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LANGUARD LOCATIONS: THE WRECKS





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LANGUARD LOCATIONS: THE WRECKS

Storied Languard—the capital of Ashlar and its greatest city—stands hard against Hard Bay’s turbulent, stormy waters. To the north lies the Mottled Spire’s brooding spray-drenched mass, the curse-haunted ruins of Greystone and Gloamhold’s doom-wreathed halls. Ashlar’s greatest—indeed only—city, Languard is a noisy, dirty place. Here, amid broad, muddy streets teeming with life and shadow-mantled, danger-filled alleyways there is little beneath the sun that cannot be had somewhere—for a price.

Languard Locations: The Wrecks presents eight additional locations designed for use with City Backdrop: Languard. While the locales within are designed with Languard in mind, they are easily convertible for use in your campaign. This instalment deals with locations in Languard’s Wrecks district.

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SYSTEM NEUTRAL EDITION

Welcome to this Raging Swan Press System Neutral Edition Village Backdrop. Herein you’ll find evocative, inspiring text designed to help you—the busy GM—run better, quicker and easier games.

This book is compatible with most fantasy roleplaying games. It’s impossible to create a truly system neutral book, though, and some generic game terms—wizard, fighter, human, elf and so on—lurk within. These generic terms are easily modified to the GM’s system of choice.

One special note about the NPCs in this supplement. While some are wizards, fighters, clerics and so on, others are simply normal folk. Because different game systems handle normal folk differently we’ve made no attempt to note their “class” leaving them simply as “female human” and so on.

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THE WRECKS

Temporariness. The Wrecks reeks of it. Shipwrecks grip piers and boardwalks that cling to what little ground there is—and that itself is mostly transient, shifting with the slurry and silt oozing unseen below this rotting stain on Languard.

