



XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS

Taming the Hydra

Expedition Scenario #6

A One-Round Dungeons & Dragons® Expedition Adventure for
9th-Level Characters
(Scaled for 7th-11th Levels of Play) for the XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS™
Campaign

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"In the city of storms' greatest time of trial, an ancient tower rises to the need. By riding the hydra and finding the Stair Invisible, the old will save the new and be reborn itself." Following the Shargon Strike attack by the pirate fleet things look grim. With the weather still out of control and ships unable to get to Xen'drik easily, supplies have become increasingly rare and the hopes of the city's survivors grow bleaker by the day. The factions ally to bring relief to Stormreach. A Xen'Drik Expeditions Expedition adventure optimized for 9th-level characters.

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Rich Baker, and Peter Adkison.

Sources: Complete Adventurer [Jesse Decker]; Complete Warrior [Andy Collins, David Noonan, Ed Stark]; Explorer's Handbook (David Noonan, Rich Burlew, Frank Brunner), Heroes of Horror [James Wyatt, Ari Marmell, C.A. Suleiman]; Miniatures Handbook [Michael Donais, Skaff Elias, Rob Heinsoo, Jonathan Tweet]; Monster Manual II [Ed Bonny, Jeff Grubb, Rich Redman, Skip Williams, Steve Winter]; Monster Manual V [David Noonan]; Races of Destiny [David Noonan, Eric Cagle, Aaron Rosenberg]; Races of Stone [Jesse Decker, Michelle Lyons, David Noonan]; *Spell Compendium* [Matthew Sernett, Jeff Grubb, Mike McArtor]

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Adventure Background

With the rise of the Captain's Alliance and the attack lead upon Stormreach by one of their leaders, the Ebon Siren, the fortunes of the city have turned decided sour. The foul weather continues to lash the city walls and churn the sea. Piracy prevents nearly all shipments from Khorvaire from reaching Stormreach. Supplies are in short supply and already food grows scarce. The citizens are nearly prisoners within the city; trapped with the twin specters of plague and starvation beginning to loom.

If Stormreach is to survive that the factions might use it as a base from which to explore Xen'drik and control the prophecy, decisive action is needed. The factions have exercised the tenuous ties forged during the night of Shargon's Strike (*EXP-5 Shargon's Rage*) and decided is time to act.

Adventure Synopsis

Adventure Start: The PCs are brought together and informed that a new portion of the prophecy has been deciphered that may reveal clues to aid the city. The PCs are to follow the Hydra River to its source where they should climb the Invisible Stair to capture a fabled floating castle immune to the storms and capable of navigating the treacherous seas between Xen'drik and Khorvaire. Unfortunately, the pirates have already begun their search, so the race is on.

Part One: The PCs begin the trip down the river but must deal with sabotage that threatens to end their mission before it has barely begun.

Part Two: As the PCs begin to make some progress, they find that the river is aptly named and it is just as dangerous as its namesake suggests.

Part Three: Strange freezing weather rolls in and the river rapidly covers itself in ice. Fighting the environment, the PCs are forced to portage their small boat to clear water.

Part Four: The party nears their destination at the Invisible Stair, only to confront some of the pirate crew sent on the same mission. The meeting likely turns violent.

Part Five: The PCs manage to get inside the floating castle, but must battle to its heart in order to claim the prize.

Part Six: At the center of the strange structure the party finds that they are not the only ones to have made it this far and the lord of the castle faces a choice between those who invade his home.

Ending the Adventure: The party claims the castle and pilots it back to Stormreach.

Troubleshooting

Adventure Secret: There are two places in which an adventure secret might be revealed during this adventure. Should any of the PCs use a card or ability to unlock an adventure secret, they may gain some suggestion that the *River Run* has been sabotaged. This might come in the form of a whispered word by a trusted informant or a prophetic revelation (as appropriate for the ability or card). Another option is for the card or ability to show a short cut to parties that have been delayed so that they can make up time after either the loss of the *River Run*'s elemental or the freak storm.

Factions: Each faction has its own individual goals and gives additional instructions to their members. Ask each player to hand you a note listing his or her faction. All players should hand in a note in order to keep suspicions evenly spread throughout the party. Note that some PCs may have Story Object allowing them to pose as a member of a different faction. If they are doing so, they should note that as well upon this note. Return the correct player handout to each player so they understand the details of their secret mission and secretly inform the players who else is a member of their faction (or at least seems to be a member). This should be done immediately following the **Adventure Start** but before **Part One**.

Adventure Start

The following read aloud text assumes that the party contains PCs of multiple factions. If it does not, the DM should adjust accordingly.

Time is of the essence. Your superiors made that abundantly clear. So important is your mission that they have once again agreed to join forces with the other factions and present a united front against a common foe.

For you it all began two days ago. You were brought into a chamber with several of the masters of your order and informed that a new portion of the prophecy had been deciphered: "In the city of storms' greatest

time of trial, an ancient tower rises to the need. By riding the hydra and finding the Stair Invisible, the old will save the new and be reborn itself."

After consultation by scholars and seers it is believe that the current pirate threat is the time of trials spoken of. The pirate fleet, known by some as the Captains' Alliance, holds Stormreach prisoner disrupting nearly all trade and intercepting vital supplies needed to weather the violent storms that continue to lash the city walls. Starvation and plague stalk the flooded streets and it seems possible that the entire city may soon be washed away.

So you have been tasked to travel up the Hydra River in search of a fable. Xen'drik lore holds that at the headwaters of said river waits a floating castle that can travel any sea and is immune to worst storms. If such a seagoing structure truly exists, it might be used to ferry supplies and allies from Khorvaire and break the strangling siege of the pirate fleet. The pirates clearly realize this as well because spies inform your superiors that an expedition funded by the pirate fleet has already left, heading up river. All the factions have a vested interest in the defeat of the Captains' Alliance and their Secret Masters and so you will travel with those you might have called enemies in other times for the salvation of your new home.

Give Player Handout #1 to the appropriate PCs, based on the faction they represent before proceeding to the next portion of the Introduction. Pick one PC to be given a *finder's stone*, a magical device that will help them choose the correct tributary (by changing colors) to proceed up river every time there is a choice. In addition, the PCs are told some food supplies and transportation will be waiting for them at their departure point. They are also given the general description of any PCs from other factions and told they are allies for the duration of this journey.

Knowledge of the Hydra River

PCs with the Knowledge (geography) may know some use details about traveling the Hydra River. PCs making this check know all details for all DCs they meet or beat. If any PC wants to purchase gear from their EV based on this information, allow them to do so using the standard campaign rules for shopping in Stormreach with one exception. All food or drink costs three times the listed cost.

- DC 5: The Hydra is a wide river with many different tributaries, much like the heads of a hydra. It flows out of the jungle to the ocean.
- DC 15: Due to the Traveler's Curse, the path of the Hydra is constantly changing and no true path is reliable. In addition, weather along the jungle river is erratic at best and flash floods or freezing snowstorms have been reported in the past.
- DC 20: Tales say that things that swim in the Hydra are often larger or have abilities they would not normally have elsewhere.
- DC 30: After several unfortunate encounters, few explorer's have wondered if the Hydra is named not for its many branches but rather than many headed hydras that plague travelers who push too far upriver.

Getting to Know You

The PCs have all been traveling into the jungle for just over a day when they arrive at the meeting location described in their individual orders. Each PC arrives in the company of any other members of their faction, but otherwise meets the rest of the party at this time. They are traveling by mundane means because the Traveler's Curse prevents accurate use of transportation magic into Xen'drik's interior.

The muddy trail you have been following ends in a rickety dock on the river. A small shack stands sentinel over the pier and the boat tied to it. A light shines through cracks in the shack walls illuminating several others arriving at the same time.

The PCs match the descriptions of those they were told they meet at the boat. The PCs have the opportunity to introduce their characters to each other at this point.

Once the PCs move to investigate the boat or the shack, proceed to Part One.

Part One: Over Before It Began

The party is free to board the boat and leave immediately, but if they do so, there will be repercussions later on. If the party chooses to interact with the dock warden, they have the opportunity to learn valuable information that may aid them on their journey.

The River Run

A large barge bobs among the rough waves of the wide Hydra River. A small structure enclosed on three sides is in the center of the barge and crates and barrels are lashed to the deck. A small metal box covered in arcane symbols is at the rear of the barge, next to a large rudder.

The *River Run* a twenty-five by forty foot, flat-bottomed boat that is large enough to carry all of the PCs, any mounts or animal companions, and all of their gear. Centered on the barge is a ten by fifteen foot shelter that is enclosed on three sides. Survival gear such as rope and tents, food and fresh water are secured to the deck inside various crates and barrels. The barge is elemental powered, with a chair for the pilot at the rear of the vessel at the rudder. For more on piloting the barge, see the Controlling the *River Run* sidebar nearby.

Unfortunately when the pirates put in, they took the opportunity to sabotage both the elemental's containment as well as poison the food supplies. These acts of sabotage are not readily apparent but might be detected if searched for.

Tampering with the Elemental Containment Device: The barge is powered by a large water elemental (MM 100) that is contained within the metal box at the rear of the barge. Before leaving, the pirate crew tampered with the containment vessel, loosening its housing. A sharp jolt, such as occurs during Part Two of this adventure, causes the housing to break loose cracking the dragonshard within and frees the elemental. If this occurs the elemental rages forth and attacks the nearest target until it is destroyed.

A DC 15 Search check notices scratches mark suggesting that someone has recently pried the metal box away from barge and the containment box is in danger of coming free. An artificer or any PC of House Cannith or Lyrander receives a +2 competence bonus to this check.

Poisoning the Food and Water: In addition to tampering with the elemental, the pirates have also contaminated the food and water supplies with rooka paste, a mild poison culled from the roots of the tasteless tropical rooka plant. Anyone not immune to poison who consumes any of the food or water must make a DC 13 Fortitude saving throw or be Sickened for 24 hours. A successful saving through negates this penalty. It should not be immediately obvious that the food and water is source of the intestinal distress plaguing the affected PCs, though deductive reasoning or a *detect poison* spell can confirm the origin.

Rather than asking the players, assume anyone (including familiars, mounts and animal companions) who does not specify that they are not eating from the supplies provided, does so. If they refuse to eat any of the provided food, they will need twenty-two days worth of food on their character's equipment list or will need to acquire food some other way (such as magical spells or regular hunting).

