

The background of the cover is a dramatic illustration of a pirate ship at sea. A female pirate with long dark hair and a red bandana is in the foreground, climbing a rope. The ship's sails are white, and the sea is dark with a large, glowing purple and blue vortex. Lightning strikes in the sky, and a compass rose is visible in the upper center.

AETHERIAL EXPANSE

SETTING GUIDE

A SWASHBUCKLER'S GUIDE TO THE STARLIGHT SEAS



5E
COMPATIBLE



Blinking
Island

WINDCROWN

PORT MAJEURE

Constellation
Isles

Nth Degree Isle

MONSTERA
CLUSTER

IMPERIAL
ARCHIPELAGO

THE
MAELSTROM

Starshine Key

ISLE OF
DRAKES

Port
Kaylo

Watervord Fork

Forked
Passage

Flamevord Fork

Shipgrave
Reef





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PREFACE

Oh, my beloved Aetherial Expanse! This setting feels like a dream to me. Like I could look up into the night sky and imagine ships sailing between them, firing their cannons and singing battle songs as silver waves crash against their hulls. It's so boldly unserious but so earnestly heartfelt that I can't help but love it.

I grew up with a grandfather who had the whole sea in his heart. He used to sail the Florida Keys before I was born, and even when I was a child, he lived on an island near Seattle. His home was decorated with statues of sea captains and brass models of Viking longboats, wall hangings of tall-masted ships, books about the Age of Sail on his shelves, and decorations of sea turtles visible beneath his glass coffee table. When I had the opportunity to create a new setting for Ghostfire Gaming in their brand-new “Fables” series, those images of my childhood on the shores of Puget Sound immediately leapt to my mind.

Pirates of the Aetherial Expanse was going to be the first “Fable” we created, but the powers that be decided it was important to launch with a Grim Hollow adventure, *Citadel of the Unseen Sun*. That was probably a smart choice. Grim Hollow had a *Campaign Guide*, a *Player's Guide*, and a *Monster Grimoire* on the way to reference. But I wanted Fables to explore new settings and break new ground. It needed to have an identity of its own.

So, when design began on the second Fable, my goal was twofold. First, make the Aetherial Expanse a world that felt like my daydreams. Like the patchwork of nautical symbols that my grandfather's house was. Then, to make it *real*. How would people *live* in this daydream world? How would they be changed by becoming immersed in the silvery aether that dreams are made of? What would the untamed power of imagination do to the real-world plants and animals that were brought from a world of physical matter to a world of dreamstuff?

A lot of real-world research went into this setting, way more than I expected, based on the dreamscape that it began as. I guess I wanted to do something more grounded—I'd watched *Black Sails* right before pre-production began, and loved how it managed to be a predictably grim 'n gritty show from 2015, while also having this mythic tone. So, I read a ton of pirate books, listened to a ton of pirate podcasts, watched a bunch of nautical movies, and brought those notes to designers like Sam Mannell, the man who created the ship combat system. The original drafts of that system were so dedicated to realism that it felt like its own board game! Honestly, even now, I worry that it's a bit too detailed, but I love that there's a resource in this book for people who want to do ship combat in their 5e game, like it's *Master and Commander*. If you hear the words “weather gage” and start frothing at the mouth, then we made that system *for you*!

Ultimately, my hope for RPGs is to write it as idiosyncratically as possible but make its joints clear enough that you can customize it however you like. This is your own Aetherial Expanse after all—that's why the extremely crunchy ship combat system also has an addendum for people who want that more narrative, dream-like tone. The people who made this game love both gritty realism and swashbuckling nonsense. I think you'll find it very easy to adjust its spice to your own taste.

Since it was set in a new world, *Pirates of the Aetherial Expanse* needed to be more than just an adventure. The setting notes I created to guide the writers were expanded into a mini-setting guide that gave players and Game Masters just enough info about the world and new mechanics to get them grounded in the adventure to follow. I always wanted more. So, seeing Joe Raso and his creative team develop a full *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide* based on my setting notes and the adventures that my team of madcap-brilliant writers and designers and artists for *Pirates* has been a dream come true.

By the way, a secret side goal I had for *Pirates* was to establish the Aetherial Expanse as a “hub world” where characters from all sorts of fantasy worlds could have big, colorful, super-high-fantasy adventures. When I had big dreams for *Fables* as a series, I imagined every *Fable* taking place in a new world, with new characters, and getting the mini-setting guide treatment that the Aetherial Expanse got. It was a very comic book-style approach to worldbuilding where adventures took place in their own worlds with their own genre conventions and lore, but also could plausibly meet in a big crossover event if the Game Master wanted to.

Despite these big ambitions, the writing was on the wall for the ongoing *Fables* series not long after *Pirates* released. *Fables 3: Agents of the Empire* was already in production, and I’d been assigned to lead a new Grim Hollow adventure. We’d discovered that *Fables*’ subscription model wasn’t clicking as much as we’d hoped with our readers, and preparing huge monthly adventure releases was burning me and our other creatives out. It wasn’t good.

But you can still see the fingerprints of this plan to make the Aetherial Expanse the central hub of a thousand worlds all over it. The story of traveling from other fantastical worlds is the heart of the Aetherial Expanse. All three of its major factions, the pirates, the empire, and the merchant kingdom, are travelers who chose to either coexist with the strange magic of the Astral Plane or to exploit it. Even factions tucked away in the lore of the Aetherial Expanse, like the giants of Astrium and the Astral Merfolk of the Constellation Isles were planesfarers—by choice or by a quirk of fate.

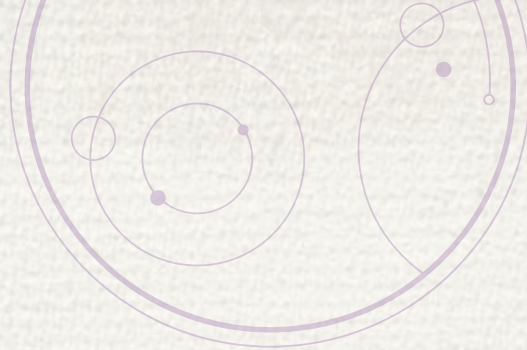
Fables 3 even started down the road I’d initially hoped for. It follows the imperial faction from *Pirates* into their home world. If *Pirates* took the swashbuckling genre and dialed the magic up to 11, *Agents of the Empire* did the same for the super spy genre, all while connecting it back to the hub world of the Aetherial Expanse. Maybe you can keep that original vision alive in your version of this world by drawing characters, creatures, and villains from other campaigns you’ve run.

This book even has some never-before-seen material from plans for future *Fables*. The mercantile kingdom from *Pirates* had its own world on the Material Plane, for example. You’ll see that lore, plus some factional quests based on that unrealized *Fable*’s nascent plot of “What if *King Lear*, but if *Lear* were a Medici and all his kids had a bunch of assassins.”

Outside of contributions like that, and a few lore expansions on locations and gods in the Aetherial Expanse that *Pirates* didn’t touch on much, I’ve been lucky enough to sit back and watch Joe and his team create the ultimate Aetherial Expanse setting guide. There’s a world of adventure out there, if you’re willing to set sail and explore it.

James J. Haeck
March 2024





INTRODUCTION

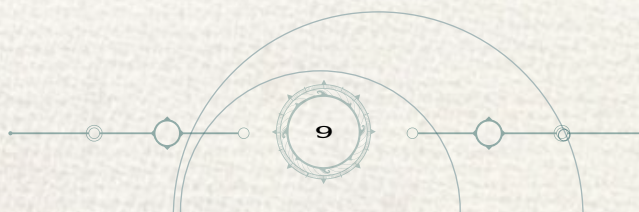
It is on these enchanted seas that we shall make our stand. No kingdom, no empire, no one will drive us from this place. The Aetherial Expanse belongs to us and all those who yearn to live free.

—Teruko the Drake

Explore wondrous islands and sail across a sea of starlight floating in the Astral Plane! Inside this sourcebook, you'll discover an expansive 5e-compatible campaign setting filled with character options, naval combat rules, and monsters from across the Silvery Seas.

This book presents the Aetherial Expanse, a wondrous setting in the Astral Plane where rival powers from prime material worlds maneuver around a tentative ceasefire to lay claim to its territory, while independent pirates rebuff these attempts at external domination.

The Aetherial Expanse setting was first introduced in Ghostfire Gaming's Fables Season 2 adventure, *Pirates of the Aetherial Expanse*. The book you hold builds upon that original content, consolidating elements from the adventure series and augmenting it with a wealth of new material to craft your own swashbuckling adventures in this magical setting.



SEVEN THINGS TO KNOW

The following items provide a brief list of things that GMs and their players should know and will learn about the Aetherial Expanse:

1. **Magical Astral Sea.** The Aethereal Expanse is a distinct part of the Astral Plane. It is also referred to as the Silvery or Starlight Seas, and is composed of magical aether, a substance that is the very essence of magic, but can be sailed upon like water.
2. **Aether and Aetherium.** If aether is the stuff of magic, aetherium is magic made solid. Aetherium is a valuable substance, allowing those who tame it to use it to power magitech, changing whole civilizations with new potential machines...and weapons.
3. **Planar Portals.** As part of the Astral Plane, the Aetherial Expanse is a location that contains portals to diverse worlds and realms. Some enterprising explorers might use these portals to access the Aetherial Expanse, while others may accidentally fall through. These portals make the Expanse a crossroads of the multiverse.
4. **A Diversity of Origins.** Just as any creature from any world might make its way to the Aetherial Expanse, the realm contains creatures unique to it. Astral emergents are souls made of magic that inhabit host bodies that perished in the Aether Sea. Aether merfolk are native to the Expanse, having evolved into beings who can swim the Aether Sea safely or walk on land when necessary. Automatons are inorganic creatures powered by aetherium who have gained sentience.
5. **Naval Adventure.** Although there is land within the Aetherial Expanse, most of this section of the Astral Plane is covered in aether. With sailing necessary to move from place to place and take advantage of the riches of the Expanse, many adventures occur aboard naval vessels. Piracy, naval warfare, and skill at surviving the “aether waters” are a vital part of life in the Expanse.
6. **Colonial Conquest.** Some nations from different worlds have learned to tap into and control the portals leading to the Aetherial Expanse. These nations struggle against the native creatures of the area—and each other—in attempts to exploit the Expanse’s resources. Many who come to the Aetherial Expanse take up the cause of driving away the colonizers.
7. **Lost Civilizations.** The secrets hidden beneath the Aether Sea are deep, dark, and dangerous. Civilizations have risen and fallen within the Aetherial Expanse over the eons. Terrible secrets and unfathomable power are just one shipwreck or tidal wave away from being uncovered—for better or worse!

“They say the Astral Plane is made of dreams, and nowhere is that more evident than the Expanse. Here, we sail for the dreams of captains, of nations, and of forces unknown.”

—Garrus Razorfin, first mate of the Ebongale

CAMPAIGNS IN THE EXPANSE

While any sort of campaign can be run in the Aetherial Expanse, the setting is tailored specifically for certain types:

- Pirate Swashbuckling Adventures.** Whoever controls the Aether Sea controls much of the power in the Expanse. Campaigns that focus on pirates or privateers, using their nautical and martial skills to exert their dominance, are well suited for the Aetherial Expanse.
- Wondrous Exploration.** The Expanse is not limitless, but its scope is profound and its contents diverse. Roving across the Aether Sea in search of treasure, power, and more is a wonderful focus for a campaign set here.
- Preventing an Apocalypse.** Godlike powers built the Aetherial Expanse, and those same powers are still at play there. A great power hidden within the roiling eddies of the Aether Sea is waiting to rise and destroy everything the Astral Plane touches.
- Eldritch/Cosmic Horror.** Horror rests in the unknown, and nothing is more unknown than what rests beneath the waves of aether or on the other side of a newly-opened portal. Political intrigue might give way to all life-loving creatures joining together to battle cosmic, eldritch horrors.
- Plane Hopping.** Portals of all varieties lead to and from the Aetherial Expanse. These portals allow characters to set up a safe base of operations in the Expanse, then sail off into the various planes and world to find more lucrative—and much more dangerous and challenging—adventures.

CONTENT WARNING

This setting guide is filled with a wide spectrum of content from wondrous and magical to dark and dangerous. Some players may be uncomfortable with certain types of content, and we strongly recommend having a conversation with your gaming group about the types of content they want, and don't want in their game sessions. We can't list every type of content that might come up in an Aetherial Expanse campaign, but some elements to consider include:

- Colonialism
- Death
- Drowning
- Gore
- Physical mutations and body horror
- Theft
- Torture

USING THIS BOOK

This book provides an entry to the Aetherial Expanse for GMs and their players to create exciting campaigns filled with daring deeds, wondrous exploration, and thrilling naval combat on the Astral Plane.

The content herein is intended to augment the Fifth Edition's rules. To play, you need either the free Fifth Edition System Reference Document (SRD) or the books that comprise the Fifth-Edition core rules.

You are encouraged to take as little or as much of the contents of this book to build and run your own campaigns. This book is a starting point. Creating your own campaigns from the building blocks contained within—or your favorite sources elsewhere—can be wonderfully fun. The Aetherial Expanse is a great place for different Fifth-Edition rules and content to come together.

ORGANIZATION

This introduction provides an overview of this setting to set the stage for the content to come. The book itself is divided into five parts.

Part One: The Starlight Sea Codex

This first section provides an overview of the Aetherial Expanse setting, describing its history, lore, locations, and people who influence events within.

Chapter 1: A Sea of Magic. A primer describing some of the key elements of this setting.

Chapter 2: Gazetteer. Insight into several important locations within the Silvery Seas.

Chapter 3: Gods. A primer describing deities having significant influence over mortals on the Aetherial Expanse.

Chapter 4: Factions. An outline of important groups who influence events, for good or ill, in this magical setting.

Part Two: Player's Guide

This section provides a wealth of new options you can use to create interesting player characters tied to the Aetherial Expanse.

Chapter 5: Character Creation. An overview of character creation options for adventures in the Aetherial Expanse.

Chapter 6: Character Traits. A listing of character traits available to craft customized player character heritages.

Chapter 7: Seafaring Advancement. New optional character advancement options tied to the naval operational rules presented in this book.

Chapter 8: Class Options. A load of new subclasses and fighting styles catering to adventures on the aetherial seas.

Chapter 9: Backgrounds. A handful of new character backgrounds to integrate player characters into the Aetherial Expanse setting.

Part Three: Magic

This part provides some of the new magical wonders that can be revealed through adventure campaigns in this setting.

Chapter 10: New Spells. New spells available to the player characters and NPCs of this setting.

Chapter 11: Items and Artifice. An outline of aetherium, magitech, and new magic items available to be discovered in the Aetherial Expanse.

Part Four: Naval Rules

This section compiles new rules available to support naval campaigns on the Aetherial Expanse or the high seas of any material plane world.

Chapter 12: Naval Operations. New ship mechanics for creating exciting naval-based adventures.

Chapter 13: Crews. New rules to create compelling crews who sail the seas.