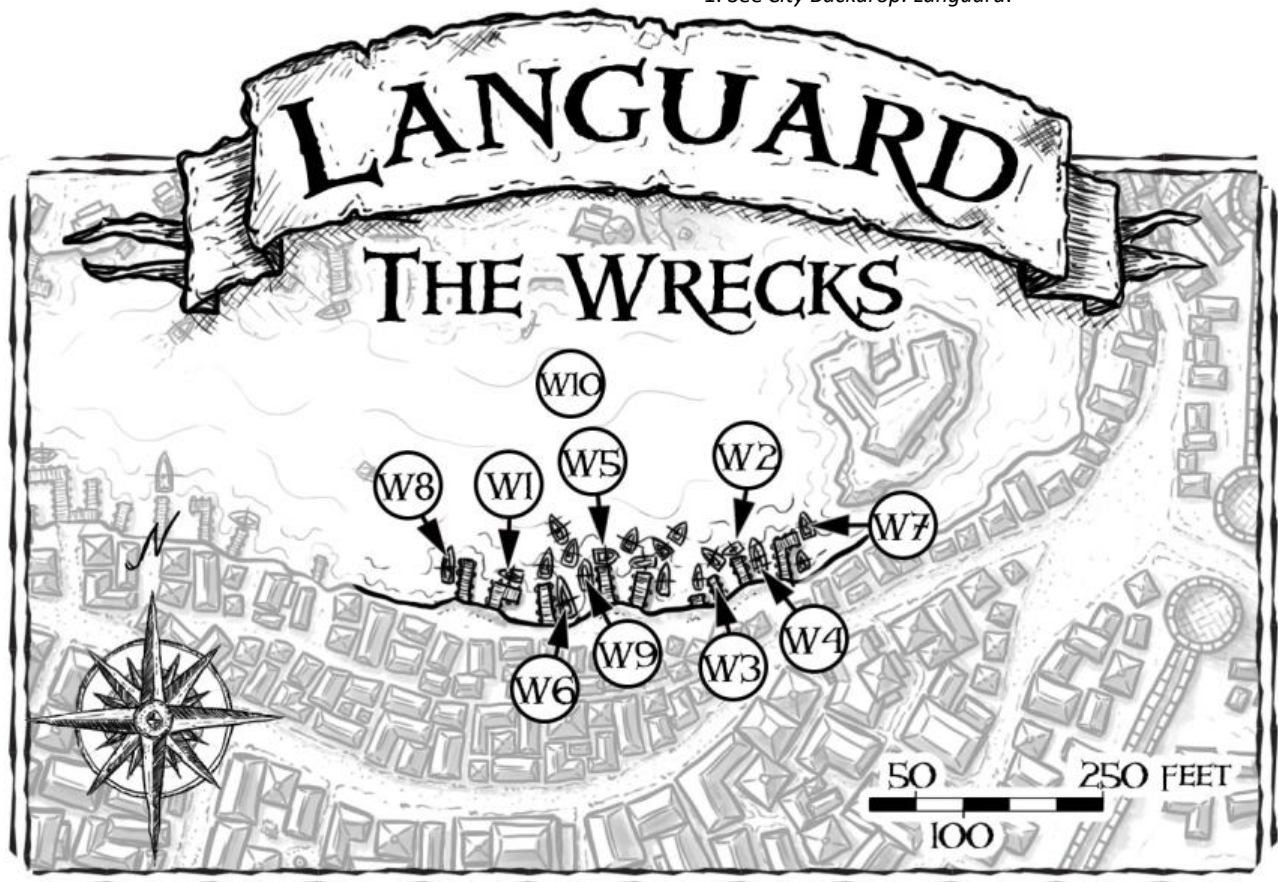
Travelling here is never fast—and often dangerous. Suddenly opening bogs and mires gulp up from filth-drowned pits below. Fleeting flaccid sinkholes and swallets—some old friends with names (and occasionally minds) of their own—choke into existence, lasting an hour, a day, a week; always long enough to cause worry and, at the worst—perhaps—death. Many is the cautionary tale of the child who went to the market across perilous boardwalks and was never seen again; swallowed by Grebb's Mouth or taken by the Bog Queen. Countless are the travellers who fell in a puddle up to their middle and were quickly (or sometimes cruelly slowly) dragged down where so many others have taken their last breath.

In truth, despite the tales, almost as much comes up as goes down. Beneath is often liquid, rancid, sagging. She is never still. Things birth from seaweed-clenched mires below, eyeless wan things flap into daylight.

THE WRECKS LOCATIONS

- W1: Duranki's¹:** Dubious ferry service operated by the Duranki family.
- W2: The Fallen Maid¹:** Home of the Wrecks' preeminent assassin Arura Kutha.
- W3: The Flotsam Pyre:** Ramshackle fop house and inn with a dark secret.
- W4: The Cauldron:** Alchemical ship-suppliers and smugglers' artisans.
- W5: Shackles:** Foul fighting pit owned by our Lady of Rust.
- W6: Devil's Bridge Wrecks:** Shanty village beneath arched bridge specialising in stolen goods.
- W7: The Briny Fane:** Secret temple and fulcrum of Father Dagon's cult in the Wrecks.
- W8: Gulping Lyza:** Mermaid brothel run by Dagon-worshipping Elisa Lyza.
- W9: Last Voyage of the Faithless:** Local fishmart and market where most common goods are purchased.
- W10: The Gape of the Eye:** Sahaugin temple devoted to Dagon sunk beneath the Svart.

1: See *City Backdrop: Languard*.



W3: THE FLOTSAM PYRE

Just before every sailor dies he's said to spend a night in the Flotsam Pyre—a teetering mass of dead ships lurching by the river. Fop-house, sin-beacon and rum-den, the Pyre is actually partly a beacon to guide Takolen shipping home as well as the last place many sailors wash up in.

The Pyre is topped with a huge burning effigy resembling a bloated man which acts as a lighthouse to warn some away from the filthy banks and draw kin home. It scrambles and staggers over a half-dozen crooked levels. Folk spend months at a time without going outside; endless games, curious corner supply shops and seemingly numberless bedrooms and strong rum deliver everything many retired old salts need.