Controlling the *River Run*

Controlling the *River Run* requires a pilot to sit at the helm and command the water elemental. Any PC with a dragonmark automatically succeeds. Those that do not possess a dragonmark must either make a DC 25 profession (sailor) check, cast *charm monster* or *dominate monster*, or turn/rebuke the elemental by use of a cleric domain. This means that most parties will not have much control over the barge other than to make it move forward in a straight line. For more details on controlling an elemental vessel the *Explorer's Handbook*.

Doro the Dock Warden

Opening the flimsy door and peering up at you with clouded eyes is an elderly human man in rags. His beard is wild and unkempt and the inside of his shack barely protects from the rain as water leaks from dozens of places in the ramshackle roof. "Who's there? Who bothers Doro at this late hour?"

Doro the Dock Warden watches over this small port on the Hydra River, though this far into the wilds his job entails very few duties and he performs even fewer of them. He is easily confused, apparently very near-sighted, and refers to himself in the third person. Doro offer the PCs a dry place to sit in spacious cottage, though clearly no such space exists. He also asks them to mind his dog Millie and yells for her to get off the sofa. Observant PCs notice that Millie is little more than the skeleton of dog who passed long ago. Food is piled high in her bowl though suggesting that Doro is unaware, or unwilling, to notice that she has long since died.

Should anyone choose to converse with Doro about the situation at hand, he knows several useful pieces of information.

- The *River Run* was delivered just this morning by airship. Several men lowered it into the river and then loaded supplies into it. Doro was told that others would be coming in the next night to use it. People come and go all the time, but this is the first time he remembers a boat ever arriving by air.
- A few hours before the arrival of the PCs, another group of men came. They men sounded rough, and clearly knew the sailing trade. They purchased his personal skiff for a big bag full of gold. (He gestures to a bag on a nearby table filled with useless pieces of tin and cackles with glee at his "good" fortune.)

- From their voices, he believes that the men were in the company of at least one woman and that she may have been the one giving orders, though Doro did not see her clearly or interact with her.
- Doro also believes that the men boarded and inspected both barges before offering to purchase his. (This is a hint that the *River Run* may have been sabotaged.)

Creatures: Doro is not what he appears. Rather than an insane old man, he is actually a gray slaad drawn to this area due certain chaotic magical fluctuations tied to the Hydra River that he has been studying for over fifty years. He uses his *change shape* ability to assume the form of a doddering old man to better relate to those few travelers that he encounters. As long as he is left alone there is no reason for him to conflict with the PCs. If threatened, he uses his spell like abilities to incapacitate foes or flee as appropriate. He does not intend for his human personae to appear mentally unstable but his innately chaotic nature causes him to behave oddly.

Doro the Dock Warden: Hp 95 hp, gray slaad, *MM* 231.

Once the PCs have boarded the *River Run* and are ready to proceed, move to Part Two.

Part Two: Namesake

The Hydra River is hundreds of feet across at this point and roughly fifty feet deep in the center. The edges are filled with debris from the jungle and include the danger of snakes and poisonous insects dropping from overhanging trees. These obstacles necessitate sticking to the center of the river. Arrange the PCs on map of the *River Run*, and determine the party's general daily operation including watch orders, who's piloting, and if anyone is wearing their armor. This encounter occurs on the second day of travel at 5 AM during false dawn.

The River Run is moving up the Hydra at a speed no normal barge could accomplish when it gives a slight bump, as though moving over some large floating log or other debris. That is the only warning before a great roaring sound as nearly a dozen fanged snake-like heads break the water.

The Hydra River is not only named for its many branches, but also the many hydras that prowl its depths. The PCs have encountered one and it is quite hungry. Unfortunately for the PCs, if they have not discovered the sabotage caused by the pirate expedition, this is the inopportune moment for the water elemental to break free and attack the pilot of the *River Run*. See Part One for more details on this situation. Note that if the elemental's containment is breached, the *River Run* stops moving quickly and moves forward only on its inertia (which is opposite the direction of the river, so it rapidly slows). The barge always moves last in the round.

Waking Up: It is likely that many of the PCs will be sleeping when the attack begins. In this case, each PC who is asleep should get a DC 20 Listen check to wake up when the barge is bumped and be fully awake in time for the hydra's attack. Those that do not wake up are automatically woken by the roar of the hydra but may only take partial actions in the first round.

Creatures: The hydra is looking for a small snack and attempts to kill a single creature and pull back into the water. It begins, swimming directly behind the barge.

Ten-Headed Pyrohydra: hp 108; *MM* 155.

Tactics: The hydra attempts to keep within range of the boat and attack one target with all of its heads. If the boat is still moving at full speed the party can easily out distance the hydra after a few attacks of opportunity. If necessary, because the boat is getting away, the hydra will use its breath weapon, but otherwise prefers to eat one target and swim away. The DM is encouraged to play up any fires that might start on the *River Run* but in the end the PCs should be successful in putting them out and using the barge to continue. If the barge is still moving at full speed, the hydra gets one round of attacks, followed by being in range to use its breath weapon once. If the elemental breaks free, the hydra is free to keep attacking. Please note that the elemental (if present) and the hydra are not allies and do not work together. The elemental wants to slay its captors (starting with the pilot who is closest) and the hydra seeks only to grab a meal and flee. It is possible that given their proximity, the PCs could arrange for the two to fight each other.

Development: What happens if the PCs do not discover the sabotage and the elemental breaks free? Well, assuming they survive the attack, they still have to find a way to get up river. This could be done by magic or old-fashioned sweat. If necessary, the PCs can row/pole up river, though it is an arduous process only slightly better than walking. Unless the PCs use magic to accelerate their speed significantly, they will suffer additional developments in nearly all encounters after this one. The DM should look for adjustments made to the encounter if the party's progress has been slowed.

Scaling the Encounter

7th-Level Characters: Replace the hydra with an eight-headed pyrohydra.

8th-Level Characters: Replace the hydra with a nine-headed pyrohydra.

10th-Level Characters: Replace the hydra with an eleven-headed pyrohydra.

11th-Level Characters: Replace the hydra with a twelve-headed pyrohydra.

Part Three: Cold Snap

Traveling through Xen'drik is fraught not only with peril from ravenous beasts and strange magic, but also inexplicable changes in weather and terrain. As the party travels upriver, they encounter one of these freak weather patterns and are forced to adapt or turn back. This encounter happens fourteen hours after the hydra attack and lasts for two days.

Traveling upriver the still, warm air is interrupted by a cool breeze. The breeze quickly stirs to a strong wind and the chill grows stronger. Within moments, snowflakes begin to drift through the air as you are surrounded with an unearthly cold.

The weather is rapidly cooling, despite the jungle terrain. The normally ever-present insects become scarce and snow begins to collect as the rain converts over entirely to snow. In a matter of ten minutes, the river ices over. The PCs now have two problems: the extreme cold and the frozen river. Both of these problems must be dealt with if they are to continue.

The Cold: The area is beset with severe cold for two days. Unprotected characters must make a Fortitude save every 10 minutes (DC 15 +1 per previous check), taking 1d6 points of nonlethal damage on a each failed save. A partially protected character (have the Cold Endurance feat, have furs or cold weather gear but not both) need only check once an hour. Do not slow the game down making rolls, but rather determine the average number of failed rolls for a PC and apply the appropriate damage. For complete protection against the cold, the character must have be a cold-tolerant PC native to an arctic climate, have cold weather gear with furs or other insulation, have an *endure elements* spell, find shelter, or have cold resistance 5 or more. PCs who become wet (possibly while pulling the barge out of the river) suffer a –3 penalty to their saving throw and are treated as though having one less level of protection (completely protect PCs are treated as partially protected, partially protected are treated as unprotected). PCs that take nonlethal damage suffer frostbite and take a –2 penalty to their Dexterity score. This can be treated with a DC 15 Heal check. None of this damage can be healed until the PC can get out of the cold and get warm. The Dexterity penalty stays until all nonlethal damage is healed.

Portage: It rapidly becomes clear that the surface of the river is freezing over, and if the PCs do not pull the *River Run* out of the Hydra, it will become frozen in place. The barge, even if it is still under elemental power, is not large and strong enough to push through the ice. If the barge becomes frozen in the ice, it can be cut free by doing 50 points of damage to the ice on all four sides of the barge. Fire does double damage. Once the barge is free, the PCs must decide whether to carry the barge with them, seek shelter and ride out the storm, or continue without the *River Run*.

If the PCs decide to portage the barge, they can carry it themselves by dragging it along the ice. Carrying it through the jungle is not feasible due to its size. To successfully drag the barge requires two PCs to make a DC 15 Strength check. Creatures of Large size (or who count as large) receive a +4 bonus to this check. Those that fail by 10 or less or anyone assisting who fails are fatigued for the next eight hours. If anyone fails by more than 15, in addition to being fatigued, the barge becomes stuck and the party loses six hours getting it free.

If the party decides to leave behind the barge, their progress will be considerably slowed once they clear the area of unnatural winter. Count these parties as delayed as though they had lost their water elemental in Part Two. There are no additional delay penalties if the party is delayed more than once.

Once the party has successfully dealt with this environmental hazard, proceed to Part Four.

Part Four: Ambush

After the PCs escape from the freak snowstorm, they travel upriver for one more day through normal jungle terrain. Allow the PCs an opportunity to heal up and prepare for the rest of the adventure before continuing with the following read aloud text. Some PCs may still be suffering the effects of the storm.

You wake on the morning after leaving the snow and ice to the sounds of thunder under an overcast sky. The river churns and your barge rocks violently as you come around bend covered in heavy vegetation. A few hundred yards away, a waterfall pours furiously over a looming cliff side down to the Hydra River. The fine mist seems to be collecting upon something huge that reaches up into the air all the way to the top of the cliff. If not for the collecting mist, it would be impossible to see.

The party has arrived at the Invisible Stair, an ancient stairwell of giant magic made of invisible force, twenty feet wide with each stair also twenty feet long. The stairs snake along the side of the rock face next to the waterfall, the mist of the pounding water collecting on it and running in rivulets down the side. Climbing the stairs is a difficult process. They are slick and sized incorrectly for medium creatures. Climbing the stairs without the aid of magic requires a successful DC 12 Climb check. If the check fails by 5 or more the PC falls off the side of the stairwell falling 1d6 x 10 feet to the rocks below.

Combat on the invisible stair is likewise difficult. The surface is slippery and hard to see. Moving on the stair, attacking, or being attacked, requires a DC 7 Balance check. A failure by 5 or more causes the character to fall prone and slide one square in a random direction (use the grenade scatter chart). This may also result in falling off the invisible stair to the rocks below.

