

MA1



AN EPIC ADVENTURE FOR LOW-LEVEL CHARACTERS

TO THE EDGEOF WORLD

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A MIDGARD ADVENTURE

"To the Edge of the World" is an adventure suitable for four to six heroes of 2nd and 3rd level.

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his adventure takes a party of four to six player characters (PCs) of 2nd and 3rd level on a wild voyage beyond the edge of Midgard. It is by necessity a highconcept adventure that assumes the heroes are up to more than killing rats and orcs. "To the Edge of the World" does not require the characters to have a ship of their own (see "Their Own Ship" for a variant), and it assumes the party is primarily non-evil, but options are provided if that's not the case.

Completing about thirteen to fifteen of the encounters presented here should advance characters to the next level. Certainly they will have some tall tales to tell if they make it back to port!

DESIGN NOTE: EPIC FUN AT LOW LEVEL

It has always annoyed me that low-level heroes are assumed to be relegated to thumping rats and goblins for a level or two, instead of doing glorious heroic deeds that reflect their status as incredible adventurers. Sure, on one level, it's fun to play the "farmboy with a

spear and helmet" stage that is the classic humble origin story. But it's also a bit of design laziness to save the most exciting adventure material for 4th to 8th level or higher. It's a lot of fun to leap into the fantastical, and the Midgard campaign setting supports both the humble, gritty play style and the more lyrical, fantastical one. "To the Edge of the World" is a deliberate attempt to design as close to a purely high-fantasy adventure as possible for 2nd-level characters. I encourage you to run it as a great saga of daring, not a humble farmboy's grind.

THEIR OWN SHIP

It's possible that a relatively low-level party has a ship of its own—and that ship would be destroyed in the course of this adventure. As the gamemaster (GM), you can avoid this by using an excuse (their ship needs repairs; they are sailing to an undead island and need a warded ship for protection; or the *Speedwell*, a ship that Simez Rothgazzi offers them, is much faster).

Or, of course, you can make sure that their ship is destroyed in the course of the adventure. That's actually fine, because it increases the stakes and the sense of player investment, rage, and retribution at a crucial point in the course of events. But it's up to you.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Simez Rothgazzi, the dangerous geomancer and head of House Rothgazzi, approaches the heroes while they are in Barsella, a port city at the farthest western edge of the civilized regions of Midgard. He offers them a short voyage to a dangerous island and a magic item, a *Key of Veles*, said to open a long-warded door. If the party accepts the mission to carry the key to an island of undead, Prince Deland meets them. Then they must convince the Bloodless Queen of Karn'lothra (a lich-queen) to let them use the key in an ancient tomb (the Tomb of the Minotaur Prince, Qoraz Velesson). If they fail, they might visit the tomb without permission.

Once the adventurers go tomb robbing and use the Key, they unleash a *lesser sphere of annihilation*. If they defeat the sphere, they recover a summoning spell in the *Book of Vael Turog*. They might return the book to Barsella or they might examine it: either way, they summon a great moving island to carry them across the sea. If they dare to step aboard, the Leviathan Island begins moving at speed. The book explains the dangers of the Leviathan to them and it tells them that they are on a one-way trip to the edge of the world. Some panicked investigation might ensue (or not).



The Leviathan does, indeed, swim right over the edge and into the Celestial Sea. Some rather epic events unfold amid the Citadel of a Million Stars, as the heroes have to make a very big decision and possibly fight some horrors from the void before returning to the normal world.

HOOKS

To begin the adventure, the party needs a reason to go visit the undead.

- 1. The PCs are on their way to the island of Karn'lothra (see *Journeys to the West*) for reasons of their own. They might have been receiving visions from an ancestral spirit, they might be seeking the remains of a lost sailor or relative, or they might have heard of the powerful necromancers and the strange creatures of Karn'lothra and be curious.
- 2. They might have found a Key of Veles or a Moon Seal in a prior adventure (such as "Awash in the Wash" in *Journeys to the West*). This object tugs inexorably in the direction of Karn'lothra and the *Book of Vael Turog* (see page 10).
- **3. They experience a cut-scene to the voyage.** The adventure begins with the PCs already sailing for the islands, perhaps fleeing assassins, creditors, jilted lovers, or demons. Some groups might be more receptive to this sort of start than others, and it certainly speeds up play a bit.

Other options are available, but the idea is to get the party on board ship and setting sail fairly quickly.

1. A Simple Errand

This scene assumes the adventurers start in the port city of Barsella. Depending on the characters' demeanors and status, they might be invited to meet Simez Rothgazzi at either the Jade Palace (a brothel he frequents) or at the Tower of the High Order of Geomancers (which he leads). Read the following.

Your host, Simez, is a handsome man with a finely kept beard who wears elegant green clothes and rings set with emeralds. He says, "I am very happy you chose to come. I have a simple errand that requires a long ocean voyage and a dangerous bit of tomb visiting on the distant island of Karn'lothra. I'm told you are the best heroes available in town. Would you be willing to set sail to find an ancient book of lore and bring it back here? I can pay you well, or instruct one of your group in mastering magical ley line energy."

Outline the task Simez expects: sailing to Karn'lothra, visiting the Bloodless Queen, gaining her permission to open a tomb (with bribes and gifts Simez provides), and then returning with the *Book of Vael Turog*. They must not read it. In exchange, he offers 500 gp per adventurer, or instruction in ley line magic.

If the adventurers decline, Simez makes his disappointment clear. He tries one last time to snag their interest.

"The stories tell that the treasures found in the Tomb of Qoraz are items of great power. I want just one of them—you shall have the rest, and perhaps a chest of gold might interest you?" He makes it clear that the mission is dangerous but not impossible: he has personally offended the lich-queen and cannot be seen in her court, but surely their reputations will rise from a successful venture of this kind? And might he throw in a free opening of the shadow roads at some future date?

If the party accepts, Simez gives the group a *Key of Veles* (see *Midgard Campaign Setting*)—this magical key of green metal opens mundane and magical portals) and a single scroll of *protection from undead*, 10-ft. radius.

A SHIP AND GIFTS

The high geomancer also asks the heroes whether they would like a fast ship or if they have one of their own, and whether they can gather up some visitor's gifts to give to the Bloodless Queen (she likes small animals, some say, and also ancient relics or items of Ankeshel). The PCs would be well advised to get some birds, salt mice (see *Journeys to the West*), hunting dogs, or something similar as gifts for the queen.

For transport, Simez offers them the *Speedwell*, a small but extremely well-built caravel with a competent crew and a peculiar captain, the Seggotan-worshiping dragonkin named Gullnipper. The *Speedwell's* captain brooks no nonsense and shouts for the PCs to get "off my deck and back in your cabins" frequently.

INSULTING OR FIGHTING SIMEZ

If the party decides to fight, Simez (LN male human geomancer wizard 6/geomancer 7) will likely mop the floor with them. His unseen servants do not fight, but his **invisible stalker** does (**CR** 7; **Initiative** +8; **AC** 20; **hp** 80; **Attack** +12/+12 slams [2d6+4]; *Bestiary*). The stalker prevents melee attacks, and Simez draws on the geomancer's ley line while casting *charm person* spells (Piercing Spell, DC 15 Will save negates). By the time they snap out of it, the heroes might well find themselves *charmed* and on a ship sailing west into the teeth of a brutal storm.

2. The Voyage to Karn'lothra

The voyage out should be as dull or as interesting as you and the players want; it's hundreds of miles of sailing, and it could go quickly with a following wind, or slowly if the ship is tacking against the wind the whole way. A quick encounter with one of the following creatures or events could enliven things if the players are bored.

Each of these creatures provides a possible tool to help the party navigate unknown waters to Karn'lothra. These methods are marked in each encounter. If the creatures are slain, of course, the ship gains no help from the encounter and you, as GM, might want to continue with the encounters until one of the creatures survives. None of these encounters come with treasure, but the party's success or failure against the spark or the ningyo might have an effect on how the PCs are seen at the Bloodless Court.

