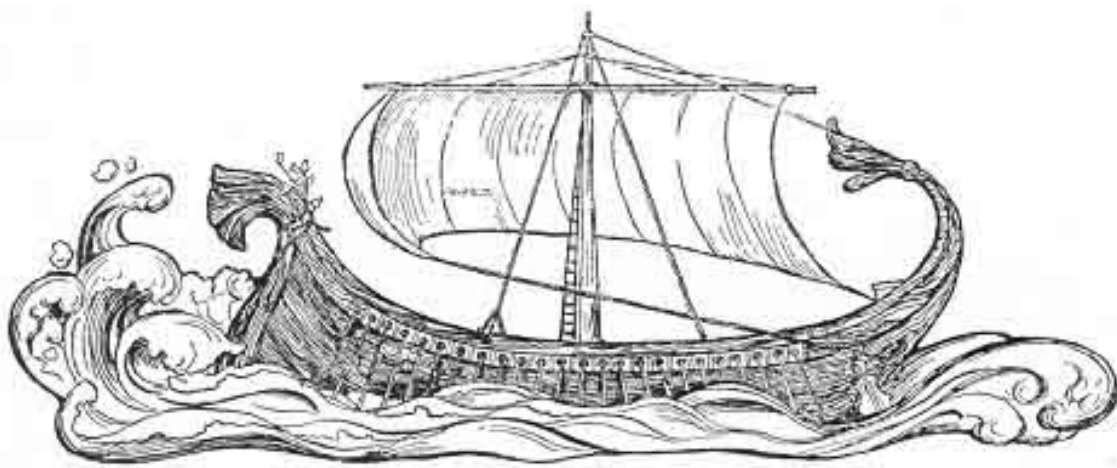


TALES OF THE MIDDLE SEA

Four Maritime Adventures for **Mazes & Minotaurs**

From the pages of the **Minotaur** webzine



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Adventures written by **Kevin Scrivner, Andrew Trent** and **Darren Peech**.

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THE TRIDENT OF RHANA

A heroic mini-quest for first level adventurers by **Kevin Scrivner**

Stopping at an island for fresh water, our heroes find themselves embroiled in the interminable war between the miniature cities of Mus and Rhana. Can they end the conflict, or at least escape the island with whole skins?

Setup

The player-characters are members of an expedition to defeat the pirate Agag the Underhanded, who has been terrorizing merchants and travelers in the seas near the Three Cities. The adventurers are promised appropriate shares of whatever loot is recovered.

If the Maze Master elects to warm things up with a pirate attack, **Agag** is a swaggering **Barbarian** from the Land of the Sun while the members of his crew are **Bandits** (pages 59 and 60 of the *Creature Compendium*). The pirates have a small galley with a single set of oars. There will be two pirates for each player-character in addition to Agag himself. Some of them carry shields but none except Agag will wear a breastplate, since heavy armor can be a liability on the water.

Agag is a wiry, swarthy man with a thick braided beard and an even thicker accent. If cornered, he will fight to the death while constantly taunting the PCs. But he'd prefer to live to fight another day and will escape if possible. His crew is a superstitious and cowardly lot who will attempt to flee if Agag is slain or if more than half their number is killed. If the unthinkable happens and Agag wins, he will bind surviving adventurers for sale at the southern slave markets. But he too will have to stop someplace for water or repairs...

Choices on the Beach

After the battle, the adventurers will need to beach their ship. It may have been damaged in the fight, or they may desperately need to replenish their water supplies after an extended hunt for the pirates. A large, verdant island soon beckons on the horizon. Once ashore, they will easily find the water or repair materials they need. Upon their return, however, they'll find their ship swarming with mice – large, fierce bipedal mice armed with miniature javelins and shields. Their ship has been discovered by a **Muscussi** foraging party (*Creature Compendium*, p 84).

If the adventurers surrender or try to talk to the Muscussi, they'll be escorted to hilly ground higher up on the island, where the mice have their capital of Mus. The mouse city is an entire hill pierced by innumerable tunnels and surrounded by a yard-thick wall as tall as a man.



Agag the Barbarian Pirate

A temple to Athena dominates the city's center. It is small compared to the heroes, but the doll-sized statue of the goddess is clearly visible. At the gates, they will be confronted by stern, young Pontikos III, who recently became king when his father was murdered by Rhabdosian assassins. Pontikos will accuse the PCs of being spies for the frogs and will demand that they prove their good intentions by performing "a small service."

The evil Rhabdosians are attempting to seize a terrible weapon, the Trident of Rhana, housed in a ruin on the far side of the island. Pontikos wants the adventurers to get their hands on it first and, of course, bring it to him. He'll send a guide, Fonias, and a phalanx of mouse warriors along to ensure the PCs aren't ambushed by the frogs on their way. The escort also ensures the adventurers don't make a dash for their ship instead, although Pontikos won't mention the fact. Fonias, a gaunt, scarred rodent who more nearly resembles a rat than a mouse, is actually the head of the Muscussi secret police. He has a dual mission: to recover a mythic item sacred to the mice, the Aegis of Iroas, and to see to it that the Trident of Rhana remains lost.



We just couldn't resist re-using Emmanuel Roudier's classic illustration from the Creature Compendium

If the heroes make a fight of it, their size advantage enables them to attack four mice at once. But the Muscussi are disciplined soldiers, and there are dozens of them. No matter how the battle goes for the adventurers, they'll be "rescued" by the arrival of a larger force of armed bipedal frogs, a patrol of the **Rhabdosians** (*Creature Compendium*, page 84). The frog commander, Aristarchus, a muscular frog with a booming voice and a princely bearing, will insist on escorting the player-characters "for your safety" down the beach to the swampy lower portion of the island where the Rhabdosians dwell in their capital city of Rhana.

The frog city is on a large patch of firm ground surrounded by deep water and quicksand. A temple to Poseidon stands in its center, the doll-sized statue of the god clearly visible. Rhana is enclosed by a tough hedge of thorns to discourage predators such as herons. The PCs will be granted an open-air audience with the king, Batrachos. The Rhabadosian monarch is so immensely fat and elderly he has to be carried on a litter by six brawny frogs. He has crafty eyes and a bleached, warty skin. Batrachos says the adventurers can demonstrate their gratitude for his protection by doing him "a slight favor."

Years ago, the Muscussi villain Iroas stole a sacred treasure from Poseidon's temple, the Trident of Rhana. The treasure is believed to be in a ruin on the far side of the island. Both Batrochos and Poseidon would appreciate them getting it for him.

Naturally he'll send along a guide, Aristarchus, and a phalanx of frog soldiers to make sure the adventurers aren't ambushed by the evil mice (and incidentally don't skip out on the deal).

The adventurers could choose to reject either king's quest and try to escape to their ship. To do so, they'll have to fight their way across rough, unfamiliar territory against hundreds, if not thousands, of tiny opponents.

Should they make it back to the beach, they may find that the monarch has posted a guard on their vessel, or they may encounter an opposing army and be caught between both sides.

If they succeed in launching the ship, they could find dozens of small, aggressive stowaways on board. And they still need repairs or water.

The Temple

The ruin is an ancient Proteusian city near a rocky beach. The mud brick dwellings have long since collapsed but some of the stone public buildings remain.

Chief among these is a weathered complex of dark stone built into the face of the cliff. The front part of the building features a large, pillared hall with a central round fire pit and a skylight overhead. Stone benches run along the sides of the hall. The tapestries that once hung on the walls have rotted but a few spears and shields, green with age, remain (see Map 1).

The back half of the building is a temple to Dagon carved out of a natural sea cavern, with fissures and passages going deeper into the cliff (see Map 2). It is in these fissures that the temple treasure was

stored and where the artifacts sought by the Muscussi and the Rhabdosians may be found. Unfortunately for the adventurers, the city isn't as deserted as it appears.

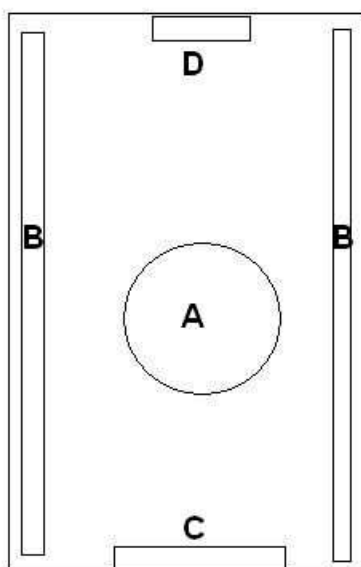
The humans are gone but **Sons of Dagon** (*Creature Compendium*, page 106) still worship regularly in the temple, entering through cliff passages that lead to the sea. There are at least three of them per player-character, and they are none too happy to find the heroes defiling their temple and looting its treasures.

The presence of these finny fiends is why Pontikos (or Batrachos) was so eager to enlist the PCs, not that he bothered to mention them. The mouse (or frog) escort will largely leave the bloodletting to the adventurers, although they will finish off any opponents the heroes manage to knock down. Fonias (or Aristarchus) will use the fighting as a distraction so he can hunt for the aegis (or the trident) without the adventurers' interference.