The place is actually run by a ghoul called Mister Palate who takes peculiar delight in lengthening the suffering of drunken sailors by infecting them. Disciplinarian Palate, aka Captain Ahab Grist, suffered mutiny on half a dozen occasions in his long career and enjoys long, slow revenge on the mutineers. Of late he has grown less fussy about who he avenges himself on providing they are old sailors.

TARIFF

- **Drink:** Dubiously strong foreign rum (1 sp – 25 gp).
- **Food:** Fresh fish and fry 5 cp.
- **Rooms:** 2 cp - 20 gp per night depending upon the view and standard.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Mister Palate** (NE human ghoul thief 4) lurks unseen in his attic due to an apparent contagious skin affliction. Seemingly highly-cultured, Palate operates an iron hand through his formidable partner (and part-time lover) Mistress Abigail Relish.
- **Abigail Relish** (NE female human thief 6) loves Palate despite his shortcoming of being dead. Fiery-haired and tempered Mistress Relish Fierce is the haughty, beautiful public face of the Pyre.

HOOKS

- The PCs kill a ghoul—once an elderly human—that has been hunting the streets and alleys near the Wrecks for the last few nights as it preyed on a passing sailor. Once the ghoul is slain, the passing sailor gasps in surprise for he recognises the ghoul as an old shipmate he last saw in the Flotsam Pyre.
- The party is in the Flotsam Pyre one night—perhaps looking for a sailor brave enough to sail them across the bay to Gloamhold—when one of the more sensitive PCs catches the unmistakable scent of death in the air.

THE TAKOLEN

Everyone is listening. The Takolen don't like strangers. Strangers are militia, strangers are spies, strangers are authority, and authority, to be honest, would like rid of them. Visitors here are noticed. Many (if they are lucky) just pass through but linger more than a day or two and you'll be observed—and that's bad.

Prying questions are the easy beginning to this encounter, Takolen like to know what's going on and visitors' business is of great interest. If they don't like—or can't find out—about this business, things quickly take a darker turn. Violence is fast to follow—and if an initial warning is not enough, the local populace has enough friends to make life very difficult. Assassins and thugs abound, and strangers go missing with alarming frequency. In this choking corner of Languard no one notices if you're taken off the street in broad daylight and meet some horrible end. In the end, the Takolen endure.

The local family populace of 200 is often greatly swollen when the fishermen return retched, half-drowned and hungry. They are always anxious for gossip and heavy with bigotry at those who come here to take their families and friends—as they see it. These are tough men and women, like the rest of their kin. They quickly become a frightening mob when danger threatens.

The Takolen like (or perhaps need) strong drink. Many establishments have a bar tucked away within them somewhere. Of course, drink loosens tongues, causes confusion and makes friendships, and when everyone nearby is listening, this is a very dangerous place to relax.

The Takolen are easily noticed; chinless, their hair sparse and greasy (even amongst women), men never have beards. With grey or dark blue eyes and dark brown, jet black or occasionally red hair a profusion of wild, unkempt body hair marks them as a strange folk. They have an oddly sweaty air, smile seldom and speak a guttural form of local dialect that even those across the river struggle to understand.

Below this, the cult of Dagon lurks behind and within the family. Themselves often at violent odds with certain of their kin, they keep their devotion secret, and when that is impossible, fanatically protect it. Their cultists may provide welcome friendly relief for visitors, maybe even sympathy. This friendship hides designs—luring potentially new devotees, seeking out dangerous spies and providing flesh for their friends and allies dwelling in the Svart's depths.

Most Takolen their living on or near the water and thus possess a fisherman's wiry build, strength and stamina. Most live in—or on the brink of—poverty, and all have an eye for a quick profit no matter the consequences to others.