PLACID WATERS

If the PCs stray into tropical waters, horrid mermaids called ningyo sing strange songs of doom that draw visions of currents, winds, and position from the minds of sailors. These creatures implant a vision of beautiful Karn'lothra, compelling those who fail a DC 18 Will save to sail in that direction to the undead paradise.



3 Undead Ningyo (CR 2): Initiative +1; **AC** 14; **hp** 21 each; **Attack** +3/+3 claws (1d4+1) and +3 bite (1d4+1), or startle (DC 15 negates); *Souls for Smuggler's Shiv.*

NORTHERN WATERS

The dragon Saltblossom knows the way to Karn'lothra but shares this knowledge only in exchange for gold coins.

Saltblossom, a Brine Dragon Wyrmling (CR 3): Initiative +6; **AC** 17; **hp** 26; **Attack** +9 bite (1d4+4) and +9/+9 claws (1d3+3), or breath weapon (2d6 acid); *Bestiary 2.*

GREEN FOREST WATER

The seaweed leshy are inhabitants of a large seaweed Sargasso. They know the way to Karn'lothra and will bargain for it in exchange for seeds or nuts from the ship stores, as well as fresh water for a peculiar land plant they are trying to grow.

1 or 2 Seaweed Leshy (CR 3 or 5): AC 15; hp 30 each; Attack +5 water jet ranged (blinding) or +4 slam (1d6); *Bestiary 3*.

ROLLING WAVES

A small goblin warship crewed by goblins likely attacks by night or in heavy waves or fog. They seek food to take over the side with them: flesh if they can get it, barrels of hardtack if need be. If a goblin is taken prisoner, it knows the way to Karn'lothra, though it warns that the undead are slavers, flesh-eaters, and horrible, horrible hosts.

Goblin Shark (CR 2): Initiative +2; **AC** 16; **hp** 30; **Attack** short sword +6 (1d6+2/19–20) or bite +2 (1d8+1 plus 1 bleed); **XP** 800; *Midgard Bestiary.*

10 Goblins (CR 1/3): Initiative +6; **AC** 16; **hp** 6 each; **Attack** +2 short sword (1d4/19-20) or +4 with short bow $(1d4/\times3)$; **XP** 135; *Bestiary*.

STORMY WEATHER

The spark appears as a "storm maiden," a fiery electrical creature of the clouds. If it hits a PC and possesses him or her, it seizes the ship's wheel and never lets go until the ship arrives at Anamareth's harbor.

Spark (CR 6): Initiative +9; AC 22; hp 39; Attack +13 shocking grasp (5d6) or possession; *Midgard Bestiary*.

3. Landfall at Karn'lothra

When the PCs arrive at the island of Karn'lothra, they see the following on their approach:

The island has a tall central hill with a smoking volcano crater at its peak, dense jungle along many of its flanks, and a huge walled section covered with hundreds or even thousands of tombs and mausoleums. Closer to you, you see an enormous titan's corpse washed up on the beach. Swarms of birds and crabs nibble at the decaying flesh, and the smell drifts hundreds of yards to your ship.

On the northwestern curve of the island ahead of you, you see a harbor entrance and a dozen ships in various states of decay, each flying a black flag. This must be the City Unforgotten, Anamareth, and a castle stands on a height above it.

The city and harbor are the home of the undead of Karn'lothra, with only a small slave quarter.

The titanic corpse is the remains of Somoroth, a sea titan that the queen intends to raise as an undead juggernaut. Other than its size, it is unremarkable. Additionally, tens of thousands of tombs are here. Finding the right one without help is the work of months.





If the PCs dock at the harbor, they are undisturbed at the nearsilent harbor until nightfall. The area has slave quarters, and crews toil on the dozen docked ships, but most activity on Karn'lothra is nocturnal.

If the PCs go exploring, they find the island divided; they will be reported by any slaves they seek to converse with, and they might be gently "herded" back to their ship by a **lich hound** (**CR** 4; **Initiative** +3; **AC** 18; **hp** 42; **Attack** +7 bite [1d12 plus trip]; SA gut rip [2d12]; **XP** 1,200) *Midgard Bestiary*.

The tomb districts are silent, though they might encounter a monkey swarm of curious **white monkeys** (**CR** 2; **Initiative** +3; **AC** 15; **hp** 22; **SQ** half damage from weapons, **Attack** no attack roll required [2d6 plus distraction]) *Bestiary* 2.

After sunset, a courtier of the Bloodless Queen Ilnora arrives to find out what they want.

Mad Prince Deland (CR 7): Ankeshelian male human; ghost aristocrat 7; Initiative +5; AC 17; hp 73; Con —, Wis 16, Cha 20; Attack +6 touch (7d6, Fort DC 18 for half); Skills Bluff +10, Diplomacy +12, Sense Motive +10; XP 3,200.

No matter where the party is on the island or on their ship, the Mad Prince finds them. Read the following:

No sooner has the sun set than a figure floats out toward you over the harbor water: a robed human with many tattoos on his arms. He is clearly a ghost, because he is quite transparent.

"Welcome to the Queen's Island and the Harbor of Last Hopes," he says. "Why are you here?" Roleplay out the encounter. Deland is mad and also in love with the Bloodless Queen Ilnora, and he does not betray her interests. If the party mentions the gifts from Simez, he asks to see them. Assuming the party has them and makes a decent impression (DC 15 Diplomacy check), he offers to bring them to the court, as long as they leave their weapons aboard the ship. If the Diplomacy check fails, he tells them to try again another night.

4. In Praise of the Lich-Queen

If the PCs make a decent case, Prince Deland takes them up the hill to the Citadel of Luminoth, which is still being rebuilt from the ruins. Read the following:

The slim towers and wide windows of this castle are strangely modern amid the smell of jungle rot and quarry's dust. Two barnacle-encrusted zombies that reek of the sea guard the gate. They speak in a gurgling tone. "Your weapons and your wands stay here."

If the PCs refuse, the audience is off. The draugr guards can be bluffed or fooled easily.

Sallow and Saddened, Two Draugr (CR 2): Initiative +0; AC 14; DR 5/bludgeoning or slashing; hp 19 each (3 HD); Attack +5 greataxe (1d12+4/×3 plus nausea); XP 600 each; *Bestiary 2*.

Within are hallways of smooth marble, statues of disquieting anatomical frankness, and halls filled with tremendous treasures. Paintings and bronze urns are marked with what are surely the ruins of lost cities and sunken realms.

Ask the players if they want to make any preparations before entering the throne room. The chamber is largely empty.

The queen towers over the Ankeshelian undead around her: she is nearly 7 feet tall, and a full head of silver hair cascades down her shoulders. She has dark eyes that shine like diamonds. Death has left her complexion a light shade of blue, but otherwise she shows no outward sign of decay.

Four guards like those at the entrance stand here, plus a female zombie captain of some kind, who is lovely but for the hole around her missing heart.

"Welcome to my island. I understand you have brought tribute from the Geomancer Simez Rothgazzi. It is about time he paid his respects," the queen states.

Roleplay it out; the queen thinks Simez is sucking up to her, and the PCs need to talk her into giving them permission to enter the Necropolis and visit the Tomb of the Minotaur Prince, Qoraz Velesson. It is not one of her ancient people, rather a relatively new tomb of merely eight hundred years, and so she might agree. If the PCs have the gifts from Simez and present them with some flowery language, they gain a +4 bonus to all Diplomacy checks in this encounter.

If the PCs fail in their Diplomacy checks, they are not given permission to visit the tomb and must do so with stealth. This excursion will likely occur during the day, when the undead are less active.

If the PCs roll a natural 1 for Diplomacy, the queen takes a liking to the most charismatic member of the party and decides he or she will become lunch. Her draugr captain of the guard and the captain's four helpers seize that PC and carry him or her off. Queen Ilnora dismisses the rest of the party.