If the PCs find the desired mythic item first, their guide will be overeager for them to hand it over. If they discover the competing city's mythic item, their alarmed guide will frantically insist that the object is cursed and must be abandoned or destroyed.

If the battle is going poorly for the adventurers, Fonias (rat that he is) will abandon them to their fate, particularly if he already has the Aegis of Iroas in his possession. Noble Aristarchus will attempt some sort of rearguard action to enable them to escape, although his first priority will be to get the Trident of Rhana out of the temple.

Map 1 : The Hall



A = Central fire pit

B = Benches

C = Main Entrance

D = Access to the Cavern Temple



Devils from the Deep : Sons of Dagon

Outcomes and Alternatives

Assuming the heroes succeed, they could encounter several possible outcomes.

If the PCs found and kept one or both mythic items, they can use them to bargain for peace between the Muscussi and Rhabdosians.

Each monarch would be willing to agree to almost anything, even negotiations with his hated rival, to ensure the return of his civilization's sacred object or to prevent it from being handed over to the other side. The heroes might do exactly the latter, giving the Trident of Rhana to the Mouse Folk and the Aegis of Iroas to the Frog Folk, each belligerent holding the other city's holy gift for ransom.

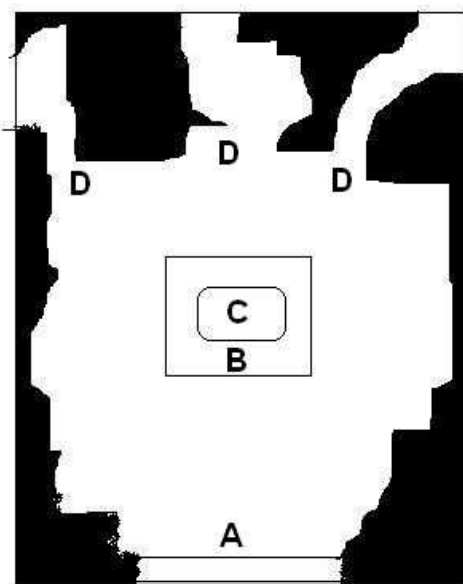
Such tactics won't endear the heroes to either race, but they could at least turn the long war into a cold one, with espionage and skullduggery replacing overt battles.

If one side succeeds in regaining its sacred token while preventing the other side from acquiring theirs, it could encourage an immediate assault. The possessors of the mythic item might attack their enemies, counting on it to give them the edge that assures final victory. Or the side without its mythic item might make a pre-emptive strike on the other. The adventurers may want to head for the high seas to avoid the general slaughter whether their ship is ready or not.

If the characters find the mythic item (instead of Fonias or Aristarchus) and present it to the king, they'll be feted as heroes and suitably rewarded. If Fonias or Aristarchus does the presenting, the adventurers will get thanks and safe conduct back to their ship (they were only the hired help, after all). Of course, they'll instantly become loathed enemies of the other side.

The Sons of Dagon will remember them without fondness in any event.

Map 2 : The Cavern Temple



A = Entrance

B = Ceremonial Dais

C = 40' tall statue of Dagon

D = Passages leading only the gods know where

There also is a small chance that they will have offended either Athene or Poseidon, although the gods tend to pay even less attention to their animal worshipers than they do their human ones.

Follow-up Adventures

Agag Again

If Agag escaped or was driven off he could return to harass the adventurers, having gotten wind of the treasure hidden in the temple of Dagon. Depending on how things turned out, the Muscussi and Rhabdosians might adopt him as an ally against the adventurers, or ask them to help them against the pirates invading their domains.

Star-crossed Lovers

Once the heroes are apparently safely away from the island, they discover a pair of stowaways: Aristarchus and Fidelia, Pontikos' betrothed. It seems the frog prince and the mouse princess have fallen in love and decided to run away together – on the adventurers' ship. Do the heroes take the lovers back home or drop them off someplace where they'll be able to enjoy marital bliss unmolested? Naturally they'll be pursued by the soldiers and assassins of both animal nations. The heroes will have difficulty persuading their hunters that they knew nothing about the whole affair. Their tiny, determined foes will repeatedly turn up at the most inconvenient

moments possible during the heroes' subsequent adventures. They'll never be sure whether that skittering or distant croaking in the night is the sound of normal animals or of their pursuers.

The Revenge of Dagon

The Sons of Dagon will dog the player-characters' steps to avenge the desecration of their temple as long as the heroes remain on or near the ocean. Vessels will be sabotaged, cargoes spoiled, crewmen and trading partners terrorized. Fish-men might even swim upriver to surprise the adventurers at inland locations. The persecution will continue until the player-characters kill off or (less likely) buy off the Dagonites with a suitable offering to the god.

The Trident of Rhana

This exquisitely jeweled silver artifact is the size of an exalted salad fork. A gift from Poseidon to the Rhabdosians, it has no powers discernible to human-sized adventurers but is supremely sacred to the frog people. They would agree to nearly anything for its return, even peace talks with their hated rodent rivals, the Muscussi. It was stolen by Iroas, a long-ago mouse hero, and lost in the ocean. The trident made its way into the treasure rooms of a remote and seemingly deserted temple to the sea god Dagon, a competitor of Poseidon's.

When wielded by an appropriately sized being, the trident vibrates like a tuning fork, emitting ultrasonic waves beyond the range of normal human hearing. They can be heard by frogs, mice, and Myrmidons. The effect is similar to the Vocal Entrancement monster power; it can lull the wielder's enemies into a helpless stupor or incite his comrades to fanatical bravery.

The vibrations of the Trident are also believed by the Rhabdosians to encourage the rapid development of their eggs.

The Aegis of Iroas

The Aegis of Iroas is a highly polished concave bronze disc inlaid with gold, just the right size to serve as a war shield for a mouse or frog. It was a gift to the Muscussi from Athena and is sacred to them. It has no powers discernable to human-sized adventurers (other than to serve as a shaving mirror). It was lost during Iroas' mission to steal the Trident of Rhana and has since also found its way into the temple of Dagon. The Rhabdosians would prefer that it remain lost.

When wielded by an appropriately sized being (Tiny), the Aegis begins to glow and shine until it spreads a blinding glare over a wide area. The Aegis of Iroas also gives the wielder the usual +4 Defense Class bonus.

THE LOST LAIR OF LAODICE

A daring underwater expedition for a party of bold adventurers

by Andrew Trent (with some additional material by Olivier Legrand)

The Tale of Laodice

Somewhere far to the west of Thena, on a cliff that rises above the Middle Sea, there stands a single withered olive tree surrounded by a ring of stones whose aspect brings to mind horses. This tree marks the entrance to a series of caverns that once served as a hideout for the greatest thief of the Age of Magic, Laodice of Minea, who stole countless treasures and artifacts from all across Mythika.

Laodice's legend spread far and wide in those golden days. Sailors from every corner of the world came to sail with her, and upon seeing unparalleled beauty swore allegiance to her. She and her crew knew no fear (or wisdom) and ransacked bazaar and temple with equal zeal.

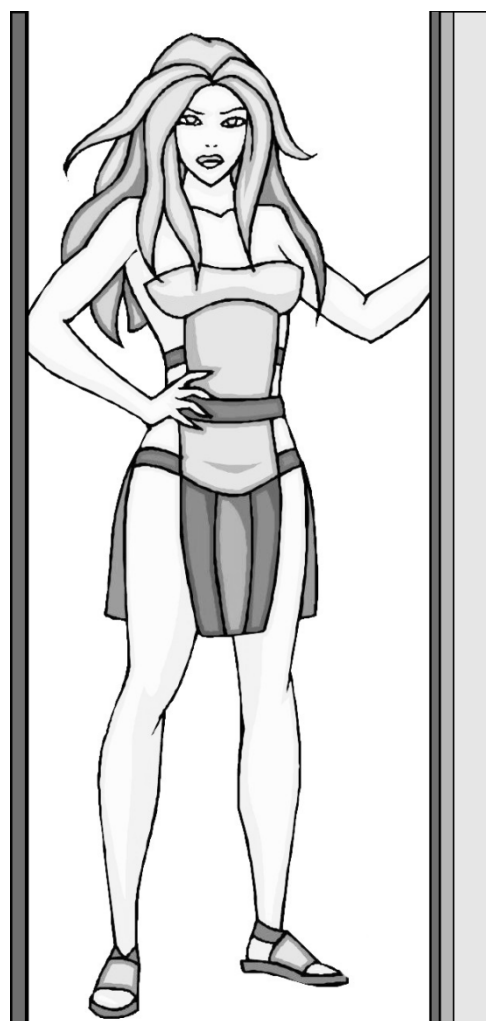
Laodice's career came to a devastating end when she dared to boast she was a better thief than even wind-swift Hermes. The god of thieves, ever clever, sought to punish Laodice for her hubris. Rather than simply visit divine wrath upon her, though, he challenged her to prove her skill by daring her to steal both the trident of Poseidon and the spear of Athena. Such was her skill that Laodice actually succeeded in this fool's errand.

