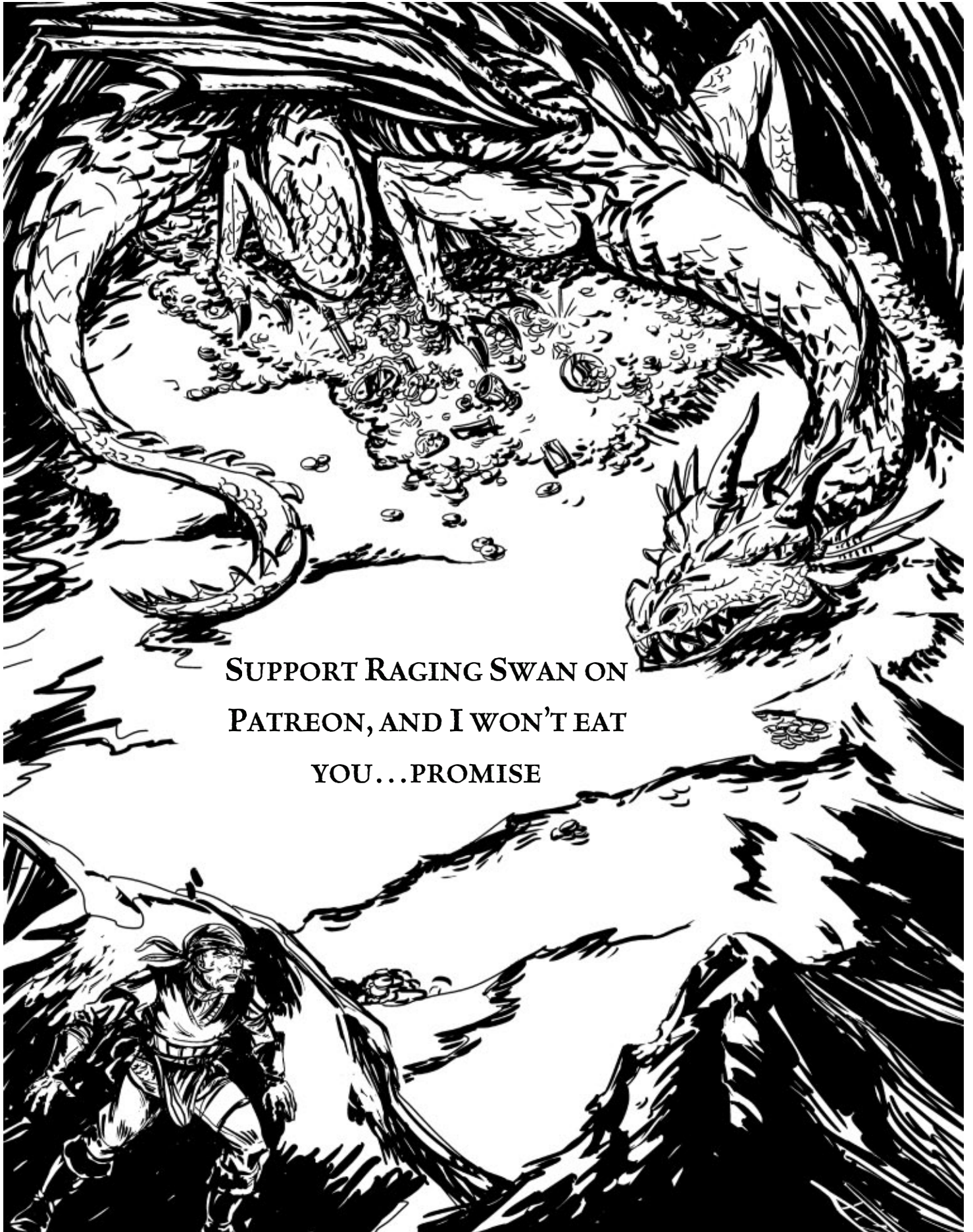


RAGING SWAN PRESS

GM'S MONTHLY MISCELLANY:

JUNE 2015





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GM'S MONTHLY MISCELLANY: JUNE 2015

Featuring material from some of Raging Swan Press's newest products as well as classic releases of yesteryear, advice articles and material from Creighton's own *Borderland of Adventure* campaign, the *GM's Monthly Miscellany* series is a terrific free resource for the busy, time-crunched GM.

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SOURCES

As well as new, never seen before material from my own *Borderland of Adventure* campaign, this instalment of *GM's Monthly Miscellany* presents information from several Raging Swan Press products and advice articles including:

- **Village Backdrop: Sea Bitch** Richard Green.
- **Ancient Empire of the Troglodytes** John Bennett.
- **Urban Dressing: Trade Town** Josh Vogt.

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FOREWORD



Welcome to *GM's Monthly Miscellany: June 2015*. Last month, I reported that I'd be hurling myself into the UK convention scene; sadly events conspired against me and I didn't get to attend the convention. Still, never one to dwell on past disasters I've once again hurled myself dark plan to take over the world!

June is going to be a very busy month for Raging Swan Press—the summer holidays will shortly be upon us and traditionally, we pretty much shut down over that period. So, I've got tons of marvellous books to get ready for release!