W4: THE CAULDRON

They say that when the wind is in the wrong direction it is impossible to look towards the Cauldron without weeping alchemic tears, such is the toxic breath of this curious shipyard and fitters based upon a trio of landlocked barges.

Behind her façade as an alchemical supplier for ship's captains and mundane shipyard, the Cauldron enjoys a veiled reputation as the apex of knowledge and talents to create secret holds and false cabins in the claustrophobic and confusing folds of ships. The master, Makubin Takolen, now in his eighties, is undeniably one of the best at his trade. As well as his more usual (yet still very pricey) talents for creating spaces where none should be, Makubin also uses partners—for particularly wealthy clients—with arcane skills to design undetectable cabins, holds that defy logic and ways to hide things in plain sight—all to elude prying eyes and taxes.

TARIFF

- **Create Secret Hold in Ships** well hidden (1,000 gp/square), incredibly well hidden (2,000 gp/square), superlatively hidden (3,000 gp/square). Maximum number of secret holds equals 1/20 squares of the vessel rounded down.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Makubin Takolen** (LN old male human) is a wily old stoat, he keeps his hidden talents cloaked behind the bluff of old age—you never know who is working for the duke, after all. In rare cases where he becomes friendly, Makubin is a mine of wild tales of exploration, raging seas and danger.

HOOKS

- The PCs are charged by a crime lord to find out who is able to make magnificently hidden holds and arrange for one to be made in his pleasure barge. The problem is getting the tight-lipped insular Takolen locals to spill this knowledge.



W5: SHACKLE

The infamous Shackle is one of Languard's most twisted and notorious gambling establishments. Built within the belly of the great river barge *Redemption*, the ship's lower hold is fashioned into an everchanging makeshift area of traps, dead-ends and confusing crawl holes. These are open to view from above and topped with thick iron spiked bars to prevent escape from all save a few select spots. Tottering rows of seats stare down from above, lashed at alarming angles to the hull. It is not uncommon for members of the audience to plummet from ill-fixed chairs, into the hold below; literally becoming part of the show.

The show is escape and horror with victims dropped or released into the frightful place below to face the perils lurking therein. Bets are exchanged throughout proceedings by the owner's acrobatic bet collectors, all dressed as gaudy clowns.

A great iron lattice is lashed high above the hold and here the host, the Lady of Rust, provides a running commentary—shouting, screaming and laughing at the misery below.

Abductees are frequently used as "bait" for the creatures serving as the hunters of the game. Our Lady of Rust likes the revolting forms of aberrations best, chokers in particular. Their appearance, alien cunning and menace are so satisfying. In truth, however, the self-important show-woman cares for little save putting on a spectacle, so whatever is available—or can be arranged—is fine by her. Private shows occasionally occur for the wealthier sadists in Languard and sometimes a call goes out for certain persons to be abducted—named people or groups usually—with considerable financial incentives to those who bring them here.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Our Lady of Rust** (NE female dwarf thief 3) was almost killed at sea. Her spine crushed during a terrible storm, the former ship's captain now moves with the aid of an unusual iron animated object that walks its passenger—who swings in an iron crib below—using hooked arms, resembling something like a rusting metal monkey. Sadistic, noisy and perverse, she likes little better than to put on the most gruesome spectacle in Languard. What she does like more is Gudea Ki-Am (location W10), with whom she is obsessed.
- **Bedgin Whelk** (NE male dwarf fighter 3/thief 4) is the shaven-bodied bodyguard of our lady—an acrobat, bouncer and nonsense dwarf who deals with her problems. Whelk is deluded in his love of his employer but cares little for the Takolen. A heavy drinker he is a mine of local gossip.

HOOKS

- One of the "contestants" is the daughter of a bankrupt merchant from High City. His creditors have arranged this final act of humiliation. Will the PCs aid him, when he begs for help?