Part Five: Friends and Foes

This section explores some of the unique creatures and people characters can meet on their adventures.

Chapter 14: Threats of the Starlight Seas. A treasury of new monsters and generic NPCs.

Chapter 15: Personalities. A selection of unique personalities tied to the Aetherial Expanse.

Beyond these chapters, several appendices support this material with additional content, such as a sampling of games played on the Expanse and tables to build ships and crews to fill the Starlight Seas.

MONSTERS, MAGIC, AND MORE

This identifies monsters and NPCs with a stat block that can be fought or interacted with by the player characters in a significant way. When you see text in **bold**, the game statistics for the monster or NPC can be found in the Fifth-Edition core rules. Text in **bold*** followed by an asterisk indicates it's a new creature found in this book, in chapter 14 or chapter 15, for a small selection of uniquely named NPCs. When you see text in *italics*, that's to tell you that you're looking at the name of a spell (like *hideous laughter*) or a magic item (like *winged boots*). Most spells and magic items are found in the Fifth-Edition core rules. Text in *italics** followed by an asterisk are new spells or magic items found in this volume, with new spells found in chapter 10 and new magic items in chapter 11.

"You need three things to sail the Starlight Seas: a fast ship, a trusted crew, and an unshakeable bearing."

—Captain Reymer, Imperial Navy Trainer





Part 1

STARLIGHT SEA CODEX

The map was cursed, no doubt about it. If it even was a map. Televos had sailed Aether's Boon from Windcrown to Shipgrave Reef and half the places in between, and he'd still never seen a layout of islands quite like it. Nobody had, not even old Pilkin, who named every uninhabited rock they passed like it was a new constellation in the sky and liked to sing them out to the tune of "By the Chariot's Heavenly Light." Not even Meriah, whose eyes were twice as old as her face and who talked about Ayris and Karelagne arriving in the Expanse like she'd had a front-row seat through their entire century of war.

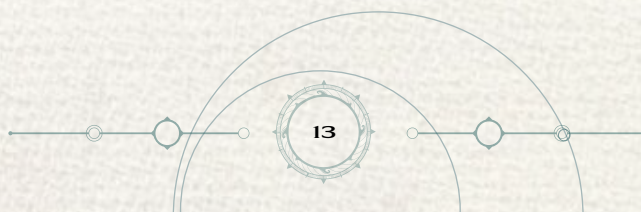
Sometimes, Televos wasn't sure why he even left it out, other than to give whoever made their way to his quarters something to talk about other than whether some other crew of Drakes had been spotted in the area or an aetherstorm was coming. Half the crew was convinced it was a treasure map, and they'd come away with crates of aetherium crystals if they could ever find where it led. The other half had been on the ship long enough to know that something about it wasn't right. Sometimes, you'd swear there'd been an island somewhere on the edge of the page, and it was gone, or bigger, or with sharper corners. Sometimes, if you looked at the water, it seemed to move just a little. Sometimes, the whole thing smelled like old smoke cutting through the fresh, clean air.

And then the pieces started showing up.

The first one to appear had been the tentacled aetherbeast, carved from some sort of wood Televos didn't recognize, sitting on the middle of the paper like never-you-mind how it got there. Half a day later, they'd run into something just like it in the flesh, nearly ripped a hole in the sails, and gone through every bit of ammo they had trying to drive it away. Televos had tossed the carving overboard as soon as they were finished with repairs, but it was back the next day in the very same spot, like the work of some aetherium-guzzling mage.

The next one had been a common shark, which was nothing to worry about for a brig the size of Aether's Boon, but that was the week they'd rescued a sailor who'd swallowed some aether on a swim and nearly died of poisoning...and then gotten swindled out of half their cargo playing him in high-stakes Flotilla. A shark indeed. After that, Televos had kept track, figured knowing was half the battle, but the pieces never made sense 'til after (a horse for the time they'd found a pack of wild ones on an uncharted island, a ship for the time they were stuck in the doldrums for a week with no air in their sails) and once they were on the table, he could only move them from one side to the other like some game, biding time 'til he figured out the rules.

— The Mostly True Tales of Televos Tramm





Chapter 1

A SEA OF MAGIC

“The Silvery Seas are filled with untold riches waiting to be plundered. Let’s make sure it’s Karel that does the plundering.”

— First Mate Caturix
On his first voyage into the Aetherial Expanse

The Aetherial Expanse is a realm of high fantasy filled with wondrous exploration and seafaring piracy. Portals from the Elemental Planes bring winds that drive ships across the starry sea and rain that nourishes the verdant foliage brought from the worlds on the Material Plane. The Expanse is full of pulsing nebulas and glimmering light, as well as creatures and plants made of starstuff. It beckons with the beautiful, the unsettling, and the promise of adventure.

A BRIEF HISTORY

The Aetherial Expanse is extraordinarily ancient but mortal chronicles of its history are so exceedingly rare as to be considered non-existent. The people of the Aetherial Expanse largely accept two competing theories about the origin of aether.

BORN OF DIVINE SACRIFICE

The first theory holds that aether is divine in origin; the god Cyrill the Hierophant (see page 55) sacrificed his body to protect the people of an ancient civilization, and his divine essence transformed into the aether. In this theory, aether poisoning is the result of a mortal body being unable to survive being flooded with the essence of a god, even a protector-god like Cyrill.

BORN OF MORTAL GREED

The second theory suggests that aether is mortal in origin, and an ancient plane-faring civilization perished in a magical catastrophe. These people longed for godlike magical power and their greed was their undoing; the power they sought annihilated them in a heartbeat but preserved their minds as a hellish punishment. The aether is a conglomeration of the wailing souls of a civilization that longed for power beyond its comprehension; and thus, aether poisoning is the result of a victim’s body and mind being torn asunder by the pure hatred of the aether’s component spirits.

A POSSIBLE TRUTH

GMs are encouraged to develop their truth for the formation of the Aetherial Expanse. However, one possible truth, as presented in Ghostfire Gaming’s Fable *Pirates of the Aetherial Expanse*, describes its creation as follows.

Aethergenesis

A group of plane-farers traveling between realms were killed by the tempestuous forces of the Astral Plane. However, their defiant spirits refused to die. Lost in space, these spirits coagulated into a silvery mass that drifted across the plane. Over the aeons, more and more lost souls were absorbed by this gestalt of spirits, until it grew so large that its individual spirits lost their sense of self, and became a mass of impotent thoughts and desires.

The gestalt became less like a spirit or a being and more like the sea; shimmering, placid, and occasionally wracked by furious storms. Other plane-farers named this sea of magical, spiritual energy “aether.” Hurtling

comets lodged in its aetherial surface and formed islands, which sank to the depths. The magical power of these planar comets caused liquid aether to crystallize into a solid form, which people would come to call aetherium. Solid aetherium crystal buoyed these comets back to the surface, and islands began to grow and form in the Aetherial Expanse.

ASTRIUM AND COSMIC TURTLES

Creatures of the Astral Plane, as well as creatures from other planes banished to the Astral by magical mishap or experimentation, found their way to the Aetherial Expanse. Over centuries, the magic of this realm caused them to mutate and adapt to their new home. The greatest of these creatures were the cosmic turtles. Tales of the earliest surviving planefaring civilizations say the cosmic turtles were once ordinary beasts no larger than a human fist, but that over centuries of exposure to aether, they gained the capacity for great wisdom and grew so large that islands could form upon their backs. Nevertheless, cosmic turtles are now believed extinct, for no sailor of the Expanse has seen one for a century.

These scant surviving myths come from records of a civilization of Astrium, a great city inhabited by planefaring giants that was lost many centuries ago. Legend says the giants made their home in the center of the Aetherial Expanse—but the center of this realm holds only the Maelstrom, an immense aetherstorm that rages without end. If Astrium ever existed, its magical secrets, and the astral titans that discovered them, have been lost forever.

ARRIVAL OF THE KINGDOM OF AYRIS

As the plane between the planes, mages are able to create highly stable portals to the plane. It's also a place where enterprising planefarers can most easily find new portals to hitherto unknown worlds. Controlling a liminal plane such as the Astral has been the giddy dream of countless empires across history.

About a century before the current day, two mighty nations from different worlds on the Material Plane discovered the secret to creating stable portals to the Aetherial Expanse, the only part of the Astral Plane they could explore by using their naval ships (with mild arcane adjustments) to sail through the aether. Of these two nations, the first to enter the Expanse was the Kingdom of Ayriss, a tiny coastal nation on its home world, which prospered as a realm of traders that its warlike neighbors maintained good relations with.

Ayriss kept a small naval fleet at home but protected its homeland with a well-paid mercenary army and an equally well-off navy of privateers. The boldest of these warriors for hire were offered huge sums to enter the Ayrissian mages' portal to the Astral Plane and go on the adventure of a lifetime, guarding Ayrissian settlers, botanists, geologists, and explorers as they hunted for new, valuable resources across the Expanse.

They found this resource in the form of aetherium. Though the aether itself was overflowing with magical power, actually immersing oneself in it for long caused

horrific poisoning and quick death. Crystallized aether, however, was stable, nonpoisonous, and easily transportable. Ayrissian mages longed for the substance to advance their experiments, and the kingdom's warlike neighbors all but salivated at its destructive potential.

INVASION BY THE EMPIRE OF KAREL

A scant decade after the Kingdom of Ayriss began colonizing the Aetherial Expanse, a new contender entered the scene: the Karelagne Empire. Hailing from another world on the Material Plane, the vast Empire of Karel had likewise discovered the potential of aetherium to enhance its military capabilities and catapult its technology centuries into the future in an instant.

Equipped with a navy that, if mustered in full, could stretch across the horizon uninterrupted, the Karelagne Empire swept across the Astral Plane, and engaged the Ayrissian colonists and their privateer navy in a bitter war that raged for decades—one that ended in a stalemate driven by both war-weary nations' desire to return to hunting for aetherium.

RISE OF THE DRAKES

The Astral Plane is hostile to mortal life; no humanoid creature is native to the Expanse. Over the centuries, however, countless people have been lost on its deserted islands, and the spirits of those who die at sea are claimed by the roiling consciousness of the aether. Bodies lost at sea have been known to rise again, inhabited by a restless spirit broken off from the aether's gestalt consciousness.

These astral emergents (see page 87) are few and have only scattered communities, but they call the Expanse their home—and no one has more right than them.

Defectors were common during the aetherial wars between Karel and Ayriss, or the War of the Invaders as the emergents called it. Many of these defectors took their ships and settled on islands where a handful of emergents had already made their settlements. Defectors and emergents banded together to form pirate crews that harried imperial and kingdom vessels alike for wealth and the resources they needed to survive.

Of these pirates, the most feared was Captain Teruko the Drake, and her ship, *The Drake*, which shared her epithet. *The Drake's* crew settled on an island cluster far from the military encampments of the Kingdom of Ayriss and the Karelagne Empire and declared it a free haven for pirates across the Expanse. Following Captain Teruko's death, her islands were named the Isle of Drakes. And in the decade since the War of the Invaders ended, jobless sailors have flocked to the Isle of Drakes in search of fortune and glory in the only way they know how: sowing death across the sea.

'The Expanse calls to us, it fuels us, it consumes us. We fight over the Sea? We are the Sea! This is a fight for our souls!'

—Harith the Moorless



AETHER AND AETHERIUM

The Aetherial Expanse has the name that it does because its seas aren't made of salt water, but of aether. Aether's appearance is that of shimmering, liquid starlight, and its physical properties are similar to those of water. The sea has waves, undersea creatures and plants, and feels much like water to swim through. Things plunged into the sea become aetherlogged—wet and heavy—and dry out at roughly the same rate as something saturated with water.

When aether is removed from the Expanse, however, it slowly evaporates into a shimmering vapor. This vapor then surges back toward the nearest body of aether at a rapid pace. Aether fog often swirls around the boots of city dwellers in the streets of major ports and after sailors wearing aetherlogged clothes trudge to taverns after months at sea.

This sea of aether acts similarly to the saltwater seas that cover many worlds on the Material Plane. However, it differs in several vital respects.

Aether has three states: liquid, vapor, and solid—in order of rarity. As a liquid, aether makes up the vastness of the Aetherial Expanse. When removed from the sea, it slowly evaporates into a vapor that surges back to the sea by the fastest means possible. This evaporation is hastened by the presence of magic (see page 19). Clever sailors, when lost on an island or trapped underground, can take advantage of this property by opening a vial of aether, accelerating its evaporation by dousing the aether with water, and following the trail of shimmering vapor back to the sea.

Aether's solid, highly valuable form, however, is the spur for countless thrilling and ill-fated journeys into the Aetherial Expanse. These grand journeys, undertaken by pirate and adventurer alike, have in turn spawned as many (or more!) ballads and tales told across the sea.

AETHERIAL SENSATION

Aether is a liquid substance that feels light as air and shimmers like starlight. Characters who spend any time in the Aetherial Expanse can trace the following sensations to the vast starlit sea around them, just as a mariner's senses are informed by the saltwater sea around them.

Touch

Aether feels wet and effervescent to the touch, yet also far lighter than water. Any aether removed from the Expanse tries to return to the sea by evaporating into a heavier-than-air vapor that rolls across the ground like fog. The shimmering cloud of aether that seeks to return to the sea feels just as heavy as its liquid form. Aether pulled from the open Expanse is typically a cold 40 degrees Fahrenheit, but coastal aether within 1 mile of an island is comfortably warm, at around 80 degrees Fahrenheit.

Taste

The high risk of aether poisoning keeps most from willingly drinking aether. Only mages who seek to amplify their arcane powers with no regard for the cost (see page 19), or

religious fanatics who wish to imbibe the ancient god of the sea's power would take such a risk. Drunk straight, aether tastes acidic and bright, like drinking starlight. It coats the throat smoothly like quicksilver and burns when coughed up as the stomach spasms at its otherworldly touch.

In small quantities, such as in incorrectly prepared aetherfish—or worse, in a poisoned drink—aether has a distinctive sour tang, as if the dish has been woefully over-lemoned.

Scent

Aether is completely odorless to the common observer, but those well versed in its study can detect a subtle alkaline smell. It smells bright, in a way no terrestrial substance does.

However, anyone who sails upon the Aetherial Expanse knows the intoxicating pureness of the air. Aether doesn't evaporate into the air like water, so the air in the Expanse isn't salty like terrestrial sea air. The air on the open aether is perfectly, dizzyingly clean, unpolluted by smog or manure.

Sound

Aether laps upon the shores of the Expanse's islands in gentle waves, and grows restless when tossed by storms. In this way, the sound of the Aetherial Expanse sounds identical to a traditional ocean.

Sight

Aether's shimmering surface resembles liquid starlight filled with auroras. The surface is frequently permeated by ripples of nebulous color from below. Aether takes on these colorful qualities beneath the surface, with darker colors near the surface and brighter colors deep below.

SWIMMING IN AETHER

Athletic swimmers can swim through aether just as easily as they can water. Courtesy of portals to the Elemental Plane of Water, some landmasses of the Aetherial Expanse have bodies of fresh water, and children who live near them learn to swim in water before swimming in aether.