In any event, herein you'll find excerpts from some of Raging Swan's newest products including *Village Backdrop: Sea Bitch*, *Urban Dressing: Trade Town* and *Ancient Empires of the Troglodytes*. I've also included a recent article I wrote about why I think at-will 0-level spells are broken, and how I fix them in my home game. Finally, this month I've included a first look at Tommi Salama's gorgeous Duchy of Ashlar map, which I think look spectacular! You can read the article (and check out more about Gloamhold and the Duchy of Ashlar)—and scores more as well as campaign summaries—at creightonbroadhurst.com.

You might also be aware that Raging Swan Press is now on Patreon. We signed up at the start of April, and it's going rather marvellously. The thrust of our Patreon campaign is to be able to afford better rates of pay for our freelance game designers. As I'm sure you know, the economics of 3PP are notoriously tight, but Patreon gives us at Raging Swan Press a way to increase our freelancer rates. At time of writing, we've already tripled our word rate to 3 cents a word, which gives me a warm, fuzzy feeling inside. We want to pay more, but to do that we need your help! If you sign up, you get our supplements earlier than normal and cheaper than normal. Even better, you can pledge what you want and cancel when you want. If you are interested in taking a look at the campaign, check out patreon.com/ragingswanpress or head over to patreon.com and search for Raging Swan!

In any event, I hope you enjoy the material in this GM's Monthly Miscellany, but more importantly I hope you find it useful and that it enhances your campaign. If you've got any comments or questions about Raging Swan Press, I'd love to hear from you. You can contact me at creighton@ragingswan.com.

FIXING AT-WILL 0-LEVEL SPELLS

I hate at-will 0-level spells with the blazing passion of a thousand fiery suns.

It's not that I think they unbalance the game or turn the PCs into super characters. Rather, the reasons for my distaste of 0-level spells falls into two categories:

FLAVOUR

On the face of it, at-will 0-level spells solve one of the perennial problems of playing a spell caster: what do you do when you run out of spells? Having a store of inexhaustible magic means you can (in theory) always do something. However, for me, this erodes the flavour of the game. I like a gritty campaign in which magic is actually wondrous. I think at-will 0-level spells erode that wonder. Consider:

- **Light/Dancing Lights:** Even the lowliest adventuring party has no real need of mundane light sources—*light* and *dancing light* aren't exactly rare or esoteric choices for spellcasters. Sure everyone should carry a couple of torches or a sunrod just in case, but in practise they are rarely used.
- **Detect Magic:** Every group has at least one spellcaster who knows *detect magic*. This means they use this spell in every area they explore, which somewhat cuts down on the level of player skill required to find hidden treasures (and indeed magic traps!) In practise, magic traps are normally much harder for a thief to find than normal traps, but this is not the case if someone can cast *detect magic*! Of course, countermeasures for both instances—lining treasure niches with lead, casting *nondetection* on traps—are possible, but extensive use of such measures just ends up nerfing a PC's abilities. In effect, at-will *detect magic* means the party rarely misses out on magic treasure and rarely suffers a magic trap's effects.
- **Create Water:** On the face of it, what's the harm in at-will *create water*? It's not like you could flood a dungeon, after all! True, but the presence of at-will *create water* does somewhat reduce the environmental challenges involved in a trek through the desert or the badlands or even a long sea voyage. Don't worry about securing a supply of fresh water—just memorise *create water* and you are golden!

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Part of my enjoyment of the game is the resource management facet of running a character. This might make me seem even geekier than the normal player, but I think it's a vital, enjoyable part of the game. For example, with at-will *detect* magics there's no real reason to only use the spell when you suspect the presence of hidden treasure or a magic trap—just wang off a *detect magic* in every area and Bob's your uncle.

Similarly, *create water* removes a large part of the challenge of travelling through inhospitable terrain. No need to look for an oasis or island at which to replenish your fresh water supplies—just have the cleric fill barrel after barrel—or flask after flask—with fresh water. Doesn't that somewhat reduce the unique challenges involved in travelling across a desert!

Finally, consider the case of *mending*:

- **Mending:** Never run out of arrows, bolts or other missiles again! Ammunition that misses their target has a 50% chance of breaking. This means archers and the like must choose their shots wisely and make sure they carry enough ammunition for their adventure. Similarly, they must carefully consider whether to buy special ammunition (silver, cold iron or adamantine arrows, for example) and when to use them. With *mending*, worry no more! Simply collect your broken arrows after the battle and fix them all—even the expensive ones tipped with special materials! How convenient.

MY SOLUTION

Since the beginning of my Borderland of Adventure, I've banned the use of at-will 0-level spells. In their place, I use the following house rule:

Spellcasters' 0-level spells do not represent an unlimited resource and a spellcaster cannot treat them as at-will powers. Rather, a spellcaster memorises, knows or has access to 0-level spells as normal but can only cast a limited number of such minor magics per day.