If the PCs want to fight, they are hopelessly outclassed, and the adventure is likely over. The queen does not fight; she leaves the room in gaseous form at the first sign of combat.

Draugr Captain Heartless Pearl (CR 3): Initiative +2; **AC** 18; **DR** 5/bludgeoning or slashing; **hp** 25 (4 HD); **Attack** +7 greataxe (1d12+6/×3 plus 1 negative level); **SA** *obscuring mist* 3/day as a spell-like ability (CL 5th, concentration +8); **XP** 800; *Bestiary 2*.

Treasure: +1 elvish chain, 50 gp.



5. Among the Bonefields: The Tomb of Qoraz

The Necropolis of Karn'lothra is surrounded by a 30-ft. stone wall. Examination of the wall reveals no bricks or seams, suggesting it might have been conjured and crafted entirely by magic. Although it is in disrepair, the wall is in overall better condition than most of Anamareth.

The Tomb of Qoraz is halfway up the saddle of the island, and the PCs must make at least a two-hour scramble up the rock and through the tombs and brush to get there. The wind is noticeably colder at that altitude, the jungle falls away, and the smell of Mt. Neegara is plain and sulfurous. The shadows darken, but there are no obvious signs of zombies or skeletons nearby (the Bloodless Queen has sent a wight to watch the party, but it requires a DC 30 Perception check to spot it, since the wight has +16 Stealth).

The tomb itself has only four elements: the Red Door, the Warded Hall, the Chamber of the Sphere, and the Well.



A. THE RED DOOR

This door is painted red and marked with two black curves: a warning glyph of a trap called the Horns of Qoraz, though the PCs are unlikely to know it by that name.

CAMOUFLAGED PIT TRAP (CR 3)

XP 800

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset manual

Effect 30-ft.-deep pit (3d6 falling damage); DC 20 Reflex avoids; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area)

B. THE WARDED HALL

The hall is protected by one or two vampiric mists that prowl ceaselessly for food. They have eaten rats and mice for far too long. Read the following:

The space beyond the door is filled with shadows and magical light so ancient that it flickers. In the corners of the hall are braziers filled with reddish smoke, a sort of peculiar incense that appears to be moving out of the braziers and directly toward you.

Vampiric Mist (CR 3): Initiative +8; AC 14; DR 5/magic; hp 30 (4 HD); Attack +7 touch (1d6 plus bleed and blood siphon); XP 800; *Bestiary 2*.

Treasure: The vampiric mist has gathered silver and a few magic items over the years. The silver amounts to 550 sp. Unfortunately for the PCs, the magic items are potions that have turned into vials

of dust. A DC 20 Alchemy skill check can restore those to one *potion of healing* and two *potions of invisibility*.

C. CHAMBER OF THE SPHERE

Read the following when the PCs first look into the room:

The chamber is dusty, the ceiling is streaked with ash and soot, and the floor is covered with thousands of empty insect shells, roaches, or beetles. The entire area is suffused with an ancient sense of doom, and it is illuminated by a glowing open chest—clearly magical. Somewhere near the black ceiling, something moves.

The chamber is home to six shadows, which are likely to result in the death of all party members. If the PCs still have the *scroll of protection from undead*, 10-ft. radius that Simez gave them early on, adding more shadows is probably a good idea. The party can fight them, can use the *lesser sphere of annihilation* to fight them, or can grab the treasure and flee.

6 Shadows (CR 3 each): Initiative +2; AC 15; hp 19 each (3 HD); Attack +4 incorporeal touch (1d6 Strength damage); XP 800; *Bestiary*.

Treasure: A box of glowing white light can contain and transport the lesser sphere if the PCs succeed on a Use Magic Device skill check in addition to a control check (basically, moving the sphere into the box and then shutting it).

Also in the box: the *Book of Vael Turog* that Simez asked them to find. If the PCs attempt to put the *lesser sphere* in while the book is still in the chest, the book shouts and complains, giving away its ability to speak.

Lesser Sphere of Annihilation

The *lesser sphere of annihilation* looks very much like a regular sphere of annihilation, but it is more tractable. See the statistics below for the differences from the regular sphere. When the chamber is first entered, the item rises from a tripod where it was resting and moves to a hovering "strike" position. Any movement toward the sarcophagus of Qoraz after this causes the sphere to attack.

Lesser Sphere of Annihilation

Aura strong transmutation; CL 12th Slot none; Weight —

DESCRIPTION

A *lesser sphere of annihilation* is a globe of absolute blackness that is 1 ft. in diameter. Any matter that comes in contact with a sphere is first paralyzed for 1 round (no saving throw), then sucked into the void and destroyed in the following round.

A PC can gain control of a *lesser sphere of annihilation* (or keep control) with a control check against DC 15 (a move action). A character's control check is 1d20 + level + Intelligence modifier. If the check succeeds, the PC can move the sphere (perhaps to bring it into contact with an enemy) as a free action.

Control of a sphere can be established from 40 ft. away. Once established, control must be maintained by making control checks (all DC 15) each round. For as long as a PC does not fail a check, he or she can control the sphere from a distance of 40 ft. + 10 ft./ character level. The sphere moves 10 ft. + 5 ft. for every 5 points by which the PC's control check result in that round exceeded 15.

If a control check fails, the sphere slides 10 ft. toward the PC attempting to move it. If multiple creatures vie for control, the rolls are

opposed. If none are successful, the sphere slips toward the lowest roller.

D. THE WIGHT AND THE WELL

After the PCs have recovered the *Book of Vael Turog* from the tomb, they might want to leave town. The wight that was following them earlier has instructions to kill them and return the book to the queen. If the PCs choose to stand and fight, so be it, but they can also evade the wight by exiting through the Well or by just running for it.

Wight (CR 3): Initiative +1; AC 15; hp 26; Attack +4 slam (1d4+1 plus energy drain); Skills Stealth +15; XP 800; *Bestiary*.

Treasure: 50 sp, a wand of magic missile with 5 charges.

The chamber contains a second exit: a well shaft that leads 60ft. down to an underground pool. From there, an underground stream and narrow tunnel lead down to the shore of Karn'lothra, which is a stretch of glistening reddish-brown sand. The PCs can avoid the wight by going this way, at the cost of being soaked.



Assuming that the PCs have recovered the *Book of Vael Turog*, the thing complains the whole way of the water's danger to its delicate pages.

6. Calling Up the Vasty Deep

The *Book of Vael Turog* insists the PCs can survive the tide of undead and the queen if they obey its instructions to read "first page 111, and then the final page." The first of these creates a powerful protection from undead that lasts about 10 minutes—just long enough to complete the summoning ritual for the Leviathan found on the last page. If a PC does read these pages, read the following:

A pulse of warmth and golden light passes through you and out to the water's edge. You feel a powerful magical current swirling around you. Whatever the book has released is deep magic—something ancient. You're just not sure what it is.

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Any character who makes a DC 15 Knowledge (arcana) skill check also knows the following:

Something is being brought to the island by magical means perhaps by means of fey roads or shadow channels tunneling through the ordinary world.

Leviathan Island arrives within a few minutes of being called, but at the GM's option it destroys the ship they had. Let the players make whatever preparations they wish, then read the following for the arrival.

The ocean surges all around you, a wave boiling up from the sea, and when the seas calm, an entire new island is in the water near you. Or rather, it seems to be an island that moves, a creature from the deep. Stone towers and a small copse of woods jut from its back. The thing must be miles long, and your arcanist seems to think that it awaits your command.

If the party is reluctant to use the island, have a pair of shadows show up, commanded by one of the draugr looking to steal whatever the PCs found in the tomb.

2 Shadows (CR 3): Initiative +2; darkvision 60 ft.; **AC** 15; **hp** 19, 17; **Attack** +4 incorporeal touch (1d6 Strength damage); **Fly** 40 ft (good); **XP** 800 each; *Bestiary*.

If you want to make the trip to the island a little more dangerous, the PCs encounter 2d6 reefclaws on the way out to the Leviathan.