A creature with a swim speed can move up to that speed through aether without issue. A creature without a swim speed can move up to half its walking speed while swimming through aether.

Calm aether is easy enough to swim through, but rough or stormy aether requires a creature to make a successful Strength (Athletics) check, otherwise that creature's speed is reduced to 0 until the start of its next turn. The GM determines the check's DC (see the Typical Difficulty Classes table in the Fifth-Edition core rules).

Swimming by Force of Will

Unlike sea water, aether is made of magic. In some ways, it's the stuff dreams are made of, and reactive to the thoughts of creatures with powerful wills. When a creature needs to make a Strength (Athletics) check to swim through aether, it can make a Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check instead to mentally exert its will over the aether.

SUFFOCATION

A creature can hold its breath for a number of minutes equal to 1 + its Constitution modifier (minimum 30 seconds).

When a creature runs out of breath or is choking, it can survive for a number of rounds equal to its Constitution modifier (minimum 1 round). At the start of its next turn, it drops to 0 hit points and is dying, and it can't regain hit points or be stabilized until it can breathe again.

For example, a creature with a Constitution score of 14 (+2) can hold its breath for 3 minutes. If it starts suffocating, it has 2 rounds to reach air before it drops to 0 hit points.

Even if a creature that drowns in aether is resuscitated, it emerges with aether fever (see page 20).



Aether octopus



Aetherium Crystal

Aetherium Ore



AETHERIUM CRYSTAL

Aetherium crystal is the rarest and most valuable form of aether in the Expanse and beyond. The rarity of these crystals has made them a black market currency, used primarily to make huge transactions, such as the purchase of ships. Aetherium floats in aether, much like ice floats in water. Raw aetherium naturally occurs beneath astral islands, causing them to float in the Astral Sea. The Kingdom of Ayris has launched numerous mining expeditions to strip smaller islands of their aetherium deposits; this destructive practice has made the kingdom's merchants very rich, but also caused the islands they mine to vanish utterly beneath the waves.

Aetherium as a Currency

Most magic item traders deal only in aetherium. When used as currency, aetherium is measured in ounces, and its value fluctuates wildly from day to day and settlement to settlement, depending on how recent the latest influx of aetherium was. Use the value below to determine the cost of aetherium each time the characters reach a new outpost, or spend a full week in the same market.

1 ounce of aetherium = 2d12 × 100 gp

Pirates and smugglers trade in raw aetherium, but both the Karelagne Empire and Kingdom of Ayris meticulously turn their aetherium into bars or strips and emboss those cuts with their national crest.

Aetherium Bars. It's common knowledge only the Karelagne and Ayrisian governments deal in bars or ingots of aetherium. A standard bar weighs 18 ounces and measures 6 inches long, 3 inches wide, and 1 inch thick. Karelagne mages can engrave their national crest on a bar of aetherium using magic with relative ease.

Aetherium Strips. Those who trade frequently in aetherium use cases filled with thin, strips of the crystal in their transactions. These aetherium strips weigh 2 ounces and measure 2 inches long, 2 inches wide, and 1/2 inch thick.

Aetherium Nibs. The tiny, easily transportable shavings called "nibs" are the most common form of aetherium currency most people see.

Mining Aetherium

Aetherium's durability increases the more aetherium it's in contact with. Mining a solid hunk of aetherium crystal from an island, however, is incredibly difficult. Mining an aetherium crystal delicately without specialized, magic-infused mining tools is almost impossible.

Blasting Aetherium. Cannons and explosive magic can be used to mine aetherium, but the result is messy and dangerous. A Small aetherium crystal formation has AC 16, 30 hit points, and immunity to poison, psychic, and slashing damage. Increase a deposit's AC by 2 and its hit points by 20 for each size category larger than Small.

Explosive Deposits. When an aetherium deposit is reduced to 0 hit points, its energy is released in an explosion. When destroyed, a Small aetherium crystal formation deals 10 (3d6) psychic damage and 10 (3d6) slashing damage to creatures and objects within 20 feet of it. Double the damage and radius for each size category larger than Small.

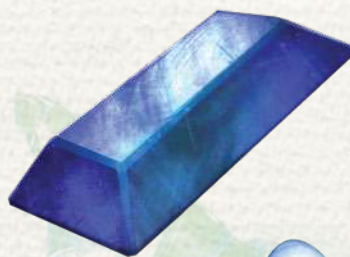
Stormy Consequences. Regardless of whether the crystal is removed safely or blasted apart, the aether reacts furiously to the act, like an organism writhing in pain. An aetherstorm (see page 19) 1d6 miles in radius forms around the mining site and lasts for 1d12 hours. At the GM's discretion, larger mining operations cause larger, longer-lasting storms.

Aetherium as a Power Source

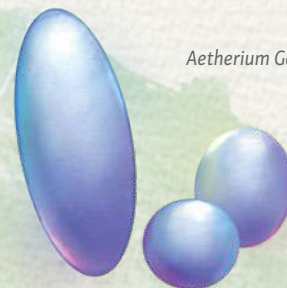
Aetherium is valuable because of its rarity, but also because of its use as an energy source—or as a weapon. As any aetherium miner knows, blasting aetherium causes it to react explosively. Specially trained mages in Karel and Ayris can transmute aetherium crystal into heavy aether, a highly unstable crystal ten times heavier than aetherium.

Heavy aether contains staggering amounts of raw energy, making it a perfect fuel source for the Kingdom of Ayris's specially constructed Stardrive engines, or as an explosive shell for the Karelagne Empire's devastating Wrath Cannons.

Aetherium Ingot



Aetherium Gems



AETHER AND MAGIC

A simple rule of thumb used by sailors is that aetherium is safe unless you want to destroy it, but aether is dangerous no matter what. Liquid aether is highly reactive to magic, particularly elemental magic. Since the Astral Plane is frequently perforated by rifts to the Elemental Planes, this makes traveling across the aether an unpredictable and dangerous prospect. Only civilian thrill seekers, square-jawed naval officers, merchants in search of tremendous wealth, and pirates with nothing to lose sail these seas willingly.

SPELLS AND AETHER

Aether is made of magic, and any spell that crosses into an area of aether is amplified by its presence.

Impact on Saving Throws

Any creature that's sopping wet with aether, immersed in aether, or standing in an aether puddle has disadvantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Once affected by a spell, such as being hit by a targeted spell or making a saving throw against one, the aether turns into vapor, which rolls along the ground until it returns to the sea, leaving the creature dry or causing a puddle to vanish. Large bodies of aether, such as the sea itself, is essentially unaffected by a small amount of its aether evaporating.

Imbibing Aether

Occasionally, mages who seek power at any cost imbibe aether as a way to amplify the power of their spells. After drinking a cup or more of aether—willingly or not—a creature is afflicted by the first stage of aether poisoning, or advances it if already afflicted (see page 20).

However, the next spell of 3rd level or lower the creature casts is treated as though the spell slot expended was 1 level higher. For example, a *magic missile* spell cast using a 1st-level spell slot after its caster drank aether would result in a 2nd-level *magic missile* spell.

ELEMENTS AND AETHER

Aether amplifies the effects of elemental portals and elemental spells that strike it.

Air and Aether

When air skims across the aether's surface, it accelerates uncontrollably, creating powerful trade winds that let ships cross the Aetherial Expanse at great speed. Because of wind's importance to a sailor, permanent air portals are coveted and marked on sea charts. Otherwise, sailors must rely on unpredictable temporary portals to the Elemental Plane of Air, and the winds they blow across the Expanse.

Permanent air portals near islands can strip them of life, leaving deep, irreparable scars. The wind-ravaged sands of the Isle of Drakes' Eolicos Island are a testament to the devastation aether-amplified winds can bring to a lush and vibrant island.

Earth and Aether

Of the four elements, earth reacts the least with aether. Earth, soil, and sand sink beneath the aether until the tides wash them back onto shore. Stones sink as well, but stone catalyzes the formation of aetherium crystals, which float in aether. Slowly, over time, aetherium coats stones and buoys them to the surface.

Sometimes, enormous stones tumble from sky to sea through portals to the Elemental Plane of Earth, and sink with a deafening crash. Decades, even centuries later, massive aetherium formations cause new islands to rise to the surface of the Expanse. Like an iceberg floating in water, the surface of these islands is nothing compared to the enormous aetherium growths that keep them afloat.

Fire and Aether

The heat of flames instantly vaporizes aether, creating a vapor that floats above the surface of the sea for a few seconds as the heat dissipates, then rejoins the sea. Extreme heat, such as an erupting portal to the Elemental Plane of Fire, can kick this vapor high into the air, where it forms clouds and glows like a sunrise.

Permanent fire portals transform the sky for miles around, making it bright like a burning sunrise at all hours. The crater of Mount Spitfire on the Isle of Drakes' Calderé Island has one such portal.

Water and Aether

Water reacts strangely with the aether; though aether is generally cool to the touch, water and aether evaporate the instant they come into contact. They evaporate in equal measure, so a cup of aether and a cup of water would transform into steam and aether vapor, leaving no liquid behind.

This strange result allows an unusual water cycle to exist on some islands of the Expanse. Portals to the Elemental Plane of Water cause rain to fall upon an island, which runs off into the sea and evaporates, forms clouds, and brings rain several days later. Islands lucky enough to be home to permanent water portals have something akin to natural tropical weather patterns.

Aetherstorms

Portals to the Elemental Planes open on the Astral Plane due to the uncharted movements of the Elemental Planes themselves. Ayrissian and Karelagne mages have set up complicated orreries to track the planes' movements and predict the Aetherial Expanse's weather, though this field of planar study is still in its infancy.

Aetherstorms occur when a rare planar alignment causes portals to all four Elemental Planes to overlap. Magic explodes outward in a burst of roiling chaos, and the aether amplifies this energy in a feedback loop that creates a devastating storm of thundering clouds, fist-sized hailstones, raining fire, and quaking earth. These storms pick up speed and hurtle across the sea, leaving devastation in their wake until they roll off the edge of the Expanse or fade after hitting an island large enough to sever the feedback loop the aether provides.

AETHER POISONING

Prolonged time spent in the aether causes serious harm to living creatures. Though some creatures have adapted to this magic-suffused environment and become dreamlike—or nightmarish—examples of the Aetherial Expanse’s natural flora and fauna, most creatures suffer horribly after being exposed to aether.

Those afflicted by aether poisoning suffer a terrible fever, delirious compulsions, and ultimately, death. Seafarers of the Expanse have developed remedies to the first stage of aether poisoning (see “Aether Antidote” below), but later stages can only be cured through magical means.

MAGICAL AFFLICTION

Despite its name, aether poisoning is not a poison in the traditional sense, but rather, a magical affliction. Those who are resistant or immune to poison are still susceptible to the effects of aether poisoning.

POISONING STAGES

The early stages of aether poisoning set in after a creature has swallowed more than a single mouthful of aether or has spent a number of minutes equal to its Constitution score floating in the aether. A creature that’s fully immersed in the aether while not holding its breath swallows a mouthful of aether.

Stage 1: Aether Fever

The early stages of aether poisoning manifest suddenly, with fever, swimming vision, and heavy vomiting if the poisoning came from a creature swallowing too much aether. Some power-hungry mages drink aether to boost their arcane capabilities, but most often it arises when a sailor is hurled overboard in an aetherstorm or battle.

Effects. A creature afflicted by aether fever sleeps restlessly, and experiences physical discomfort. The creature takes 10 hours instead of 8 to complete a long rest.

Cure. Aether fever can be cured by casting a *lesser restoration* spell on the afflicted creature. It can also be cured with an aether antidote.

Development. If not cured within a number of hours equal to 2d12 + the afflicted creature’s Constitution score, the poisoning progresses to its next stage, as the ravaging aether reaches the creature’s brain. A creature that’s exposed to aether long enough to contract aether poisoning while already suffering its effects reduces the number of hours before the poisoning advances to the next stage by 1d12.

Stage 2: Aether Delirium

The fever of aether poisoning’s first stage intensifies as the raw magic in the afflicted creature’s body ravages its brain. Visual and auditory hallucinations are extremely common, and many sailors afflicted by aether delirium claim they can hear the sea calling to them, inviting them to return to its depths, where all their pain will disappear.

Effects. In addition to the effects of stage 1, the afflicted creature suffers from visual and auditory hallucinations at the GM’s discretion, beckoning it to walk

into the aether. It might see people from its past, or hear unfamiliar but alluring voices calling from the sea.

After witnessing these hallucinations, the creature must make a DC 8 Wisdom saving throw. On a successful save, the creature is immune to delirium hallucinations for 2d12 hours. On a failed save, the creature is compelled to dive into the nearest body of aether large enough to engulf it. It violently resists any creature that tries to stop it, but if prevented from reaching the sea for 1 hour, its compulsion subsides, and it is immune to delirium hallucinations for 2d12 hours. The creature has disadvantage on this saving throw if it can see the sea.

Cure. Aether delirium can only be cured by casting a *lesser restoration* spell on the afflicted creature. The creature must then succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or the spell has no effect.

Development. If the afflicted creature is fully immersed in aether for at least 1 minute, or it isn’t cured within a number of days equal to its Constitution score, the poisoning progresses to its final stage.

Stage 3: Aetheric Decay

In the final stage of aether poisoning, the afflicted creature’s blood turns to aether, and its organs and veins crystallize into aetherium. Its skin slowly becomes translucent, revealing strange crystalline constellations and organic nebulae within its rapidly mutating innards.

Effects. The afflicted creature is paralyzed until cured.

Cure. Aetheric decay can only be cured by casting *greater restoration* on the afflicted creature. The creature must then succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or the spell has no effect.

Development. If the afflicted creature isn’t cured within 24 hours of advancing to this stage, it dies, and its body hardens entirely into aetherium crystal.

CURING AETHER POISONING

Aether poisoning is one of the greatest dangers sailors face in the Aetherial Expanse. As this condition is not a poison in the traditional sense, typical antidotes and abilities that grant immunity to poisoning are ineffective against this magical affliction.

Powerful magic can heal the damage aether poisoning wreaks upon the body, but those who can work such magic are rare and their services expensive. Apothecaries, spurred by necessity, have worked tirelessly to create an herbal remedy.

Once aether poisoning has advanced past its initial stage, it can only be cured by magic. This is because the creature’s organs have been transformed by aether and now produce aether instead of blood and bile. However, while the poisoning is still in its first stage, an herbal antidote can be applied.

Aether Antidote

This antidote is an herbal decoction of kammik nuts and merblood petals. These ingredients grow wild on many islands of the Aetherial Expanse. A creature that drinks it is cured of aether fever.

Cost. 50 gp (but prone to price gouging)



Oceane the Bard relaxing at the Seven Stars Tavern

LIFE IN THE EXPANSE

Children play in the aetherial shallows of their home islands, where the spray tingles their skin and sparkles in the light. Some even swim in it, and their parents look on carefully, ready to shepherd them away after a few minutes, or after a wave tows them under, an herbal antidote for aether poisoning in hand.