- At 1st-level, a spellcaster can use his 0-level spells a total of 3 + spellcasting stat's modifier per day. Thus, a 1st-level wizard with an Intelligence of 16 could use his 0-level spells a total of 6 times per day.
- Spellcasters gain an extra use of their 0-level spells for every two level of the relevant spellcasting class they gain.

SEA BITCH AT A GLANCE

Perched hard against steep cliffs and protected on the landward side by an earth ditch and berm, Sea Bitch is a windy place. A small harbour protects the village's dozen or so fishing boats, and the villagers are renowned for the trained ernes (sea eagles) they use to hunt the seabirds nesting in the nearby cliffs.

Sea Bitch was founded fifteen years ago by the all-female crew of the eponymous pirate vessel, following the death of their captain in a ferocious battle with the *Relentless Kraken*, another pirate ship. The *Sea Bitch's* captain, Elyse Killigrew, was slain by a crossbow bolt through her eye, fired by a cowardly young goblin sniper lurking in the *Kraken's* crow's nest. Allindra Squallmaven, the first mate, took command of the *Sea Bitch* and used her druidic magic to call lightning down on the enemy and drive them off, thus winning the battle. With her captain dead and many of her crew slain, the *Sea Bitch* put in at a sheltered harbour to the east of Deksport.

She never left. Allindra and the surviving pirates beached the ship and set about establishing a new home for themselves on land, using wood from the nearby forest to build homes, fishing boats and a jetty. Over the last decade and a half, the village of Sea Bitch has grown into a small but thriving fishing community. To supplement their piscine diet, Allindra used her affinity with wild birds to attract a congress of ernes to the village, and to train them to hunt the razorbills and puffins nesting high in the cliffs. As Sea Bitch's population grew, men came to live in the village, but women are still very much in the majority, and the community is renowned for sheltering women of all races fleeing from brutish, bullying husbands.

Sea Bitch trades regularly with Deksport and the nearby villages of Revenge and Red Talon. However, life in the village is complicated by trouble brewing in the nearby forest. A warlike tribe of orcs inhabits an ancient ruined fortress, once more. Loggers have been attacked, and the orcs have made several attempts to attack Sea Bitch itself. It's only a matter of time before the savage humanoids are able to breach the village's defences and put it to the torch. The villagers have been spreading rumours of lost orcish treasure in the ancient fortress, in the hopes of attracting fearless and heroic adventurers to Sea Bitch, willing to take on the orcs.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Allindra Squallmaven

Government Magical

Population 89 (65 humans, 11 half-orcs, 6 halflings, 4 half-elves, 3 dwarves)

Alignments CN, CG, N

Languages Common, Orc

Corruption -3; **Crime** +0; **Economy** -1; **Law** -1; **Lore** +3; **Society** -3

Qualities Isolated, Notorious

Danger +10; **Disadvantages** None

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Allindra Squallmaven (location 2; CN female human druid [aquatic] 8) Retired pirate, founder of Sea Bitch and the village's spiritual and secular leader.

Erwyn Splintertusk (location 1; N male half-orc commoner 2) Hoary old beachcomber who makes his home in what's left of the *Sea Bitch* and sells interesting flotsam in the market.

Finelle Hornswaggle (location 6; N female human fighter 2/expert 2) Former pirate and ship's carpenter, Finelle runs the Merry Maiden Inn with her partner Nyssa.

Ildiko Squallmaven (location 7; CN female human fighter 1) Allindra's fiery young daughter yearns to pursue her mother's old life as a pirate.

Krog the Flyer (location 9; CE male orc fighter 6) Bloodthirsty leader of the orc tribe living in the nearby woods.

"Shiphape" Selma (location 5; CG female dwarf expert 3) This meticulous ex-pirate quartermaster runs the trading post.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the village comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **The Sea Bitch:** The rotted hull of this pirate ship lies on the beach and is home to Erwyn Splintertusk.
2. **Druid's Cave:** Allindra lives in a sea cave at the cliff's base.
3. **Puffin Heights:** The cliffs to the east of the village are home to hundreds of nesting puffins and razorbills.
4. **Aeries:** Trained sea eagles build their nests high on the cliffs.
5. **The Stores:** This well-stocked trading post sells fishing gear, dry goods and other equipment.
6. **The Merry Maiden:** The village inn is a lively place where patrons can enjoy good ales, hearty food, music and dancing.
7. **The Docks:** Always busy with fishing boats and merchant vessels arriving from Deksport and points beyond.
8. **Village Defenses:** An earth ditch and berm protects the village.
9. **Forest:** An ancient orcish fortress stands in the dense woods to the northwest of Sea Bitch, occupied once more by feral orcs.

MARKETPLACE

Resources & Industry Fishing, hunting, forestry

Base Value 650 gp; **Purchase Limit** 3,750 gp; **Spellcasting** 4th; **Minor Items** 2d4; **Medium Items** 1d4; **Major Items** –

When the PCs arrive, the following items are for sale:

- **Potions** *pass without trace* (50 gp), *barkskin* +2 (300 gp)
- **Scroll (Divine)** *calm animals* (25 gp), *commune with birds* (25 gp)
- **Wondrous Item** *efficient quiver* (see location 1; 500 gp)

VILLAGE LORE

A PC making a Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (local) check may know some information about Sea Bitch. A successful check reveals all the information revealed by a lesser result.