2d6 Reefclaws (CR 1): Initiative +5; **AC** 14; **hp** 13; **Attack** +2/+2 claws (1d4 plus grab and poison); **Swim** +8; **XP** 400 each; *Bestiary 2.*

Assuming that the summoning PCs step aboard, the Leviathan immediately begins to move. The Leviathan is swimming W-SW and (though the PCs don't know it yet) it is heading for the Edge of the World.

If further encounters are desired, the Leviathan might blow past a pirate ship or even meet up with the mongrelman's ship, the *Fortune* (see *Journeys to the West*). Although this could be a straight-up fight, it also provides a good time to bring in new PCs or a helpful NPC if needed.

7. Aboard a New Ship: Mongrels and Oracles

As the PCs explore the Leviathan, they are bound to run into its inhabitants, the mongrelmen, and they could also find the opportunity to commune with the Leviathan itself. Read the following when the party ventures into the moonflower grove.

For the purposes of this adventure, the moonflowers themselves should all be busy in a nonflowering and less aggressive phase of their life cycle; the CR 8 is too much for this party to handle, though hints of their flesh-devouring strength (like bones among their root balls) should be encouraged. (See *Bestiary 2* for more information about moonflowers.)

The flowering trees around you seem to move and whisper, beyond the normal motion of plants in the wind—but nothing hostile comes from them. Instead you hear a voice from one of the larger trees, saying, "Stand right there! All those who visit the Grove must eat the flesh of the Swimming God."

Let the party members immediately make Perception checks, but with varying results as shown:

THE BOOK THAT READS ITSELF

The book is an NPC, of course, and can be as pompous, clever, wily, and dangerous as you care to make it. The book may explain that it contains the soul of an archmage and the knowledge of an entire academy of wizards, plus that it was written entirely in the language of pure deep magic. Much of this is bluff, but not all of it.

The book's exact powers are left to DM license, but it should provide at least one or two spells per game session; it can also sulk and refuse to cooperate if mistreated (or the plot demands it).

The cantrips it commands are *detect magic*, *light, message*, and *mending* at will, the effect of three 1st-level spells (chosen from *mage armor, comprehend languages, detect undead*, and *hypnotism*), two 2nd-level spells (chosen from *arcane lock, erase, levitation*, and *zone of truth*), one *fireball* or *lightning bolt*, and one *shadow walk* along the shadow roads to help the party out in times of need. Not that it will ever let the PCs forget it if it helps!

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- DC 14 or less: No additional information.
- DC 15+: That's not a plant voice; it's some humanoid, for sure.
- **DC 21+**: As above, and you know there are at least three humanoids out there hiding.
- DC 25+: As above, and you think that it is a mongrelman or an orc voice. There are at least five humanoids around you, hidden among the plants, with one within an enormous seedpod or cocoon.

If the party is inclined to pick a fight, the fight is on. The same holds true if the party lights fires, chops down trees, or generally disturbs the Leviathan god. The tribe is happy to hold the PCs as prisoners and feed them godflesh (see *Journeys to the West*) until the PCs become mongrelmen themselves.

6 Mongrelmen (CR 1): Initiative +1; **AC** 13; **hp** 15 each; **Attack** +4 club (1d6+3) or +3 slam (1d4+3); **XP** 400 each; *Bestiary 2.*

The party has several days to discover the safety of the Bubble Tower and the sea caves, and they might possibly find the moonflower cocoons (see *Journeys to the West*). Then one night on watch, the tide rolls in and keeps rolling in and keeps rolling in.

Treasure: 33 gp, +1 falchion.

8. Seven Days Below the Sea

The adventurers can sit it out for a few days of travel, or they can poke and prod and find their way to the Nodes of Godflesh chamber. They might also encounter a gelatinous cube or three amoeba swarms within the beast if encounters are needed.

Gelatinous Cube (CR 3): Initiative –5; **AC** 4; **hp** 50; **Attack** +2 slam (1d6 plus 1d6 acid); **SA** acid, paralysis (DC 20 Fort save); **XP** 800 each; *Bestiary*.

3 Amoeba Swarms (CR 1): Initiative -5; **AC** 13; **hp** 9 each; **Attack** swarm (1d6 acid plus distraction DC 11); **XP** 400 each; *Bestiary 2.*

If any adventurers do decide to eat the godflesh (see *Journeys to the West*), either from finding the chamber or from being captured by the mongrelmen, read the following:

The first thing you notice is the tingling on your tongue. The second is a set of somewhat-pleasant spikes of light in your mind, and the sensation of falling as your limbs all go slack.

With a good Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (religion) skill check, the PCs can interpret this wave of communion with the Leviathan a little better, or at least interpret it at a deeper level than "I passed out." Consult the Communing with the Swimming Leviathan table.

TABLE 1: COMMUNING WITH THE SWIMMING LEVIATHAN

Knowledge Skill Check	Result
15 or less	The lights you saw overwhelmed you. You cannot interpret their deeper meaning.
16+	You had a vision of return and renewal—of crossing boundaries on the way to the Source of Life. The beast is on its way somewhere important, perhaps migrating to its feeding grounds or to challenge some other terror of the seas.
20+	The great Leviathan may be going somewhere to spawn and die, or it may literally be leaving the mortal world and ascending into a world of greater beings or demons, perhaps.
25+	The Leviathan is swimming to the edge of the world and off into the stars. You could sense its delight at no longer heeding some ancient command to remain within the Western Sea and being able to return to its home. It is happy and cheerful.

If asked, the *Book of Vael Turog* makes it clear that things get weird out there. The ley lines that carry magical force can be cut, causing spells to fail and magic items to falter. Creatures move through peculiar forms of propulsion, and creatures from the Void of Veles, the black space between worlds and stars, prey on the unwary. Play up the doom angle; none of this necessarily happens unless you think it useful, but it is true that communing through the use of godflesh becomes cut off after the leap into the void. The goal is to be sure that Things Look Bad, and players realize that their characters are in trouble. Don't necessarily linger on this sequence.



9. Beyond the Edge

Note on Play: The Leap into the Void

This scene is one of those that either works or doesn't largely based on GM presentation. The Leviathan's leap out of the ordinary world and into the heavens or the Ethereal Plane is one of those moments that the players may remember fondly or mock. That depends on you.

I suggest you hint at it and build up to it. Mention the way that the beast is moving faster, waves breaking over its snout. Hint at dreams full of skies and clouds, and a sense of being carried on titanic currents. Let a druid or other nature- or lore-based PC figure out that its breathing cycle has sped up tremendously. And make sure that all the PCs see the Leviathan's enormous tail thrashing in the ether sea, pushing waves of glowing blue in all directions.

Get a little poetic. Then paraphrase the text in whatever form works for you, and hit them with the ambush encounter.

The Leviathan reaches the edge—and leaps off the world into the ethereal sea of stars. Read the following:

The Leviathan rises to the surface, and it is again possible to find some ley lines and weave magic spells. At the same time, it seems that you are approaching the end of the world: a huge greenish-black wall holds in the ocean, though there is a crack in that wall—a crack you are headed straight toward.

Let the players make whatever preparations they like. *Levitate*, protection spells, and the like will all help keep the party safe and together. When they are ready, read the following:

The Leviathan Island rises in the water as if about to dive and then a tremendous weight pushes you down to the ground. The island-beast reaches the edge of the world and jumps off into the void beyond, a place of black and deep blue light punctuated by shining motes. You can see the world of Midgard behind you. The island is swimming through the darkened heavens using some great magic, and swirls of light are trailing in its wake.

Give the PCs a moment to react. Then ask for a DC 20 Perception check. If someone makes it, read the following:

Four of these lights seem to be pacing you, two on each side. They are coming closely, slowly but steadily, and their path might intersect yours.

The party will be investigated by about four star bearers, who are very curious about this invasion of the heavens by a large and potentially hostile creature. They do not attack except in self defense.