W6: DEVIL'S BRIDGE WRECKS

Staggering across the edges of the Svart below Puddle Lane is a peculiarly high arched bridge of stone. This was erected to allow a very wealthy merchant passage for his grand ship to a palace he never built on land swarming with slums. The bridge is so steep it is impossible to see what is ahead when crossing it until its arch is crested. Tales tell that sinners meet a terrible demon on the crest at midnight and are taken to the Abyss, or given a particularly terrible keel-hauling beneath the arch.

This tale does much to lend the place an air of fear, and the story is suitably ingrained through repetition that almost everyone stays away at night, when most of the good business is done below.

When the *Ragged Rat* ran aground under the bridge fifty or so years ago it was the beginning of an impromptu development. Since then, the wreck has grown upwards as a shanty village of brothels, foul taverns, fop-houses and dens of wedged into the obliging archway. The shanty is precarious, but ideal for smugglers, offering a market, which rumour says has never closed, for their ill-gotten gains.

Mudgran Ki-Feg, Takolen elder and possibly the most repulsive man in Languard, oversees the market with an iron hand and the assistance of a group of almost equally repulsive sons, some of whom are infected with wererat lycanthropy. They keep an eye on trade and exact tolls for protection from traders, and visitors. However, one never knows what might appear beneath the arch—stolen goods, ill-gotten treasure and illicit objects are frequently found, sometimes without the owner having a true idea of their worth. The arch has thus become a stalking ground for greedy antiquarians, wizards and sundry curiosity seekers.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Mudgran Ki-Feg** (old male human wererat thief 4/magic-user 2) is repulsive. Mudgran is also one of the most powerful men in the Wrecks. Close kin to the patriarch Samuqan Ki-An, Mudgran is one of those touched by Dagon. Expert treasure hunter, explorer and partially insane cultist of alien monstrosities, Mudgran is a very dangerous man to cross with kin everywhere in this corner of the city. Mudgran idolizes Elise Lyza (location W8) from afar and seethes with jealousy about the way Gudea Ki-Am (location W9) treats her.

HOOKS

- The PCs are asked to retrieve an object known to be on sale. However, when they arrive they find the seller has been horribly murdered and the object is missing.

W7: THE BRINY FANE

The part-flooded soaked wreck of the *Acheon* lurks mockingly in the dawn shadows of the Dreaming Spires (location H4). Having the Sequestered Library so close is handy for those who lurk within the ruinous hulk and seek dark grimoires. They have made this the centre of worship for Father Dagon. Having relatively few worshippers scattered across the city, at least in theory, worship is kept private. Beneath the Svart, however, lurks a ruinous sunken isle called the Gape of the Eye (location W10) wherein dwell an increasing number of sea-devils. The sahaugin have been drawn here by the current High Shadow of Dagon in the city, the dreadful Samuqan Ki-An, Tarkolen patriarch.

For now, the Fane remains secret, so Samuqan has concocted a story to keep non-believers away. The tale goes that the *Acheon* was a plague ship, her crew nailed themselves inside the stricken vessel at port rather than allow the spread of sickness to the city. The suitably abandoned upper decks add to this tale, but beneath, in the deeper parts of the ship, lurks a tiny secret chapel to Father Dagon marking this vessel as a sacred place.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Samuqan Ki-An** (NE old male human cleric [Dagon] 5) is the Secret High Shadow of Dagon. His wan, wet fingers are groping wider in the city while spreading lies and promises amongst his own kin—but slowly, so slowly. Samuqan is clever, he knows not to alarm the city elders and so lurks in secret, wearing in public the inbred grimace of his kin. As the number of sahaugin and worshippers steadily increases, so the elder grows bolder, seeking more powerful men to join the cult. Samuqan secretly hopes to be given the kiss of the deep ones and granted access to eternity. The patriarch is a paragon of his kin—chinless, with sallow skin to the point of emaciation, and hard cold eyes. He despairs of his wayward son Gudea Ki-Am (location W10) and searches for a more suitable successor, while dreaming of immortality as a deep one.