DC 10: The villagers use trained sea eagles to hunt seabirds for food.

DC 15: Sea Bitch was originally founded by an all-female pirate crew, and has a reputation for offering refuge to women in need.

DC 20: An ancient fortress stands in the forest to the northwest of the village; it was once home to the infamous orc king, Ogzug the Betrayer, and is rumoured to hold lost treasure.

VILLAGERS

Appearance The villagers are mostly women of diverse appearance and ethnic backgrounds. Many were former pirates and usually have at least one or more tattoos.

Dress Sea Bitch's inhabitants wear thick, hooded cloaks over their simple shirts and breeches to protect themselves against the strong winds blowing in from the sea.

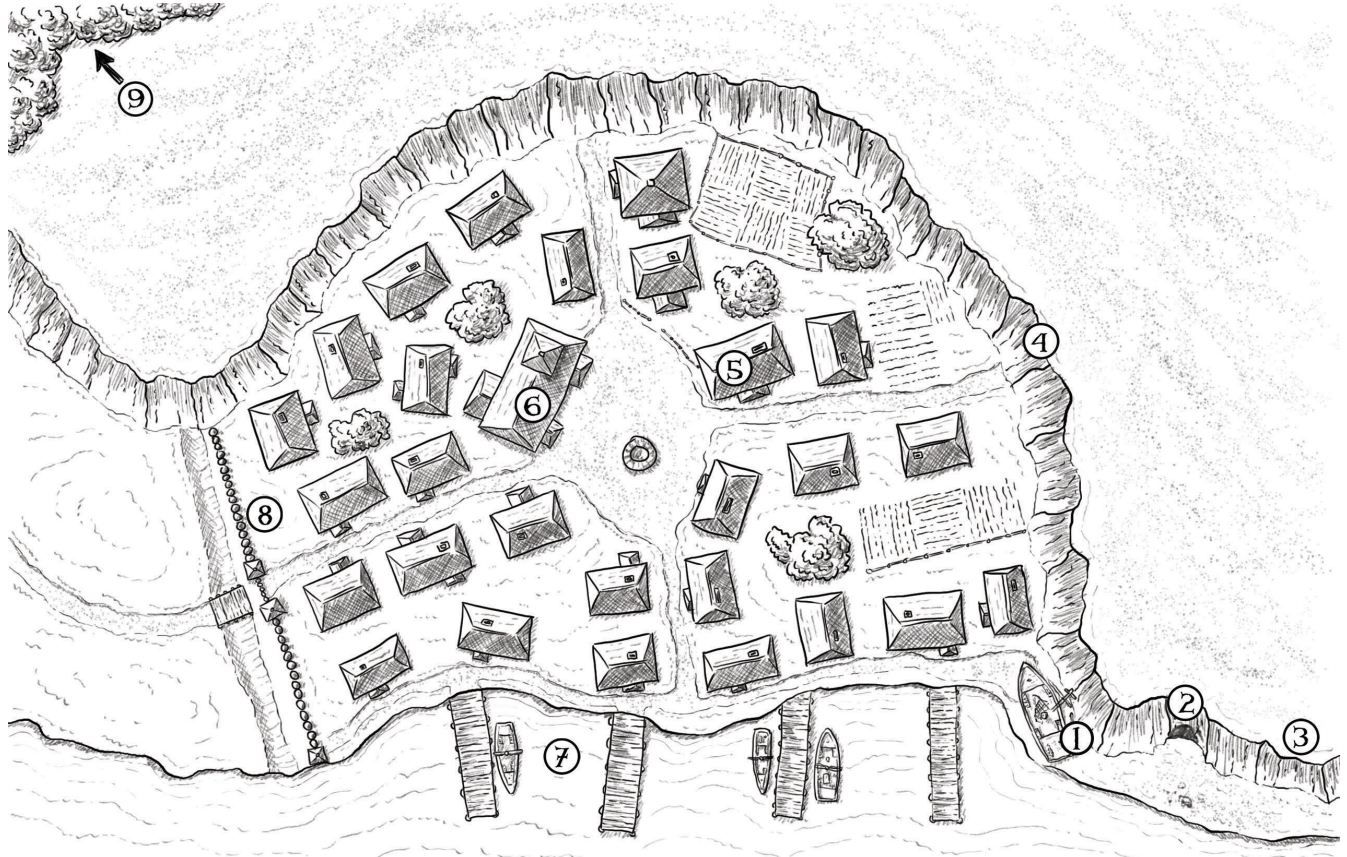
Nomenclature *female* Gia, Hanife, Kerrie, Rafat, Tiarna; *male* Brion, Muirin, Tady; *family* Delaney, Grogwether, Inkspott, Redsail.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A PC can use Diplomacy to gather information about Sea Bitch and its surroundings. This takes 1d4 hours and requires a DC 10 check. A PC exceeding this check gains one additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10. Use the table below to determine which rumour(s) the PC learns.