Creatures: Pluresa has left a handful of her men behind to ambush anyone that might be following her. Her orders are quite clear, kill anyone that comes along and leave no survivors. Her men are slavish in their devotion and immediately move to eliminate the PCs. They wait until the party has ascended to two stairs below the top before beginning their attack.

Pirate Thugs (2): male human fighter 2/rogue 5; hp 48 each; See Combat Statistics.

Pirate Brutes (2): male half-orc barbarian 2/fighter 2/ranger 2; hp 71 each; See Combat Statistics.

Wavebreaker: male human druid 10; hp 73; See Combat Statistics.

Apple: dire bat animal companion; hp 52; See Combat Statistics.

Tactics: The pirates begin by hiding out of sight above the cliff and cannot be seen due to total cover. The noise of the thundering falls imposes a –10 penalty to Listen checks. A small air spirit controlled by Pluresa, which spotted them coming down the river, has alerted them to the PCs. As the PCs approach, the pirate thugs drink their *potions of invisibility* so they can approach and flank a weak looking opponent and the pirate brutes drink their *potions of levitation* so if they slip on the stair, they do not fall. Wavebreaker is mounted upon Apple and initially stays at range using his spells to control the battlefield while the other pirates melee. With the exception of *greater magic fang*, which is cast directly upon Apple, Wavebreaker is sharing all of his precast spells with his animal companion. If necessary he flies Apple into melee range and casts *nature's favor* upon his Apple. None of the pirates will flee no matter the circumstance, though if more than half of the pirate party is down and Wavebreaker has been incapacitated, the remaining brutes/thugs will surrender if the opportunity is offered. They will of course use the opportunity to betray the PCs at a later time if given the chance.

Delay: If the PCs have been delayed during Part Two or Three, Pluresa's elemental spies have had time to impart more information to the ambushers. The pirates have a general idea of the class of each PC as well as their general tactics. The DM should feel free to adjust Wavebreaker's spell selection using the PHB to tailor it against the PCs based on this information.

Development: Should any of the pirates be captured, they resist interrogation to the best of their ability. They are so devoted to Pluresa that they refuse to cooperate even if threatened with their own deaths. Only magical force can compel them to provide useful information. The pirates know that they are members of the Captain's Alliance, the pirate fleet that attacked Stormreach during the night of Shargon's Strike. These pirates in particular serve Pluresa, the Storm Witch Siren and Secret Master of the hidden pirate atoll of Maggago. She is one of several Secret Masters that control the fleet. The pirates do not know who the others are, but they know their mistress' standing must have fallen significantly since the attack on their island by the Blackwheel Company.

They do not know exactly how Pluresa came to know of the floating fortress, only that she recently received information of its existence and that others would be attempting to claim it. She organized this expedition immediately. Pluresa and the rest of their party continued on after leaving the pirates here.

Wavebreaker CR 10

Male human druid 10

CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; Senses Listen +18, Spot +18

Languages Common

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20; (+6 armor, +1 deflection, +4 natural)

hp 73 (10 HD); **DR** 10/adamantine (100 point *stoneskin*)

Immune grapple, negative energy, poison

Resist +4 vs. fey spell-like abilities, acid 20, fire 20

Fort +9, **Ref** +3, **Will** +12

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +1 *scimitar* +7 (1d6/18-20)

Ranged mwk sling +8 (1d4)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +6

Special Actions wild shape (4/day, Large)

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*

Druid Spells Prepared (CL 10th):

5th—[†]*death ward*, [†]*stoneskin*, *wall of thorns*

4th—*dispel magic*, *flamestrike* (DC 21), [†]*freedom of movement*, *ice storm*

3rd—*call lightning* (DC 20), [†]*greater magic fang*, *sleet storm*, *wind wall*

2nd—[†]*barkskin*, *flaming sphere* (DC 19), *nature's favor*, ^{††}*resist energy* (x2)

1st—*entangle*, *faerie fire* (x2), *foundation of stone*, *hide from animals* (DC 16), *produce flame*

0—*create water*, *cure minor wounds*, *detect magic* (x2), *detect poison*, *flare* (DC 17)

[†]Already cast

Abilities Str 9, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 20, Cha 8

SQ trackless step, wild empathy (+9), woodland stride

Feats Combat Casting, Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Improved Initiative, Natural Spell, Spell Focus (evocation)

Skills Concentration +15 (+19 cast defensive), Listen +18, Spellcraft +12, Spot +18

Possessions combat gear plus +1 *wild wooden breastplate*, +1 *scimitar*, *ring of deflection*, military saddle, *lesser rod of extend* (used), *lesser rod of quicken*, masterwork sling, 5 silver bullets, 5 byesk bullets, 5 adamantine bullets.

Hook “I will bring the fury of the elements upon you!”

Apple CR -

Dire bat animal companion

N Large animal

Init +7; Senses Listen +12, Spot +8; blindsense 40 ft.

AC 29, touch 16, flat-footed 22; (-1 size, +7 Dex, +9 natural, +4 armor)

hp 52 (8 HD); **DR** 10/adamantine (100 point *stoneskin*)

Immune grapple, negative energy, poison

Resist acid 20, fire 20

Fort +9, **Ref** +13, **Will** +7; evasion

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); fly 40 ft. (good)

Melee bite +11 (2d6+7, magic)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +14

Abilities Str 19, Dex 24, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 6

SQ devotion, link, share spells

Feats Alertness, Improved Natural Attack (bite) Stealthy

Skills Hide +5, Listen +12, Move Silently +12, Spot +8

Possessions chain shirt barding

Tricks Attack (x2), Combat Riding, Fetch, Track

Pirate Thugs CR 7

Male human fighter 2/rogue 5

AL CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +6; Senses Listen +9, Spot +9

Languages Common

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor, +2 Dex); Uncanny Dodge

hp 48 (7 HD)

Fort +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +0; Evasion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee mwk great club +11 (1d10+6) or
unarmed strike +9 (1d3+4 lethal or nonlethal)

Ranged light crossbow +8 (1d8/19-20)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +13

Atk Options Sneak attack +3d6, Sunder (+19 with great club)
Combat Gear *potion of invisibility*, smokestick, tanglefoot bag

Abilities Str 18, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 8

SQ Trapfinding, trap sense +1

Feats Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (great club)

Skills Climb +6, Hide +10, Intimidate +9, Listen +7, Move Silently +10, Search +9, Sleight of Hand +10, Spot +9, Tumble +10

Possessions *Studded leather armor* +2, masterwork great club, light crossbow, 10 masterwork bolts, thieves' tools.

Hook "You lookin' at me?!?!"

Pirate Brutes [Raging] CR 6

Male half-orc barbarian 2/fighter 2/ranger 2

CN Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +5; Senses Listen +7, Spot +4; darkvision 60'

Languages Common, Orc

AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, -2 rage, +5 armor)

hp 71 (6 HD)

Fort +12, **Ref** +4, **Will** +2

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee +1/+1 *orc double axe* +12/+12/+7 (1d8+8/x3) or
mwk battle axe +12/+7 (1d8+11/x3)

Ranged mwk javelin +7 (1d6+6)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +10

Atk Options Rage 1/day

Combat Gear *potion of levitation*

Abilities Str 18 [22], Dex 13, Con 16 [20], Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 6

SQ Uncanny dodge, wild empathy

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Shadow Marches Warmonger, Track, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (orc double axe)

Skills Handle Animal +1, Listen +7, Spot +4, Survival +7

Possessions mithral breastplate, +1/+1 *orc double axe*, masterwork battle axe, 5 masterwork javelins

Hook "We crush you good!"

Scaling the Encounter

7th-Level Characters: Remove one thug and one brute.

8th-Level Characters: Remove one brute.

10th-Level Characters: Add one brute.

11th-Level Characters: Add one thug and one brute.

New Spells

Foundation of Stone

Transmutation [Earth]

Level: Cleric 1, druid 1

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. +5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One creature/level, no two of which are more than 30 ft. apart

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

Calling upon the strength of the earth, you lend some of the stability of stone to your allies.

As long as they do not move and remain standing on solid ground, the subject creature gains a +2 bonus to Armor Class and a +4 bonus on Strength checks made to resist being bull rushed or tripped.

If this spell is cast in mountainous terrain, the bonus on Strength checks granted by this spell increases to +6.

Nature's Favor

Evocation

Level: Druid 2, ranger 2

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 swift action

Range: Touch

Target: Animal touched

Duration: 1 minute

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

Rubbing the animal's side, you whisper the final bit of the spell's ritual. The animal glances at you before turning its attention to your foes, bristling as it does so.

You grant the subject animal a +1 luck bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls for every three caster levels you possess (maximum +5).

Part Five: Castle of the Waves

Once the PCs have made it to top of the Invisible Stair, they can finally see the Castle of the Waves that have been looking for.

The majesty of the Invisible Stair is lost as you surmount the cliff side. A great castle floats in the center of a crystal clear lake, bobbing on the waves with a slim bridge leading to the gate. The castle is clearly not of human origin. The towers spiral back and forth, wrapping around each other and coming to slim points at the four corners. The walls are carved like a mass of slithering tentacles, wicked blades and oozing cocoons. The walls drip clear slime into the lake, giving birth to the waters of the Hydra River. The violet metal gates appear to have been rent asunder and mend themselves even now. As you watch from across the bridge, the bars bend themselves back into place.

Locked behind a seal of giant magic, the Lord of Waves waits and schemes his return to the world. Trapped since ages past by giant magicians, the Lord of Waves and his creations have been waiting for the chance to stir. Now the time has come when their horrific prison can be of use to others if they are willing to open the door.

Those inspecting the castle from afar note that there is no obvious movement on the walls of the fortress, though it appears a battle may have recently taken place at the gate. The entire lake and fortress radiate magic (DC 20, strong abjuration), chaos, and evil.

Entering the Castle

Not long before the PCs have arrived, the pirate expedition crossed the bridge and forced their way through the gates. In order to continue the PCs will have to do the same. The gates however are not without their own defenses. The gates regenerate themselves, feeding off the unwholesome nature of the Lord of Waves, and the walls spawn defenders of their own should anyone bypass them. The gate is meant to seal something in, as much as keep others out. It is not meant to, and cannot be, opened. They are mounted directly into the stone.

Byesk Gates: 1 in. thick; hardness 17; hp 25 (normally 35); AC 5; Break DC 25; repairs itself 5 hp every two rounds.

