever riches may exist in the kraken's belly once it's dead. While simply fighting a kraken is often adventure enough, an extended campaign might feature themes similar to *Moby-Dick* and *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.

which unnerves most people who have continued contact with him.

Graves captains the *Aleph-Tide* with a small crew of elves loyal to him. He chases the kraken that destroyed his home and family, but he is also deeply obsessed with the "ancient ones": otherworldly abominations he believes reside at the bottom of the sea; psychically influencing the surface world. He is deeply paranoid and afraid of them and their power.

The captain often speaks in thoughtful-sounding questions and hypotheticals, beginning many sentences with "I wonder if..." and

"Imagine, if you will..." in order to get his strange and affected thoughts across. There is a deep, disturbed madness about him, one that is subtle and intricate. He only shows true outrage and lack of composure when he is in the presence of the kraken that destroyed his home.

- **Traits:** I'm condescending to the superstitious and the ignorant. How could they comprehend what truths lies below?
- **Ideal:** Revenge. The ancient ones of this universe mock us with their mysteries, so I shall see them solved—and destroyed.
- **Bond:** I never lie if I can help it. A captain is only as good as his word.
- **Flaw:** I'll risk anything and everything for the knowledge I seek, and to see my enemy killed.

DRENCHED WENDY AND HER PARASITIC BABY

A drenched and dripping woman clutches a baby to her breast. She's pale and sunken-eyed. The posture of her body like that of a wrecked ship, twisted and bent. She calls out to you from the storm "My baby! Ye gods my baby! Why won't she eat! Why does she not cry?"

Physical Description

Drenched Wendy is a human woman of average height and weight, with long wet hair and pruned wet skin. She clutches a swaddled baby to her chest, never quite letting its face be shown unless she's alone with a victim.

When fully revealed, her "baby" turns out to be a mottled, grub-like thing with a dead infant's face and features. A fleshy umbilical cord from its stomach splits into a few thick tendrils, each one embedded in its mother's flesh. Wendy keeps this hidden under her clothing. The parasitic "baby" wails when attacked, uttering an inhuman cry that causes madness in mortal creatures.

Background

Drenched Wendy was once a fishwife in a coastal village like any other. Her community prospered

off of what the sea gave them. But, as the years continued, the sea grew sour. Each day's catch turned up fewer and fewer fish, and instead the nets held more and more twisted abominations: half-formed creatures not suited for land or water. At length, the villagers cursed the sea and moved inland, and the abandoned village decayed and fell into ruin.

Wendy and her partner stayed. They knew only a fisher's life, and did not want to refuse the "bounty" of the sea. Wendy cooked and ate of what the sea offered, and was thankful for it. Months later, Wendy gave birth to a parasitic creature, a baby born from consuming twisted sea-flesh. The poor woman cannot bear to rid herself of the creature, so she cares for it. Linked to her body, it draws vitality from her, slowly killing her and driving her mad.

Statistics

Medium human and aberration, both chaotic evil

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
12 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Details Drenched Wendy is a human woman connected to a bizarre, infant-like aberration. Together, they use **dretch** statistics, ignoring its fiend type. Her Fetid Cloud feature is a spray of acidic brine and stomach acids emanating from the "baby."

Possessions Drenched Wendy wears ragged clothing that is perpetually wet, even indoors. She carries nothing with her except her swaddled baby, which she never lets go of.

Roleplaying Drenched Wendy

Drenched Wendy has all but totally succumbed to the alien evil of her parasitic child. When Wendy encounters other people, she often begs for help or for accompaniment on the road. She sizes up her victims, then tries to get them alone so that she can prey upon them. Yet Wendy is not above an appeal to her humanity or her well-being. If a character makes a strong enough case that they can help her or heal her, she will reveal the secret of her baby and plead to be made rid of it. The parasitic baby has a mind of its own, though.

LAMPREY JOE

A transient on the road by the sea, stumbling drunk and rambling to himself, whistling a sea shanty through broken teeth. "The sea, the sea, it calls to me," he croaks. "Rum's finer than water, drink and you'll see. I looked into the blackness...and it looks back through me!"

Physical Description

Lamprey Joe is a middle-aged scruffy transient with as many teeth as he has fingers (not a lot). His liver-spotted head is bald, save for a few wisps of white hair. His face bristles with white stubble. He hides his left hand in his sleeve, claiming it was mangled by a shark's bite. In truth, his entire left arm is a lamprey that feeds on blood and brains.

Background

Lamprey Joe was once entirely human: a hermit living by the sea not far from a fishing community, making a living begging and grifting people who came ashore. A meager existence. For whatever reason, this vagrant was chosen by the Ancient Ones of the sea. Their psychic influence began to twist and mutate him. His teeth fell out, his brain boiled off and reduced in size, his belly bloated with salt-water, and his left arm atrophied and fell off while a sea-creature wriggled out of his arm socket to replace it.

Over the course of a few months, Joe was transformed into an abomination; a vicious creature with only a fraction of his humanity remaining. Now he wanders seaside roads, seeking the company of travelers, exploiting their good nature, and feasting on their brains.

Statistics

Medium aberration, chaotic evil

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
20 (+5)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Details Lamprey Joe uses the statistics of a **berserker** with the above ability score adjustments. While he appears to be human, he is currently a human puppet piloted by an aberration born in the lightless sea. He also has a swim speed of 40 feet.

Possessions Lamprey Joe wears the scraps of a fisher's outfit. He carries a bundle on the end of a fishing rod without any line. Inside the bundle is three days' worth of stale rations and a half empty bottle of rum. Joe keeps his left hand in his sleeve at all times.

Roleplaying Lamprey Joe

Joe whistles when he speaks. He has the creaky voice of a man who's not all there, rambling and singing to himself. He rattles off incoherent stories about fishing trips and diving for sunken treasures in his youth, punctuated by requests for liquor to soothe his parched throat.

Joe only attacks when he thinks he has the upper hand. If he's outnumbered or overpowered, he'll run away rather than fight to the death.

- **Traits:** I know every sea shanty there is, and I sings 'em all the time.
- **Ideal:** Oblivion. Better to be drunk and numb than to understand what's eating the world alive.
- **Bond:** I don't trust nobody, but a bottle of drink is a good place to start.
- **Flaw:** I'm opportunistic. If I think I can get away with it, I'll stove a man's head in to get at them brains! 🍷