Still, Hermes held the upper hand. He simply informed the two mighty gods of the identity of the thief and left them to mete out punishment.

The affront so angered Poseidon and Athena that they brought forth the full weight of their powers against the thief and her men.

Poseidon sent forth earthquakes and tidal waves to destroy her ships and hideouts, while Athena called upon her best and bravest followers to seek out and destroy all that remained of Laodice's legacy.

Together the two deities decided to curse the beautiful thief further by transforming her into a monstrous, grotesque creature. As a further punishment, they imprisoned her within her flooded and ruined lair, filled with some of her most beloved prizes. However, some of these they cursed, others they damaged and still others they placed just out of Laodice's grasp. Now all that remains of Laodice is this last lair, sunken beneath the waves except for the few caverns that hold her greatest treasures tantalizingly close and yet impossibly far.



Laodice as she once was...

This tale represents the story of Laodice's doom as known to Lyrists, Thieves, storytellers and scholars. It purposefully omits one very important piece of information: the specific type of monster Laodice was turned into. The answer is: a **Sea Gorgon**, a punishment that the two angry gods found fitting to Laodice's vanity: where once to look upon her rendered men loyal and full of fire, to meet her gaze would now leave only cold stone. Of course, the only way to discover this vital piece of information is to meet Laodice herself...



Gallos the Audacious, Thief and Raconteur

Gallos' Plan

While hanging out at a local port, the characters are approached by a friendly young man posing as a storyteller. After introducing himself as Gallos, he will tell them the tragic tale of Laodice the Thief (see previous page). Soon after he will reveal his true occupation and purpose : although he is a skilled raconteur, Gallos the Audacious is not a storyteller but a talented and (very) ambitious Thief (see below for his complete stats).

Gallos has recently come into possession of some very precious piece of information which has allowed him to locate Laodice's underwater lair, just a few miles off the coast. Armed with this knowledge, Gallos has decided to raid the undersea caves, hoping to recover a part of the fabulous Thief's lost treasure - and also because such a daring venture would make him a living legend among the Thieves of Mythika.

Gallos wisely assumes Laodice's lair to be filled with all sorts of deadly creatures (including Laodice herself), so he is looking for a group of « fellow adventurers » to accompany him in this perilous but extremely profitable expedition – especially mighty warriors and / or powerful magicians who could deal with the more dangerous denizens of Laodice's lair.

Gallos quickly adds that he already has two indispensable associates : a « trustworthy Mariner » (read : small-time smuggler) named **Barros** who can transport the party in his ship (and wait for their return) and a Nereid named **Ava**, who has agreed to kiss all the members of the raiding party to allow them to breathe and act freely underwater – see below for more details about these two NPCs.

If the adventurers decide to join Gallos in his daring venture, he will insist on the necessity of agreeing upon the « shares of the spoils » before any activity takes place. Here are Gallos' conditions :

* All money and gems will be split in half, with one half going to the adventurers and the other half to Gallos, Barros and Ava.

* Mythic items and other « unique objects » will be handled on a « finders-keepers » basis.

Gallos the Audacious

Level 3 Thief

Might	10	Skill	15	Luck	18
Wits	17	Will	13	Grace	14

Initiative 15, EDC 16* (melee 19*), Hits Total 14

Melee +6*, Missile +9*

Danger Evasion +8*, Mystic Fortitude +6*

Physical Vigor +5*, Athletic Prowess +6*

Personal Charisma +6*

Thievery +7* (stealth & detection +15*)

Background Talents : Actor, Orator.

Weapon of Choice : Sling

Other Weapons : Sword, dagger.

Mythic Items : Glowgem necklace, Ring of Good Fortune.

* *These figures take into account the +1 bonus granted by Gallos' Ring of Good Fortune.*

Gallos is a young but already quite experienced thief gifted with a pretty face, a glib tongue and a good measure of roguish charm ; he is ambitious, adventurous and overconfident - much like Laodice was in her days...

The characters are free to discuss these conditions if they so wish, but Gallos will be extremely reluctant to lower his (and his two associates') share – in fact, he intends to keep most of it for himself but that's another story. Provided the characters agree to join Gallos' expedition, the adventure can now begin !

As stated earlier, Gallos' two other "business partners" are **Barros "One Eye"**, a tactiturn, tattooed Mariner (level 2) with a scaly patch over his left eye and **Ava the Sea Nymph**, a wayward Nereid (level 2) with a willowy silhouette and a rather immature attitude. Ava has "given her heart" to Gallos (who has a good measure of roguish charm) and would do anything for him. Much like a naive teenage girl in love with the proverbial "bad guy", Ava has not yet realizez that her "eternal lover" mainly sees her as a very useful commodity (and an enjoyable one too).

Barros ship will bring the characters above Laodice's underwater lair but the Mariner himself will not accompany Gallos and the adventurers below the surface. Ava the Nereid will keep away from the cavern but will kiss Gallos and each adventurer before they "go under", enabling them to breathe and act freely underwater for a number of hours equal to her Odylic Charm (which is equal to 5).

Thanks to Ava, Gallos and Barros have also come into possession of a big supply of glowgems (see this issue's *Pandora's Box*) with which they have crafted special necklaces that will act as light sources during the expedition: each adventurer will be generously provided with a necklace with three gems (giving the light an illumination radius of 30').

Laodice's Lair

Use the **Undersea Caverns** map included at the end of this scenario (see p 11).

A. Cavern Entrance

A full fathom below the waves, the entrance to the cavern complex is obscured by a dense stand of seaweed. Finding the entrance isn't really difficult for those who know that it is here, but the plant life has served to shield Laodice's Lair from unexpected visitors : without Gallos' knowledge, finding it would require a careful search and a detection roll against a target number of 15.

B. Sitting Room

This chamber was clearly once a sitting room, and is still largely appointed as such.

A stone table and benches dominate the center of the room. Gilded serving vessels still sit upon the table. Broken pottery covers the floor and two barnacle- and coral-encrusted skeletons sit slumped near the western exit.

A pair of **Killer Fishes** (see *Minotaur Quarterly* n°1, p 34) make their home in this submerged cavern. Their natural speed and stealth all but guarantees they will take the adventurers by surprise. The fish are ravenous and fight until killed, pausing briefly to relish the meat and blood they rip from the bones of any unlucky adventurer.

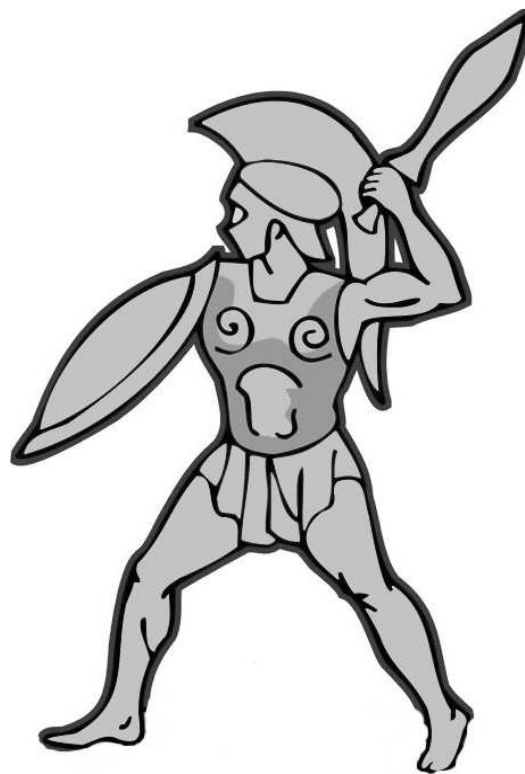
C. Statue of Poseidon

This man-sized marble statue of Poseidon depicts the Lord of the Sea in a typical display of anger. His head is reared back, howling and a dozen Nereids swarm about him. Characters who have Poseidon as their patron deity should pause to pay appropriate homage before this statue. This will grant them the effects of a triple Divine Blessing, raising their Mystic Fortitude, Danger Evasion and Physical Vigor by +2 for the rest of the expedition.

D. Statue of Athena

This alabaster statue of Pallas Athena depicts the virgin goddess in repose beneath an olive tree upon which is perched a watchful owl. Characters who have Athena as their patron deity should pause to pay appropriate homage before this statue. This will grant them the effects of a triple Divine Blessing, raising their Mystic Fortitude, Defense Class and Melee attack by +2 for the rest of the expedition.

Note to Maze Masters : *The bonuses granted by the statues of Athena and Poseidon to their followers reflect the fact that Laodice's lair is still placed under these deities' watch. The bonus to Mystic Fortitude will prove especially welcome when the characters will confront Laodice and her petrifying gaze. These bonuses will take effect as soon as the character enters the next area and will last until he passes the statue again on his way out.*



Attack of the Green Bronze Automaton !