Creatures: Once inside the walls, three of the stone cocoons split open and release three Thoon soldiers. This encounter assumes that the PCs enter through the gate, but should they climb (DC 20 Climb) or fly over the walls, the guardians animate and attack just the same.

Thoon Soldier (3): hp 72, 75, 80; See Combat Statistics.

Tactics: The Thoon Soldiers move to eliminate the nearest foes, reconfiguring to use their *aspect of the fiery sun* unless their foes appear to be immune to fire damage. They make liberal use of their *aspect of the*

death blossom ability, willingly taking their allies with them if it will trigger multiple *death blossoms*. The constructs fight to the death. When a Thoon Soldier is slain, its body or remaining fragments, dissolve into a clear slime, leaving behind no evidence of their passing.

Delay: If the PCs have been delayed, it has been some time since the pirates have been here and the gates have fully regenerated to their normal 35 hp.

Combat Statistics

Thoon Soldier CR 8

N Medium construct

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages speaks specific Undercommon phrases, understands telepathic commands

AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 17 (+3 Dex, +7 natural)

hp 75 (10 HD)

Immune construct immunities

Resist fire 10

Fort +3, **Ref** +6, **Will** +4

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee 2 arm-axes +14 each (1d8+7/x3)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +14

Atk Options depends on aspect (see below)

Special Actions aspect of bloody slaughter, aspect of the fiery sun, aspect of the impervious tower, aspect of the ravenous horde, aspect of the death blossom

Abilities Str 25, Dex 16, Con -, Int -, Wis 12, Cha 5

SQ construct traits

Feats –

Skills Listen +1, Spot +1

Aspect of Bloody Slaughter (Ex) By expending a swift action and taking 5 points of damage, a Thoon soldier can reconfigure its limbs to deal damage to multiple adjacent foes. When in this aspect, a Thoon soldier can make a Whirlwind Attack (as the feat) with its arm blades as a full-round action, and it can make attacks of opportunity as if it had the Combat Reflexes feat. A Thoon soldier can have only one aspect active as a time. When adopting this aspect, a Thoon soldier says in Undercommon, “Slaughter for Thoon!”

Aspect of the Fiery Sun (Ex) By expending a swift action and taking 5 points of damage, a Thoon soldier can channel the quintessence from its body, creating heat. The Thoon soldier’s melee attacks deal an extra 2d6 points of fire damage, and creatures that hit it with a natural weapon or a nonreach melee weapon take 1d6 points of fire damage. A Thoon soldier can have only one aspect active as a time. When adopting this aspect, a Thoon soldier says in Undercommon, “All will burn for Thoon!”

Aspect of the Impervious Tower (Ex) By expending a swift action and taking 5 points of damage, a Thoon soldier can extrude extra armor plates and bolster its magical defenses. When using this aspect, a Thoon soldier gains a +4 resistance bonus on saving throws and a +4 deflection bonus to AC. A Thoon soldier can have only one aspect active as a time. When adopting this aspect, a Thoon soldier says in Undercommon, “Stand and fight! Thoon is Thoon!”

Aspect of the Ravenous Horde (Ex) By expending a swift action and taking 5 points of damage, a Thoon soldier can reconfigure its lower limbs for greater speed and maneuverability. When in this aspect, a Thoon soldier’s speed increases to 40 ft., and it can make a melee attack in the middle of its move as if it had the Spring Attack feat. A Thoon soldier can have only one aspect active as a time. When adopting this aspect, a Thoon soldier says in Undercommon, “Walk with Thoon!”

Aspect of the Death Blossom (Ex) A Thoon soldier has one final mode it enters if it starts its turn with between 5 and 20 hit points left. By expending a swift action and taking 5 points of damage, a Thoon soldier can reconfigure its body to explode when destroyed. If destroyed while in the aspect of the death blossom, a Thoon soldier deals 8d6 points of fire damage to all creatures within a 40-foot-radius burst (Reflex DC 15 half). A Thoon soldier can have only one aspect active as a time. When adopting this aspect, a Thoon soldier says in Undercommon, “Death blooms in the name of Thoon! Thoon! Thoon!” A Thoon soldier doesn’t change out of the aspect of the death blossom until it is fully healed. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Description *This biped is covered with armor plates, yet it moves with a sinuous quality. With a liquid popping sound, it extrudes claws and axe-blades from its arms.*

Scaling the Encounter

7th-Level and 8th-Level Characters: Remove one Thoon Soldier

10th-Level and 11th-Level Characters: Add one Thoon Soldier.

The Central Keep

The inside courtyard looks no better than the exterior. Pools of slime collect in depressions carved in the courtyard to give the appearance of fanged maws and the walls are bundles of stone-carved tentacles. A keep stands solitarily in the center of the yard, the huge entrance gaping wide and remnants of the door laying broken on the ground. The sky opens up and rain begins to fall.

The towers seen from the outside appear to be wholly ornamental, as there is no access to them from the courtyard. The only place to go appears to be the keep (DM Map #1). There is no door; the pirates have shattered it. Inside the central keep there are no lights except those the PCs bring with them. All descriptions assume the PCs have some way to see. If this is not the case, the DM should adjust accordingly. All ceilings are twenty feet high and in general, things seem sized for much larger creatures than the PCs.

1. Hall of Lightning Barbs

Beyond the door is a dark, humid, cross-shaped room with door to either side. The wall is decorated with barbed stone tentacles, each pointed inward and dripping slime.

This hall is meant to deter those who would seek to free the Lord of Waves. Anyone entering the room who weighs 20 pounds or more sets off a pressure trigger that causes one of the barbed tentacles to fire at them. A tentacle fires at each target that enters the room that sets off the pressure sensor, and fires again at each target, each round. The doors are locked.

Stone Door: 4 in. thick; hardness 8; hp 60; AC 5; Break DC 28; Open Locks DC 40.

Trap Statistics

Lightning Barb Trap: CR 11; mechanical, location trigger; automatic reset; Atk +36 ranged (1d8+5 plus 1d6 electrical plus poison, as +1 *shocking arrow*); poison (shrieking terror saliva, Fort DC 19 resists, unable to heal damage from trap magically or naturally unless that target receives a *neutralize poison* or *heal* spell; *delay poison* allows magical healing, but not natural); Search DC 32; Disable Device 30.

Scaling the Encounter

7th-Level Characters: Reduce the Atk bonus to +30, the Search DC to 25 and the Open Locks DC to 30.

8th-Level Characters: Reduce the Atk bonus to +30 and the Open Locks DC to 30.

10th-Level Characters: Increase the Atk Bonus to +40.

11th-Level Characters: Increase the Atk Bonus to +40/+35/+30/+25 (it now fires four arrows per PC triggering the trap).

2. Hall of Shame

The black stone walls and floor of this room are carved in bumps, bubbles, and knobs. Ichor and slime continue to drip from the walls and collect in dark puddles on the floor. One door exits this room.

The Lord of Waves dumps his failed experiments into this room where they feast upon each other until only the strong remain. Currently two black puddings reign supreme, though they are starving for more.

Creatures: The puddings look much like the walls and floor and have found it to be a useful tactic to remain still while prey comes to them. As such they are hiding amidst the bumps and knobs of the black stone. A DC 10 Spot check is required to notice that not all of the floor is actually made of stone and unmoving slime.

Black Pudding (2): Hp 110, 120; MM 201.

Tactics: The puddings are simple minded. They move towards the nearest prey and try to grapple with it. As they are not intelligent and seek only to feed, they fight to the death.

Development: Noise from this chamber does not draw further attention from the other residents of the central keep. They are used to the sounds of desperate food trying escape the puddings.

Scaling the Encounter

7th-Level Characters: Remove one black pudding.

8th-Level through 11th-Level Characters: No change.

3. Hall of Glory

This room contains two vats bubbling with dark ichors. The walls are covered in stone shelves that support the weight of thousands of scrolls and writing implements.

The room houses a great storehouse of blasphemous lore concerning the aberrations of the Dragon Below written in Undercommon, though even that wealth fills but a fragment of the scrolls here. The rest simply repeat the word Thoon over and over again.

The two vats are used as sleeping chambers by the two mind flayers that lair here and radiate faint evocation magic (DC 16 Spellcraft) from the enchantment that keeps the fluid in each of them warm. The foul alchemical liquid in each is mildly acidic and does 1 point of acid damage per round of contact with the skin of any non-aberration creature.

Creatures: Two of the most trusted minions of the Lord of Waves were imprisoned with him and now lair here. They know that even now their master entertains with a group of outsiders that seemed incline to free the mind flayers from their imprison in the Castle of the Waves and they are unwilling to allow others to disrupt those talks. As such they attack anyone who tries move past their lair.

Renzesk the Disciple of Thoon: mind flayer cleric 4, hp 90; See Combat Statistics.

Velosk the Shadow Flayer: hp 52; See Combat Statistics.

Tactics: The mind flayers readily enter into melee combat after unleashing their dreaded mind blasts. Renzesk tries to disarm any melee combatants that have resisted the effects of their mind blast while Velosk attempts to poison any casters, possibly moving behind the party's lines by use of his shadowcloak ability. The illithids are fanatical in their belief in Thoon and their desire to escape this prison that they spread the word of Thoon. They fight to the death and anyone who surrenders or is captured becomes food. Due to the magical effects imprisoning the illithid and their constructs, they cannot use their *plane shift* spell-like ability.

Development: If the PCs manage to enter Room 4: The Crafter's Hall without having encountered the illithids in this room, they will be attracted to any sounds of combat coming from that room. If any fights, or even loud arguments break out in Room 4, the illithids will move there to see what the disturbance is. They do not interfere unless the PCs are attempting to harm the Lord of Waves.

If the party should manage to capture and hold one or both of the mind flayers, a dangerous proposition indeed, they continue to chant Thoon but if questioned cannot coherent explain what or who Thoon is. For more on Thoon, see the nearby sidebar.

Combat Statistics

Renzesk, Disciple of Thoon CR 10

Mind flayer cleric 4

NE Medium aberration

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +13, Spot +13

Languages Undercommon; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22 (+1 Dex, +9 armor, +3 natural)

hp 90 (12 HD)

SR 25

Fort +9, **Ref** +4, **Will** +15

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares) in full plate; base speed 30 ft.