D6	RUMOUR
1	Nyssa came to Sea Bitch to get away from her violent husband. He followed her here, but Finelle Hornswaggle and others forcefully persuaded him it wouldn't be a good idea to try and drag her home again.
2	Ildiko Squallmaven's father is a well-known pirate captain in Deksport and she's thinking about paying him a visit.
3	Erwyn Splintertusk found a treasure map inside a bottle that washed up on the beach the other day. X marks the spot!
4	The forest orcs are searching the ruined fortress for a mighty magical amulet which once belonged to Ogzug the Betrayer.
5	The captain of the <i>Sea Bitch</i> was slain by a crossbow bolt fired by a cowardly goblin pirate; the goblin survived the battle but must surely be dead by now.
6*	Erwyn Splintertusk came to Sea Bitch to escape the massive gambling debts he ran up in Deksport.

*False rumour



TRADE TOWN: SIGHTS & SOUNDS

Use this table to generate the sights and sounds the PCs experience as they move about the trade town. Some may be inappropriate based on the locale's set up; ignore such results and simply re-roll.

D%	
1	Guards shout to stop a passing caravan as the driver tries to flee.
2	A man in luxurious robes jingles as he walks, his purse heavy with coin.
3	Hawkers belt out deals for lesser wares on practically every street corner.
4	A chain line of slaves shuffles by under the watchful eye of an obese taskmaster and his guards.
5	The line of wagons and people passing through the main gates seems never-ending.
6	Competing food vendors fling rotted wares across the street at one another.
7	A whole mercenary band stands guard in front of the imposing gates of a large building.
8	A slim man flanked by bodyguards notes all passersby, jotting observations on a parchment.
9	The last cart to roll by definitely had the aura of something dead wafting from it.
10	Lamplighters collect their dues from business owners to keep the streets lit at night.
11	A crate lies in the middle of the street, cracked open and empty of anything but sawdust.
12	Workers chant in rhythm as they unload seemingly endless crates from the latest caravan.
13	Someone has painted a rather obscene glyph on every business door along this street.
14	Water splashes as labourers slop it across the street, washing animal refuse from the cobbles.
15	Two merchants wave daggers at each other as they argue over a shipment.
16	A whole guard troop accompanies a tax collector who stops by every establishment along the way.
17	Signs indicate all business done in town must be registered with the appropriate guild, on pain of imprisonment.
18	A smell of smoke, redolent with foreign spices, wafts through the market.
19	A merchant is flanked by two massive hounds, that growl at anyone who gets too close.
20	Lute and flute players are among the many performers playing to the crowded market.
21	A lovely young woman chats up a merchant, who appears completely unaware he's standing outside a brothel.
22	A vendor tries to sell off his stacks of candles before they melt in the blazing sun. He appears desperate—perhaps suspiciously so.

23	A heavily muscled man rolls a massive barrel along the street.
24	A man cries in denial as he's shackled by guards for doing business without guild registration.
25	Black smoke churns from a wagon as it burns in the street, dangerously close to a shop.
26	A line of guild registrants shuffles in place as they wait admittance by the guards.
27	A courier pants as he darts passed, message bag overflowing with letters.
28	These gates leading to a guild's compound have been smashed in by a massive force.
29	Drunk traders weave through the crowd as they celebrate a recent sale.
30	A trader weeps over a lost shipment, wailing his tragedy to anyone who'll listen.
31	A caged menagerie of exotically coloured (and noisy) birds chatter loudly at passersby.
32	A sign advertises entrance to the mayor's private zoo for a hefty fee.
33	A door slams in a woman's face, and she falls to her knees on the stoop, sobbing.
34	A group of black-veiled foreigners carry a gilded litter down the way.
35	The doors of this tavern are shut and chained, the sign knocked to the ground.
36	A gaudy sign indicates fresh corpses are sold within the establishment beneath.
37	A guard leads several dogs around a wagon, letting them sniff it vigorously. A merchant looks on—nervously.
38	Wine glugs as it's poured from a barrel for a merchant to sample.
39	Guards guide a caravan off to one side for further inspection.
40	A lovely voice floats over the crowd, the singing almost unearthly in its beauty.
41	A worker opens a barrel only for a torrent of rats to pour forth.
42	A merchant oversees the preparation of oil-soaked bundles of new weapons.
43	Voices babble over one another during an open-air auction.
44	Horses whinny as they're tied to posts for inspection by buyers.
45	Flyers proclaim a reward for the capture of a group of bandits harrying the incoming caravans.
46	The central market is a dusty, chaotic affair, with foot and hoof traffic all about.
47	Beyond the gates, an encampment of traders refused entry has sprung up.
48	People mutter and glare at a trader caravan composed of people wearing bronze masks.
49	Townfolk scurry to cover their goods in tarps as thunder rumbles in the distance.