E. Green Bronze Automaton

This chamber holds one of Laodice's greatest acquisitions : a working **Automaton** (see *Creature Compendium*, p10) made of a strange, green metal which is completely impervious to the effects of rust.

This wonder comes from the workshop of Daedalos himself. Crafted by the master to resemble Agenor of Argos, a noted noble and warrior of the Age of Magic. The Automaton readily attacks all who attempt to pass from this chamber into room F.

If the characters manage to defeat the Automaton, the scrap metal from its body could be taken and used to craft a single, non-rusting green breastplate.

F. Sarcophagus

This room holds a sarcophagus which contains a mummy – which, like the Automaton above, seems to be completely impervious to the effects of water.

This may lead the characters to believe that this is a supernatural Animate, but this mummy is, in fact, a normal, completely dead, mummified corpse.

The mummy's obviously supernatural state of physical preservation is actually a side-effect of the **Amulet of Protection** (see *Maze Masters Guide*, p 43) placed around its neck. If this amulet is taken, the mummy will offer no resistance (it's dead, remember ?) but will immediately crumble into dust, which may make nervous adventurers a bit more nervous still (was that thing cursed ? etc).



The Cat Goddess of the Desert Kingdom

G. Statue of The Cat Goddess

One of Laodice's acquisitions from her series of daring raids on the Desert Kingdom, this statue of a cat-headed human female has fallen over and broken into several large pieces. Seaweed grows rampant in this alcove, while numerous albino crabs skitter to and fro and large snails crawl across the walls and ceiling.

Characters who take a closer look at the weeds should be allowed a detection roll (target number 15) to notice a heavily verdigrised copper shield hanging from the wall, the Gorgon head design on its face nearly faded. This shield is an **Aegis** (see *Maze Masters Guide*, p 37).

H. Graffiti Covered Walls

The walls of this long hallway are covered graffiti - carved, painted, written in chalk... Most of them are now undecipherable but careful readers will be able to recognize half-erased names, fragments of dirty jokes and bits of poetry.

Three key pieces stand out, though. Halfway down the length of the hall, in a delicate woman's writing one finds the following two phrases: "*Poseidon is impotent*" and "*Athena is a whore*". Followers of Athena and Poseidon will obviously feel extremely insulted by these distasteful scrawls. The third piece of graffiti of note is found near the far end of the hall. Written in a rushed, panicked script it reads: "*At last she sleeps. Wake her not!*"

There is nothing of monetary or magical value to be found in this area.

I. Barracks

This room is home to a scouting party of **Sons of Dagon** (see *Creature Compendium*, p 106). There were seven initially, though three have fallen victim to Laodice (their stony remains are found deeper within). The four that have holed up here will attack on sight with a mad terror driving their assault.

This room served as barracks for a number of Laodice's men. Stone beds, tables and chests are scattered about the room. Anything of value has long since been looted from here.

J. Attack of the Kelp !

Attack Kelps (see *Creature Compendium*, p 10) grow from a deep depression in the cavern floor here. Their location provides an additional +2 to the target number required to detect them) making it a 14. Their number should be roughly equal to that of the characters in the party.

At the bottom of the depression lies a pile of bones, mostly fish but some human, representing the victims of the kelps' aggression. Amongst the scattered bones lies a long lost **Ring of Good Fortune** (see *Maze Masters Guide*, p 43). This ring is very hard to find and should require a Perception save with a target number of 20.

K. Lair of the Octopus

A **Large Octopus** (see this issue's *Mythic Bestiary*) makes its home here. It is not aggressive and only attacks in self-defense.

Three **small vessels** are found in this room: one of earthenware from the Stygian Empire, one of carved wood from Charybdis and one of Atlantean design, crafted from the ivory of some huge sea-creature.

To the right buyer these ancient relics would be worth a small fortune. However, these items are quite fragile and moving them (or an extended combat with the octopus) risks damaging them beyond repair or salvage. Any stressful motion in their immediate vicinity will result in a 60% chance (1-12 on a d20) of breakage.

Alternatively, Maze Masters may decide to replace these mundane (but priceless) *objets d'art* with some mythic items or to give one of them some unique magical properties.

L. Skylight Alcove

A hole in the ceiling of this alcove extends all the way to the surface, allowing sunlight to stream into the area. The water is slightly warmer here, and the room is dense with kelp and seaweed.

Moving through this room takes great effort and any fighting engaged in here results in a -2 to Initiative (except for marine creatures).

M. Statue of Dagon

A man-sized statue of the horrible sea god Dagon stands in this alcove. This statue is the reason why some Sons of Dagon ventured into the lair (see next area) : they wanted to recover the stolen idol.

Anyone inspecting this statue must make a Danger Evasion roll to avoid triggering the needle-spraying trap that has been built into the base of the statue.

Thieves may, of course, detect this trap per their normal abilities.

A failed Danger Evasion roll will result in 1d6 damage for the unlucky inspector.



The head of Laodice the Sea Gorgon

N. Planning Room

Three statues of Sons of Dagon are found in this room. They are spread apart, two appear to be in fighting postures while one appears to be cowering, as if begging for mercy. These are, of course, not statues but victims of Laodice's dark powers.

The walls of this room are covered in intricate maps, drawings and diagrams. Many of Laodice's greatest exploits were planned here, and these markings are all that remain of her criminal genius. Thieves who take the time to decipher these various writings will gain 100 extra Experience points.

O. Statue of the Elementalist

A statue of a human Elementalist stands in the middle of this hallway. She stands as though casting a spell of great power. This is, naturally, not a statue but another of Laodice's victims.

The Elementalist had a **Staff of Earth** (or Water) in her possession ; because of its magical nature, this mythic item was not turned to stone and can still be found in the hand of the petrified magician. If there is no Elementalist in the group, the Maze Master may prefer to replace this item with a Staff of Light.

P. Undersea Graveyard

The floor of this cavern is littered with the lifeless, coral- and barnacle-encrusted skeletons of Laodice's long-dead minions. A number of these **Skeletons** (see *Creature Compendium*, p 105), however, are animated by their burning passion and loyalty for Laodice. Mindless things that they are,

they exist only to protect Laodice's domain and attack all who enter this chamber. The Maze Master should feel free to use as many or as few of these skeletons as suits his needs, just be sure not to overwhelm the party.

Scattered amongst the bones and detritus of this room may be found (3d6 x 100) sp worth of coins, jewels and objects.

Q. The Lair of Laodice

This small room serves as the abode of Laodice. In it may be found a mat of seaweed upon which she sleeps and the statue of Hyperenor, Laodice's bravest man, last lover and first victim. When the gods were enacting their punishment Hyperenor rushed to be at his lady's side and became the first to be turned to stone by her wretched gaze. It was this tragedy, even more than the wrath of the gods themselves, that proved to be Laodice's greatest torment. When the adventurers reach this room, they find Laodice kneeling at the feet of this statue, weeping and muttering to herself and to it.

Laodice attacks all who enter her abode, but will focus her efforts on any who approach or attempt to damage the statue of Hyperenor. She has the traits and characteristics of a **Sea Gorgon** (see *Minotaur Quarterly* n°1 , p 37).

Upon her death, Laodice will transform back into her human, original form.

Though it will be hard to tell given the underwater nature of the area, the statue of Hyperenor may be noticed to be weeping at her death...