From the shores of its many islands, the Aetherial Expanse is beautiful. But sailors of the Twilight Sea know its dangers well. Though a person can float and drift atop the aether's cloudy surface, falling from a ship's deck, being overtaken by a towering wave, or being caught in a ship's wake can be a death sentence, for beneath the waves lurk nightmarish creatures hungry for mortal flesh.

The tale of the Aetherial Expanse is one of beauty, danger, evil, and good. The choice for most is simple; a humble life in the beauteous islands is easy and safe. But for the ambitious heroes and villains of this region, humility and safety can't compare to the thrill of braving the Expanse's myriad dangers.

PERPETUAL TWILIGHT

There's no sun on the Astral Plane. The radiant power that gives life to plants and animals on the Material Plane is absent, and the sky is filled with perpetual twilight. Yet, the night is bright. Countless stars shimmer in the blue and purple sky, streaked with nebulous clouds of red and green, and the Expanse is constantly shrouded in glowing, ambient dim light. Generally, only settlements are brightly lit thanks to candles, lamps, or other illumination.

Plants love these stars. No plant life is native to the Astral Plane, but countless plants transplanted from Material Plane worlds, some intentionally, some accidentally, now thrive. The plants that rooted in the aether's desolate floating islands have adapted to their new environment.

The largest plants, like great tropical palms, grow massive, deep-green leaves, fueled less by the dim starlight than by the surrounding aetherial magic. This gives the great jungles of the sea, like the Isle of Drakes' Fosfior Island, an oversaturated, hyperrealistic feel.

Some plants drink deeply from the aether and grow beyond unnatural vibrancy, taking on a truly supernatural appearance. Their leaves grow long and tendrilous, swaying with eerie sentience on windless days. Their verdant leaves become variegated with aetherial blues, whites, and pinks, and develop fenestrations resembling glyphs in the mysterious Aetherian language (see the "Languages" section below).

SLEEP AND RESTS

Although the Expanse exists on the Astral Plane, it is a region where gravity and time behave much like on a Material Plane world. Scholars argue over its cause, with some suggesting it's a natural manifestation of large aggregations of matter, while others believe the aether's innate magical properties are a likely cause.

Sleeping and resting on the Astral Plane are no different than on the Material Plane. However, creatures who rise with the sun and sleep with the dark must adjust to the perpetual, star-dappled twilight of the astral sky. A long rest still lasts 8 hours, but generally people sleep for a few hours at a time, rising once or twice to perform light activities like reading or sketching, before falling asleep again.

Most creatures born on the Aetherial Expanse are accustomed to its perpetual twilight skies. Areas of the Expanse with strong, consistent elemental activity, like the Isle of Drakes, live in perpetual daylight because the aether vapor in the sky above glows brightly as it reacts with the power of the Elemental Planes. People who live here must become comfortable with sleeping even it's as bright as day.

MATERIAL PLANE FLORA AND FAUNA

Every single flesh-and-blood creature on the Aetherial Expanse is an invasive species from the Material Plane. The same can be said for green, leafy plants and edible crops.

In addition to plants and animals brought to this plane intentionally, rubbish from the Material Plane has tumbled into the Astral Plane since time immemorial. The Aetherial Expanse has been shaped by magical experiments gone awry, bad reactions between extraplanar storage containers like bags of holding and portable holes, and other arcane mishaps—such events have hurled everything from people to herbalists’ packs brimming with seeds into the Expanse, seeding it with life from the Material Plane.

Jungle islands populated by wild boars and other Material Plane flora and fauna are surprisingly common, making the Expanse feel like a dreamworld to planefarers; something simultaneously familiar and alien.

Aetherbeasts

Frightening wonderous creatures exist in the Aetherial Expanse that are descended from creatures who found their way into this magical realm and somehow adapted to survive within its poisonous aether waters. In many cases, these creatures mutated into vibrantly nightmarish versions thanks to their continued exposure to aether. Refer to **aetherbeasts*** on page 206 for a selection of aetherbeasts and rules for creating your own.

Comet Eels

Swarms of eels shoot through the color-streaked depths of aetherial reefs. Though beautiful and peaceful, these strange creatures pose an unintentional danger to ships passing through their territory. They travel at such speed that they appear to be comets shooting through the aether; when comet eels burst from their lairs, they travel with such haste and abandon that they can punch holes through a ship’s hull.

During gameplay, comet eels are typically encountered in groups as ship hazards (see page 182), although combat stats for **comet eels*** are also provided on page 236.

Elemental Beasts

On occasion, aetherial sailors find an elemental portal their craft can travel through, bringing them into the mysterious worlds of the Elemental Planes. There, these sailors are greeted by elemental spirits, intelligent beings with their own societies. Those rare sailors who cross the planes often form mutual bonds of respect with their fellow planefarers. Those elemental beings have a vaguely humanlike shape—though this bipedal form is cold comfort to most who see them for the first time. Instead of being familiar, this humanlike form is just close enough to be uncanny.

Most sailors are more familiar with the elemental spirits that guard the entrances to these portals. These spirits are more bestial in form and intelligence, and jealously guard the entrance to their worlds. Sailors know well to keep a distance from these portals unless they’re prepared to fight their way past these **elemental beasts*** (see page 238).

ASTRAL FOOD

The food eaten by settlers on the Aetherial Expanse is heavily influenced by the cuisine of their homelands of Ayris and Karel; with pirate settlements often eating a blend of the two.

Karelagne Victuals

The Karelagne Empire spans a vast swathe of land on its home world on the Material Plane, and its cuisine is as varied as the climates that produce it. Heavily spiced roasted meats and fish, often served with cereal grains in the form of loaves, cornbread, and flatbread, form the backbone of their diet. Seeded fruit like apples, along with stone fruit and pomegranates are commonly seen at mealtimes, and candied nuts are a popular sweet.

Ayrissian Cuisine

The Kingdom of Ayris trades extensively with other nations on its home world on the Material Plane, importing cuisines and ingredients from all over the world. Despite this, its culinary habits resist outside influence. An ironclad sense of culinary elitism pervades the Ayrissian spirit, thanks to a long history of master chefs and gastronomic artists “perfecting” Ayrissian cuisine.

The food of Ayris is often prepared only at home, and almost never seen as street food. In all but the humblest of households, meals with multiple discrete courses are the norm, often with small portions made by following a complex, time-honored recipe. Sautéed vegetables, seared meats, and thin, flaky pastries are common at any Ayrissian table worth dining at.

Aetherial Fare

Fish caught from the Aetherial Expanse are strange beasts. Tiny aetherbeasts (see page 206) lack any serious magical power, but any fish worth catching—equivalent to a tuna—fights hard to remain in the aether. The life of an aether fisher transforms one into a hardened monster-fighting veteran after only a few years at sea.

Once an aetherfish has been caught, it must be laboriously butchered and drained of the aether permeating its flesh. Improperly butchering an aetherfish is punishable by imprisonment, and most taverns have the ingredients for an aether antidote on hand in case of accidents (see page 20).

Ship’s Rations

Fine cuisine, even fresh cuisine, is a foreign concept aboard sailing ships. Journeys between major ports on the Expanse take weeks, sometimes even months if conditions are foul, forcing most sailors to subsist on a diet of salted, preserved meat and ship’s biscuits, a bland unleavened bread made from only water and flour.

Rum or grog (watered-down rum) is common aboard ships. Rum made from astral-grown sugar has a mild hallucinogenic effect. Regardless of whether one captains a pirate, naval, or merchant ship, the hallmark of a wise captain is a well-fed crew, for nothing instigates mutiny quicker than a crew lacking in grub or grog.

LANGUAGES

In addition to the languages found in the Fifth-Edition core rules, the Aetherial Expanse is home to another language: Aetherian. This magical language isn't taught or learned, it is felt. Aetherbeasts can understand it innately, though few possess the sapience to speak it or write it. Astral emergents and astral merfolk can speak it from birth. Sailors who spend their lives upon the sea begin to develop a knack for it as well, and some even say they can hear the sea itself speaking to them.

Qualities of Aetherian

The Aetherian language, when spoken, is strangely unmemorable. Though beautiful in the moment of its hearing, the sound of Aetherian speech flees from memory like a dream upon waking. When written, Aetherian glyphs compress a near-infinite amount of thought into a single character. Complete thought, with all the nuance that can't be communicated in mortal languages, finds its way into single, unique glyphs.

Understanding Aetherian

If your character has sailed upon the Aetherial Expanse for 10 years or more, you can replace one of your starting languages with Aetherian, but you can only understand it, not speak it, read it, or write it. If they've sailed for 30 years or more, they can speak, read, and write Aetherian as well.

Learning Aetherian

If you gain a feature that allows you to learn a new language, you can choose to understand Aetherian. If you understand Aetherian and gain the ability to learn another new language, you can gain the ability to speak, read, and write Aetherian as well.

PEOPLES

The Aetherial Expanse is populated by peoples from countless material, celestial, or even primordial planes. Creatures of nearly any heritage may be found within the Expanse. With a GM's blessing, players could choose to play characters originating from nearly anywhere. *Chapter 5 Character Creation* describes new rules to create custom ancestries using character traits found in chapter 6.

Among the multitudes that live in the Expanse, a few are strongly tied to the Silvery Seas.

Astral Titans

Though none are known to have survived, legends tell of an ancient civilization of planefaring storm giants who settled on the Astral Plane in ancient times. These people supposedly saw the creation of the Aetherial Expanse and mastered the power of aether. They became known as astral titans, but only scattered records of their mythic city of Astrium remain.

Astral Merfolk

These humanoids are spritely and capricious creatures immune to the toxic effects of aether. They swim along coastal shallows and make their homes in shipwrecks and undersea ruins. Astral merfolk are rumored to have a glorious, secluded civilization in the Constellation Isles. The isles are surrounded by deadly reefs no sailor save the legendary Sistren of the Constellation Isles can traverse.

Astral Merrow

Demons rarely incur upon the Astral Plane, but when they do, they ally with demon-touched astral merrow. Merrow are merfolk that have been afflicted by demonic powers, or by aether exposure while injured, and transformed into creatures of hatred and destruction that prey upon ships without remorse. Pirates occasionally ally with merrow, but these alliances rarely last after the pirates have defeated their quarry; then, the merrow become just another enemy.



Astral Merfolk



NAVIGATING THE EXPANSE

Merely getting from one island to another is an adventure in and of itself in the Aetherial Expanse—let alone seeking planar portals, navigating the Maelstrom, or seeking its astral boundaries.

CONSTELLATIONS

Four constellations shine at all times on the distant horizon. Sailors have learned to navigate by these four omnipresent, equidistant constellations. It's believed that, rather than being made of stars like the other constellations that decorate the heavens, these cardinal constellations are made of permanent portals to one of the Elemental Planes.

Standard compasses don't function on the Astral Plane. However, these constellations mark four cardinal directions, and sailors have learned to navigate by them. Some planefarers have even developed compasses attuned to the Elemental Planes which always point toward the constellation of air. Just as a magnet disrupts a compass, elemental disturbances can foul an astral compass.

In the northern (airward) direction is the Chariot, a diamond constellation of air toward which an astral compass always points. In the eastern (flameward) direction is the Empress, a ruby constellation of fire. In the southern (earthward) direction is the Hermit, an emerald constellation of earth. In the western (waterward) direction is the Hierophant, a sapphire constellation of water.

The ordinal directions are referred to as one direction by another (e.g. northeast in the Aetherial Expanse is “air by flame”).

The constellations are named after the four deities identified in the lost texts of the astral titans, which are now commonly worshiped in the Aetherial Expanse (see chapter 3).

NAVIGATION SKILL

Finding one's way by interpreting the ever-changing constellations is a new Intelligence-based skill granted to all characters exploring the Aetherial Expanse (see page 176).

Maggie Ivy

TRADE LANES

Though the Expanse's weather is unpredictable from day to day and island to island, sailors are aware of broad patterns that make it easy to sail in certain locations. Permanent portals to the Elemental Plane of Air have been charted across the Expanse and create strong gusts that allow even ships with green crews to move quickly and predictably across the sea. These wind-blessed seas are called wind routes, and the wind routes between major settlements are known as trade lanes. A trade lane is rich with prey for pirates. Any civilian sailing these lanes knows to buy a few cannons to defend themselves from or, better yet, to scare off predators.

Traveling a trade lane from one port of call to another can be an entire episodic arc of the story, since most ships need to stop at all of the ports along that lane to replenish grub, grog, and gear.

Travel Times

The map of the Aetherial Expanse has symbols on it marking known wind portals (a circle), their path (a dotted line), and a star. The star represents one travel leg; most wind routes are only one travel leg long, but the central, densely trafficked trade lane known as the Forked Passage takes multiple legs to navigate in its entirety.

As described in the "Travel Legs" on page 178, each travel leg takes about 1 week of time. The GM can always decide if a travel leg is especially harrowing, and aetherstorms and repairs can extend travel time. A journey of less than one travel leg still consumes the same resources as a full leg, but only takes a fraction of the time, at the GM's discretion.

OPEN AETHER

Far from the predictable winds of the trade lanes, open aether is home to pods of deadly aetherbeasts, strange elemental phenomena, and, worst of all, the risk of losing the wind and being caught in the doldrums, unable to continue until the winds bless your ship once more.

Ships seeking far-distant isles must venture out into open aether. Without wind routes to guide them, you must navigate on your own (see page 176). A ship beginning to stall in the doldrums may use their wayfinder to seek a portal from the Elemental Plane of Air to find new wind, though it may not be toward their destination (see "Portals" later in this section).

Uncharted Islands

Countless tiny rocks scatter the open aether. Most of these are too small to even bear plant life and are used only as a perch for aetherlions sunning themselves in the radiance of a nearby fire portal. But there are a few islands, far from known wind routes, that are large enough to serve as pirate hideaways, secret military bases, and religious hermitages. More than a few of these distant islands are home to shipwrecks laden with treasure and guarded by vengeful spirits or aetherflora.

THE MAELSTROM

The crackling clouds of the Maelstrom are eerily beautiful—from afar. This endless storm marks the heart of civilization in the Expanse, with the Monstera Cluster and Imperial Archipelago both near to the Maelstrom's edge. Navigating around the Maelstrom along the Forked Passage is easy business; both plentiful air portals and the storm's own rotation whip ships clockwise around it.

NAVIGATING THE STORM

You must have a death wish if you try and pass through the Maelstrom. Most ships that attempt it are never seen again. If however, the players wish to embark on this journey, consult Chapter 12 Naval Operations, in conjunction with the guidance provided below.

Controlling the Ship. Entering the Maelstrom requires a ship's helmsperson to make a DC 21 Intelligence (Navigation) check, and for each of a ship's officers to make DC 15 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks to keep the ship from flying apart due to the gale around them. These checks have disadvantage if the ship is running a skeleton crew (see page 198).

Count the number of successes and failures. The helmsperson's check result counts as two failures or two successes. If there are more failures than successes, the ship takes 5 (2d4) damage to its hull, the crew suffers 5 (2d4) casualties, and each player character takes 39 (6d12) lightning damage.