Ongiol the Scout, Star Bearer (CR 2): AC 15; DR 10/evil; hp 15, 14, 13, 10; Fly 60 ft (perfect); Attack ranged touch 20-ft. +3/+3 *ray of light* (1d6); Spells *detect evil, greater teleport*; XP 400.

If the party is friendly, the star bearers will inform them that the

Leviathan has been enchanted to bring them to the Star Citadel, though the source of this enchantment is ancient. It's up to the party whether to go along for the ride, or fight against the tide.

PC skills can affect navigation and knowledge to "steer" the Leviathan somewhere within the Celestial Sea (such as back toward the Western Ocean, or up to a particular star or even the moon—those locations are left to the GM's imagination). Steering in a particular direction requires a DC 15 Knowledge (arcana) check and communication with the Leviathan through eating its godflesh.

If the PCs don't want to influence the island's direction, time passes swiftly. In about one hour the Leviathan arrives at the Star Citadel (or Citadel of a Million Stars). Once it arrives there, use encounter 10, below.

Further encounters are possible at your discretion. These might include whatever strange creatures you like as inhabitants of the upper air and the starry heights. Possibilities include the following:

- 1. A patrol of arbiter inevitables (CR 2; AC 16; hp 15 each; Attack +7 short sword [1d3/19–20]; XP 600 each).
- 2. A psychopathic augur kyton (CR 2; AC 17; hp 19; Attack +4 gore [1d4–1 plus bleed]; SA unnerving gaze; *Bestiary 3*).
- 3. One or two howling vargouilles (CR 2 each; AC 15; hp 19 each; Attack +5 bite [1d4 plus poison; DC 12 Fort save or damage only healed by magic]; SA shriek [DC 12 Fort save to paralyze for 2d4 rounds]; *Bestiary*.
- 4. An oculo swarm (CR 4; Initiative +8; AC 18; hp 37; swarm traits, immune to weapon damage; Fly 40 ft. [good]; Attack swarm 1d6 acid; SA distraction DC 15, eye extraction; *Midgard Bestiary*).
- **5. Ether Whirlpool** (no melee attacks, but drains energy and magic from creatures in this magical storm; all PCs must make three DC 20 Will saving throws; for each failed save, they either lose access to their highest-level spell for a week, lose 2 points of Constitution for a week, or lose 3 hp for a week).
- 6. Illestaroth, a Void Dragon: See Kobold Quarterly #22, but essentially, this is an unconquerable dragon that lives in the void between the stars. Use the skincrawler dragon statistics from the Kobold Quarterly blog if combat is called for (and it should be brief). Star bearers may find a survivor when combing the wreckage.

Once the PCs have dispatched these minor threats, proceed with the arrival at the Star Citadel.

WHAT PLANE IS THIS?

Once the PCs have gone ethereal and leapt into the void, they may have questions about their planar travel. Grant any PC a DC 15 Knowledge (the planes) check (or a DC 22 Knowledge [arcana] or Knowledge [religion] if the planar lore is not available) to know that this is a form of the Ethereal Plane, the celestial region surrounding the world of Midgard.

A successful skill check also means they know that movement in this ether is always at half speed, and it can happen up and down as well as along the gravity plane. An *ethereal jaunt* cast here returns a PC to the mortal world—hundreds of miles above the ground.

10. Arrival at the Star Citadel

Assuming the party does not steer the Leviathan away for too long, the island-beast arrives at Star Citadel within a day of entering the void. The Leviathan does not immediately move close to the citadel; instead, it approaches and slows down, coasting like a tremendously heavy ship seeking to dock at a fragile pier.

The air around you is filled with wispy streamers of gray and starry whirls of light, but one light is brighter by far: a castle in the air, many miles from the solid earth. It seems to be a six-pointed star, with each arm of the star ending in a tower shape, and a large set of windows and gates piled closer to the center. It is a fortress that shines with bright bluish-white light, half the size of the Leviathan you stand on.

Even now, the Leviathan does not come within 200 yards of the citadel. Instead, it swims a few circles around the citadel, and then proceeds to begin foraging and devouring the small glowing creatures here (they resemble tiny luminescent flies or beetles if the PCs are inclined to examine them closely). It rests, and at some point, stops moving to sleep. The Leviathan is exhausted. Attempts to speak with it by eating godflesh bring only very peculiar dreams.

The PCs may soon grow impatient, and in any case there is much to see at the citadel. The party notices that dozens, possibly one hundred, star bearers congregate here, similar to those who approached the party out in the void earlier. Their leader is Elushiel, who shines with a noticeably more silvery-green light than the others. He addresses them and invites them into the citadel. Read the following when the party attempts to contact the people of the citadel. The noise and attention leads to a dangerous collision.

The beast nudges one of the long, spindly arms of the star citadel, and the huge stone fortress creaks a moment—then spins a little faster. A dozen bright lights fly out of its gates and windows, and are heading in your direction.

If the heroes wants to enter the citadel, they need to leave the Leviathan (feeding happily on celestial plankton or the like) and find some way across the void. Since the PCs cannot fly, this likely means being towed by Elushiel or finding some way to float across. Any PC with the Fly skill can attempt it here with a +8 bonus due to the natural buoyancy of the air near the citadel. All others must be pulled across the strangely buoyant air to the white stone citadel.

Elushiel Star Bearer (CR 2): AC 15; DR 10/evil; hp 13; Fly 60 ft. (perfect); Attack ranged touch 20-ft. +3/+3 *ray of light* (1d6); Spells *detect evil*, *greater teleport*; XP 400.

Treasure: When slain, Elushiel's bright light coalesces into a gleaming silvery +1 *short sword* named Lionstooth (marked on the blade).

11. Star Chambers

The citadel is a hemisphere with a central courtyard, and six towers reach out into space around it. The hemisphere includes tunnels lit by bright orange or blue magelights, and it includes



several areas entirely within that asteroidlike space underground, the rock of the citadel. The chambers and public spaces include eleven areas of possible interest to the PCs, briefly described here.

A. Six Tapering Towers: These towers are usually described as the Moon Tower, Sun Tower, Milkstone Tower, Tower of Ashes, Alchemist's Tower, and Butcher's Tower. They are inhabited by the priestess of Hecate (Mydella the Pale Priestess), the king and queen, the Captain of the Guards, guests and visiting dignitaries such as Lord Chelessfield (an elf fighter and aristocrat), Lightning Lord Suvid (a famous quickling duelist), and Lady Sorreminx (an elf enchantress). The Butcher's Tower is home to the Master of the Bridle and his kytons (see encounter 13).

The guest chambers between the towers are currently vacant, so the PCs are likely housed there. The hall is slightly smelly, utterly vacant, and built of crumbling limestone.

- **B. Courtyard:** The courtyard is an open space planted with bone-white grass and marked with floating orange magelights. Here much of the court gathers and plays.
- **C. Grand Hall:** All meals and special occasions are held in the grand hall. Its arched ribs are carved from stone to resemble the interior of a ribcage. The dual throne is a floating extravagance of silver and electrum.
- **D. Guest Chambers:** Well-appointed, the guest chambers have a few secret passages to spy on guests, and they also allow for assignations and intrigue. Each room

comes with a shae servant/informer and several goblin or kyton underlings to fetch and carry.

- **E. Leviathan's Yard:** The Leviathan's Yard is an enormous beach of white pebbles, many lightly stained with brownish-red. This is where leviathans are often butchered. An enormous section here (the size of a house) is actually an egg (Nature DC 23).
- **F. Courtier's Chambers:** These bubblelike rooms are stuck to the outside of the citadel like the nests of enormous paper wasps. They are made of stone and star-silk, and they have a somewhat pebbled texture to their walls. Doors and windows are often circular. The area is not off-limits to guests, but most of the star bearers who live here ask a lot of questions of any casual visitor: "Can I help you find someone?" and "Are you lost?" are common lines of questioning.
- **G. Kitchens and Servant Hall:** The head chef is Kettlepot, a shadow fey with remarkably long teeth and a nasty smile. Her servants are primarily ghostly white-haired halflings.
- H. Temple to the Starry Lovers (Hecate and Veles): The Temple to the Starry Lovers is considered an abomination by worshipers



of the Dragon Gods or the Moon Goddess on Midgard's lands, but it is well-respected here, and its high priestess, Mydella, is a dangerous woman to cross, beloved by the king and queen.