Aftermath

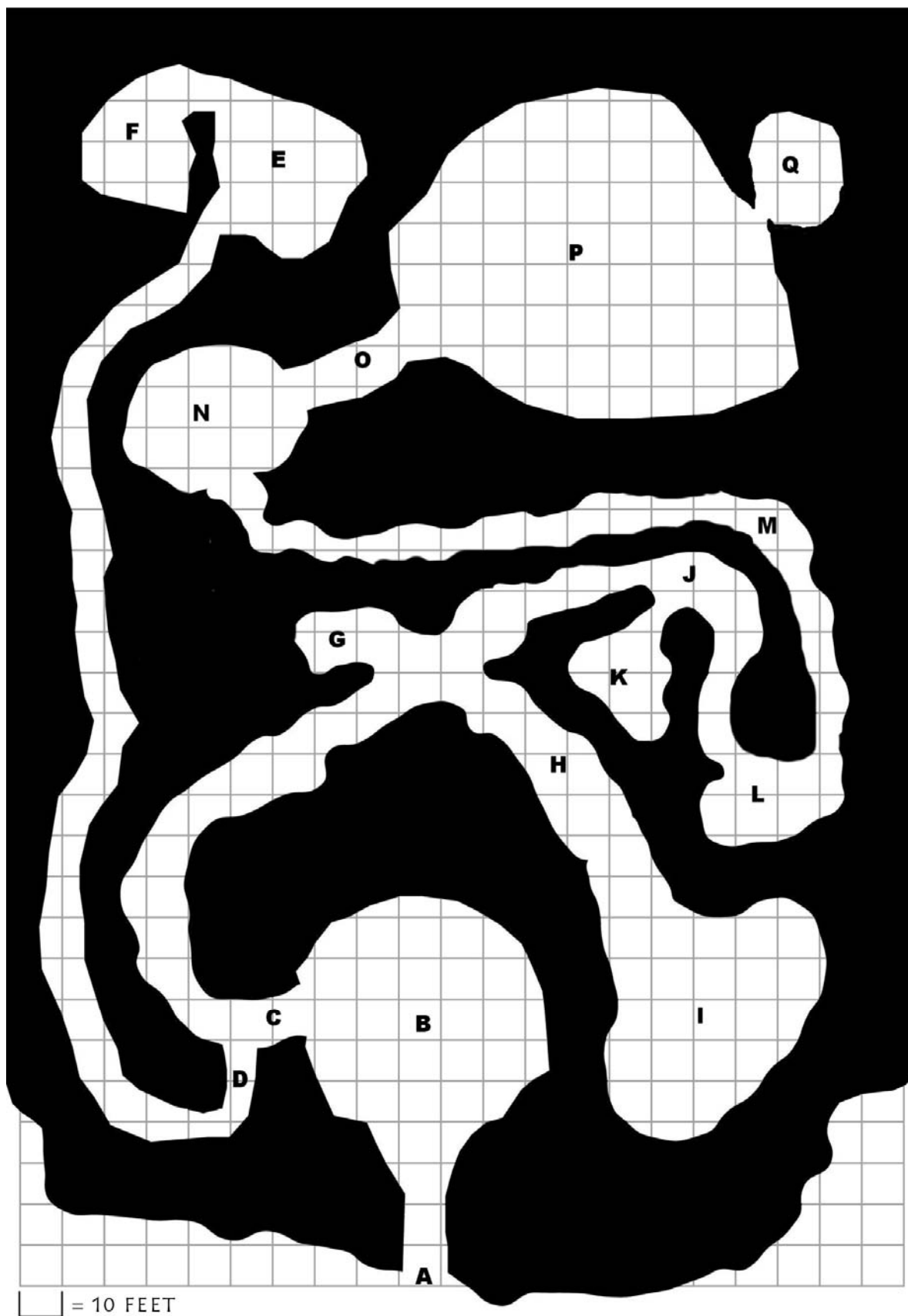
Characters who complete this adventure will collect the usual Glory and Wisdom awards ; as a Sea Gorgon, Laodice herself is worth a total of 300 Glory points and 90 Wisdom points.

Maze Masters may want to use Gallos as a recurring NPC (provided he did not die a tragic death in the Lost Lair of Laodice) : he could become their ally, try to rob them of their shares once the job is done (no honor among thieves, remember ?) or even turn into the party's nemesis...

Barros the dodgy Mariner could also become an interesting contact for the adventurers, especially if they have no ship of their own. Maze Masters may even decide that Barros is badly in debt with the local smugglers and is willing to accept any job offer which will take him abroad (and, possibly, out of trouble) as fast as possible...

In a completely different style, Ava the wayward, immature Sea Nymph could become an interesting dramatic element in her own right, especially if her beloved Gallos met his untimely end during the adventure... or finally decided to dump her. She could then attach herself to the party (or, better, fall in love with one of its members), acting as a cute nuisance and trouble magnet...

ADVENTURE MAP : UNDERSEA CAVERNS



Map by Matthew Rodgers

A DARK ALLIANCE

A perilous underwater adventure for a party of fearless adventurers

by Darren Peech (with some additional material by Olivier Legrand)

Introduction

Note : The location of this scenario has been deliberately kept vague – it takes place “somewhere near Tritonis” (see *Minotaur Quarterly* n°1, p 19-23, for more details about Tritonian culture).

Mythic Background

During the Great Titanomachy, Poseidon defeated three great watery Titans. These creatures Dagon, Kraken, and Ktolos are now held prisoner by the King of the Sea (see *Minotaur Quarterly* n°1, p 17 and p 38, for more details).

The creatures known as the Sons of Dagon are seeking to free their “Father” from his prison. To accomplish this, they have enlisted the aid of some Telchines (who think the Sea Titan will be able to give them back their former human form) and an evil human Sorcerer named Xalton, allied to secret faction of fanatic Nobles from Tritonis (who see Dagon’s awakening as a sign of a new age of might and glory for their decadent sea empire).



Xalton the Sorcerer

A Sinister Plan

The Sons of Dagon have long wanted to free their Father from its undersea prison but have always been unable to do so, lacking the occult knowledge which could have given them some clues about how to proceed. Recently, one of their leaders had the brilliant idea to contact Telchines - creatures who, being former magicians, would perhaps have some useful information about this eldritch matter.

And indeed the Telchines knew about the Tablets of the Sea Titans and how they had been confiscated by Poseidon himself a long time ago... but the transformed beings knew nothing about the actual location of the Tablets. Yet, they decided to help the Sons of Dagon in their dark endeavor, hoping that the rise of Dagon would shatter the power of Poseidon and give them back their long-lost human forms. They also decided to enlist the help of an occasional ally of theirs, an evil Sorcerer from Tritonis named Xalton, who saw this situation as an unprecedented opportunity to forge a strong and secret alliance between his own Tritonian allies and various evil sea creatures – an alliance which could, in time, help to shatter the power of Poseidon and restore the grandeur of the Tritonian sea empire...

Xalton devised a fiendish plan, which was carried out by his undersea allies : with the help of the Telchines, the Sons of Dagon abducted a Nereid named Belis, whom the Telchines knew to be one of the Oceanids (see *Minotaur Quarterly* n°1, p 18) and whom they supposed to be privy to such secrets as the location of Dagon’s Tablet.

The unfortunate Belis was then brought to Xalton, who used his Sorcery to Enslave her : this enabled the Sorcerer to learn where the Tablet was kept (in a secret undersea cave at the bottom of the sea) and to psychically compel the Enslaved Oceanid to steal it and bring it back to her new master...

When the adventure begins, Belis has already delivered the stolen Tablet to Xalton – who intends to sacrifice her, along with ten captured Mermaids of royal blood, in a secret underwater cavern that was once a temple dedicated to Dagon...

But the sister of Belis, the Oceanid Tanis has just discovered the theft and managed to track down the culprits. She now has very little time left to find a group of brave adventurers to help her recover the stolen Tablet (and, if possible, rescue her sister) before it is too late.

Character Hooks

One of the following could be used to get the player characters in this adventure : their divine patron could send them to the area to investigate a vague disturbance the deity sensed, they could have been sent by Minean lords on a diplomatic mission to Tritonis or their ship could simply be blown off its intended course by a great sea storm

The Scenario

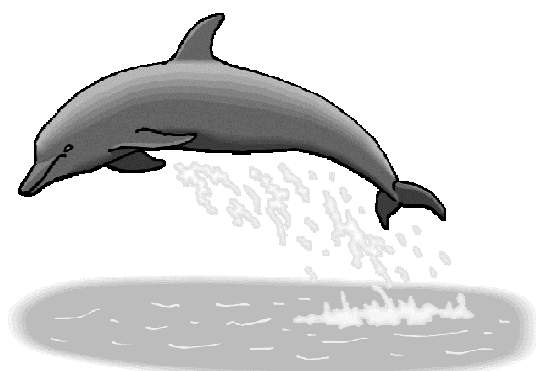
Part One : Battle at Sea

While sailing at sea, the party sees a group of Dolphins which seems to be heading their way. Suddenly, a group veers off in the opposite direction. As the group of dolphins that is still heading for the ship approaches, it can be seen that a beautiful Nereid is riding on the back of the lead dolphin. This Nereid is actually Tanis the Oceanid (see p 17). The other group of dolphins that veered away seem to be battling something just below the surface.

The group with Tanis speeds up, dives beneath the waves, then suddenly leaps into the air over the ship, and then disappears over the other side. However, now standing on the deck of the ship is Tanis herself, a Nereid of unearthly beauty. She gazes at the party for a moment then with a anguished cry of, "No!" She sees that the second group of dolphins are dead, dying, or wounded. She then whirls around points behind the characters and shouts "*Beware !*"

Three Hexapods (see *Minotaur Quarterly* n°1, p 32) have boarded the ship after battling the Dolphins and immediately attack the adventurers, whom they suppose to be allies of Tanis.

After the combat, Tanis will tell the party that she is a Sea Nymph (but without revealing her special status as an Oceanid) who has learned that Sons of Dagon are planning a ritual sacrifice that will enable the Telchines to regain their former form and thus their full powers which they will then use to free Dagon and his brothers. If asked how she came to this knowledge, she will reply with an enigmatic smile : "*The sea has its way.*"



Tanis the Sea Nymph

Tanis will then inform the characters that the sea and its folk will always remember those who aid it. If any character needs healing, she will perform Nature's Comfort on them, giving priority and special attention to followers of Poseidon.

The Sea Nymph will then bestow Nature's Favor on the adventurers who have volunteered to help to grant them the power to breathe and act underwater for a period of up to 7 hours (her Odyllic Charm bonus). She will also give each of the adventurers a necklace with three glowgems (see this issue's *Pandora's Box*), allowing them to see in the darkest recesses of any undersea cavern.