HOOKS

- Samuqan seeks new followers, using his great cunning to rally them. He covertly puts about a story that city officials are intending a massive crackdown on the Wrecks and its operations—not to mention threatening the Takolen. Violence against non-Takolen increases, as a result.
- The elder's prayers are answered with a visitation from a herald of Dagon. This bloated alien horror lurks in the Svart demanding a number of curious and profane acts are committed—as well as the theft of certain artefacts once held in the *Acheon's* hold. These are in truth part of a complex ritual to taint the waters of the Svart with children of Dagon.

W8: GULPING LYZA

A grotesquely mouldering plaster mermaid of disturbing voluptuousness drags herself from a garish painted scene of debauchery welcoming visitors to (allegedly) the only mermaid brothel in the world. In this squat, partially collapsed building tottering on the edge of a stinking wharf Elise traffics in misery and despair. Only the most depraved or uncaring folk give Elise their custom.

The truth, of course, is more disturbing; there are indeed a pair of true mermaids held herein. This is merely a grotesque prison operating in plain sight, its appallingly mistreated workers seemingly beyond hope.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Elise Lyza** (CN female human magic-user 6) is a flatulent, fishy old maid of repulsive girth and manners. She runs—or more correctly secures—the brothel, aboard the redundant riverboat. She dallies with Gudea Ki-Am (location W9) occasionally, but is oblivious to Mudgran Ki-Feg's (location W7) feelings toward her, and finds him repulsive.
- **Aelliah and Lamahs** (N female merfolk) are miserable and long for escape. The two are fiercely loyal to one another, though, and one will not escape without the other. They hate Elise and want her dead.

HOOKS

- The PCs hear rumours about what is really going on here. Soon afterwards, one of the mermaids escapes and word spreads that Lyza is offering a large reward for her capture. A grotesque hunt begins, with greedy locals anxious to make some easy money.
- The PCs are in another inn or tavern when they overhear a pair of incredulous sailors talking in excited whispers about Gulping Lyza and the unique, depraved pleasures to be had within. Shortly thereafter, the two now drunk sailors totter off into the night.

W9: LAST VOYAGE OF THE FAITHLESS

Alas for the *Faithless*, come aground with her cargo of rats and no one aboard not twelve years since...

The *Faithless*, reached by precarious iron walkways and rocking bridges, now acts as the more mundane market of the Wrecks. Her association with rats—even to this day—quietly forgotten. Selling pigs and chickens as well as commonplace ironmongery—and some of the best cooked fish in Languard—the curiously bloated hold of the Faithless is often full of locals looking for something to eat or something to buy. Some have described her interior as unsettlingly claustrophobic, maybe it's the ladders and odd angled ramps herein, but some swear there is more to this place than meets the eye, and as for that story of hers...