50	A mage casts an icy spell to keep a stall of fish brought in from the coast fresh.
51	Two carts crash together, spilling wares across the road.
52	A quartermaster checks off crates and barrels with a wedge of chalk.
53	A guild leader preaches the virtue of proper registration and following regulations.
54	An angry crowd demonstrates in front of a guild hall; guards watch on nervously.
55	A man loudly begs a moneylender to extend his debt just once more.
56	A group of traders swagger down the street, bare chests covered in nautical tattoos.
57	This trader appears to buy and trade all matter of tarred or shrunken heads.
58	The glint of jewelled rings on a merchant's pudgy fingers catches the sun.
59	A ragged woman runs up to a newly arrived trader, holding up a child as he tries to shove her away.
60	A caravan surrounded by soldiers blocks the street. A growing crush of other merchants and passers-by are growing increasingly angry at the delay.
61	This row of crates and pots has been marked in red, saying: "Do Not Open Under Pain of Death."
62	This enormous clothing shop sells outfits for every possible race and size.
63	A pair of traders guffaws as they stroll along, boasting how much gold they cheated from their latest client.
64	A child calls to passers-by, saying they can get anything at any price with his help.
65	A man flips through a large tome, wondering out loud why there aren't any pictures.
66	This trader's cart appears to be guarded by a massive, horned demon.
67	Merchants still beyond the gates clamour to be let in before nightfall.
68	A buyer challenges a trader to a duel for attempting to swindle him.
69	A trader tosses a few coppers to a beggar alongside the street. Immediately, he is inundated with other street denizens begging for money.
70	Bolts of silk and cloth, of all colours and patterns, are lined up against the wall.
71	This trader displays an array of tiny, manicured trees, claiming they come from a distant land.
72	The smell of salted meats and pickled vegetables reaches the party's nostrils.
73	In a plume of dusty rubble, a warehouse collapses just down the street.
74	The heady scent of mint hangs over the whole street.

75	People in long white robes gaze at vials of white dust, dabbing the substance on their tongues.
76	A thief hangs by his thumbs in the middle of the town square, a warning to all.
77	A seer wanders the street, calling out offers to sell prophecies.
78	A guildmaster tacks up a scroll listing next week's projected tariffs.
79	A strange moan emanates from a nearby crate, which shakes briefly.
80	Donkeys bray as they haul sacks laden with grain and goods.
81	A bare-handed masked man asks people to make a donation to the thieves' guild.
82	Near the wall, the lowing of cattle can be heard in the stockyard outside town.
83	Townfolk line up to gawk at a recently unveiled statue of the town leader.
84	A market stall selling odd citrus drinks appears to be run entirely by children.
85	Something shatters nearby, followed by a bellow of rage and screams.
86	A merchant stumbles, an arrow having just sprouted from his broad back.
87	A vendor wanders the street, handing out free samples of fruit sold back at the stall.
88	This wall has the image of a black hog painted on it, with an arrow pointing down a nearby alley.
89	The stink of sulphur wafts from a bathhouse offering hot baths for weary travellers.
90	This temple appears to be dedicated to a god of commerce and wealth.
91	A puppet show depicts the mayor as controlled by the strings of the many guilds.
92	The crowd boos as a crier announces the latest tax rise by the mayor.
93	This street is oddly empty and quiet for being in the middle of the bustling town.
94	A carriage careens down the street, the driver trying to get the horses back under control.
95	Pure white doves flutter within a wooden cage, soft coos barely heard over the crowd.
96	Coins chink as they strike the bottom of this temple's "non-voluntary offering" box.
97	Hammering and sawing can be heard as a building undergoes new construction.
98	A mage chants a spell to check for disease in a wagon loaded with foodstuffs.
99	Every driver and worker on this caravan appears to be the exact same person, down to the face and clothes.
100	This shop sign promises wishes fulfilled if you'll simply sell your soul to the proprietor.

ANCIENT EMPIRE OF THE TROGLODYTES

Many races claim the gods made their kind first. Yet crumbling ziggurats, surrounded by the statues of profanely leering creatures left mouldering in long forgotten caverns, shows the troglodyte race must have been one of the first races to arise from the primordial ooze of creation. Empowered by the worship of their demonic patron, the troglodytes conquered, enslaved and ritually sacrificed creatures in a time predating even the ancient elves, all to give rise to the sweeping empire of Ssar'targontha.

Ssar'targontha arose in the deepest caverns of the world before recorded history when the civilised races of today—elves, dwarves and humans among them—were still in their infancy. Gigantic ziggurats squatted in immense caverns carved from divine magic powered by the life essence of sacrificed elemental creatures and giant worm-like creatures called zowrms. Canals and aqueducts writhed like serpents across the cavern floors, nurturing great fields of fungi where slaves toiled and died at their masters' whims.

Ssar'targontha endured for thousands of years in almost uncontested rule its bloody downfall. The primitive races the troglodytes once subjugated evolved, finding their own gods and divine magic as well as something nearly non-existent in Ssar'targontha—arcane magic. Unable to compete with this new and powerful force, Ssar'targontha began to crumble at its edges. This only inspired the high priests to fight amongst themselves for control, further fracturing the empire. Then the denizens of the elemental planes the troglodytes had sacrificed staged a brief, but violent invasion, after which Ssar'targontha split into smaller empires, each of which would fall prey to the encroachment of humanoids and other, younger races. The troglodytes never recovered from their defeat nor did they ever regain their former glory as ruinous war over resources caused them to descend further into barbarism and savagery.