Story Option: If the PCs are still with Captain Gullnipper for any reason, he is likely to take the entire temple as an offense to Seggotan, the dragon water god, and be arrested for blasphemy and given to the Keeper of the Bridle.

I. Armorer's Hall: Largely abandoned, these halls are storage areas for javelins and rapiers and other, stranger weapons such as an estoc (See the *Midgard Campaign Setting*) and three trumps with two charges each (*Midgard Campaign Setting*). These weapons are guarded by a powerful hound archon named Carresland (**CR** 4; **AC** 19; **hp** 60; **Attack** +9/+4 masterwork greatsword [2d6+3]; *message* and *greater teleport* at will; *Bestiary*). Attempts to "borrow" a weapon are frowned on. Attempts to bribe Carresland are frowned on. Really, even visiting the hall requires a DC 20 Diplomacy check to avoid the hound archon's frowning and sending a message to summon a star bearer who will attempt to lead the PCs elsewhere.

J. Alchemist's Hall: The alchemist Scarlet Crucible is an arbiter inevitable (AC 16; hp 20; Attack +7 shortsword [1d3+1/19–20], electrical burst 10-ft-radius [3d6 electricity damage (DC 13 Reflex half)]; constant *detect chaos*, 3/day—*command* [DC 13]; *Bestiary* 2) and commands a great many augur kytons. As he works closely with the Master of the Bridle and provides ointments and potions to the nobles and royals, he wants no interference in his work. Attempts to visit are viewed with extreme suspicion and outright hostility since he sees them as likely to be attempts to steal his work. Secretly and with the support of his royal patrons, Scarlet is attempting to perfect the pure godflesh and reduce it to pure essence of philosophy and a thin portion of the magical metal called orichalcum (see *Sunken Empires*).

Story Seed: The Alchemist's Hall stands next to an enormous stony egg (DC 23 Perception to notice that this is not part of a curving wall). The Egg of One Thousand Years is known in the court, but mostly as a curiosity. Wizards sometimes tinker with it, but it seems largely a dead thing, though mildly magical. Touching it with the *Key of Veles* illuminates it with golden threads that grow over an hour or two into a fantastical, animated spidery web of cracks and swirls. See "Hatching the Egg", page 20.

K. The Dungeons: These chambers are built around a central well in the heart of the citadel: entering or leaving requires passing through a door of black iron, carved with reddish warding runes that burn anyone touching them (1d6 fire damage to touch door, plus 1 hp bleed). The Keeper of the Keys, Dormitian the Hunchback, knows the secret of the egg and the *Key of Veles* (he knows much and says little).

12. The Vault of Heaven

Elushiel offers the party two options: take the beast away at once, or plead their case here and perhaps learn something about life in the heavens. If the PCs take the beast away, run another one of the encounters from encounter 9 and then have the Leviathan return to the court. It doesn't want to go where the PCs want to go, really.

To plead their case or learn more about the Leviathan, the PCs must enter the Court of a Million Stars and speak with the King and Queen of Stars, King Iorotas and Queen Astrakia (treat as shae, *Bestiary 3*). Let the PCs make whatever preparations they like, including a possible DC 20 Gather Information check if they settle into their rooms and quiz guards, servants, or other inhabitants of the halls. Characters with a Status of 5 or more gain a +2 circumstance bonus to these Gather Information checks as "famous visitors from the earthly realm."

DC Result

15 or less The PCs learn nothing new about the citadel.

- 16+ The heavens are ruled by various creatures—some infernal, some fey, some celestial. This Court of a Million Stars is distantly related to the elves of Midgard.
- 20+ The rulers of the court, King Iorotas and Queen Astrakia, are strange and ageless creatures. They have been rulers here for one thousand years or more.
- 25+ At one time, the elves of the stars visited the elves of Midgard. At some point they learned to enslave the Leviathans of the Deeps, the Isonade, and others like it. These creatures were once their ships across the oceans and the sky. Little else is known about them.

NPC CHEAT SHEET

It's easy to say there are too many NPCs here, and the sandbox of talking to any one of hundreds of creatures can be paralyzing. So, here is a summation of the court's main movers and what they want.

Captain Elushiel: A smartly saluting star bearer and paragon of order, Elushiel seeks to bring visitors to the attention of the royal pair and to keep the order and discipline of the citadel intact. A beat cop for the citadel, he hates chaos and surprises. Secretly he considers visitors a bother and seeks to encourage them to become vassals or leave the citadel. "Honored guests" is a troublesome category.

Alchemist Scarlet Crucible: The arbiter inevitable and alchemist wants only time and endless funds to explore the mysteries of the Vault of Heaven, to distill star-stuff, and to create new potions and potent fusions of soul and starlight. He is far more interested in lore and theory than anything happening in the citadel that does not affect his experiments. He also cares little for the Leviathan except as a raw ingredient.

Butcher Abdiel: Master of kytons and a hunter of creatures like the Leviathan in the heavens, Butcher Abdiel wants the Bridle of the Leviathan so that his power will rise relative to king and queen. Though he is an evil creature, he keeps his sworn word. **Dormitian, Keeper of the Keys:** Dormitian is a gearforged of extremely advanced years, and some believe he is a lich who assumed a clockwork body. If attacked, he teleports away and sends Elushiel to deal with the problem. He has no interest in the Leviathan except as a bargaining chip, but he does know that the Egg of One Thousand Years can be hatched (and he might tell curious visitors that to get them out of his hair).

King Iorotas and Queen Astrakia: Somewhat cold and distant, they rule from long habit and their egos are large. They both want to maintain their power and maintain access to Leviathan godflesh for their own ceremonial magic and longevity. They will not tolerate mayhem, unless that mayhem profits them.

Priestess Mydella of the Starry Lovers: She wants neither power nor wealth, only seeking to further the happiness of the star bearers, kytons, and others here. A mystic rather than a realist, Priestess Mydella is a figure that others fear because of her divine favor with void dragons and others. If everything goes to hell here, she might stand in judgment of the royals, alchemist, and others. They fear her righteous wrath if they break the law of the void. She wants the Leviathan set free. After the PCs enter the citadel for the audience, read the following:

The chamber you enter has no walls and no floor; all creatures within are floating in space, including two strange creatures that resemble pillars of light, or at least they wear masks and their shimmering clothes seem to contain little solid flesh.

"Step forward!" booms a voice from one of them.

Elushiel says, "I will announce you!" and launches himself into the void. He floats as if in a tranquil sea.

Any PCs who follow Elushiel's lead can use either Swim, Climb, or Fly (the last of these with a +4 bonus) to move around the room. Any character who does not make a successful DC 12 check with one of these skills loses his or her move action for that round. Ask for one move check when entering, and one when leaving. Unless the PCs want to offer gifts or show off, no other movement is required. Read the following:

The two figures at the center of the room speak together. "You have brought the godflesh creature here, but you do not control it. Give it to us, and we shall see it harnessed and brought to table."

If the PCs do offer the Leviathan to the king and queen, they do not touch it. If the PCs refuse to offer the Leviathan, King Ioratas and Queen Astrakia demand an explanation for the unharnessed and uncontrolled Leviathan's presence. Ask for an in-character explanation from the players, and ask the speaking player to have his or her PC make



a Diplomacy check. If the check fails, the whole party is in hotter water—having brought the creature here, the nobles demand that the party either hand it over or command it to swim back into the Western Ocean.