TARIFF

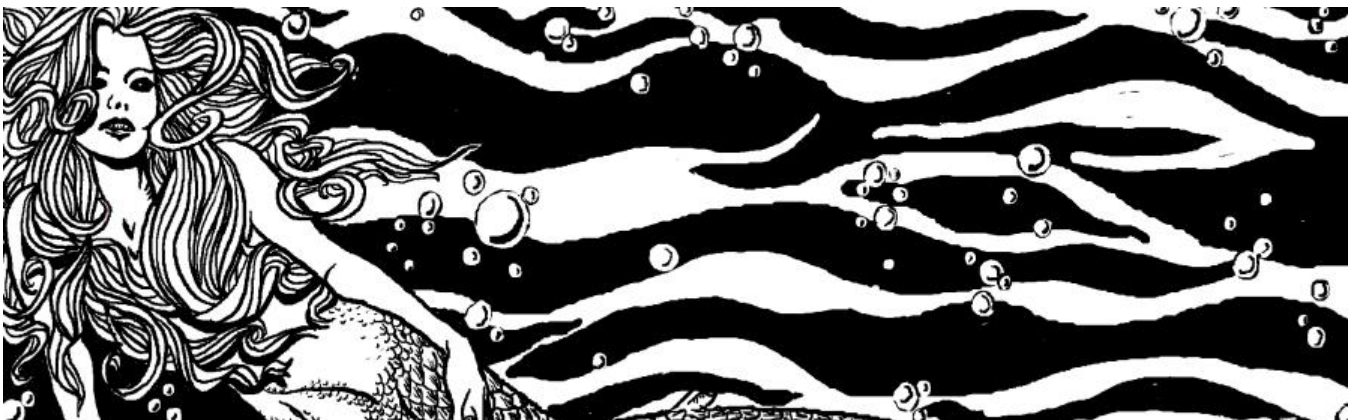
- **Drink:** Salt-rum 1 sp.
- **Food:** jellied eels 3 cp, fresh killed boiled squid 5 cp, fried dory 1 sp, pufferfish fried in garlic 1 sp.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Jurrin Ki-Puk The Maester of Faithless Market** (N male human thief 4) is bulbous-eyed and one of the friendliest locals visitors can meet in the Wrecks. He actively avoids Gudea Ki-Am.
- **Gudea Ki-Am** (CE middle-aged male human fighter 4) is the son of Samuqan Ki-An (location W7). He stays here as it's a good place to get into fights. Gudea is strong and bald and covered in tattoos. He likes to bully weaker folk, especially Jurrin. Gudea is revolted by the occasional attentions of our Lady of Rust (location W5) and has an on-off affair with Elise Lyza (location W8). He has become obsessed with the malenti (location W10) whom he saw recently with his father. His obsession is becoming a danger to the sahaugin.

HOOKS

- The PCs find the truth about the *Faithless'* last voyage, that it was a ship of ghosts who fled into the city. Now the ghosts are returning to the wreck to herald a terrible event.



W10: THE GAPE OF THE EYE

Once, not so long ago, the good folk of Languard looked for other places to build upon, and settled upon spreading onto the Svart on man-made isles. Alas the idea was short-lived as the buildings created atop burgeoning piles of stone collapsed one night swallowing the occupants. What is left sunk beneath the waters, but it did not remain abandoned for long. Dagon saw them, or at least his visionary Samuqan Ki-An did.

Contacting other—less human—worshippers of Father Dagon, the patriarch drew a group of sahuagin here. They have thrived and now lurk in some number below the Svart, concealed in the bloated, drowned ruin. Here they plot and plan, spreading the word of Father Dagon and gaining power. Their plans now intend to draw more powerful city elders into their inky bosom. Presently some 20 sahuagin, including their malenti leader, are here. And slowly, their numbers grow.

From directly above, the sahuagin-built temple resembles an unblinking eye, its ruins consisting of a dozen low sunken buildings.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Driftwood** (LE malenti sahuagin cleric [Dagon] 4/thief 3) appears as a gorgeous elf. The blessed malenti operates as the agent of the sea-devils within the city, spreading their plots using her gifts and otherworldly beauty. She is a formidable, cunning foe.



HOOKS

- A young noble's son has become completely enamoured of the malenti and has vanished, taking the majority of the family silver with him. The PCs are asked to seek him out—he was last seen drunk staggering toward the Wrecks arm and arm with a beautiful elven maid.
- When a large cache of Languard objects are recovered in a raid on a sahuagin lair—perhaps one near the infamous Sunken Pyramid—far out at sea, local officials start getting edgy and demand action. How did the items come to be there when there has been no reported sahuagin raids in the environs for quite some time. Do the sahuagin have contacts with the smugglers operating from Languard and Rivengate's lower levels? City officials demand answers.
- The malenti lures the PCs into helping her get rid of the attentions of Gudea Ki-Am (location W9) by posing as the wronged victim of his unwanted attentions. Afterwards, if one of the PCs seemed particularly smitten or gullible she attempts to lure him or her into a private meeting. Here the PC is kidnapped and carried down to the Gape of the Eye to feature in a special service to glorify Father Dagon.