If there are more successes than failures, the ship and its crew take half damage, and the number of casualties are halved. If there are no failures, the ship and crew suffer no damage or casualties.

Navigating through the Maelstrom takes 5 travel legs, and each travel leg in this environment is only 1 day long. This check must be repeated at the start of each leg. Most ships are destroyed in the Maelstrom because they suffer too much damage by the point of no return.

Enchanted Ayrissian
Spell Book



PORTALS

Though they seem like miniscule points of light, the countless thousands of stars that shine in the Astral Plane surrounding the Expanse are actually far-distant portals to other planes. Most wink in and out of existence sporadically—or seasonally, on a mostly-predictable cosmic calendar—while others shine eternally in the sky.

Within the Expanse itself are hundreds of portals like this. Most naturally occurring planar portals are only wide enough for a single humanoid to walk through, but great piratical tales tell of massive gates to other planes opening and swallowing ships whole. These enormous phenomena are just as much weather as they are magic—a portal that opens beneath the surface of the aether manifests as a cataclysmic whirlpool, while one that opens in the sky showers debris, rainstorms, or hellfire down upon the sea.

These portals to other planes are sought by pirates, imperials, and merchants alike. Adventurers are enthralled by their secrets, imperial soldiers by the allure of their riches and resources, and merchants by the vastness of their untapped markets.

Sailing to Distant Planes

Portals ring out with magic, sending vibrations through the aether that a skilled wayfinder can sense. Likewise, skilled navigators can see the subtle shifts in the planar stars caused by these ripples. Reaching another plane has three steps:

Sensing a Portal. A character can make a DC 20 Intelligence (Navigation) check (see page 176) from anywhere on the Expanse to identify if a planar portal in a direction of their choosing is open or has opened within the last 24 hours. On a success, they learn one of the following:

- The approximate direction of the portal
- The nearest landmass to that portal
- If that portal is to an Elemental Plane or an Outer Plane like a realm of Evil or Good, or Law or Chaos.

If the check succeeds by 5 or more, the character learns all three pieces of information. If this check fails, the character can't make another check to sense a portal until they complete a long rest.

The GM determines how many travel legs it will take to reach that portal, if it's in open aether. A journey of 1 leg is a short story, while 5 legs is a whole campaign arc.

Pinpointing a Portal. When a character is within 1 travel leg of a portal, or on the same landmass as a portal, they can make a DC 20 Intelligence (Navigation) check, learning the precise location of a portal on a success.

Expanding a Portal (Optional). The GM determines the size of a portal when it's found, and some portals aren't large enough for a whole ship to pass through. A portal can be measured in creature sizes or ship sizes (see page 169). A portal can be expanded or contracted 1 creature size (e.g., from Medium to Large) if a character makes a successful DC 15 check with their spellcasting ability, and then spends 1 spell slot of any level. A portal can be expanded from creature sizes to a ship size of Small in the same way, but a spell slot of 3rd level or high-

er must be spent. Expanding a ship-sized portal functions the same way, and requires a 3rd level or higher spell slot.

Entering a Portal. Naturally occurring portals are unstable and changeable as the tides. They swirl and spiral and whip the aether into a frenzied froth. Unless there are unusual circumstances (like the portal being high in the air or whipping up a deadly storm of crystal shards), a creature can enter it without issue.

A ship entering a portal that isn't under any time pressure (such as being in a Pursuit, described in chapter 12) takes 1d4 hull damage per size of the portal (e.g., Small is 1d4, Medium is 2d4). This hull damage increases by 1d4 for every size the portal is smaller than the ship as the ship tries to force its way through.

If a ship moves through a portal while in a Pursuit, the portal is a Hazard (see page 182) with a Dodge DC, Avoidance Penalty, and Hit Penalty based on its size. Any additional environmental effects created by the portal can alter these numbers, at the GM's discretion.

Dodge DC: 11 plus 2 for each ship size above Small

Avoidance Penalty: -2 minus 1 for each ship size above Small

Hit Penalty: 2 damage times 2 for each ship size above Small, and 1d4 casualties for each ship size above Small.

Creating a Gate

Karelagne mages have devised ritual means of casting the *gate* spell such that it opens permanently so long as the ritual is maintained, and to sizes large enough for Gargantuan ships to pass through safely. These gates are placid compared to naturally occurring planar portals. They are not a hazard to ships unless the gate closes when a ship is midway through, which always results in a ship split down the middle.

WAYFINDING

A character with proficiency in the Navigation skill and who also has the Spellcasting trait can use their spellcasting ability score instead of Intelligence when making a check with the Navigation skill.

QUEST HOOK: PORTAL-POWERED

Uveli, a Karelagne technomage, hires the characters to bring her as close to a newly discovered portal to the Plane of Fire. She intends to harness its energy using a magitech contraption of her own design.

Unfortunately, since its discovery, the portal has grown significantly, releasing dangerous elementals upon a nearby island, and is now too large for Uveli's device.

The characters must stop the portal's growth and shrink it to a size that's small enough for Uveli's magitech device to safely tap into.

EDGES OF THE EXPANSE

Silvery froth seethes and hisses at the borders of the Aetherial Expanse, where silver aether cascades into the vast emptiness of the Astral Plane beyond. The countless billions of droplets of aether which spill into the void become vapor, sink, then gravitate naturally toward the bottom of the Expanse. Aether attracts aether.

The fate of a ship that foolishly travels to the edge is unknown. All that is known is that escaping the current is all but impossible once a ship is within 10 miles of the edge—known simply as the Point of No Return. Captain Amil Markhoff famously returned his ship, the *Legend*, from within a league of the Edge of the Expanse after chasing a falling star by unleashing a Gargantuan air *elemental mote* (see page 161) into his sails and pushing against the current for a full week before breaking back into safer seas.

Traversing the Astral Plane

Beyond the Aetherial Expanse is the infinite vastness of the Astral Plane, a place where gravity does not exist and time does not pass. The Aetherial Expanse is protected in a pocket of air and gravity that defies explanation. No one living on the Expanse knows what exists beyond, but the vast mysteries of the cosmos are a perfect blank canvas for GMs and players to create all sorts of strange origins for their monsters and characters. Maybe a ship capable of soaring through the Astral Plane itself will crash-land in the Expanse someday, bringing a party of otherworldly adventurers—or Astral raiders—to disrupt the pirates of the Aetherial Expanse?

BOTTOM OF THE EXPANSE?

The Aetherial Expanse is a vast cloud of aether floating through the star-speckled, zero-gravity environment of the Astral Plane. The aether has a “top” and a “bottom,” and a shifting, nebulous “edge.” No one has ever seen the bottom of the Aetherial Expanse, or what exists on the surface of its “bottom.” Some guess that there’s a whole other Expanse on the other side, but the question is akin to asking how many angels can dance on the head of a pin—in other words, impractical philosophy.

Rumors suggest that the ancient city of Astrium lies broken beneath the aether upon a great slab of rock. Intrepid explorers who’ve dove into the aetherial depths have come across a stony sea shelf. Scholars suggest this shelf is a constantly growing sheet of rock formed by a constellation of portals to the Elemental Plane of Earth. Stepping off this shelf might cause a creature to tumble into the infinity of the Astral Plane beyond—or, at the GM’s discretion, into the uncharted “flipside” of the Aetherial Expanse.

“Up, down, earthward, airward. These directions keep our minds tethered. If the body drifts without weight, our minds will soon follow.”

—Cerise Ling, Navigator of the INS Eclipse Crest





Chapter 2

GAZETTEER

“You speak of sunk costs and abandonment?! Where’s your financial sense? Even a lowly clerk can work the maths. The properly amortized costs of a standard galleon over but a quarter of its expected lifespan represent a minuscule fraction of the profit we will accrue from resources it will bring through the gate into Lavazza Harbor.

*To maximize the value of our discovery we **MUST** fund further exploration of the Aetherial Expanse. This investment is vital for us to maintain our competitive advantage, lest others extract or block access to its riches before we can do the same.*

Now is not the time for fear. Now is the time when we must lay our claims upon the isles of the Silvery Seas. Time is of the essence!”

*- Vesputia the Elder, Mercantile Vizier
Addressing the Royal Council of Money Changers
After Ayris and Karel agreed to a ceasefire*

The Aetherial Expanse is vast, but still only a small island of aether in the boundless infinity of the Astral Plane. Its boundaries are charted, and the aether tumbles like a misty waterfall into the swirling void of the Astral Plane, slowly expanding and contracting like the lungs of a titan. However, much remains to be discovered on the islands floating in the aether.

This stretch of sea is home to countless islands, some of which are stable, while others hurtle through the sea like comets.

This chapter provides a glimpse into major islands, ports, and places of interest on the Silvery Seas, and an overview of intriguing stories that can come to life in this magical place.



CONSTELLATION ISLES

The Constellation Isles are not friendly to outsiders, nor to anyone not at home on the aether sea. Solid ground is scarce, as most islands are made up of sand dunes that shrink and grow based on the tides. One day, an island may be a mile in diameter, only to have most of its shore washed away by the following morning.

Most residents of the Isles are as comfortable living beneath the waves as above them, and permanent, terrestrial structures are hard to find within the Isles. The Isles' harbors are not built for strangers, as these are the headquarters of the Sistren and a home base for the local astral merfolk. Finding these harbors without a guide requires a degree of luck found only in fate. If one were to settle their vessel at one of these harbors with no invitation, the locals would be more likely to respond with violence and bloodshed than patience and understanding.

The area surrounding the Isles is treacherous with many hidden dangers. Any character who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (History) check recalls rumors of sea monsters and corrupted merrow dwelling nearby. The seas are also teeming with aetherbeasts who may attack sea vessels on a whim, so it pays to come prepared for the dangers offered by the Isles.

The Constellation Isles are relatively peaceful, thanks to the Sistren and merfolk working to make it so. Most conflicts stem from tension between the predatory merrow and the other denizens of the islands, as they battle for dominion over the islands within the archipelago.

For more information on factions of the Constellation Isles, see page 68.

ARCHIPELAGO FEATURES

The Constellation Isles is an archipelago made up of a series of "living" islands with a diverse undersea ecosystem. Though it is not widely known, the islands are the calcified remains of ancient creatures called **feathered stars*** (see page 240). These stars were celestial guardians of a sea god, and they perished here while serving him. The entire Constellation Isles rests upon these feathered stars, and their bodies are the foundation for several permanent structures within the archipelago.

SOUL CAGES

The Soul Cages are a chain of barrier islands that protect the Constellation Isles. Waves splash in the narrows between natural dune barriers, beckoning vessels to navigate their labyrinthine passageways.

The coastal landforms are made up of sand from waves crashing over a ring of sunken ships that surrounds the archipelago. Hundreds of shipwrecks form a broken barrier below the surface of the astral waters between 15 to 30 miles from the coastline. They emerge at low tide to partially reveal an eerie ghost fleet.

At times, ancient masts loom out of the mists, some overgrown with vegetation. Others have become small islands, sprouting gnarled trees. Birds build nests on the outcroppings of some wrecks, while aetherbeasts live

within unnatural reefs fully colonized by shrimp, seaweed, sea anemones, and other sea creatures.

The area is considered difficult terrain for Medium and larger ships.

Barrier Navigation

Medium or larger ships are at risk of running afoul of the rocks and reefs of the Soul Cages. Passing through these channels to reach the Constellation Isles is difficult, requiring careful navigation and three successive Intelligence (Navigation) checks to avoid running aground or damaging the hull. DCs range from 15 in the calmest weather and can easily rise to 25 during an aether storm.

Thanks to the many ships that failed to make this journey, enterprising crews may be rewarded by searching the Soul Cages for abandoned ships for treasures lost in these barrier islands.

KESFORTH

The island of Kesforth and the neighboring isle of Keshlith are inhabited by the Sistren of the Constellation Isles, along with their humanoid charges. Keshlith houses many humanoid civilians who support the Sistren, and much of the faction's food production is kept to this more populous island.

Kesforth itself functions more as a holdfast for the Sistren. A final defensive position where they can be safe from outsiders—at least, that is the intention. The island has seen better days, as has the Sistren fortress built near the island's center. The fort, called the Castle of Stars by locals, is constructed from coral and enormous turtle shell scutes harvested from cosmic dragon turtles that were once known to patrol the aether around the islands. Its entrance is draped in embroidered silks, and its center hall has a large domed ceiling made of glass, to better see the stars above.

The fort would be an impressive sight, but it has crumbled and deteriorated, now more ruin than castle. Its once grand exterior is now a patchwork of hasty repairs with driftwood and salvaged ships.

The Sistren of the Constellation Isles maintain outposts all over the Aetherial Expanse, but their Kesforth base is what most Sistren consider home. It is at the heart of their faction, the first ever constructed to house the Sistren.

Kesforth Infrastructure

The island of Keshlith provides the Sistren with most of its food through farms, fishing, and brewing. This makes the island a frequent target of piracy from other Isles and is heavily guarded as a result. If Kesforth's harbors are heavily occupied, Sistren vessels are directed to anchor outside Keshlith, both to act as a deterrent from would-be thieves and to act as defenders should the island be attacked.

On Kesforth, the area around the Castle of Stars bustles with activity. Cobbled roads with coral bricks comprise streets between artisan shops, ship builders, and training areas for Sistren members. It is more city than island, and palisade walls made from old shipwrecks have been erected in places to offer defense to the civilians residing on Kesforth.



Life on Kesfirth

Kesfirth is led by the local faction leader of the Sistren, a half-merfolk woman in her fifties named Eldari (LG, half-merfolk female **knight**). She oversees both Sistren operations, as well as keeping order on Kesfirth and Keskith.

The islands are mostly known for being the home of the Sistren, but many civilians live here as well. Kesfirth welcomes non-merfolk humanoids, as most of their infrastructure is on land. Families of Sistren members live and work on the islands, and civilians respect the Sistren's ability to protect them from outside dangers.

There is a general distrust of outsiders from the local populace, but only to the extent of seeing them as a potential threat. Those bearing a *Sistren honorary sign** (see page 164) or who travel with a Sistren detail are welcomed as allies of the Isles with little hesitation.

LARMEATH

Larmeath and Larmeath Minor are the home islands of the astral merfolk within the Constellation Isles, though the islands themselves are inhabited only by animals. With the exception of a small harbor side only large enough to shore one Large ship at a time, the entirety of the merfolk civilization is beneath the aether. Here, the astral merfolk reside in a many-layered city, with buildings made of coral and with natural defenses augmented by artifice and enchantments. Larmeath is rumored to be home to the last astral merfolk who know of and protect the legendary artifact, the *Mermaid's Tears** (see page 162).

Their only defense against the local merrow is their ability to outsmart predators using technology and magic. Salvagers and tinkers, merfolk constantly innovate to stay ahead. Because they can change form, they also have scouts who walk on land.