Failure to do so within a day will lead to the party's being "blinded and driven into darkness for insolence and insult to their betters." This is not further explained, but any servant is willing to tell the PCs what this means with a DC 12 Gather Information check. The threat is literal: the king and queen want to slaughter the Leviathan or strip it for its godflesh, and only getting a bridle for such a beast will prevent this. If the Diplomacy check is a success, the king and queen tell them that the bridle is here, held by a creature called the Master of the Bridle. What the PCs do with this information is up to them.

If, for any reason, the PCs decide to fight, things will likely go poorly for them. The two shae nobles rule a dozen augur kytons and more than fifty star bearers (lantern archons).

King Ioratas and Queen Astrakia (CR 4): AC 15; DR 10/evil; hp 40, 36; Speed 30 feet, fly 30 ft. (perfect); Attack +8 masterwork falchion (2d4+4/18-20 plus 1d6 cold) or touch (1d6 cold); Spells *blur* (constant), *lesser shadow evocation*; XP 1,200 each.

Treasure: 2 masterwork falchions, 1 *mask of the skull* (charged, 2 charges left), 1,000 gp diamond on 100 gp silver chain.

13. The Master of the Bridle

The bridle is used to hold leviathans still while auger kyton's cut them to ribbons; their godflesh feeds the star bearers and maintains the court's potency without needing to resort to geomancy or diabolism. So the Master of the Bridle is not just an executioner, but also a butcher and the sharer of the court's little shortcut to divine visions and immortality. Read the following:

These quarters are stark and draped in red and brown leather hides, with chairs carved of enormous bones and tables made of strangely furred baleen. Among them stands a man in armor, his arms heavily tattooed with black spirals and squares. "Come in, strangers." He drinks from a goblet bright with rubies. "What can I do for you?"

Abdiel pretends to listen for a time, and then says:

"I understand what you say, but I neglect my duties as a host. Servants, bring wine!"

Abdiel has already been warned of the PCs' arrival, and he hopes to dispose of them and seize the Leviathan for himself. The wine he offers is drugged with void spice; a DC 25 Perception check reveals this, but only to someone actively seeking to see or smell anything unusual about it. Anyone who drinks the drugged wine must make a saving throw.

Void Spice: ingested DC 13 Fort save 1 min.; unconscious 1d3 hours; 1 save; 180 gp.

If this ploy fails him, he might call on his hidden ally, Elushiel, to help him destroy the PCs and seize the Leviathan by force. Yes, Elushiel, their helpful friend, is not entirely on the PCs' side: Quite the contrary, he made himself helpful early on to win their trust, the better to know what they are up to. If confronted, he makes it clear that they are strangers and his loyalties are to the celestial rulers.

If the PCs want a fight, Abdiel is happy to provide it. This might be the best solution for the party, because the alternative could leave them in a much worse bargaining position. Abdiel is always protected by at least two augur kytons. Augur Kytons (CR 2): AC 17; hp 19, 18; Speed 20 feet, fly 50 ft. (perfect); Attack +4 gore (1d4-1 plus bleed); SA unnerving gaze; Spells *deathwatch* (constant), *bleed*; XP 600 each.

CAPTURED AND ABUSED

If the poison and combat leaves the heroes in his power, Abdiel does his best to find out everything about how they arrived, what they brought with them, and who paid them (see the Interrogation article by Hank Woon in *Kobold Quarterly* issue #11 for some options in a PC interrogation). He will certainly take the *Book of Vael Turog*, the *Key of Veles*, and the *lesser sphere of annihilation* if the party has any of these items with them.

Finally, Abdiel will ask them to sign a paper granting him ownership of the Leviathan; this paper is a quit claim on all liens, claims, and ownership due to salvage or possession. He wants them to sign over the Leviathan Island, and he is quite willing to kill off one or two of the party to make that happen. If needed, he will fight them in front of the entire court in a blood feud or trial by combat.

Abdiel, Master of the Bridle (faceless stalker, CR 4): Initiative +7; AC 17; DR 5/piercing or slashing; hp 42; Speed 30 ft.; Attack +8 masterwork longsword (1d8+4/19–20); SA blood drain, sneak

Treasure: *bridle of the Leviathan*, 4 golden goblets set with garnet and bloodstone (100 gp each), masterwork longsword.

BRIDLE OF THE LEVIATHAN

attack (2d6); XP 1,200; Bestiary 2.

Aura strong enchantment; CL 18th Slot none; Price 30,000 gp; Weight 10 lb.

DESCRIPTION

This ancient artifact dates from ages past and has passed through countless hands. It is made of smooth black links of adamant set with chips of engraved sapphire and ruby, with the whole being 20 ft. long. It has a split section of doubled links with larger links to hold a bit (missing). The whole really does look like the bridle of a whale or similar monstrosity. Some believe it was first made to tame the isonade (see *Midgard Bestiary*) or one of the great dragons of Midgard.

The effects of the bridle are permanent unless canceled by a *break enchantment, dispel magic, limited wish, miracle, remove curse,* or *wish*, or unless the bridle is removed from the affected creature.

As a work of the jeweler's art, it is worth at least 5,000 gp, but its magical power is even greater than this. The *bridle of the leviathan* can be used to charm creatures of Gargantuan, Colossal, or greater size. To use it, the bridle must be wrapped around a limb, neck, tentacle, or other protuberance of the target creature. The creature is entitled to a saving throw each round that the bridle remains attached; after a saving throw fails, the creature is charmed and obeys the bridle's owner with reasonable requests.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *charm monster, permanency*; **Cost** 15,000 gp

14. One Final Choice

When the party has spoken with Abdiel (and has either defeated him and taken the bridle, or else has been captured and lost the Leviathan), they are likely to find that they are left with a choice about what to do. The king and queen still want the godflesh, and the Leviathan is not willing to return to the Western Ocean unless bridled and commanded to go.

DESIGN NOTE: OPEN FINALE

All journeys are linear, and so I can already hear the complaints about this adventure's relatively straightforward sequencing of encounters to this point. That critique has some merit, in that all journeys follow a straight line, but the complaint pretty much ends with the finale, which is completely open-ended. The choice of what to do with the Leviathan and whether to give it to the inhabitants of the citadel or attempt to take it back to the Western Ocean is entirely in the player's hands. They can use the bridle to enslave the Leviathan, they can break the bridle, or they can take another path entirely.

Because the story is open-ended here, with at least two options, your players might want to find the "right" solution. There isn't one, necessarily, though there are some options that are more dramatic, others more practical. All are very much dependent on GM preferences and the group's play style and decisions so far—the "right" decision is the one that suits your group.

THE FINALE

Here are five likely elements for a finale, though the final resolution is entirely in each group's hands. Choose the scene that you and your players find fitting.

- 1. Abdiel Demands Trial by Combat: If the PCs have not defeated Abdiel, he doesn't want to let them leave without a fight. Once the faceless stalker is defeated, the various incarnations of Law and Shadow (Scarlet Crucible and the priestess of Veles) speak up in defense of the PCs as the rightful cu rrent holders of the bridle, as agents of the geomancer Simez Rothgazzi. The PCs might take the Leviathan's bridle and return with it to Barsella in triumph. Slightly evil, but surely more treasure this way.
- 2. Abdiel Lives and Triumphs: If Abdiel survived and forced the PCs to grant him control over the Leviathan, things turn dark and ugly. He commands his augur kytons to begin butchering the beast, using its bones to build an additional tower, and boiling its blood and fat to feed a small hoard of star bearers and



summon great swarms of comets, proto-styles, krill-like masses of glowing lights, and dragons of the void between the stars. He hopes to use the bridle on one of the void dragons. The PCs get a second fight with him if they like, but they are forever banned from the citadel.

- **3. Abdiel Flees with the Leviathan:** The villain escapes and founds a new, dark court elsewhere in the Heavens if given 24 hours to depart. The king and queen offer the PCs time to rest in the Court of a Million Stars, but they gain no Status from this adventure.
- 4. Abdiel Is Dead, the Bridle Swap: The king and queen might give the PCs the bridle in exchange for the *lesser sphere of*

TO THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

annihilation and perhaps the *Book of Vael Turog*, plus a piece of Leviathan godflesh. They will then use their own *Ring of the Black Star* (a *ring of regeneration*, though it works only in the vault of the heavens), and live on, able to eat godflesh undisturbed rather than sending servitors to hunt it. The PCs gain the Leviathan to control if they wish, or they might set it free. Certainly King Ioratas and Queen Astrakia are eager to retain access to a Leviathan every so often.