As soon as preparations are complete, the dolphins will carry the Oceanid and the adventurers to the underwater cave entrance...

What About Belis ?

Tanis will say nothing to the adventurers about her sister Belis : so far, she is still unsure about the actual role Belis played in this disastrous sequence of events (has she betrayed her vows to Poseidon or was she somehow coerced by dark powers ?) and intends to solve this specific matter herself – either rescuing Belis from her captors or, if necessary, by killing her herself for having betrayed her pledge to Poseidon (which could actually be interpreted as an act of mercy from Tanis' part, since it would spare Belis the terrible wrath of the Sea King).

See *Aftermath* at the end of the adventure for more details about Belis' possible fate.

Maze Master's Advice

Handling Tanis & her Powers

As an Oceanid, Tanis is a powerful character – but like most Nymphs, she is far from being a formidable fighter. She will try to stay out of melee as much as possible but will provide effective magical support to the party.

Among her Nature's Gifts, the two powers she is most likely to use during the expedition are Nature's Comfort (to heal injured combatants) and Nature's Seduction, to hold the most dangerous opponents away from her as well as to give the adventurers the advantage of striking first – which may come especially handy against foes such as a Quinotaur (see below).

Remember, however, that Tanis' Power total will already be reduced because of the various magical actions she performed after the fight on the ship. Tanis will use her magic wisely, however, and will prefer to keep such tricks in store for the most dangerous opponents.

Lastly, as a (covert) divine agent of Poseidon, Tanis has one 100% effective Divine Call. She will keep this a secret and will only use it as a last, desperate resort, especially since she has NOT alerted Poseidon of this situation : she hopes to be able to solve the crisis on her own (with, of course, the providential help of a few valiant adventurers) to spare her sister Belis the terrible wrath of Poseidon (and perhaps because she blames herself for not noticing Belis' strange behavior before it was too late).

See the end of the scenario for Tanis' stats.

Part Two : The Cave

This part of the scenario uses the **Undersea Caverns** map included in this issue (see p 11).

As the players descend they see a cave entrance about ten feet wide.

Tanis warns them that the entrance is guarded by Attack Kelps and there may be several Sons of Dagon inside the caves, as well as other dangers to be wary of but which are unknown to her. Tanis herself will accompany the party inside but will order the accompanying Dolphins to depart.

A : Entrance

The entrance of the cave is guarded by Attack Kelps (see *Creature Compendium* p 10). The number of Attack Kelps should be equal to the number of player-characters.

B : Statue Chamber

The players enter a large chamber. There are three large 30-ft high statues here. The hideous Statues represent the three Titans : Dagon, Kraken and Ktolos. Any Nereid, Priest of Poseidon or character with the Scholar talent will recognize them.

To the left there are stairs that lead upward. At the top of the stairs it levels out creating a waterway that allows air breathers and water breathers use of the same passage. The passage is lit by bioluminescent sea plants and the water level is 4 and half feet deep (deep enough for water breathers and low enough for air breathers).

C : Langustos Guardian

This area is guarded by a Langustos (see *Minotaur Quarterly* n°1, p 34). The passage is too narrow to allow more than one opponent at a time.

D : Second Langustos Guardian

Same as above (including space restrictions).

E : Two Abyss Lurkers

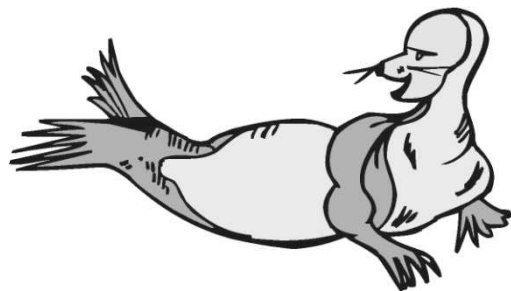
This a wide room that seems to be empty with a corridor to the back and left. In this room are actually two Abyss Lurkers (see *Minotaur Quarterly* n°1, p 32) which act as the final guardians to the treasure room.

F : Treasure Room

This room holds various booty taken from raids. Here the Maze Master can place treasure appropriate to the overall power level of his campaign.

G : Store Room

This room contains various goods and weapons (mainly spears and tridents) brought by the Sons of Dagon ; at the Maze Master's discretion, it may also contain a few marine mythic items, such as a Manta Cloak, a Net of Nodens etc (see this issue's *Pandora's Box* for more details on such wonders).



A treacherous Telchine

H : Sons of Dagon

A group of Sons of Dagon (see *Creature Compendium* page 106). Their number should be equal to the number of player-characters.

I : Barracks

This is the barrack chamber of the various guardians. The room is has several nest/resting pods, weapons, and miscellaneous personal items of little monetary value.

J. Sea Lion Guardian

This area is guarded by a Sea Lion (see *Creature Compendium* p 100). The key to the cell in K. Is around the beast's collar.

Sea Lions are noble creatures and this unfortunate Beast has been Enslaved by the Sorcery of Xalton. Tanis will actively oppose to the slaying of the Sea Lion : her choice of tactic will be to keep the Lion distracted and entranced (using her Nature's Seduction power) while the rest of the party cross the room unscathed and then to fetch the key herself. If the adventurers disregard her instructions and attack the Sea Lion anyway, she will not prevent them from doing so but will probably be a bit less ready to help or heal them afterwards.

K : Cell

Locked in a cell is a large male Triton – who is in fact the local Triton King, Nemos. He will inform the party that there was a massive assault on his domain in which most of his warriors were killed by a large underwater raiding party of Sons of Dagon and other foul creatures. The brave Triton warriors inflicted heavy losses on their enemies but could not prevent the capture of their King by the survivors of the horde. Ten young Mermaids from Nemos' royal household (including some of his sisters and nieces) were captured along with him and are to be sacrificed by the Sons of Dagon and their allies, a human Sorcerer and “two bloody Telchines”.

Nemos knows nothing about his captors' true goals, nor does he know why he has been separated from the other captives (Xalton intends to Enslave him later as part of his dark designs).

As soon as he is freed, the infuriated Nemos will join the party to free the Mermaids from their captors' clutches before it is too late. If magical healing is available, he will request it so that he can get his strength back (or at least part of it) before the fight. Also note that Nemos has been stripped of all his armament - but his fury is so great that he will even accept the trident of a dead Son of Dagon as a replacement weapon.

Nemos is a major Triton NPC (see *Minotaur Quarterly n°1*, p 12) : his detailed stats are given at the end of the scenario.

L : More Sons of Dagon

At this point, two Sons of Dagon will come to check out the noise caused by combat with the Sea Lion (or Nemos' own furious roars).

M : Floating Medusa

A Floating Medusa (see the *Mythic Bestiary* of this issue for this creature's stats and abilities).

N : Lair of the Quinotaur

A Quinotaur (see *Creature Compendium* p 91) guards the access to the sacrificial chamber. The ground of this cave is littered with the skulls, bones and other remains of various marine creatures (including a few unlucky Sons of Dagon).

This Monster is very tough and the adventurers will probably have a very hard time defeating it, even with the help of Tanis. The fight against the Quinotaur should be the “climactic combat” of the scenario – but not the final one, as detailed below. If Nemos is killed during this combat, allow him to utter a few last words to his newfound allies : “Please, bring the girls back home...”

O : Telchine Statuettes

The left-hand wall of this small corridor holds a carved niche with three 1-ft tall stone statuettes of bearded men wearing weird crowns. These actually represent the Telchines as they once were and are a priceless treasure to the cursed creatures, who (wrongfully) hope Dagon will be able to give them back their human appearances.

P : Sacrificial Hall

The party enters into a huge hall. There is an altar in the middle that is raised so that it is completely out of the water. Tied down to the table is a Mermaid. Above her stands Xalton the Sorcerer chanting in Old Tritonian (see the end of the scenario for Xalton's stats). Also there are two Telchines (see *Creature Compendium* p 114) perched on blocks on either side of the altar. Chained together are nine other Mermaids and an unconscious Nereid (Belis) guarded by four Sons of Dagon.

The Sons of Dagon will immediately attack the intruders, while an infuriated Xalton will throw Psychic Attacks at them. The Telchines will probably prefer to sneak away unnoticed while they can still save their hides... If he is still alive, the valorous Nemos will immediately rush into combat.

Q : Ascending Stairway

Here lies a spiral staircase that leads to the surface. This is the entry used by Xalton to access the half-immersed “temple” in area P.



Aftermath

Success & Rewards

In addition to any Glory points gained for defeating the various opponents in this scenario, warriors who succeed at preventing the rise of the Sea Titan should receive an extra reward of 200 Glory points each for their heroic deed.

Magician characters will gain Wisdom points as per the regular rules – and Xalton himself is worth 500 Wisdom points.

If the adventurers manage to rescue Belis and the royal Mermaids, they will gain the undying gratitude of King Nemos (or his royal heirs) as well as that of Tanis the Oceanid – a benefit which will prove invaluable should the characters decide to visit the local undersea realms in later scenarios.