Larmeath Landing

Neither Larmeath nor Larmeath Minor are inviting to outsiders. The merfolk remain neutral in all things related to politics of the region, and prefer to be left to their own devices. Despite this, they have a harbor designed for foreign vessels. Most of the time, these ships are crewed by a partial merfolk crew, be they emissaries from a different region of the Aetherial Expanse, or traders bringing luxury items such as spices and steel to the Isles.

Sistren members have been known to use Larmeath Landing to conduct diplomatic meetings, though this happens rarely. The factions tend to keep a respectful distance from one another, and usually meet in neutral aether rather than at either faction's home.

Captured vessels convicted of violent crimes within merfolk territory are also brought to the harbor. Partially to process and try the criminals on board, but also to strip the captured ships for useful wood and equipment.

Larmeath Law and Defenses

These Isles are surrounded by an underaether kelp forest that acts as a defensive barrier, and prevents Medium or larger vessels from approaching within a mile radius. The kelp forest has several defensive properties, ones that have been tended carefully throughout the generations of the merfolk living near the islands. These defenses apply to the entire kelp forest, as well the islands they surround, and include the following effects:

- Sensors created by divination spells can't appear inside the area.
- Creatures in the area can't be targeted by divination spells.
- Teleportation and planar travel spells cast, or whose destination is inside the area, automatically fail.
- Ships entering the kelp forest are grappled by the aetherial kelp and ripped apart over the course of 1d10 minutes (for a Small or Medium vessel; add 1d10 minutes for each size larger than Medium).

To further protect these islands from threats, a series of astral coral constructs were created by the mages of Larmeath to protect their home. Characters in Larmeath without merfolk escort are in danger of being attacked. Every 10 minutes, a patrolling **coral guardian*** passes. The party must make a special group DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check; if at least half of the characters fail this check, the construct spots the party and attacks. It fights until destroyed, and pursues until the characters have been out of its sight for 1 minute. The coral guardian can also be shut down by an astral merfolk speaking a specific command word. The command for "stop" are the words "white star" spoken in Aetherian.

Merfolk Matriarchy. The astral merfolk of Larmeath are neutral in all dealings with outsiders. They are ruled by a matriarchal triumvirate called a trident that is representative of senior, middle, and young ages. The roles oversee merfolk history, present day concerns, and future plans, respectively (see page 69).

SCAMALLATH

The aether between the Soul Cages and the Isles are overrun by **astral merrow***. These predatory creatures lurk beneath the surface of the astral sea, eager for their next meal. While they can survive off aetherbeasts, they crave more substantial fodder like the humanoids aboard ships, which they attack without a second thought. If any shred of compassion exists in the merrow prowling this aether, it is buried deep in their core.

Travel through Scamallath is treacherous. The larger the vessel, the more likely it attracts the deadliest of merrow shivers. Smaller vessels are left for lone merrow or smaller shivers. Scouts patrol the area and, unless spotted, return to the larger group after identifying the characters to organize an ambush.

MINOR ISLANDS

There are several island groups within the Constellation Isles, but few are large enough to have been mapped. Between the landmasses, small sand dunes form islands less than 30 feet in diameter.

Atakora and Diyan

The Atakora and Diyan islands are named after the parasitic plants growing on them: atakora grass and diyan moss. On Atakora, red grass covers the entirety of the landmass. The grass is dagger-sharp and whips around erratically when approached. On Diyan, black moss completely shrouds the island. The moss is a tar-like material, acidic to the touch. Traveling to either Atakora or Diyan is forbidden, as the chance of bringing the plants to an inhabited island is too great a risk.

A creature that comes within 5 feet of a tuft of atakora grass must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d4 slashing damage as the grass swipes at them. A creature that touches the grass takes 1d4 slashing damage.

Touching black diyan moss has the same effect as touching a **black pudding**, but the moss cannot move.

Centaris

Powerful geysers spew boiling aether from vents in the island's surface. **Aether elementals*** patrol the island and rest within these vents. The iridescent island should be admired from afar.

Equino Duo

As the most hospitable of the unclaimed islands, several humanoids have attempted to settle on Equino and Equino Minor. However, due to the proximity with Scamallath and the hostile merrow living there, no expedition to settle on the islands has been successful.

Nimbus Islands

Consisting of Nimbus Prime, Nimbus Major, and Nimbus Minor, the Nimbus Islands are aptly named as the aether around them gleams due to the glowing jellyfish congregated around them. These thousands of jellyfish (uses **violet fungus** statistics with a swim speed of 5 feet) are generally passive but climb aboard vessels that stray too close.

Vitates, Vinan, and Vianti

Also called the "Victory Islands," these isles were the first line of defense when the merfolk of Larmearth were attacked by an advancing army of merrow several hundred years ago. The islands were used to fortify the merfolk's position, but the battle's carnage left a lasting magical corruption that has left the islands inhospitable to land dwellers.

MOTHERPEARL

Motherpearl, an opalescent material that is as hard as steel but half the weight, is a crafting material unique to the Constellation Isles. This magical material comes from the inside of giant oysters that nest on the dormant bodies of **feathered stars*** (see page 240). Though motherpearl is rare outside the Constellation Isles, it is fairly plentiful within, leading it to be used commonly in weapons, armor, and jewelry, instantly marking its bearer as a member of the Sistren.

Motherpearl Armor. Medium or heavy armor made of motherpearl is half the weight of its steel counterpart. If the armor normally imposes disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks or has a Strength requirement, the motherpearl version of the armor doesn't. A piece of medium or heavy armor made from motherpearl is treated as an Uncommon magic item.

Motherpearl Weaponry. Weapons made from motherpearl are easier to wield in aether. Melee attack rolls using weapons made from motherpearl do not have disadvantage while their wielder is submerged in water or aether. Likewise, ranged weapon attacks that use motherpearl ammunition no longer automatically miss beyond the weapon's normal range and can be used just as they would on land.

SISTREN STAR SIGNS

All Sistren of the Constellation Isles carry a "sign" on their person to signify their allegiance. This sign is a necklace made from a motherpearl molded to look like a constellation of stars. Each member of the Sistren has a unique sign made from the material. This way, the necklace serves both as a symbol of membership to the Sistren and as a personal identifier should their body be found washed up on shore.

Allies of the Sistren are sometimes given a *Sistren honorary sign** (see page 165), to show that they are considered a friend of the faction. This sign, not exclusive to women, is also made from motherpearl and is always in the shape of the Constellation Isles.

"The sea is life, the sea is freedom. So long as the sistren draw breath, those who live 'pon the seas shall always be free! No law but the law of the aether, and the code of the Sistren!"

—Brightstar Commander Eldari



THE IMPERIAL ARCHIPELAGO

Smoke chokes the skies of the Imperial Archipelago. Dull silver clouds from aetherium refineries mingle with black ash from countless volcanoes secreting portals to the Plane of Fire. While the Maelstrom rages in the distance, dozens of imperial ships—both navy and civilian vessels alike—gather in the archipelago’s many harbors.

The pirates of the Isle of Drakes watch the Imperial Archipelago closely, for when the navy is away, the pirates shall raid—and then scatter when the fearsome warship *Thunderchild* appears on the horizon to test its deadly, experimental Wrath Cannon.

ISLES OF THE ARCHIPELAGO

The Imperial Archipelago is comprised of four main islands and a comet-tail of dozens of smaller landforms. Between these islands is the Sable Sea, a placid shelter from the wrath of the Maelstrom, which rages only a few leagues waterward. Ash rains down upon the Sable Sea from the countless volcanoes on the surrounding islands. It is this fertile, volatile landscape that Karelagne settlers and soldiers have chosen to make their home.

They have named the archipelago’s main islands:

- **Silver Plume Island**, for the silver smoke that billows from its cities’ aetherium refineries.
- **Flame Empress Island**, for its magnificent temple to the goddess Asteth and the Oracle within it.
- **Nuriel Reef Isle**, for the vast aetherium reefs that have wrecked countless ships trying to claim its wealth are said to be rife with booty.
- **Guardian Reef Isle**, for the knife-edged peaks that shelter the Sable Sea from the winds and tides of the Maelstrom.

SILVER PLUME ISLE: NEW TOURNELLE

At the end of the Kaylo Trade Lane—a well-traveled stretch of good winds provided by a portal to the Elemental Plane of Air near the Monstera Cluster—is the port city of New Tournelle. This ash-dusted, many-tiered city is known by sailors as the “Layer Cake” for its seemingly endless strata, climbing from the lower docks to the towering smokestacks of aetherium refineries at the top.

The Layer Cake rivals the Imperial home base of Port Majeure in both grandeur and corruption. Each week’s market day is akin to a festival, as local elites parade their fashions and shoot off fireworks in honor of the goddess Asteth, whose fury and fertility have brought both wealth and devastation to the archipelago since it was first settled.

New Tournelle is lightly populated for its size; it only accounts for a quarter of the Imperial Archipelago’s population. However, each weekend on market days, the city fills to bursting with farmers from the interior and traders from across the Aetherial Expanse.

Lord-Governor

The Viceroy’s Mansion is the winter abode of Viceroy Caturix the Silver-Handed (see page 75), commander of the Empire’s presence in the Aetherial Expanse. It is also the residence of the city’s lord-governor, Marcella Keine (LN, female human **noble**). Not just a loyal servant of the Empire, but a true believer in its unerring righteousness, Lord-Governor Keine has played right by Imperial dogma her entire life; she is a proud mother of seven, dutifully (if not happily) married to a commodore in the navy, and tithes ten percent of her salary to the Temple of Asteth each month. And yet, she is deeply unsatisfied with her life. If she could ever be convinced of the Karelagne Empire’s evil, her defiance would be legendary.

NURIEL REEF ISLE: LOSTMARC VILLAGE

Pirates’ reasons for sailing to the Imperial Archipelago are predictable. They either want to raid settlements on Flame Empress Isle, spend their plunder in New Tournelle on Silver Plume Island, or go hunting after legends of lost treasure in Nuriel Reef.

Lostmarc Village is a tiny coastal settlement known best for encouraging treasure hunters to scour the nearby reef, and providing them with lodging, provisions, and appraisal services on their hunts. Depending on who you ask, Lostmarc is either a godsend or a trick of the Hells. Some make their fortune playing Lostmarc’s games—but far, far more lose it all: wealth, family, and life.

QUEST HOOK: THE PURSER'S LAMENT

Venrus Vikan, the purser, appraiser, and moneylender of Lostmarc Village's inhabitants and visitors, and renowned as a stingy tightpurse, is called the "Devil of Lostmarc" by his detractors. But even he doesn't deserve for an actual devil of greed to burst into his vault, steal his gold, and abscond in secret onto a ship that just left for the reef. Vikan pleads with the characters to find the devil, learn if the crew of the ship he escaped on is complicit, and bring the perpetrators to justice.

QUEST HOOK: THE DRAGON'S HOARD

The characters go hunting in Nuriel Reef for the lost treasure of a ship called the *Amberwurm*. After following a series of cryptic clues that have entered Lostmarc Village's local legends through the reef's hazards, they find the ship—but not unguarded. In a cove within the reef is the lair of an aetherdragon named Kelagiodaz (see wyrmling, young, adult, or ancient **aetherdragon***). This dragon asserts his claim to the treasure of the reef—his home—supersedes any claim these treasure hunters have, and will defend it with force, but will not die for it.

USING A CREW'S REPUTATION

If your game uses the crew reputation rules found in chapter 13 (see page 199), there's a chance residents may have heard stories of the characters' exploits and thereby influence how they react on meeting them.

Individual NPCs will react according to their unique motivations, but you can make generalizations about how an average community member will react when they meet a crew based on their reputation.

As an example, communities aligned with the Karelagne Empire will likely be distrustful of crews with a chaotic reputation but more tolerable of ones with a lawful one. Conversely, strongly independent communities, such as many in the Drakes, will be wary of those with a strong lawful reputation, and communities associated with the Kingdom of Ayris may prefer neutrally aligned crews, those lacking strong inclinations to either law or chaos.

These biases can affect social interactions such as persuasion checks, intimidation checks, or haggling with a merchant over the price of goods. Giving advantage or disadvantage on checks is a great way to represent these effects, as is providing discounts or increasing prices for goods and services.





ISLE OF DRAKES

Twenty-four years ago, at the height of the War of the Invaders, the crew of the infamous pirate galleon the *Drake*, captained by Teruko the Drake herself, united settlements of deserters and civilians fleeing the war between Ayris and Karel. This cluster of stationary islands in the Aetherial Expanse's earthward reaches were dubbed the Isle of Drakes in honor of their new defender. Though the War of the Invaders ended in a ceasefire between Ayris and Karel ten years ago, the Isle of Drakes has matured into a haven for all Drakes—a word that has become synonymous with “pirate” in the Aetherial Expanse.

SQUABBLING CREWS OF DRAKES

The Isle of Drakes would be a paradise for pirates, if not for the fact that none of the pirate crews descended from the *Drake*'s original crew get along. Together, they're powerful enough to hold the pirate-hunting privateers and bounty hunters of Karel and Ayris at bay, but not organized enough to mount a serious resistance and establish a permanent pirate realm. Everyone knows the Drakes are living on borrowed time, but they seem unbothered by living in mortal peril from day to day. Drakes are rovers dedicated to enjoying a merry life, but a short one.

The Drakes' motto is “Enemies of All,” an ironic and mocking nod to the words read aloud before the hanging of pirates at Port Majeure during the height of the war.

Though many pirate crews call the Isles home, currently, the most infamous ones are:

- **The Blood Lilies.** An all-druid crew with a burning hatred for the Karelagne Empire are based out of a tree fortress on Maladell Island.
- **The Thorned Knights.** This pirate crew is known to ruthlessly pursue Ayrisian merchant ships.
- **The Children of Asteth.** Crewed by sailors fervently devoted to the goddess Asteth, this crew lays claim to Fort Angelos Island.

- **The Shipwreckers.** Housed on Fort Roost Island, this pirate crew is famous for using their speed and maneuverability to drive ships to wreck themselves on reefs before demanding surrender.

Each of these crews is further detailed in chapter 4, starting on page 60.

FROM MANY ISLES, ONE

Naming the Isle of Drakes was a chaotic and ramshackle thing, with residents of each island naming their island the “Isle of Drakes” and refusing to budge, until the entire cluster bore the same moniker. Now, each island has its own individual name, and the collective is called the Isle of Drakes.

The central island, Velstarrón, is a bustling port of call for merchant ship and pirate ship alike. Surrounding Velstarrón are three large islands and three small ones, all of which are pirate strongholds protected by mighty crews, hilltop forts with powerful cannons, and a veritable fleet of ships.

The islands of the Isle of Drakes have wildly different biomes and climates due to permanent portals to the Elemental Planes. Notably, though, all the isles lie under a brighter sky than the rest of the Aetherial Expanse, due to the glowing aether vapor that hangs above them.

VELSTARRÓN ISLAND

Velstarrón is the Isle of Drakes' beating heart. It's the most densely populated island of the cluster, thanks to the sprawling Port of Drakes. The island is also the most frequented by merchants, pirates, smugglers, sex workers, gamblers, and adventurers.