Melee 4 tentacles +11 (1d4+1) or

heavy flail +12/+7 (1d10+2/19-20)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +10

Atk Options Improved Disarm, improved grab

Special Actions extract, *mind blast*, rebuke undead 7/day (+6, 2d6+8, 4th)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 4th):

2nd—*cure moderate wounds*, *hold person* (2) (DC 17), *spiritual weapon*^D

1st—*cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *protection from good*^D, *shield of faith* (2)

0—*cure minor wounds*, *detect magic* (3), *light*

D: Domain spell. Deity: Thoon. Domains: Evil, War.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th):

At will—*charm monster* (DC 18), *detect thoughts* (DC 16), *levitate*, *plane shift*, *suggestion* (DC 17)

Abilities Str 12, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 20, Wis 21, Cha 19

SQ extract, improved grab, *mind blast*, spell-like abilities, spells

Feats Ability Focus (*mind blast*), Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Martial Weapon Proficiency (heavy flail), Weapon Focus (heavy flail)

Skills Bluff +14, Concentration +19, Diplomacy +15, Disguise +4 (+6 acting), Hide +4, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (religion) +15, Knowledge (the planes) +13, Listen +13, Move Silently +4, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +20, Spot +13

Possessions +1 fullplate, +1 heavy flail

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a Thoon disciple must hit a creature of up to Large size with a tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and attaches a tentacle to the opponent's head. A Thoon disciple can grab a Huge or larger creature, but only if it can somehow reach the foe's head. If a Thoon disciple begins its turn with at least one tentacle attached, it can try to attach its remaining tentacles with a single grapple check. The opponent can escape with a single successful grapple check or an Escape Artist check, but the Thoon disciple gets a +2 circumstance bonus for every tentacle that was attached at the beginning of the opponent's turn.

Extract (Ex) If a Thoon disciple begins its turn with all four tentacles attached to its opponent and makes a successful grapple check, it extracts that opponent's brain, instantly killing the creature. Constructs, elementals, oozes, plants, and undead are immune.

Mind Blast (Sp) 60-foot cone, stun for 3d4 rounds, Will DC 20 negates.

Hook "For the glory of Thoon!"

Velosk the Shadow Flayer CR 8

NE Medium aberration

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +10, Spot +10

Languages Undercommon; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+3 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 52 (8 HD)

SR 25

Fort +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8

Speed base speed 30 ft.

Melee 4 tentacles +9 (1d4+1) or

mwk spear +10 (1d8+1/x3) or

mwk dagger +10 (1d4+1/19-20 plus poison)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +7

Atk Options Quick Draw, improved grab, poison (DC 17, 1 Str drain/2d6 Str)

Special Actions extract, *mind blast*, shadowcloak

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th):

At will—*detect thoughts* (DC 14), *plane shift*

Abilities Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 19, Wis 15, Cha 15

SQ extract, improved grab, *mind blast*, poison use, shadowcloak, spell-like abilities

Feats Improved Initiative, Quick Draw, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +10, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +2 (+4 acting), Hide +13, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Listen +10, Move Silently +13, Sense Motive +7, Spot +10, Survival +2 (+4 on other planes)

Possessions masterwork spear, 4 masterwork daggers (each poisoned with shadow essence)

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a shadow flayer must hit a creature of up to Large size with a tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and attaches a tentacle to the opponent's head. A shadow flayer can grab a Huge or larger creature, but only if it can somehow reach the foe's head. If a shadow flayer begins its turn with at least one tentacle attached, it can try to attach its remaining tentacles with a single grapple check. The opponent can escape with a single successful

grapple check or an Escape Artist check, but the shadow flayer gets a +2 circumstance bonus for every tentacle that was attached at the beginning of the opponent's turn.

Extract (Ex) If a shadow flayer begins its turn with all four tentacles attached to its opponent and makes a successful grapple check, it extracts that opponent's brain, instantly killing the creature. Constructs, elementals, oozes, plants, and undead are immune.

Mind Blast (Sp) 60-foot cone, stun for 3d4 rounds, Will DC 20 negates.

Shadowcloak (Su) A shadow flayer can draw on its own inner stores of quintessence to briefly become invisible. By expending a swift action and taking 5 points of damage, a shadow flayer becomes invisible for 1 round. Unlike the *invisibility* spell, shadowcloak doesn't end when a shadow flayer attacks.

Poison Use (Ex) A shadow flayer is skilled in the use of poison and never risks accidentally poisoning itself when applying poison to a weapon.

Hook "Thoon can hide all things from your sight."

Scaling the Encounter

7th-Level Characters: Remove Velossk.

8th-Level and 10th-Level Characters: No change.

11th-Level Characters: Add Valessk, another shadow flayer with the same combat statistics as Velossk.

What/Who is Thoon?

What or who is Thoon? In fact it doesn't really matter, as the mind flayers are incapable of describing Thoon in detail, even under magical compulsion. The genuinely seem unable to understand questions such as "Is Thoon a god?" The mind flayers respond answer, "Thoon is Thoon, and Thoon is all!" Almost any question about Thoon's nature gets the same response. Whatever or whomever Thoon is, the illithids strong believe in him, or it.

Part Six: The Lord of Waves

The culmination of the party's trip down the Hydra and infiltration of the Castle of the Waves comes as they enter the Crafter's Hall and confront the Lord of Waves himself. The pirate expedition has already arrived and is negotiating for the rights to use the floating castle as battle platform from which to launch further assaults upon Stormreach.

4. The Crafter's Hall

The room is mad collection of bubbling vats of acrid solutions, strange glass contraptions sprouting wires and tubes, arcing electricity and harsh flashing lights. Pieces that look like they may have once been, or may soon be, humanoid float behind glass walls, lie on cold tables or hang suspended from sparking hooks. Any sane man would be overcome with nausea and horror.

Without the need for sleep as any man would understand, the Lord of Waves has spent centuries at work in this room, distilling magical quintessence from the prison that holds him and followers and using it to shape his creations as Thoon dictates. He has waited for the time when the giant prison would fail and he would be free of this place, but to free himself requires fresh brains, the one thing he cannot create out of raw quintessence. In order to be free of this place he requires three fresh brains that he can use in a ritual to break the chains that hold him and the Castle of the Waves in this lake.

Amidst the mad alchemical gear stand several other beings. An immense, slug-like creature with a giant maw dripping with spittle and a mane of canisters, each containing a glowing, green fluid stands to one side being addressed by a beautiful woman who floats on air, her diaphanous scarves and silks floating on unseen air currents. The woman is surrounded by a motley assortment swashbucklers and sea rats.

All conversations stop at the PCs enter and the assembled look in their directions. The Lord of Waves asks, in a deep blubbery, lisping voice if the PCs have also come seeking the aid of the Lord of Waves? At the same time, anger flashes across Pluresa's face like a raging thunderstorm, but she does not interfere since she needs the madcrafter. PCs that have played *CSH-08 Racing Midnight* may recognize Pluresa as the mistress of Maggago atoll and a leader of the Captains' Alliance.

The Lord of Waves sees the opportunity to negotiate a better deal by playing the two groups off against each other. He is confident enough in his own power and the proximity of his nearby allies that he feels he has a position of strength and can afford to try for a better deal.

This encounter is intended to begin as a role-playing encounter with all three parties negotiating for what they want most. It is likely that combat of some kind will result, but it does not have to start out that way. If the PCs attack without negotiation, they must fight both the pirate and illithid forces at once.

Aggressive Negotiations

The negotiations are intended to be freeform, as each party of PCs are likely to be composed of different combinations of each faction and thus will have different goals. Presented here are goals of the flayers of Thoon and the pirates of the Captains' Alliance, as well as what they can offer to get their way. If your players do not wish to negotiate, you may have them make opposed Diplomacy rolls.

Flayers of Thoon: The illithids needs three brains. This is paramount. If they can receive more (since who doesn't like a fresh meal after a few hundred years) that may help sway them, as does offers of magic items or slaves. They have no wish for others to convert to worship of Thoon as they do not believe non-illithids to be worthy. Offers of continued alliance might be considered if the PCs seem subservient enough. Whomever they chose, they are willing to offer up the floating castle or pilot it themselves. If threatened, the Lord of Waves claims no one but an illithid can pilot the Castle of the Waves (true) and without him it will sink below the waters if they try to move it (not true). It is up to the DM to decide what terms the illithid will agree to, but he absolutely must be free of the bonds holding him here to side with either group.

Captains' Alliance: The pirates of the Captain's Alliance want the floating castle to use as a siege platform against the city of Stormreach. Pluresa is unnerved by the presence of the mind flayers and would prefer to determine how to pilot it without them, though would consent to their presence if it helped her position. She has no problem freeing the illithids from the bonds that hold them and fully intended to offer up the needed brains. While she originally intended to use some of her crew, the PCs are a more convenient source and if the PCs seem to be winning the argument or talks are stalling, she orders the party served up for the illithids. Her crew attacks immediately.

PCs: It is likely many PCs will have ethical issues with feeding others to the illithids and loosing such horrors upon the world, but their orders are clear. They must find some way to secure the Castle of the Waves. It should be clear to the PCs that violence may be their only issue and the illithids are more than willing to stand back and allow the humanoids to kill each other. It is possible that a socially cunning party could battle the pirates and then heal themselves while speaking further with the Lord of Waves, and then slay the illithids as well. In this case they will have secured the castle, though without its pilot, but for some PCs, this may be the best option. Of course Cabal of Shadows PCs may be more than willing to ally with the Illithids and offer up hosts of fresh brains and slaves to get their way.

A Break Down in Communication

Unless the PCs are willing to hand the castle over the pirates, it is likely that combat will eventually ensue. The enemies involved will vary significantly based on the outcome of the negotiations. If the pirates and the illithid have allied, there may be little choice but to flee, but if the PCs have previously slain the mind flayers in Room 3 and attack only the pirates, they may have a relatively easy combat. The DM should include only those enemies that are appropriate and add the mind flayers from Room 3 if they are alive and the Lord of Waves is attacked.

Lord of Waves: madcrafter of Thoon, hp 125; See Combat Statistics.

Sea Dog (4): male half-orc fighter 1/warrior 1, hp 18; See Combat Statistics.

Elennina Mistrunner: female half-elf bard 7, hp 37; See Combat Statistics.

Red Harl: male half-elf fighter 1/ranger 2/sorcerer 2/scar enforcer 3, hp 54; See Combat Statistics.

Volnik: male half-orc barbarian 2/fighter 2/ranger 1/outcast champion 4, hp 87; See Combat Statistics.

"Pluresa," the Storm Witch Siren: female simulacrum siren sorcerer 4/dread witch 2, hp 61; See Combat Statistics.