A. Setting the Leviathan Free: If the PCs still control the Leviathan, they may want to set it free to roam the heavens and the Celestial Ocean. It does so, but only after smashing into the Alchemist's Tower (potentially harming any servants or items left there by the PCs). The PCs gain some great honor and Status from this (see "Story XP and Status Awards"), and at the GM's option they might gain an Improved Familiar of some celestial stripe, or perhaps simply a party servant in the form of a star bearer that thinks the PCs are the best of the best.

At the same time, this means that the PC must find another route to the ground. This could involve a paid voyage with star bearers or a flying city of Sikkim, an adventure to the sky stairs of Beldestan, or another option such as a trip by giant eagle, as the party and GM prefer.

STORY XP AND STATUS AWARDS

Releasing the Leviathan to Roam: Worth 1,500 XP for each character and 2 Status points.

Giving the Bridle and Leviathan to Abdiel or Royals: Worth 1,000 gp and 1 Status point for each character, but not XP.

If the PCs Hatch the Egg: Worth 1 Status point and 500 XP.

If the PCs agree to carry a message to Beldestan, they may take the Leviathan back to Midgard.

B. Returning to the Western Ocean: The return voyage is swift and relatively uneventful; the PCs can bring the island to any point near a coast and return in triumph to Barsella, Bemmea, or similar coastal towns. The Leviathan itself must feed after the long journeys and returns to the deep ocean as soon as it can; if the party attempts to keep it as a private ocean island, it eventually dies of starvation.

TABLE 2: SIX RANDOM NPCS OF THE COURT

Not everyone and everything in the court is related to the Leviathan Island, the bridle, or courtly plots and murder. Here are six NPCs to liven things up if the players get stuck.

d6	NPC
1	Apprentice Sola: A young lantern archon, Sola gleefully dishes (half-true) gossip about everyone and everything, and not terribly interested if it doesn't involve fashion, dating, mating, and marriage. Cheerful and not helpful by design.
2	Fisherman Levontelin: A star bearer who knows everything there is to know about the Celestial Seas and the creatures of the Ethereal space, Levontelin owns a small skiff. He is a font of lore about void dragons, comet fish, lantern skates, bank cod, gillstars, and other unusual animals, from gooseshells to seamilk pods, including Leviathan Islands.
3	Lady Sorreminx: This elf sorceress is from the courts, and she is prone to flirtation on the ground but somewhat nervous and out of sorts here. She finds the lawful and aerial environment a little irritating, and she covers this by being rather abrasive and quick to charm new servants for herself.
4	Lightning Lord Suvid: A quickling noble and duelist who is absolutely deadly in combat and quick to take offense, Suvid is not a friend, not looking for help, and mostly wishes to be left alone to cut a deal for some kind of magical blessing he seeks from the high priestess. The only use he has for PCs is taking on their best fighter as a sparring partner, then leaving him or her full of holes and unconscious on the floor somewhere.
5	Grandmother Ultressa: As oracle of Volund, keeper of starfire, maker and mistress of flying ships, Ringmaker and Eldest of the Cantons, this dwarf matriarch is here to study the elements and winds of the Vault, to build better skyships, and to improve her earthbound people's connection to the somewhat fey and distant Court of a Million Stars. She hates it here, and she buttonholes young folk to ask them when they are leaving and why they are wasting their time here.
6	Prince Iska, Scion of the Court of a Million Stars: Iska is the wastrel grandson of Ioratas and Astrakia, and he finds his grandparents incredibly pompous and dull. Likely to be gambling, drinking, or chasing young elf maids or star bearers, he is a bit of a stereotype of the debauched and indolent child of privilege. Mostly, he wants to run away to live a life of adventure and find his parents.



5. Hatching the Egg: The egg within the Alchemist's Tower is linked to the Leviathan by trails of magical connection—wispy tendrils visible only to those using *true sight* or *detect magic* spells. Once that mystery is solved, it is clear that the egg is a young Leviathan and could be hatched into something about the size of a house, which would then need to be fed and cared for (by the star bearers who understand such things) or released into the wild. Hatching the egg is a major event, involving dozens of hound archons teleporting in, the star bearers arriving in droves, and suchlike hubbub.

When a sufficient crowd has gathered, the king and queen make an appearance and attempt to lay claim to the Leviathan as theirs. This is not a spurious claim: the egg was theirs, so surely what hatches is theirs as well. They offer the PCs a gift for having discovered how to hatch it.

DESIGN NOTE: THE COURTS OF MIDGARD

Astute readers might notice that the Citadel of a Million Stars shares some similarities with the much higher-level *Court of the Shadow Fey*, in that it is a fey and otherworldly place ruled by a royal pair of mysterious immortals. This is deliberate, and it is a theme in my depiction of the fey and the celestial powers of the Midgard campaign setting. The differences are also quite sharp, in that the Celestial Court is more direct, easier to find, and easier to overcome, as is appropriate for its level of challenge. The sense of otherworldly drama, however, should echo between the two, since they are distant cousins. If you do later play the Court of the Shadow Fey in your campaign, having the Master of the Bridle appear there might be a wonderful callback to the early days of your game.

TABLE 3: TEN EVENTS OF THE CITADEL OF A MILLION STARS

Sometimes foolish celestial nobles are vain or needy. Here are some events that might liven up an otherwise deadlocked game session.

d10	Event	
1	A Ship Arrives! Visitors from any nation of Midgard show up. Perhaps these are dragonkin emissaries seeking to contact the great dragons, shadow fey paying a social call, or a human wizard of Bemmea seeking to consult Scarlet Crucible on a point of alchemy	
2	Flight of a Void Dragon. An enormous monstrosity passes by, and it demands food or tribute! A horrific thing, the creature causes screaming, eats guards, and puts the citadel into an uproar. It causes panic among the gentry, basically.	
3	The Tumbling Stone. Star bearers capture an enormous starstone, which is useful for mining stone or for hurling to the earth. Nobles debate the proper course of action.	
4	The Poisoned Soup. An attempt on someone's life happens, though it is not clear whose life was the target. The kytons are asked to lead an investigation and ask the PCs where they were, whether they know anything about poison, whether they ate any of the seamilk soup, and so on.	
5	The Lost Fisherman. Levotelin or another fisherman has failed to return in a timely way from a three-day trip. Scouts are sent, magic returns no answer, and the fisherman is feared lost on the celestial seas.	
6	The Angel's Wrath. An angel arrives, irritated at the presence of the citadel's "blasphemous arrogation of celestial privileges unto itself." It delivers a warning to abandon the citadel in the harshest terms, and it threatens to return in ten days. This might be a bluff, but the star bearers and the nobles are nervous.	
7	The Pilgrim-Saint Keywinder. A kyton saint of the Goddess Rava arrives with four disciples to preach the word of the Gear Goddess. The kytons and alchemist are fascinated, honored, and completely smitten. The priestess Mydella of the Starry Lovers is quite irritated and seeks to see Keywinder the Pretender driven out, perhaps even asking the PCs to help in this matter.	
8	The Comet Dance. A full-on courtly dance, with feasting and flirting and frolics. Dancing, gifts, and merriment abound, and those who have bardic talents or wizardly ability to display magical amusements are more-or-less forced to provide some entertainment for an hour or two.	
9	The Day of Atonement. A high holy day requires silence, contemplation, and sacrifices of atonement. There is no food served, and the PCs are expected to either attend an all-day service in the temple or keep to themselves.	
10	The Marriage. A young pair of hound archons, Rover and Calamity, celebrates a union, and everyone is invited to the ceremony. A gift to the happy couple is expected.	

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