At the Maze Master's discretion, Tanis could also reward each adventurer with one mythic item (taken from the various Treasures of the Tritons described in this issue's *Pandora's Box*); the Maze Master may even decide that Tanis brings such items with her during Part One, so that the characters can benefit from their use during the expedition, and then allows them to keep them afterwards.

Possible Loose Ends

This scenario may have various consequences which could easily form the starting point of further adventures. The most obvious ones are the vengeance of the Sons of Dagon or Telchines (who could come back to attack the adventurers or, in the case of the Telchines, attempt to sink their ship with a magical storm) or that of Xalton's brother (Phobos the Mad Sea Prince) and his allies, who could decide to hunt down the adventurers responsible for

thwarting the Sorcerer's mad plans... in which case our heroes' ship could suddenly find itself chased by two or three Tritonian warships ...

If the characters gain Tanis' friendship, the Oceanid could call for their help in a later adventure, especially if she is faced with a problem involving surface-dwelling opponents (such as Tritonians ?).

For players interested in exploring their characters' personal feelings, this story could also be the starting point of an interesting romance between an adventurer and one of the two Oceanid sisters – something that Poseidon might well disapprove...

Belis' fate may also be an interesting theme to explore, provided she survives the adventure. In this case, she will be stripped of her special Oceanid powers (and duties) by Poseidon, becoming a « rogue Nereid » riddled by guilt, sadness and longing for the secret abysses... Such a tragic character could make a very interesting ally (or nemesis ?) for the adventurers.

What About Failure ?

What if the characters fail to prevent Xalton from completing his unhallowed ritual ?

Maze Masters who are confronted to this extremely unpleasant turn of events have two choices : either Dagon does rise from the Abyss and, well, everybody dies... OR Poseidon himself suddenly intervenes at the last moment, mercilessly crushing the foolhardy Xalton and his nonhuman accomplices and getting VERY angry at Tanis, Belis and any surviving adventurers.

In this case, Poseidon's wrath could be used as a convenient plot device to embark our heroes (with, perhaps, the surviving but now disgraced Oceanids) on another marine quest to atone for their failure.

Important NPCs

Tanis the Oceanid

Level 4 Nereid

Might 12 **Skill** 12 **Luck** 20
Wits 16 **Will** 17 **Grace** 18

Initiative 12, EDC 18*, Hits Total 14

Melee +4, Missile +6

Danger Evasion +11*, Mystic Fortitude +12*, Physical Vigor +7, Athletic Prowess +4

Personal Charisma +10

Odylic Charm +7, Mystic Strength 19, Power 19

Magical Powers : Nature's Gifts (Nereid).

Divine Boons : Ocean's Favor, Guise of the Sea, Divine Call (one).

** This includes the +2 bonus granted by Tanis' special Ocean's Favor divine boon.*

Tanis' specific mission as an Oceanid is to monitor the interactions between adventurers and the various Folks of the Undersea, including Tritons, Mermaids and Dolphins. Thus, depending on an adventurer's attitudes towards marine Folks, Tanis can act as a very useful ally, providing precious pieces of information or even magical help (enabling surface dwellers to venture underwater, healing injured defenders of the undersea etc), as a behind-the-scenes troublemaker (summoning sea storms to stir them away from their intended routes, warning local Sea Folks about the presence of dangerous mortals etc) or even as a direct opponent (summoning storms to wreck ships, sending sea creatures to attack « enemies of Poseidon » etc).

Nemos the Triton King

Level 3 Triton

Might 19 **Skill** 17 **Luck** 16
Wits 11 **Will** 15 **Grace** 10

Initiative 21 (in melee), EDC 19 (16 if surprised),

Hits Total 24 (15*)

** Nemos' Hits Total has been reduced to 15 because of various injuries sustained during his capture.*

Melee +9, Missile +5

Danger Evasion +4, Mystic Fortitude +4, Physical Vigor +8, Athletic Prowess +9

Personal Charisma +4

Weapon of Choice : Trident.

Xalton the Sorcerer

Level 5 Sorcerer

Might 13 **Skill** 10 **Luck** 17
Wits 19 **Will** 20 **Grace** 9

Initiative 14, EDC 16*, Hits Total 17

Melee +4, Missile +7

Danger Evasion +12*, Mystic Fortitude +8*, Physical Vigor +8, Athletic Prowess +4

Personal Charisma +7

Psychic Gift +8, Mystic Strength 20, Power 24 (18)**

Magical Powers : Sorcery.

Mythic Items : Amulet of the Nereids, Amulet of Protection, Staff of Command.

** These figures take into account the +1 bonus granted by Xalton's Amulet of Protection.*

*** When encountered in the caves, Xalton will only have 18 Power points because of the various magical operations he has performed beforehand.*

Xalton is the classic power-mad evil Sorcerer. He already envisions himself as the true master of the resurrected Tritonian sea empire, much like the Autarch magicians of ancient days, with a Sea Titan at his command – a very unlikely perspective, even if Dagon *did* rise again from the abyss.

Belis the Oceanid

Level 3 Nereid

Might 9 **Skill** 12 **Luck** 20
Wits 16 **Will** 12 **Grace** 18

Initiative 12, EDC 18*, Hits Total 12 (currently 0)

Melee +4, Missile +6

Danger Evasion +8*, Mystic Fortitude +9*, Physical Vigor +4, Athletic Prowess +4

Personal Charisma +7

Odylic Charm +7, Mystic Strength 19, Power 15 (0)

Magical Powers : Nature's Gifts (Nereid).

Divine Boons : Ocean's Favor, Guise of the Sea, Poseidon's Blessing (one).

** This includes the +2 bonus granted by Belis' special Ocean's Favor divine boon.*

Belis is Tanis' younger sister. She is less self-disciplined and resourceful than her older sister and thus was a slightly easier prey for Xalton's Sorcery. If Xalton's death frees her from her Enslavement, Belis will feel terribly ashamed for letting herself fall prey to the Sorcerer's magic and will ask to be relieved from her duties as an Oceanid...

The Isle of Tempests

A Shakespearian Interlude for *Mazes & Minotaurs*

Introduction

The Isle of Tempests is not a detailed adventure with a fixed plot or labyrinth map – it is a flexible “background story” upon which various scenario situations can easily be constructed. Several story seeds are provided as examples of how the Isle and its characters may be injected into an ongoing campaign, either as a short diversion or as the basis for several interwoven stories.

This mysterious island and its inhabitants can easily be integrated into an ongoing seafaring campaign, either as an extended encounter or as a short scenario. This works best with a small group of low-level characters including at least one magician (especially a Lyrist or a Nymph, for reasons which will be detailed later.

As its title implies, *The Isle of Tempests* is (very) loosely based on William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* – transposed, of course, in the ancient fantasy world of Mythika. Knowledge of Shakespeare’s play is by no means necessary to use this scenario background, which takes *very serious* liberties with the plot of the Bard’s illustrious play. The names of most characters have also been changed so that the Shakespearian references do not become too obtrusive in play.

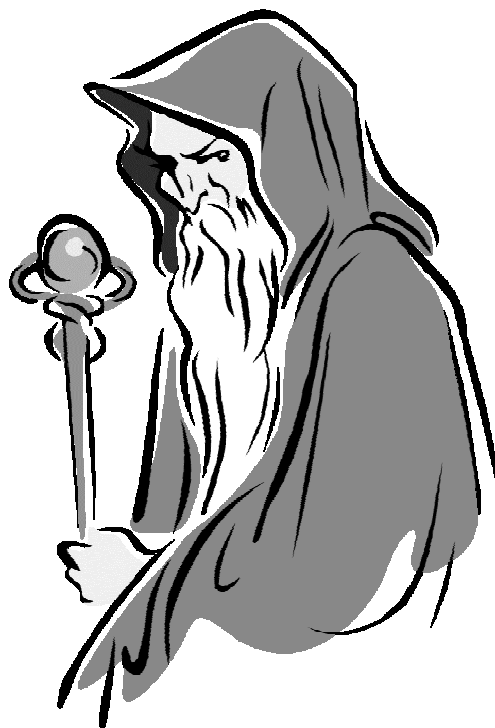
A Tale of Two Brothers

Twelve years ago, the head of a noble family from Thena, Lord Speros, vanished in mysterious circumstances. His ship, which was heading for the small island of Seriphos, was caught in a sudden, terrible storm and was presumed sunken – with all its passengers, including Speros himself, his spouse and their 3-year old daughter Randa.

Unbeknownst to the good people of Thena, this unfortunate event was actually a murder attempt on the person of Speros – a vile crime perpetrated by Speros’ younger brother, Antos, who was jealous of his elder brother’s power and craved for his position, lands and riches.

But before we uncover the true fate of Speros, more need to be said about the two brothers.