Tactics (illithids): If involved, the Lord of Waves uses his *mind blast ability* and then expels a scyther of Thoon trying to hit as many PCs as possible with the acid. He continues this tactic into the second round before entering melee himself. He tries to avoid birthing a third scyther of Thoon unless additional actions are absolutely necessary. As he is imprisoned here, he cannot run and thus fights to the death. For tactics of his allied mind flayers, see Room 3.

Tactics (pirates): If it becomes clear that negotiations are breaking down and combat is likely, the pirates begin preparing by nonchalantly drinking potions or casting preparatory spells. Elennina will begin with a quickened *haste* followed by *inspirational boost* and bard song only to drop that for more spell support such as *cure light wounds* for her allies, *silence* near enemy spellcasters, or *glitterdust* against troublesome fighters; while using her bow and inspiring courage. She hides behind cover if possible and if directly approached, she tries to use her whip to trip enemies. Volnik attacks to the best of his ability, trying to block the stairs. He uses his avenging strike as soon as appropriate. Note allies within thirty feet gain his aura of confidence as well as his teamwork benefit. Red Harl attacks or uses spells as appropriate, trying to fight as smart as possible; smiting at the first opportunity. The sea dogs attack to aid Volnik and Red Harl, using

Volnik's Teamwork benefit and their Distracting Attack feat. The simulacrum of Pluresa flies out of reach and triggers her *improved invisibility* ability followed by devastating spells like *phantasmal killer*. If her enemies seem immune to her powerful fear based effects, she switches to more traditional attack spells such as lightning bolt or use of her *charming song*. Everyone in her party is already under its effects, so she has no qualms against using it again and affecting the entire room. Due to the recent attack on her base by the Blackwheel Company, she gives its members openly displaying their heraldry undue attention.

Development: If "Pluresa" is slain, she dissolves in a puddle of slush and snow making it clear that the woman here is not one of the true Secret Masters of the Captains' Alliance.

Combat Statistics

Lord of Waves, Madcrafter of Thoon CR 10

NE Huge aberration

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +17, Spot +17

Languages Undercommon; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 20, touch 8, flat-footed 20 (-2 size, +12 natural)

hp 125 (10 HD); fast healing 5

Immune acid

Fort +11, **Ref** +3, **Will** +9

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee bite +16 (2d8+15 plus 4d6 acid)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +25

Special Actions launch spawn, *mind blast*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th):

At will—*detect magic*

Abilities Str 30, Dex 10, Con 26, Int 19, Wis 15, Cha 13

SQ launch spawn, *mind blast*, spell-like abilities

Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Sense Quintessence (can use *detect magic* to detect quintessence), Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Concentration +21, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (the planes) +17, Listen +17, Spot +17, Survival +2 (+4 on other planes)

Launch Spawn (Su) A madcrafter of Thoon usually takes a full day to give birth to a stormcloud of Thoon or a scyther of Thoon. When threatened, however, it can create constructs far more rapidly, then expel them in globules of caustic spittle. Once per round, as a swift action, a madcrafter of Thoon can spit a stormcloud of Thoon or a scyther of Thoon. The caustic birthing fluid that surrounds the new construct covers the square the construct lands in and all adjacent squares. Creatures in those squares take 6d6 points of acid damage (Reflex DC 23 half). For 1 minute afterward, any creature that steps in a square covered by acid takes 3d6 points of acid damage. A typical madcrafter of Thoon has enough stored quintessence to safely use its launch spawn ability twice per day. If it uses launch spawn a third time, it loses its fast healing ability for the rest of the day. The fourth and subsequent times it uses launch spawn, it takes 20 points of damage.

Mind Blast (Sp) 60-foot0cone, stuns for 3d4 rounds (Will DC 15 negates). Unlike its mind flyer cousins, a madcrafter of Thoon can use its *mind blast* only three times per day.

Description This immense, slug-like creature has a mane of canisters, each containing a glowing, green fluid. The front of its body seems like it is all mouth—a maw dripping with spittle.

Scyther of Thoon CR 6

N Medium construct

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., illumination, low-light vision; Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages understands telepathic commands

AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16 (+2 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 69 (9 HD); natural healing

Immune acid, construct immunities

Resist electricity 10
Fort +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee 2 mwk scythes +11 each (2d4+6/x4)
Ranged *searing light* +8 touch (damage varies; see below)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +10
Special Actions dispelling touch

Abilities Str 18, Dex 14, Con -, Int -, Wis 13, Cha 5
SQ construct traits, dispelling touch, *searing light*
Feats –
Skills Listen +1, Spot +1
Possessions 2 masterwork scythes

Illumination As long as at least two other scythers of Thoon are within 30 feet, the glowing eyes of a scyther shed light in a 60-foot cone and provides shadowy illumination in a 120-foot cone. A scyther of Thoon can close its eyes to douse the illumination, but doing so leaves it blind. A scyther of Thoon that has only one other scyther in range still has glowing eyes, but those eyes provide only a 20-foot radius of bright illumination and a 40-foot radius of shadowy illumination. A scyther of Thoon by itself has faintly glowing eyes that provide shadowy illumination in a 5-foot radius.

Natural Healing (Ex) A scyther of Thoon is capable of natural healing, albeit very slowly. A scyther of Thoon heals 1 hit point for every 8 hours it remains motionless.

Searing Light (Sp) A scyther of Thoon can focus its glowing eyes to emit a dangerous beam of light that functions as a *searing light* spell; at will; +8 ranged touch; caster level 6th. Unlike the spell, a scyther of Thoon's *searing light* deals an extra 1d8 points of damage for each scyther of Thoon within 30 feet (maximum 5d8), including the scyther emitting the *searing light*. After one scyther of Thoon has used *searing light*, the glowing eyes of any others within 30 feet dim briefly, and none of those creatures can use *searing light* during the same round.

Dispelling Touch (Su) With a successful melee touch attack, a scyther of Thoon can wipe away spells and magical effects. This ability functions as a targeted *dispel magic* spell (caster level 6th). Against each ongoing spell currently in effect on the object or creature touched, a scyther makes a dispel check at +6 against a DC of 11 + the spell's caster level. Each time a scyther of Thoon uses dispelling touch, it takes 10 points of damage.

Description *Before is a silvery automaton with four arms, perfectly constructed to wield the two wicked-looking scythes it carries. Its eyes glow as they cast forth beams of illumination. It crouches as if preparing to attack.*

Sea Dog CR 1

Male half-orc fighter 1/warrior 1
CN Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen -1, Spot -1
Languages Common, orc.

AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12 (+1 Dex, +2 armor)
hp 18 (2 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +1, **Will** +0

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee great club +7 (1d10+6)
Ranged javelin +3 (1d6+4)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +6
Atk Options Distracting attack (When you make a melee attack against a creature, whether you are successful or not, all other creatures get a +1 circumstance bonus on attack rolls against that creature until the start of your next turn.)

Abilities Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 6
Feats Distracting Attack, Weapon Focus (great club)
Skills Intimidate +0, Tumble +3
Possessions Leather armor, great club, 2 javelins

Hook "Pluresa says you die!"

Elennina Mistrunner CR 7

Female half-elf bard 7

CE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, elven

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+3 Dex, +4 armor)

hp 37 (7 HD)

Immune sleep

Resist +2 vs. enchantment spells

Fort +4, **Ref** +8, **Will** +5

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee rapier +5 (1d6/18-20) or

whip +5 (1d3 nonlethal plus trip)

Ranged short bow +8 (1d6/x3)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +5

Atk Options *fascinate* (DC Perform check), *suggestion* (DC 17)

Special Actions countersong, inspire competence, inspire courage +1

Combat Gear tanglefoot bag, flask of acid, *scroll of grease*, *scroll of silent image*, *necklace of fireballs I*, *wand of summon monster I*

Bard Spells Known (CL 7th):

3rd (1/day)—*haste*, *see invisibility*

2nd (3/day)—*blur*, *glitterdust* (DC 16), *heroism*, *silence*

1st (4/day)—*cure light wounds*, *focusing chant*, *inspirational boost*, *Tasha's hideous laughter* (DC 15)

0 (3/day)—*daze* (DC 14), *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 14), *lullaby*, *message*, *read magic*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 18

SQ bardic knowledge (+7)

Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Whip), Lingering Song (bardic song effects last 10 rounds after you stop playing), Metamagic Song (spend uses of bardic song instead of increasing the spell level when applying metamagic feats), Quicken Spell

Skills Bluff +14, Concentration +11, Diplomacy +8, Gather Information +6, Listen +1, Perform (Lute) +14, Search +1, Spellcraft +10 (+12 scrolls), Spot +1, Tumble +13, Use Magic Device +14 (+16 scrolls)

Possessions Chain shirt, whip, rapier, shortbow, 20 arrows, spell component pouch, lute, black clothing, *lesser enlarge metamagic rod*, *wand of detect magic*

Hook "As the mistress commands."

Red Harl CR 8

Male half-elf fighter 1/ranger 2/sorcerer 2/scar enforcer 3

NE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, elven

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +4 *mage armor*)

hp 54 (8 HD)

Immune sleep

Resist +2 vs. enchantment spells

Fort +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee shortsword +9/+9/+4 (1d6+4/19-20)

Ranged longbow +8/+3 (1d8/x3)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8

Atk Options favored enemy (human +2, elf +4), smite enemy (1/day), sneak attack +1d6

Combat Gear flask of acid, *Quaal's feather token: whip*

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 7th):

1st (6/day)—*critical strike, mage armor[†], shield*
0 (6/day)—*acid splash* (+8 ranged touch), *detect magic, read magic, resistance, touch of fatigue* (DC 12)
[†]Already cast

Abilities Str 18, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 14

SQ wild empathy (+4)

Feats Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Track, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (Shortsword)

Skills Bluff +10, Concentration +6, Diplomacy +8, Gather Information +4, Hide +6, Intimidate +4, Listen +1, Move Silently +6, Search +1, Sense Motive +7, Spot +1, Tumble +13

Possessions Shortsword (2), longbow, 20 arrows, spell component pouch (2), lacy shirt, leather breeches, high boots, key, *brooch of shielding*.

Smite Enemy (Su): Once per day starting at 2nd level, you can deliver a powerful melee attack to a human or elf foe. You add your Charisma bonus (if any) on your attack roll and deal an extra 1 point of damage per class level. If you accidentally smite a creature that is neither an elf nor a human, the smite has no effect, but the ability is still used up for the day.

Hook “Give us a smile love, a blood smile.”