Though most of the world has forgotten Ssar'targontha, certain of its ruined ziggurats and obelisks still exist, lying decrepit and abandoned in long forsaken caverns. Faded writing in the Ssar'targontha cuneiform script tells an embellished history of the mighty empire and the wonders it once wrought on the earth. Those exploring the benighted caverns and facing ancient dangers can learn powerful secrets of antiquity now lost.

ECOLOGY & SOCIETY

The troglodytes of Ssar'targontha differ from their brethren of today much as humankind differs from the ape. Standing nearly seven feet tall, the troglodytes' scales ranged in hue from deep reds to glistening yellow or even an emerald green. They also possessed greater intelligence, proving adept at engineering

feats the rest of world would take countless millennia to duplicate.

Life revolved around the worship of Ssar'targontha's demonic patron, Amon-Pyr, who raised the troglodytes up out of the sea where the aboleths and other ancient creatures had nearly hunted them to extinction. Throughout the empire, the troglodytes constructed cyclopean ziggurats in honour of Amon-Pyr. Each ziggurat served as the city's religious and government centre, ruled by a high priest and a cabal of lesser priests. High priests were specifically bred, the product of dark, unholy rites cast upon eggs bathed in elemental sludge. The high priests ruled with divine power granted to them by Amon-Pyr, a power they jealously guarded. These high priests were even more horrific than the other troglodytes—bloated, giant things, they squatted on golden thrones hoisted by slaves, unable to move under their own power.

The priests' divine magic led to Ssar'targontha's rise to greatness as it shaped everything around them. Amon-Pyr taught the first priests how to summon and bind elemental creatures from the four elemental planes. Sacrificed during a specific, blasphemous ritual, the slain elemental was reduced to an oozing sludge composed of its base elements which then become the components for spells to power the empire. Water elementals and earth elementals fed crop fields, while fire and wind elementals fashioned giant structures out of solid stone.

In addition to using the elemental sludge in rites to create the caste of high priests, the troglodytes of Ssar'targontha feed it to a race of giant wormlike creatures, the descendants of purple worms, called zowrms. These trained worms burrowed out the many canals crisscrossing cavern floors, chewing and digesting solid stone.

A fearsome warrior caste existed under the rule of the priests. The troglodyte warriors journeyed from their deep caverns to raid the primitive, developing humanoid races, bringing them back as slaves to either aid in Ssar'targontha's continuing expansion or to be eaten. The warriors also fought in the frequent battles between cities as high priests continually sought to expand their own personal power.

CUNEIFORM WRITING

The troglodytes used an ancient cuneiform writing system, inscribing their history and important events into the walls of a city's ziggurat and accompanying obelisks, as well as the large steles marking a city's borders. It is possible to decipher this writing with a DC 20 Linguistics check. One day spent studying the troglodyte writing grants the deciphering creature a +4 insight bonus to all Knowledge checks relating to the ancient troglodytes of that particular city.

Those troglodytes not bred to become priests or strong enough to be warriors formed the lowest caste in Ssar'targontha society. They often served as governmental underlings for the high priests. Others served as taskmasters of the slaves who worked in the fungi fields or tended and trained the zowrms. Though low in troglodyte society, their lot was much better than those they enslaved. Those with particularly unique scale colourings often lived an indolent life in a harem of a priest or warrior caste member.

Specially built ziggurats housed the troglodyte eggs for each caste where elemental sludge pumped in through aqueducts to bath the unborn troglodytes. Amon-Pyr claimed a quarter of all eggs produced, feeding on the unborn souls within in exchange for endowing the troglodytes with his power.

ENEMIES & ALLIES

Ssar'targontha never had allies but lacked no shortage of enemies.

At first, the machinations of the aboleths threatened Ssar'targontha's rise to power. Only Amon-Pyr's direct intervention saved the troglodytes from becoming the aboleths' slaves, allowing them to flee from the oceans into the deep caverns. Once the troglodytes found the safety of the caverns, the two races only occasionally came into contact, usually when one of Ssar'tongtha's cities lay by the shores of a deep underground lake or sea. At other times, advance aboleth scouts would battle with troglodyte warriors near the surface over slaves and raiding grounds.

The troglodytes of Ssar'targontha built much of their empire with the souls of captured and sacrificed elemental creatures. In specially constructed ziggurats surrounded by four towering obelisks, the high priests conducted divine rituals to rip open gateways to the four elemental planes and draw forth the elemental creatures on the other side. The



elementals suddenly found themselves bound to the ziggurat, unable to return home, and were then subsequently slain. This perpetual condition existed until near the end of Ssar'targontha when a cabal of Elemental Lords decided to fight back. The invasion from the elemental planes was short-lived, because of the elementals' diverse natures, but it still wrought significant devastation on an empire already reeling from the attacks of other subterranean enemy civilisations. Attacks on the empire's birthing chambers resulted in the destruction of tens of thousands of troglodyte eggs, which had a long lasting effect that rippled through the empire. Coupled with the new dangers of summoning elementals, Ssar'targontha began its inexorable slide into barbarism.