A few of the island's interesting locations are described in the following sections.

Arcane Acquisitions

Magic Item Shop

Arcane Acquisitions is run by the youthful pair of Min and Max (NG, elf **acolytes**). These identical twins of ambiguous gender are distinguished by unique scarring resembling a nebula all over their bodies, a result of severe aether poisoning as children.

The shop's interior is cozy, warm, and smells of strong incense. The magic items in stock float about the room in translucent, colored bubbles that only Min or Max, the bubbles' creators, can pop. The siblings buy any magic item brought their way, no questions asked. When selling, they prefer to deal in aetherium (see page 18) rather than gold. Patrons are encouraged to return regularly as their inventory changes on a weekly basis.

*“Don't worry, I trust our clientele.
If you say you found it washed a shore,
that must be what happened.”*

—Min to a prospective seller

Cross-Sea Sendings

Messaging Station

A building resembling a 10-foot-tall goose egg sits on the outskirts of Velstarrón Island. Inside is a milk-white room inhabited by three curious humanlike figures, each lacking facial features. Due to their smooth, egg-like heads, a number of pirates have tried to slay them over the years in hasty, drunken fear of the unknown, but the remarkable telekinetic powers the Egg-Heads wield have repulsed all their assailants over the years. If required, use **gynosphinx** statistics for the Egg-Heads.

The Egg-Heads, who appeared during the height of the war between Ayris and Karel, have since become a trusted, if eerie, part of the Drakes community. Their telepathic abilities make them highly sought after as messengers to any corner of the Aetherial Expanse, as long as thorough physical descriptions of the target and their social relationships—friends, family, crewmates—are provided. The Egg-Heads claim this information is required to ensure the accuracy of their communications.

Messages for Sending. The Egg-Heads will send a message of twenty-five words or fewer to anyone on the Astral Plane. They can hear perfectly well through the thin, gill-like slits on the sides of their heads. They rarely communicate with their customers, preferring to let signs do the talking, as follows:

- Pay 50 gp in advance.
- Describe the intended recipient in great detail, and three people they know well. Be specific. If possible, describe their location or name the ship they're on.
- Recite aloud a message of twenty-five words or less.
- Successful messaging is not guaranteed. Buyer beware.

If the message is sent successfully and the recipient responds, the Egg-Heads project the response directly into the sender's mind.

Drake Shipwright Union

Pirate Shipyard

Gold flows in and out of the Isle of Drakes in all its businesses, but nowhere does gold and aetherium trade hands in greater quantities than at the Drake Shipwright Union. As the only shipyard of size in the Isle of Drakes, anyone

in need of ship upgrades, repairs, or who are looking to commission a new build, comes to the Shipwright Union.

Buying Ships. New ships don't come cheap; most pirates acquire ships through theft or capture. A made-to-order ship costs the following:

- Rowboat or lifeboat: 50 gp
- Sloop: 10,000 gp
- Schooner: 20,000 gp
- Brigantine: 25,000 gp

Larger ships can't be ordered from this shipyard.

Upgrading Ships. The Shipwright Union is happy to install ship upgrades for 500 gp. At the GM's discretion, the union can also craft any ship upgrade listed in chapter 12 (see page 174). Union-crafted upgrades are installed for free, as a courtesy.

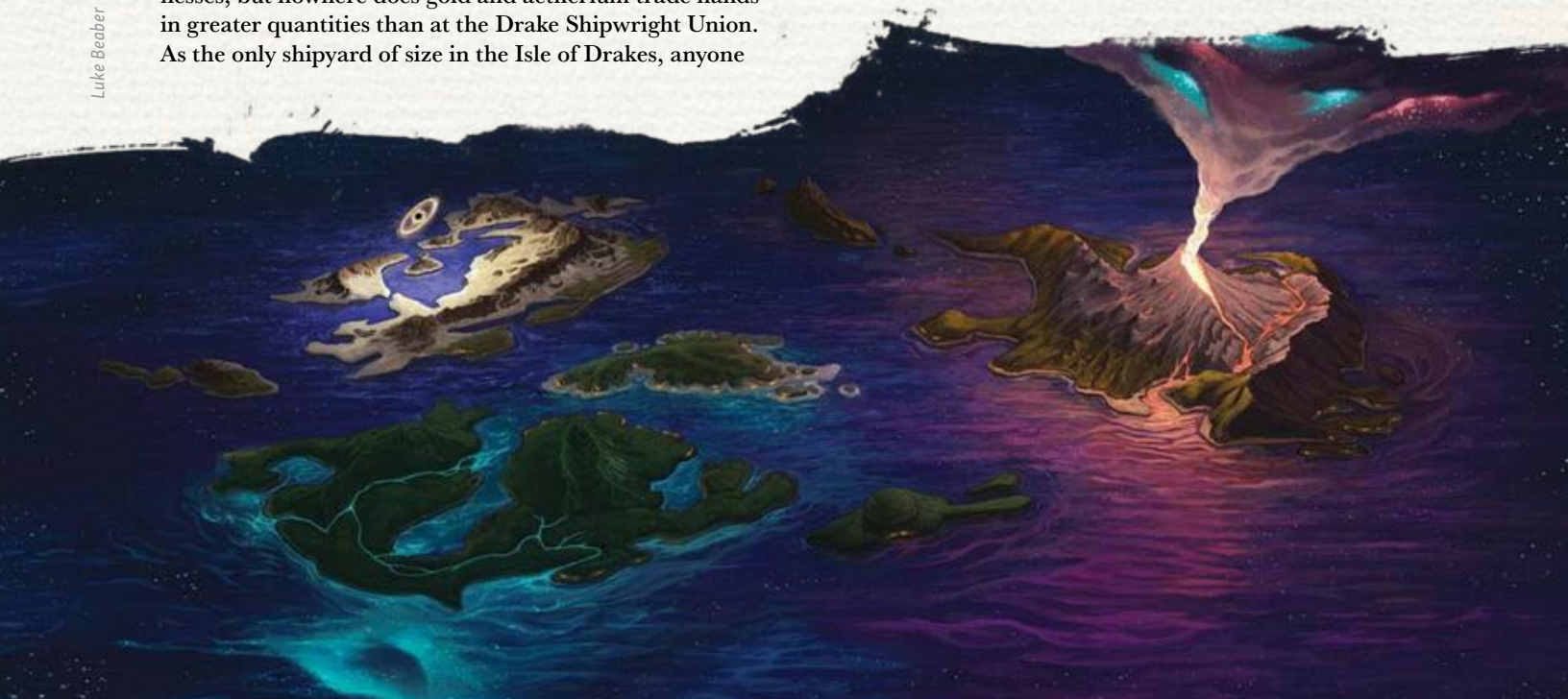
Repairing Ships. When in port, a ship can repair 1 hit point of hull damage per day by paying 50 gp per day to the Shipwright Union. Repairs can be rushed, but it costs 150 gp to repair 2 hit points per day.

QUEST HOOK: SCRAMBLED EGGS

Several individuals who had been in hiding have turned up dead after receiving a friendly telepathic message conveyed by the Egg-Heads. These messages were sent on behalf of a disguised Karelagne spy.

Drakes captains grow angry with the Egg-Heads' continued silence and refusal to reveal the sender of these messages. A prominent figure from Velstarrón hires the characters to determine the Egg-Heads' complicity in the matter and the origin of these messages.

Alternatively, the characters are hired by a Karelagne envoy to uncover information on several fugitives who are hiding in the Drakes. The characters must then deliver the information to the Karelagne spy without getting caught.



Remy's Doghouse

Magic Item Exchange

Lucky Remy is a unique figure among the Drakes. He stands nine feet tall, but with such a deep stoop he appears only seven feet tall. His skin is the color of aether and shimmers as if wet, like an aetherbeast's. His bipedal, humanoid frame is broad and muscular, with strange, squirming protrusions all over like the writhing tendrils of a sea anemone. A crown of four curling horns sprout from his temples, and from beneath his heavy brow are gleaming golden eyes. Completing Remy's chimeric appearance are a bull's snout in place of a nose, and webbed ears with a shape akin the leathery wings of a bat.

Despite his frightening looks, Remy's voice is light and airy with innocent joy. He regularly mangles piratical parlance in an eager attempt to blend in with the locals and reacts with outsized glee whenever anyone presents him with a new trinket, curio, or artifact to sell. When asked what he has in stock, he famously responds, "What do we got? Matey, what don't we got?"

Remy uses **minotaur** stats but his alignment is neutral, his Intelligence and Charisma scores are 14 (+2), he has Persuasion +4, and once a day he can use the poison breath weapon of a green dragon wyrmling.

Buying Items. Remy is apparently filthy rich, and he keeps his money in a place no pirate has yet found. He pays cash for any treasure worth 500 gp or less without blinking an eye, and offers to barter his own items for anything else.

Items for Barter. Remy has no interest in selling his items in exchange for gold. He only trades, selling magic items of the GM's choice, with their rarity dependent on the characters' level range:

- Level 1–4: Rare or lower (potions or consumables only)
- Level 5–9: Rare or lower (potions or consumables only), uncommon or lower (other items)
- Level 10–16: Rare or lower (any item)
- Level 17–20: Very rare or lower (any item)

Seven Stars Tavern

Beloved Pirate Tavern

The Seven Stars Tavern is possibly the best-loved establishment in the Aetherial Expanse. No other tavern in the Isle of Drakes, let alone Port Majeure or Windcrown, has quite the reputation for raucous debauchery as this beloved piratical watering hole. Nor does it have the diversity of trophies lining the walls or as colorful clientele. And, as tavern regular Oceane the Bard would glibly claim, no other establishment has music of such virtuosic quality as this grand old pub.

Anyone found on the Isle of Drakes can be found in this pub at some point. Merchants, sailors, laborers, and pirates come here to end their day, whereas bards, sex workers, cardsharps, and wanderers keen to hire seafaring adventurers come here to get down to business.

Ceilings. The ceilings are 15 feet high. The ceiling in the bar area is covered by an illusory map of the Aetherial Expanse.

Greensleeve's Floating Map. Created years ago by the legendary wizard pirate captain Greensleeves, this magical projection pulses and radiates an illusory living map of the Aetherial Expanse on the ceiling over the bar. The map constantly changes as it absorbs the conversations of tavern goers and incorporates their stories and information onto the map. Ship battles and pirate raids manifest on the map, displaying the stories of tavern goers, and perhaps clues to hidden Drake treasure!

Doors. Each door in the tavern belonged to a famed pirate captain's personal quarters aboard their ship. When an illustrious pirate captain retires, even if just temporarily, they donate the door to the Seven Stars Tavern. The doors rotate once per month, showcasing the elaborate and ornate doors of pirate captains feared throughout the Aetherial Expanse.

Lighting. Seven miniature stars slowly orbit the tavern, filling it with luscious warmth and bright light. The tavern earned its name from these seven orbiting stars.

Walls. The tavern's walls are made from the hulls of legendary pirate ships. Each time a famed pirate captain brings their ship to Velstarrón Island for repairs, they visit the Seven Stars Tavern to donate a piece of their ship's hull. The tavern keeper only accepts the hulls of pirates with a total reputation score of 20 or higher (see page 199).

Menu. The Seven Stars sells normal beer and grog, but its menu also includes several unique drinks:

Aether Stout (3 sp). A thimbleful of aether mixed in with ale. Astral emergents say it tastes great, but regular humanoids who try it wind up staggering to Spitz's Remedies not for a hangover cure, but for an aether antidote.

Moon Whiskey (7 sp). Finding good conditions to grow rye in the Aetherial Expanse is difficult, but whiskey made with local-grown grain has a silvery, shimmery hue, and locals say it tastes better than Material Plane stuff.

The Seven Stars (1 gp). A local novelty that takes a shot of black rum and mixes it with magic from a snap of the barkeep's fingers. Seven tiny, fizzing hard candies appear in the shot and twinkle and crackle as they go down.

Sunspot (1 gp). A pint of rum and juice with a flake of crystal from the Elemental Plane of Fire at the bottom. The drink glows and grows bubbling hot because of the crystal flake. This flake is small enough to swallow, but it burns in the mouth and going down the throat. Most pirates spit it out to avoid risking the crystal's painful journey through the body.

Noxious Tonic (50 gp). The natural follow-up to a night of aether stouts, this vile concoction is a half-pint of bitter mixed with an aether antidote. The beer didn't taste good to begin with, and the addition of medicine doesn't help matters.



OCEANE THE BARD

*Chaotic good, male human astral emergent **spy***

A beloved fixture of the Seven Stars Tavern since the end of the war between Karel and Ayris, Oceane has been singing and playing everything from the mandolin to the hurdy-gurdy as the famed tavern's most-requested performer. Little do the pirates there know, however, that Oceane is an undercover agent for the Kingdom of Ayris.

Charming and flamboyant, Oceane always draws attention to himself with music or by challenging others to games so he can disguise his true occupation. Part of his job is identifying pirates for the Ayrisian government to approach and hire as privateers with letters of marque—commission orders that grant pirates immunity from prosecution in Ayris, so long as they don't attack Ayrisian ships.

RED JACQUES

*Chaotic good, female red dragonborn **mage***

The proprietor of the Seven Stars Tavern is a wide-faced, broad-shouldered red dragonborn named Red Jacques (pronounced "Red Jack") or just "Jackie" to her friends (and only to her friends).

Red Jacques looks strong (and is strong; she's won the last ten arm wrestling tournaments), but her real strength lies in her ability to listen. She isn't much for giving advice, but she has an uncanny knack for knowing exactly who can help the most with her regulars' problems. Usually, the person to solve it is their captain, but it could just as easily be her favorite bard, Oceane, or Spitz the alchemist. The story goes that she once listened to a half-drunk pirate's problems for two hours in silence (save for the occasional prompting question), and then, at the end, said just five words: "Only you can solve it."

Red Jacques uses **mage** statistics, with the following changes:

- She has a Strength score of 18 (+4)
- Charisma is her spellcasting ability, and she has a Charisma score of 17 (+3)

Spitz's Remedies

Apothecary

The flyers posted on local notice boards for this shop read:

For all who ail from sickness, wounds, or the truest scourge of the Expanse, Aether Fever, you won't find your cure at the bottom of a mug of ale! No matter what your local barkeep says, the answer is found at an apothecary. To wit, the best apothecary on the Isle of Drakes is Spitz's! Aye, Spitz's Remedies will save you from everything from headaches to scurvy!

Master Archifelt Spitz is an aging, grandiloquent human apothecary who was exiled from Port Majeure. He then traveled to Windcrown, where not long after, he was exiled from Windcrown and banished from all Ayrisian territories. If anyone catches wind of his banishments and asks him about them, he refuses to elaborate any further and threatens to ban the curious customer from his shop.

Regardless of the reason for Spitz's banishment, his cures for aether fever, scurvy, infection, and the usual ailments work perfectly well, and he happily—giddily, even—sells them to anyone willing to pay.