Volnik CR 9

Male half-orc barbarian 2/fighter 2/ranger 1/outcast champion 4

CE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +8, Spot +0

Languages Common, orc

Aura Confidence (all allies within 30 ft. gain +4 to Will saves; has not been added into ally stat blocks)

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor); uncanny dodge

hp 87 (9 HD)

Fort +14, **Ref** +3, **Will** +8

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee falchion +15/+10 (2d4+6/18-20)

Ranged longbow +9/+4 (1d8/x3)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +13

Atk Options Avenging strike, desperate fury, favored enemy (human +2), Instantaneous Rage, rage (1/day), Power Critical (+4 to confirm threats)

Combat Gear *potion of shield of faith* +2

Sorcerer Spells known (CL 7th):

1st (6/day)—*critical strike, mage armor[†], shield*

0 (6/day)—*acid splash* (+8 ranged touch), *detect magic, read magic, resistance, touch of fatigue* (DC 12)

[†]Already cast

Abilities Str 18, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 16

SQ teamwork, wild empathy (+4)

Feats Improved Initiative, Improved Toughness, Instantaneous Rage, Power Attack, Power Critical, Track, Weapon Focus (Falchion)

Skills Hide +12, Intimidate +11, Listen +8, Survival +5

Possessions Breastplate, MW falchion, falchion, dagger, longbow, 20 arrows

Aura of Confidence (Ex): Your presence emboldens allies within 30 feet who can see you (including yourself). They add your class level as a morale bonus on their Will saves. This effect is lost if you fall unconscious or die.

Avenging Strike (Ex): You are surrounded by allies who rely on you for victory, and you take this responsibility to heart. You can attempt an avenging strike on an enemy who has dealt damage to an ally of yours within the last hour. The avenging strike must be delivered with a melee attack. You add your Charisma modifier (if positive) to your attack roll and deal an extra 1d6 points of damage per outcast champion level, if you accidentally strike a creature that has not dealt damage to an ally within the last hour, the avenging strike has no effect, but that use of the ability is still expended. You may use an avenging strike once per day per point of Charisma bonus (minimum 1/day).

Desperate Fury (Ex): You are at your best when times are worst. Beginning at 3rd level, once per day when you are reduced to fewer than one-half your full normal hit points, or when you are fatigued or

exhausted, you can enter a state of desperate fury While in a desperate fury, you gain a +2 morale bonus to Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution. The desperate fury lasts for 3 rounds + 1 round per point of your (newly improved) Constitution bonus. Unlike with a barbarian's rage, you have no penalties or limitations while in a desperate fury; however, if you become frightened, panicked, or cowering, the desperate fury ends immediately.

Teamwork (Ex): You are skilled at creating a strong bond of teamwork between yourself and your allies. Starting at 4th level, whenever you or any ally within 30 feet who can see or hear you uses the aid another action, the bonus provided on attack rolls, AC, or skill checks improves by 2 (from +2 to +4).

Hook “Smash for lady! Raaaahhhhhhh!”

“Pluresa,” the Storm Witch Siren CR 11

Female simulacrum siren sorcerer 4/dread witch 2

CE Medium fey (Aquatic)

Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision, see *invisibility*; **Listen** +3, **Spot** +3

Languages Common, sylvan

AC 23, touch 19, flat-footed 19 (+4 Dex, +5 deflection, +4 *mage armor*)

hp 61 (10 HD); **DR** 5/cold iron

Resist +5 vs. fear

Fort +3, **Ref** +9, **Will** +14

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); swim 60 ft.

Melee short sword +4 (1d6/19-20) or
touch +4 (1d4 Int)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +4

Atk Options *Charming song*, intelligence damage, master of terror (+1 DC to fear spells)

Special Actions absorb fear, soothing touch

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 9th):

4th (5/day)—*confusion* (DC 21), *phantasmal killer* (DC 22)

3rd (7/day)—*dispel magic*, *hold person* (DC 19), *lightning bolt* (DC 18)

2nd (7/day)—*false life*[†], *fear* (DC 19), *scorching ray* (+8 ranged touch), see *invisibility*[†]

1st (7/day)—*bane* (DC 18), *cause fear* (DC 18), *mage armor*[†], *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* (+8 ranged touch)

0 (6/day)—*acid splash* (+8 ranged touch), *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *light*, *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

[†]Already cast

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th):

1/day—*fog cloud*, *improved invisibility*, *polymorph self*.

Abilities Str 10, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 20

SQ wild empathy (+7)

Feats Combat Expertise, Practiced Spellcaster, Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Focus (necromancy), Unnatural Will

Skills Concentration +13, Diplomacy +6, Heal +10, Hide +11, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Perform (dance) +19, Perform (sing) +19, Spellcraft +6, Swim +15, Survival +10

Possessions *glamoured wings of flying* (no visible wings), *pink and green sphere ioun stone*, *amulet of health* +2

Absorb Fear (Su) Starting at 2nd level, you can turn your own fear, whether magical or mystical in origin, into extra power for your spells. Any time you are exposed to a condition that could make you shaken, all your spells function at +1 caster level; if the condition could make you frightened, they function at +2 caster level, if panicked, they function at +3 caster level. These bonuses last for the duration of the fear effect, or for a number of rounds equal to your charisma modifier, whichever is less. (Of course, if you fail your saving throw against the condition, you might not be in a position to use the bonuses, but you do have them.) These bonuses are treated in all ways as though had failed the save. In other words, if you are subject to a spell that causes panic on a failed save but only frightens those who make the save, you gain the bonus from being panicked even if you make the save. You can, instead of gaining these bonuses, choose to cast a single extra spell; this casting does not use up a spell slot. You must make this choice the instant you are subject to the fear effect, and once you have made your choice you must

cast the spell within a number of rounds equal to your Charisma modifier. You can cast an additional cantrip if shaken, an additional 1st-level spell if frightened, or an additional 2nd-level spell if panicked. If you are subject to a second fear effect while still enjoying the effects of the first—either the granted benefits or holding the extra spell—you must decide whether to keep the original effect or replace it with the new one; you cannot keep benefit from more than one fear effect at a time.

Charming Song (Sp) At will, a siren can sing a special song that functions like a *charm person* spell (caster level 2nd; save DC 16), except that it lasts for 11 hours and affects every creature that hears it.

Intelligence Damage (Su) Any creature hit by a siren's touch attack takes 1d4 points of Intelligence damage (or 2d4 on a critical hit).

Soothing Touch (Su) A siren, if it desires, can use its touch to restore 1d6 points of damage caused by any siren.

Hook “Come on, do it for me...”

Scaling the Encounter

7th-Level Characters: Remove two sea dogs and Red Harl. Pluresa has used her *improved invisibility* earlier in the day.

8th-Level Characters: Remove Red Harl.

10th-Level Characters: Add two more Sea Dogs and all of the pirate NPCs have consumed a *hero's feast* earlier in the day (cast off a scroll using Elennina's Use Magic Device skill).

11th-Level Characters: Add Black Harl (same stats as Red Harl) and two more Sea Dogs and all of the pirate NPCs have consumed a *hero's feast* earlier in the day (cast off a scroll using Elennina's Use Magic Device skill).

News Spells

Critical Strike

Divination

Level: Assassin 1, sorcerer/wizard 1

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 swift action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 round

While this spell is in effect, your melee attacks are more likely to strike a foe's vital areas. Whenever you make a melee attack against a flanked foe or against a foe denied its Dexterity bonus, you deal an extra 1d6 points of damage, your weapon's threat range is doubled (as if under the effects of *keen edge*), and you gain a +4 insight bonus on rolls made to confirm critical hits. The increased threat range granted by this spell doesn't stack with any other effect that increases your weapon's threat range. Creatures immune to sneak attack are immune to the extra damage dealt by your attacks.

Focusing Chant

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]

Level: Bard 1

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Targets: You

Duration: 1 minute (D)

You can use *focusing chant* to block out distractions and hone your attention. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus to attack rolls, skill checks, and ability checks for the duration of the spell. You need not concentrate on *focusing chant*, but you must continue to mutter the syllables of the chant to maintain the spell. Therefore, you cannot speak, use bardic music effects, or cast spells with verbal components while a *focusing chant* spell is in effect.

Dismissing *focusing chant* is an immediate action.

Inspirational Boost

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting, Sonic]

Level: Bard 1

Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 swift action
Range: Personal
Targets: You
Duration: 1 round or special; see text

When you play your instrument, sing your song, recite your epic poem, or speak your words of encouragement, you fill your allies with greater confidence than normal. When this spell is in effect, the morale bonus granted by your inspire courage bardic music increases by 1.

The effect lasts until your inspire courage effect ends. If you don't begin to use your inspire courage ability before the beginning of your next turn, the spell's effect ends.

Ending the Adventure

Choose the appropriate ending for your party. If the PCs arrive at another conclusion than what is presented, it is up to the judge to determine the appropriate ending.

Success

Read this if the PCs successfully defeated the pirates, claimed the Castle of the Waves, and convinced the Lord of Waves to pilot it for them.

The devil's bargain made, the Lord of Waves, master of the floating castle, has agreed to pilot the unusual fortress and help to relieve the stranglehold of the pirate fleet. While many of your faction question the wisdom of allying with the Thoonite illithids, it is hard to argue when the choice is between starvation or a full belly. Only time will tell if the choices you have made are worse than alternative, but for now your faction will persevere.

PCs who receive this Conclusion receive the story object **EXTH01 Child of the Hydra** and the event treasure.

Partial Success

Read this if the PCs successfully defeated the pirates and claim the Castle of the Waves but either slay the Lord of Waves or otherwise part company with the Thoonite.

You have claimed the Castle of the Waves for Stormreach and hope to relieve the stranglehold of the pirate fleet but it quickly becomes clear that none among you can pilot the strange fortress. Following your return, your faction dispatches experts to the site. You are commended for preventing the fortress from being commandeered by the pirate fleet as well as your defeat of the Thoonite illithids. Only time will tell if the choices you have made are enough to forestall widespread starvation throughout the city. For now, your faction will persevere.

PCs who receive this Conclusion receive the story object **EXTH01 Child of the Hydra** and the event treasure.

Failure

Read this if the PCs failed to stop the pirate fleet from claiming the Castle of the Waves.

Disaster for Stormreach! Not only is the strange floating fortress not the answer to the prayers of the starving, but it will now be used as a foul weapon from which the pirate fleet might further press its heel to throat of the city. Your superiors quietly listen to your report with empty expressions, their thoughts already looking for some other option.