One of Ssar'targontha's greatest enemies was itself. Though a unified empire under the worship of Amon-Pyr, the high priests of each city always sought more personal power and it was not uncommon to have two or more cities in Ssar'targontha at war with one another. This, however, was not enough to destabilize the empire until near its end when civil war over increasingly limited resources finally shattered Ssar'targontha into smaller kingdoms, which each eventually collapsed. The surviving troglodytes became baser, plunging into a degeneracy in which they can now only recall faint legends and myths of their former empire.

FORGOTTEN POWER

The troglodytes worshipped one power now all but forgotten to mortal man.

AMON-PYR

CE troglodyte god of darkness, evil, madness and water

Epithets: The Elder One, Lord of Slime

Symbol: A tentacled whip

Domains: Chaos, Darkness, Evil and Water

Favoured Weapon: Whip

Holy Text: None survive intact, but some acolytes of the ancient ways have managed to collect several fragments of the *Amoninomicon*—a foul text so depraved that possession and knowledge of more than a few pages can drive the possessor mad with terror.

Additional Notes: Amon-Pyr is an ancient demonic power worshipped by troglodytes since the earliest days of the race's long-fallen empire. A tentacled demon that crawled from the unknown depths of the frigid, slime-coated waters of the Sea of Perpetual Misery, Amon-Pyr is a terrible figure from the world's pre-history. Only a few isolated troglodyte clans yet cling to his worship. Guarding fragments of ancient knowledge, these groups yet perform rituals the meaning and significance of which they have long since forgotten.

GLOAMHOLD: THE DUCHY OF ASHLAR

Dismissively called “Fenland” by outsiders for the broad swath of fetid, tidal saltmarsh almost cutting the duchy in twain, Ashlar sprawls along the appropriately named Hard Bay. Effectively isolated from the rest of the continent by a high plateau crowned by dark, silent woods clustering hard against a legion of fantastically shaped stone spires, Ashlar is a realm of hard, resilient folk.

For centuries, the folk of Ashlar have dwelt in the shadow of ancient evils. Although it has stood for generations, the Grand Duchy is not the first kingdom to claim the lands sprawling north of the Forest of Gray Spires. From his seat in Languard, the Duke ever watches over his realm. Brooding upon the ancient shadows seemingly clustering ever closer about his realm, he looks to the grim, towering bulk of the Mottled Spire as the source of much of the evil besetting his people. Within this towering, wave-lashed shard of limestone lie the labyrinthine passageways and chambers of Gloamhold and, beyond them, the benighted precincts and canals of the legend-shrouded Twilight City.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

The Duchy of Ashlar has the following major features:

- **Forest of Gray Spires:** While not part of Ashlar, the Forest of Gray Spires forms its southern border. Deemed all but impenetrable, wild rumours cluster thickly about these brooding woodlands and the legion of strange, slender rock spires thrusting upwards from the plateau on which they stand.
- **Hard Bay:** A wide and deep bay renown for stormy weather and savage tides, Hard Bay is aptly named. Its bounds are a tangle of rivers, rocky headlands, wooded isles and small, stony beaches.
- **Saltmire:** This swath of dismal, low-lying saltmarsh sprawls

outwards from the broad, muddy banks of the River Ost and its tributaries. It effectively sunders the duchy in twain.

NOTABLE ADVENTURING LOCALES

Ashlar has several locations of interest:

- **Cavern of Forbidden Dreams:** Buried deep in the Shoalstone and only accessible via a precipitous, oft-flooded tunnel the Cavern of Forbidden Dreams is a place of pilgrimage for those seeking forbidden knowledge.
- **Gloamhold:** A vast dungeon complex of unknowable, but undoubtedly ancient, origin and unfathomable extent, dark rumours and terrible tales of adventure, death and betrayal hang over this forsaken site. It is a place of madness and death.
- **Tower of Woe:** Standing deep in the Forest of Gray Spires, the Maddening Spire (as it sometime called) appears as if it has been twisted and melted. Those daring its interior are often driven mad by their experiences.
- **The Mottled Spire:** This huge chunk of granite glowers over Hard Bay’s treacherous waters like an angry giant. Difficult to reach by land or sea, the Mottled Spire shelters Gloamhold deep within its bowels.
- **The Sunken Pyramid:** Lying barely 30 ft. below the water, the Sunken Pyramid looms large in sailors’ lore. The surrounding water is cold and dark. Sharks are reported here in great numbers. Sea spirits, gigantic sharks and the ghosts of those drowned nearby are all said to haunt the nearby waters.
- **Valentin’s Folly:** This ruined keep stands upon a wooded bluff overlooking a steep-sided valley. Also known as Ironwolf Keep, or the Shadowed Keep on the Borderlands, it was built by Valentin Ironwolf. The fortress fell into disrepair shortly after Valentin – along with his family – were slain by his orc and goblin enemies.



FEATURED MAP: THE DUCHY OF ASHLAR



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