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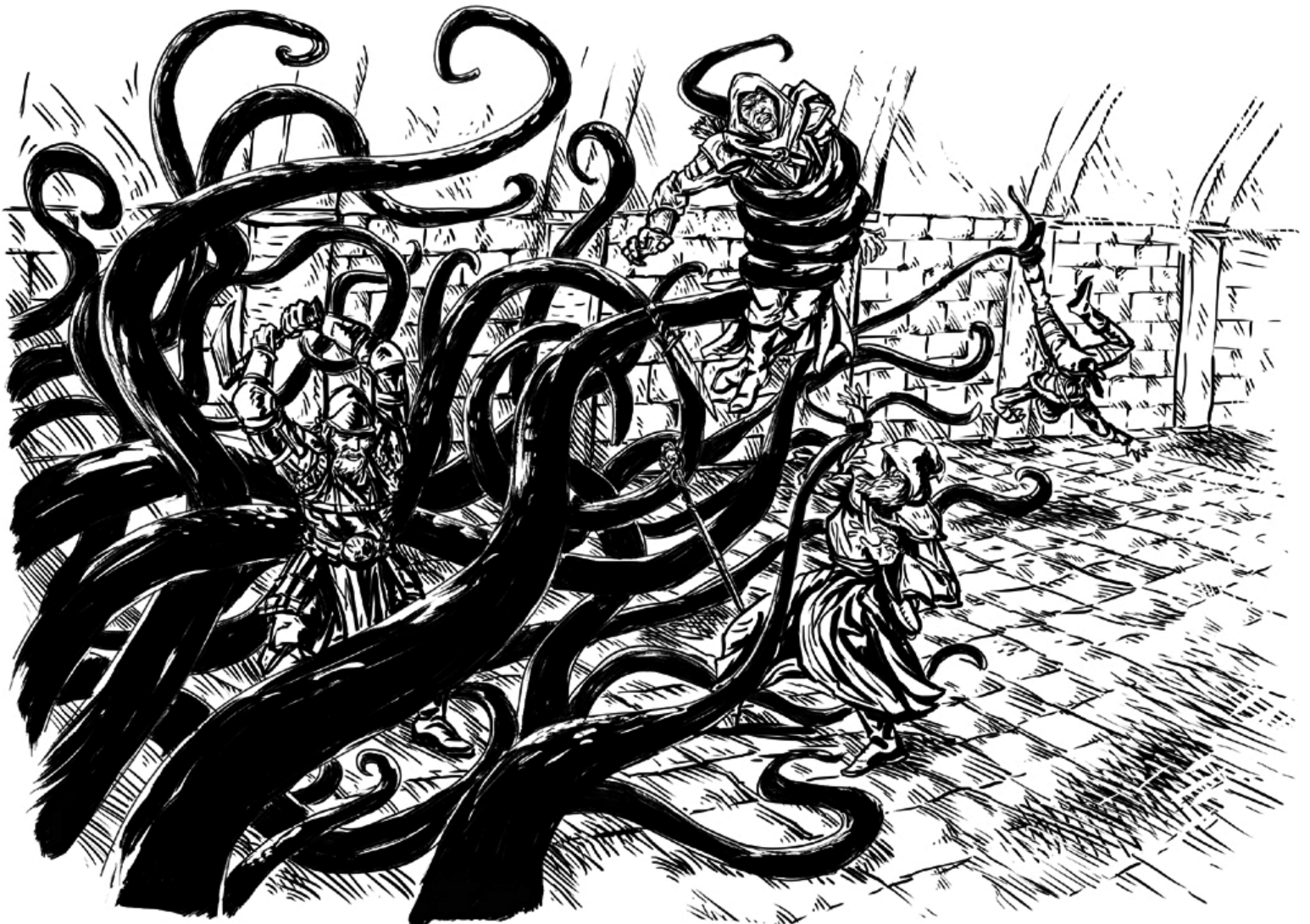
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