Unlike most ruling nobles, Speros was actually a Sorcerer – not a scheming, psychic manipulator but a well-meaning, good-natured scholar who had studied Sorcery as a logical extension of his already extensive knowledge. Speros was well-loved by his people, who rightfully view him as a wisdom-seeking



Speros the Sorcerer

Sorcerer... but many of them also acknowledged Speros’ major flaw : his love for learning was such that it often distracted him from the material world and its more direct concerns – including his duties as the ruler of a noble family. This enraged his brother Antos, who secretly craved for this temporal power that Speros so lightly neglected... but Antos had more than his lust for power and a talent for intrigue, for he too is a magician – an Elementalist, skilled in the ways of Air and Water.

When Speros announced he was taking a sea trip to Seriphos to visit the great libraries of Klebos, Antos saw the opportunity to dispose of his cumbersome brother and seize power in the family as Speros’ closest male heir.

Antos (who was secretly following Speros’ ship in a ship of his own) used his mastery of elemental magic to create a furious sea-storm that would wreck his brother’s ship – a “tragic accident” that would make him the new (and perfectly legitimate) ruler of his family. But things did not go as Antos had planned : as his magical storm began to rage, it drew the curious attention of a small band of frolicking Nereids, who were piqued by the obtrusive Elementalist’s weather manipulation.

When they realized a 3-year old baby girl was among the passengers of the drowning ship, the sea nymphs used their own magical powers to save Speros and his daughter from certain death (it was too late for Speros' wife, who had already drowned), causing the waves to bring the two castaways on the lonely shores of a small island, shrouded in mist, surrounded by dangerous reefs and treacherous currents, well away from the usual sailing routes.

Convinced that his devious plan had worked perfectly, Antos discreetly returned to Thena to wait for the "tragic news". Everything seemed to proceed as he had planned and within a few weeks, he was established as the new ruler of his illustrious and powerful family. This was 12 years ago...

The Lost Island

Let us now get back to the fate of Speros and Randa. At first, the death of his wife plunged Speros in a deep sorrow. He was now left alone on a desolate island, with a 3-year old daughter... but in his good-natured naivety, Speros did not yet suspect the treachery of his brother.

To his astonishment, Speros soon discovered that the small island had some inhabitants – an evil, mad Alseid named Sycorax and Klebos, a young Faun she had Enslaved with her Sorcery, making the poor creature believe she was actually her mother. Sycorax's powers had also enabled her to Enslave an Eolian spirit named Ariel, forcing him to act as her invisible spy and servant.

It was not long before Speros fought – and won – a sorcerous battle against the wicked Sycorax. Having vanquished the evil Alseid, Speros freed her two magically-bond slaves : the Faun Klebos and the Eolian Ariel, and then Enslaved them again with his own magic, for both of them were very useful servitors. A typical aristocrat, Speros could not imagine life without slaves or servants – but he proved a far better master than Sycorax, treating his two slaves with goodwill and gentleness.

This earned Speros the respect and loyalty of the Eolian... as well as the hatred and jealousy of the Satyr-child, who was hopelessly twisted and warped by years of abuse and enslavement under the thrall of Sycorax.

Soon after the demise of Sycorax, Ariel the Eolian went flying over the sea – something that he was not allowed to do as the sorceress' slave. He soon met the Nereids, who told him about the tempest and the Elementalist... The Eolian shared this information with his new master. Thus did Speros learn about his brother's foul treachery...

The years passed. Speros became the sole ruler of his lost island. Randa grew up into a comely and graceful maiden, who secretly dreams of discovering this "outside world" in which she was born and about which she knows so little...



Klebos the Caliban

Randa has also developed a solid friendship with the local Nereids, who, in the absence of Randa's mother, treated her like their foster-daughter. But the Nereids are highly aware that Randa is not one of them and will never be able to find her place in their undersea realm.

As Randa is slowly becoming a young woman, she feels more and more lonely and the almost tomboyish enthusiasm of her childhood years has left place to a deep, dreamy longing for the "world beyond the sea" – something that her self-absorbed father has not even noticed.

Speros is certain that his daughter is "perfectly happy" and that she has absolutely no reason to leave the island (not to mention her father) to discover the outside world and live her own fate – otherwise, she would have told him, wouldn't she ?

Klebos's Dark Dreams

Klebos grew up, too – not into a lusty, happy Satyr but into a dark-hearted Caliban, with secret dreams of his own : in the brutish depths of his Enslaved mind, he fantasizes about the day where he will be able to throw off the aging Sorcerer's domination, kill the old man and make Randa the toy of his darker, beastly passions.

So far, neither Speros nor Randa has the slightest suspicion about Klebos's dreams of betrayal and violence; Speros considers him as a loyal (if a bit lazy and simple-minded) slave, while Randa, who does not fully understand her father's sorcerous powers, still sees Klebos the Faun as her faithful childhood companion, not realizing that the "friendship" and "loyalty" of the Caliban is the result of her father's sorcerous powers.

This is the present situation. As alert Maze Masters will have already noticed, this situation is full of loose ends, hidden motives and unsolved problems – all of which may be used as adventure seeds, as shown by the following examples.

First Contact

The easiest (and, probably, most dramatic) way to embroil the adventurers in the affairs of Speros is to have their ship wrecked on his island by a furious storm of extraordinary magnitude.

This storm may be a natural phenomenon... but it could also be caused by the local Nereids as a way to bring strangers to the island, as a “first contact” for Randa, who has confided in them about how she longs to discover the outside world and meet other humans... If this justification is used, the Nereids’ storm does not even have to wreck the characters’ ship : it could simply force them to change their route... and discover the mysterious island “by chance”. If the player-characters’ group includes a Nymph (or, even better, a Nereid), this character could even be contacted by the Nereids beforehand to arrange the whole ploy.

Ah, Love...

Randa could well fall into love with the first young, handsome (Grace 15+) male adventurer she meets, especially if he is a Lyryst, since Speros’ daughter has never heard true music - but the Nereids have told her about this great wonder of the human world.

This will work best if the chosen character is played by a player who does not fear to verbalize or play out his character’s emotions (something that all players intending to play Lyrysts should consider). This could also work with a dashing, young Noble.

This situation could lead to various interesting dramatic developments, ranging from a simple comical interlude to a great, campaign-spanning, “true love” storyline, depending on how the character (and the player) feels about the noble but naïve maiden... Given his overall personality, Speros will almost certainly strongly disapprove of his daughter’s spontaneous infatuation with “the first stranger” she meets – a reaction which could lead to interesting dramatic developments, especially if the character’s player is willing to follow this romantic storyline and ‘free’ Randa from the authority of her over-protective father.

The Antos Alternative

Alternatively, some sailors could already have discovered Speros’ island and caught a glimpse of a strange, staff-wielding man (surely a magician of some kind) and a comely maiden (a Nymph ?) watching them from a distant cliff. Tales of this strange encounter could easily reach the ears of Speros’ brother, the treacherous Antos.

Suspecting his brother might have survived after all, Antos could hire a group of adventurers (enter the PCs...) to explore the mysterious island. Antos could even come up with a pretty convincing back story about an evil Sorcerer holding a comely maiden (“my dear, long-lost niece”) in sorcerous enslavement – the classic “damsel in distress” ploy.

The adventurers could come to Speros’ island with the intention of “freeing” Randa from the clutches of the “evil Sorcerer”, in order to bring her back to her “loving uncle” : this deception could easily lead to Speros’ death at the hands of the player-characters themselves, a situation which could have very interesting consequences, especially if the adventurers eventually learn the truth about Speros from Randa or the Nereids.

Uncovering Antos’ nefarious schemes could then become the only way for our heroes to gain Randa’s forgiveness – or to avoid the revenge of the Nereids (in the form of the dreadful Curse of the Drowned), if a stronger incentive is needed...

Klebos Unbound !

An entire scenario could also be based on Klebos’ awareness of his own Enslavement and on the Caliban’s dark dreams of revenge against Speros and Randa. In his fitful sleep, the Caliban fantasizes about killing the old man and turning his daughter into his own terrified, submissive slave... but fortunately for Speros and Randa (who are completely unaware of the Caliban’s secret dreams), Klebos has absolutely no chance of breaking the sorcerous enthrallment.

The Maze Master is free to decide where Klebos’ dreams come from : are they just “normal” dreams, born of the Caliban’s constantly repressed feelings of hatred and revenge... or are they sent by some hidden, malevolent power ? What if the late Sycorax had found a way to linger on as a ghostly presence, visiting her son in the secret world of his dreams ?

And what if her powers actually allow her to turn Klebos into a sleepwalker, making him temporarily immune to Speros’ power and turning him into a murderous, automaton-like monster ?

This dark power could also work in a subtler way, trying to trick the adventurers into slaying Speros – which would instantly break Klebos’ Enslavement and would allow him to have his way with the unsuspecting Randa...

What About Ariel ?

Readers who know their Shakespeare will have noticed that the Isle of Tempests does not include any equivalent of Ariel, the aerial spirit who serves Prospero in *The Tempest*. Maze Masters who wish to include such a being in the story could simply make him an Eolian, formerly Enslaved by the evil Alseid Sycorax and now in the service of Speros.