PCs who receive this Conclusion do not receive the story object **EXTH01 Child of the Hydra** and do not gain all of the event treasure.

Resolving Faction Secret Missions

Any PC that completes the secret mission given to them by their faction at the beginning of the adventure should receive the **EXTH02 Faction Hero** story object. Here is a summary of what must be done to receive this reward.

- *Blackwheel Company and Cabal of Shadows*: Blackwheel, not Stormreach or any other faction, must be in charge of the tower; though the Lord of Waves may still pilot it in their name.
- *Covenant of Light*: The Lord of Waves and his minions must die.
- *Crimson Codex*: All of the writings from Room 3 must be recovered.

Event Treasure

If you are running *EXP-6 Taming the Hydra* as part of another event and the PCs successfully claim the Castle of the Waves, they are able to plunder the treasures of that strange place. If they were not successful, but still managed to arrive there, they will have acquired a few items from their fallen foes. If the PCs were Successful or Partially Successful, have each PC record all the event treasures upon their adventure journals in addition to any story objects to be carried on their adventure journal until the results of this event are reported and their EV is updated. If they Failed, they receive only the potions. Each PC receives a *pearl of the sirens*, a non-ioun stone +2 stat boosting item of their choice from the DMG, a *potion of cure serious wounds*, a *potion of levitation* and a *potion of invisibility*.

Adventure Questions

1. How did the PCs deal with the sabotage on the *River Run*?
 - a. The party discovered both acts of sabotage before any harm was done.
 - b. The party discovered one by not the other.
 - c. They were sick from the supplies, and the elemental broke free further delaying the party.
2. What happened when the party was attacked by the pyrohydra?
 - a. The party slaughtered the snake and had extra provisions for the trip!
 - b. The party out ran the slow moving hydra.
 - c. The snake scattered the PCs and feasted on the remains of the party.
 - d. They never made it that far.
3. How did the PCs deal with the pirate ambush atop the invisible stair?
 - a. It decimated them.
 - b. It left them weak, but alive. The pirates fled or were defeated with great difficulty.
 - c. The PCs destroyed the pirates.
 - d. They never made it that far.
4. Which best describes the party's entrance into the castle?
 - a. The regenerating gates and the constructs repelled the party's efforts.
 - b. The PCs smashed their way inside.
 - c. They never made it this far.
5. Did the PCs survive/defeat the lightning barb trap?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.
 - c. They never made it this far.
6. Did the PCs defeat the minions of the Lord of Waves?
 - a. They squashed all opposition.
 - b. They stopped some but not all.
 - c. The party was forced to flee almost immediately.
 - d. They never got this far.
7. Did the party manage to secure the Castle of the Waves?
 - a. They were never in a position to claim the castle.
 - b. They stopped the pirates from getting it, but they are not able to pilot it.
 - c. They successfully allied with the Thoonite illithids and the Castle of the Waves was theirs!
8. Rate the players' role-playing (while keeping in mind limitations of convention time restrictions)?
 - a. Excellent, they should all be on the silver screen.
 - b. Good, you had a fun time.
 - c. Fair, someone used a funny voice.
 - d. Poor, they rolled some dice and ignored chances to role-play.

Story Objects

Child of the Hydra

Code: EXTH01

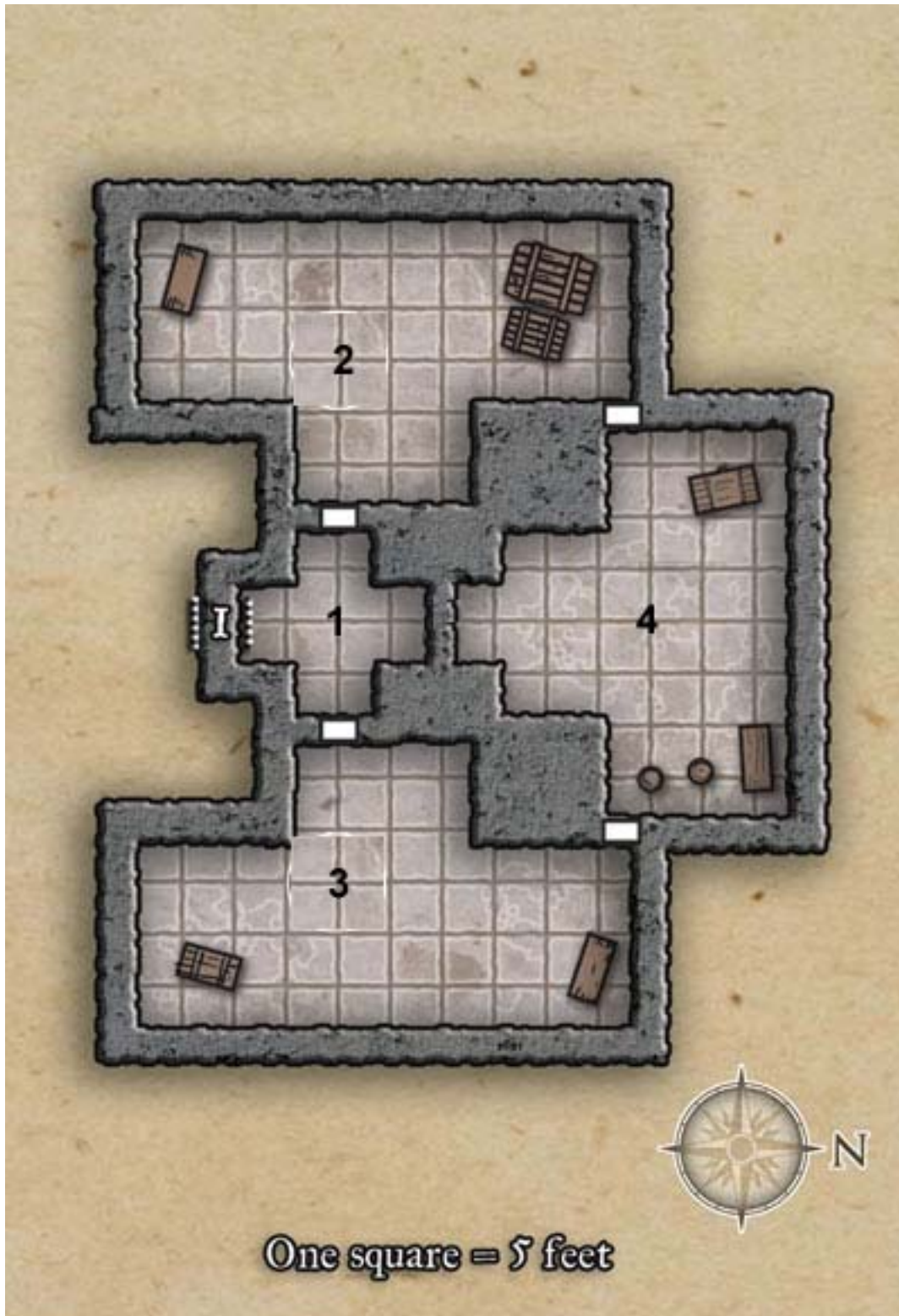
Your exposure to the Castle of the Waves and the strange waters that give birth to the Hydra River have changed you. You may expend an action point as a swift action to cover yourself in the oozing slime and sprout several wriggling tentacles. This is a supernatural effect that lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Constitution modifier (minimum one) and gives you a +6 competence bonus to Escape Artist and opposed Grapple checks made to escape a grapple.

Faction Hero

Code: EXTH02

You have succeeded in a secret mission given to you by your Faction and are recognized as a hero among your peers who shower you with gifts and rewards. You receive a bonus of 1000 gp to your EV for each adventure hereafter. This amount will be automatically added to your EV in the character tracker and you should not add it in yourself.

DM Map of the Central Keep



Player Handout #1: Faction Orders

The DM should have each player identify their PC's faction membership and provide them with the appropriate handout. These are SECRET orders and should only be shown to players whose PCs are in the listed Faction.

Blackwheel Company

In order to speed you on your way, the company has airdropped an elemental powered barge at your embarkation point. The *River Run* is an expendable resource if necessary.

Also note that the Company has recently bombarded the pirate base of Muggago Atoll and the pirates may be looking for pay back. Be aware that you be receive undue attention in the field by pirate enemies and their allies.

As part of your efforts to recover this fabled floating castle, R&D in the Arclight Battalion would very much appreciate it if the castle was held under Blackwheel control so they might have time to study how it functions. You have been ordered to negotiate with, or trick, anyone you have to in order to arrange for a Blackwheel garrison to be allowed to staff the tower. As the only military organization is only seems appropriate.

Goal: Blackwheel, not Stormreach or any other faction, must be in charge of the tower.

Cabal of Shadows

Your departure point is the lair of a foul and dangerous creature that goes by the assumed name of Doro the Dock Warden. While Doro is not our ally we know of him and his power. Do not trifle with him if you wish to live. You cannot fulfill your mission if you dead, unless of course one of your allies animates your corpse.

In order to assist in cementing our alliance with the Blackwheel Company, you are ordered to support any Blackwheel efforts to control the fabled floating tower. If no members of the Blackwheel Company are present, you are ordered to arrange for the Arclight Battalion to hold direct control over the castle so they might have time to study how it functions. You will negotiate with, or trick, anyone you have to in order to arrange for a Blackwheel garrison to be allowed to staff the tower.

Goal: Blackwheel, not Stormreach or any other faction, must be in charge of the tower.

Covenant of Light

At your meeting area you will find a large number of crates and barrels filled with supplies sent from Radiant Hold. You may use these foodstuffs and traveling equipment as you see fit, but remember the starvation that troubles the people of Stormreach and know the price that was paid to outfit your mission. If food remains at the end of your travels, you should return whatever can be salvaged.

Records in Radiant Hold suggest that this fabled tower might not only be the answers to your fevered prayers, but that it also serves as a prison for some great evil. You must secure the tower. Stormreach's need is too great to do otherwise. That means you must slay whatever evil is imprisoned in the castle.

Goal: The Lord of Waves and his minions must die.

Crimson Codex

Records held by the Crimson Codex suggest that while the castle may be the answer to your current woes, it is also quite ancient and was likely built by ancient giant wizards. As such it likely holds many ancient writings that may help us decode more of the prophecy. Recover all lost knowledge.

In addition, ancient stories tell tales of a timeless being, possibly a construct, which may live within the floating fortress. If such a being exists, they may be a great font of lost information and you should try to cultivate a relationship with them or their masters that we might understand the past of the Lost Continent further.

Goal: Recover and return with any records or writings.