Remedies for Sale. Apothecary Spitz sells the following items:

- *Potion of healing*: 50 gp
- *Potion of greater healing*: 250 gp
- *Potion of superior healing*: 1,000 gp
- Aether antidote (see page 20): 50 gp

A character who makes a successful DC 13 Charisma check can convince Spitz to spend 1 week acquiring the ingredients for and brewing an uncommon potion for the sum of 100 gp.

The same can be done for a rare potion, requiring a successful DC 18 Charisma check. It takes 1 month for Spitz to acquire the ingredients and brew the potion, and it costs 1,000 gp.

Steel for a Steal

Weapon Shop

Steel for a Steal is run by Gunnery Chief Hamelyn Ferralon (LE, male elf **bandit captain**), renowned for his love of high explosives and his wicked punishments toward thieves among his crew. He served aboard the *Burning Water*, but was expelled from the crew five years ago for excessive discipline.

Cannons in Stock. This shop sells all common ship weapons, as described in chapter 12 (see page 170).

Weapons in Stock. This shop sells the following weapons; these items are found in the Fifth-Edition core rules:

- Cutlasses (scimitars): 25 gp
- Gunpowder Musket: 300 gp
- Gunpowder Pistols: 150 gp
- Bullets, set of 20: 5 gp
- Gunpowder, Personal Flask: 50 gp

Steel for a Steal carries twenty of each of these weapons and replenishes its stock daily. Five other shops on Vel-starrón Island hold similar stock.

Magitech Firearms. Hamelyn occasionally stocks aetherium-powered firearms, though he will not advertise the fact, preferring to personally contact individuals he knows who are willing to pay exorbitant prices for these magical weapons. Characters can attempt a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check to get him to reveal this inventory. He normally charges 25% above the prices found in chapter 11 (see page 157).

FOSFIOR ISLAND

Fosfior is covered with lush, bioluminescent vegetation. The island positively teems with life, so much so that its plants have gained sentience from consuming aether, making them exceedingly dangerous (see **aether plants*** on page 220).

Those who dock at Fosfior Island usually do so seeking its claim to fame: the Wellspring. Stemming from a portal to the Elemental Plane of Water, the Wellspring nourishes Fosfior's countless plants, as well as those who choose to live on the island, with abundant fresh water.

The docks are simple affairs compared to the larger ports in the Expanse, but they are large enough to support a handful of ships, even ones as large as galleons. Larger vessels must anchor offshore and use shoreboats to come on land.

Fosfior Island Features

Outdoor areas of Fosfior Island have the following features unless otherwise noted.

Light. The jungle is dimly lit by various bioluminescent plants that cast a multicolored glow upon the rest of the island.

Casting Spells. Various plants in the jungle feed on aether. Anyone who casts a spell is in danger of attracting one. Whenever a creature casts a spell of 1st level or higher, it must roll a d20 + the level of the spell slot expended. If the result is 18 or higher, a **draining creeper*** is alerted to the caster.

VIPERVINES

Environmental Hazard

A common danger found on Fosfior Island are curtains of ropey vines dangling from the jungle canopy. Often as not, these plants are vipervines, a dangerous hazard to the unwary.

A vipervine has AC 10, 10 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. The vines are filled with a bright purple poison but look nearly identical to mundane jungle vines, requiring a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) to discern their nature.

Poisonous Effects. A creature that deals damage to a vipervine while within 5 feet of it must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, they take 10 (3d6) poison damage and become poisoned for 8 hours. On a success, they take half as much damage and are not poisoned.

Harvesting the Poison. Vipervine poison quickly loses its potency once it comes into contact with air, making it difficult to collect for later use. A character making a successful DC 18 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check with a poisoner's kit can obtain one vial of vipervine poison worth 200 gp, which inflicts the same poisonous effects described above.

Getting Past. These vines can be safely bypassed with any method that doesn't involve damaging the vines, whether that be gently moving them aside or crawling under them.



Fosfior Town

Remote Trade Town

Nearly all of Fosfior's inhabitants are clustered in Fosfior Town, built around the freshwater wellspring, a good mile inland of the Fosfior Docks. Travellers must navigate a winding trail running through the island's lush jungle to reach the town. The trails are dangerous because of the island's plant and animal life. Visitors are strongly encouraged to hire a guide at the docks to help avoid the most dangerous areas, though even with such assistance, travel can be perilous.

Despite these dangers, many who live in the Drakes are willing to make the journey to trade for the town's water.

Village Leader. The town is led by Areyca, a pragmatic elven mage. Despite being a paraplegic, she capably navigates the island thanks to a specially-fashioned enchanted wheelchair. She is well-liked by the town, and accurately directs its defenses thanks to the many archers Fosfior counts as residents.

Buildings. The settlement is built atop wooden platforms, encircling the Wellspring that rises in its center. Sharp-eyed guards (**island archers***) protect the town from dangerous creatures prowling below, and any raiders foolish enough to attempt an assault.

Locations. Places of interest include:

Town Hall. A simultaneously humble yet grand two-story wooden building where the Areyca works.

The Monkey's Paw Tavern. The local tavern is owned by Everett (LN, male dwarf **island archer***) who is a retired Karelagne soldier happy to now call the town his home.

The Treehouse Inn. This inn is built to resemble various Fosfior Island trees woven together. It's owned by Karabell (LN, female half-elf **commoner**), a sweet woman who loves to gossip.

The Jungle Markets. A semicircle of permanent shops and smaller stalls occupies much of the town's platform. Many honest Karelagne citizens have set up shop here allowing the market to provide a remarkably diverse offering of goods. Most standard adventuring gear items listed in the Fifth-Edition rules are sold in the market, though prices are often 25 percent higher because of the costs of shipping goods here.

The Wellspring. The focal point of the town is a hill, from which water flows outward into three rivers. The site is always guarded by at least 12 **island archers*** watching through arrows slits atop the walls of adjacent buildings. Water can be purchased here with a filled waterskin costing 1 gp, while a grub's worth of water costs 10 gp. Of course, the town may be willing to trade for food and goods in place of coin.



Fosfior Residents

Civilians loyal to the Karelagne Empire make up the majority of Fosfior's population. Because they are aware of the leverage the Wellspring has over visiting pirates, they largely do not fear pirates. Indeed, they rarely fear anyone or anything as they already thrive in a dangerous place. Fosfior's villagers believe themselves to be above harm.

Reputation. If asked, the civilians of Fosfior Town claim that they view all pirates the same way—outsiders over whom they have power due to their source of fresh water. However, reputation has more of an effect on the town's views of individual pirate crews than they'd care to admit.

Crews with lawful reputations enjoy a 20 percent discount on inns and supplies, while those who are chaotic have advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks while in town.

The Rivers

Three rivers wander towards the sea from the Wellspring: the Flamebound, the Airbound, and the Earthbound Rivers. Each flows roughly in the direction of its corresponding constellation, manifesting a hint of the appropriate element as it flows toward the sea. Characters succeeding on a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check can sense these subtle elemental effects.

Flamebound River. Faint flames dance across the surface of this river from time to time. The temperature of the water is also subtly warmer than the other rivers.

Airbound River. Wind rustles the area surrounding this river. The water from this river is aerated, giving it a refreshing fizzy quality.

Earthbound River. Fine silt shrouds this river's water, and its riverbed is a renewable source of clay.

OBTAINING WATER

Water is cheaper to obtain from the rivers but riskier. Water elementals are known to exit the Wellspring and go downstream. Furthermore, the various plants growing near the rivers affect the water in unpredictable ways. Unless a *purify food and water* spell is cast on river water, anyone who drinks it must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, they must roll a d6 to determine what side effect they get from the River Water Side Effects table.

RIVER WATER SIDE EFFECTS

D6	SIDE EFFECT
1	The drinker gains 1 level of exhaustion.
2	The drinker gains 1 level of aether poisoning.
3	The drinker consumes small amounts of vipervine poison and must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, they take 5 (2d4) poison damage and become poisoned for 1 hour. On a success, they take half damage and are not poisoned.
4	The drinker consumes traces of starrydew * and is affected by a random effect from its Jungle Magic trait.
5	The drinker consumes a small dose of dreamdrinker berry juice and must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be incapacitated for 1 minute as they are assailed by pleasant hallucinations.
6	The water is tainted from by rare minerals. The drinker must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour.

AREYCA

Lawful neutral, female wood elf town leader

Areyca is a slender, paraplegic wood elf who sits with an authoritative and patient posture in an elaborately-carved enchanted wooden wheelchair. She is a levelheaded and diplomatic woman who will cordially speak with most those seeking to trade with the town. She is confident in her abilities and that of the well-trained militia to deal with troublesome guests. She uses her affinity for rift magic to assist town deliveries from the docks.

A statblock for **Areyca*** can be found in chapter 15.

QUEST HOOK: POLLUTED DREAMS

After being driven away by the villages of Fosfior Town, the pirate ship *Wyvern's Fang* attempted to make shore further down the coast. After landfall, the crew and ship were destroyed by **aether plants***, releasing barrels of distilled nightmares into the nearest river. This mysterious liquid blight corrupts all plant life it touches, leading to attacks on Fosfior Town. The characters are asked to locate and eliminate the source of this pollution.

CALDERÉ ISLAND

Calderé is visible from anywhere on the Isle of Drakes, thanks to the smoldering volcano that towers over it. Mount Spitfire's crater is home to a permanent portal to the Elemental Plane of Fire, which constantly spews forth glowing aether vapor that hangs above the islands, giving the Isle of Drakes' sky a golden, sunset glow.

Despite Mount Spitfire's volatile presence, this island houses a city of people. Recently, island life has become difficult due to elemental creatures emerging from the volcano's core. This has also led to rising tensions among the civilians as they struggle to deal with the situation.

Island Docks

Rows of stone piers welcome ships docking at this island. Even the largest vessels can normally find a place to dock. Wagons for hire can make the journey to Calderé City easier, though walking the well-tended rock road takes only a few hours.

Volcanic Incursions

The rate at which elementals spew from the volcano can vary, from once a month to multiple times a day. These events often result in elemental creatures landing across the island. These creatures typically manifest confused and angry, lashing out at anyone they encounter. Suggested creatures are shown on the Volcanic Incursion table.

VOLCANIC INCURSION

D6	ENCOUNTER
1	A burst of fire flares up from a puddle of lava, revealing itself to be a fire elemental .
2	Smoke and ash coalesce into an ashen air elemental *
3	A molten earth elemental * crashes into the ground, forming a small crater before it rights itself.
4	Lava splatters and forms into two lava serpents *
5	Chunks of volcanic glass form themselves into three obsidian gargoyles .
6	Molten rock coalesces into two hellhounds that are elementals instead of fiends and that understand but cannot speak Ignan and Terran instead of Infernal.

Calderé City

Industrious Town

Calderé City is unmistakable. Buildings hewn from volcanic stone and constructed of brick and mortar jut from the ground like stalagmites. Smoke, black from burning wood, rises into the sky, quickly overshadowed by the volcano's clouds.

Typically, the city's citizens are generous to their neighbors but mistrustful of outsiders. The unpredictable nature of volcanic incursions has made residents nervous. Firearms, both gunpowder and aetherium-based, are more common here than in most locations across the Expanse.

Reputation. Reputation does not matter in Calderé City, simply because its civilians do not generally focus their attention outside of the city. However, crews with at

least 1 evil reputation have advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks against civilians here, as gaining the respect of Calderé City's people is easier if they are ruthless and blunt. Even so, Calderé City only cares for its own, and anyone who threatens its well-being earns its ire.

City Government. Mayor Bronson (LG, male dwarf **hardened islander***) spends most of his time within the sturdy walls of his city hall. Kind-hearted, he wants the best for his city, but does not have the resources or means to effectively deal with its problems. Constantly occupied with various tasks, he also doesn't have the time to personally address issues brought up by individuals within the community.

Local Militia. When volcanic incursion rates are high, a local militia gathers, led by Vik (CN, male halfling, see page 268), a generally good and charismatic leader. He is frustrated by the lack of action he's seen to deal with the elemental incursions, often organizing groups of 2d4 **militia members*** to respond to inevitable elemental attacks.

Locations. Places of interest in Calderé City include:

City Hall. A large, utilitarian stone building in the center of town. This building houses the city's administration along with a courthouse that deals with major disputes.

The Powder Keg Inn. Though not the city's only inn, the Powder Keg is its most popular. This is largely due to its pleasant atmosphere, the charming personality of its owner Vik, and that it doubles as the headquarters of the city's militia he oversees.

Sparrow's Flight. Sparrow's Flight is a gambling den, with no pretense as to its purpose. Countless sailors enjoy games of chance while singing songs and chugging ale at the Sparrow. The most popular game here is Flotilla (see page 274). Its owner is Zheng Yang Shi (N, female human, stats on page 271). She was once a notorious pirate and member of the legendary *Drake's* crew, but is content to live out her days playing cards in her establishment.

The Steel Barrel. Run by Kellis (NG, nonbinary half-orc **hardened islander***), a gunsmith whose reputation extends throughout the isles, the Steel Barrel is the city's best-regarded gun smithy. Kellis pioneered the art of fashioning fire crystals for aether pistols, and they love to talk about guns and little else.

Kellis regularly stocks a few gunpowder firearms, and at least one aether pistol, along with a few replacement crystals as well. There is a 25 percent chance they have a fire replacement crystal in stock which adds 1d6 fire damage to the normal damage of the magitech firearm it's loaded into.

The Meat and Greet. The local butcher shop, the Meat and Greet is where livestock from the Ashfields is slaughtered and sold. It is run by Diligence (NG, female tiefling **hardened islander***), a gruff and hardworking woman of few words. Various cuts of meat are sold here, with the equivalent of 1 grub's worth going for 10 gp. Though more expensive than other grub, the scarcity of fresh meat makes it a noteworthy bargaining chip when trading.

ZHENG YANG SHI

Neutral, female human retired captain

Zheng Yang Shi is the elderly owner of the Sparrow's Flight gambling den on Calderé Island. Her wide, wrinkled countenance throws off those foolish enough to see her as just a weary old woman, for her shining brown eyes still see as sharply as they did when she raided the seas with abandon.

Nevertheless, Zheng is now peacefully in retirement. Her patrons fill her gambling hall with gossip from all over the Expanse, and she listens intently— but only with an audience's ear. Her fighting days are behind her, and all she wants to do is gamble until the reaper claims her. However, as an original member of the *Drake's* crew, her knowledge and prowess in combat could change everything if convinced to act.

She doesn't care for cheaters, and isn't afraid to threaten them with the barrel of her walking stick rifle.

A stat block for **Zheng Yang Shi*** can be found in chapter 15.

The Ashfields

Sprawling fields of various crops and pens of livestock cover the countryside outside of Calderé City. Sporadic scorch marks and craters mar otherwise meticulously cared for fields. Stone farmhouses, barns and silos accompany these pastures.

The majority of food enjoyed in Calderé City is farmed here. Its fertile volcanic soil provides rich harvests. However, the frequent eruptions means that the crops are also in danger of being set alight, and the livestock being killed by elementals.

Mount Spitfire

A path leads from Calderé City and up to Mount Spitfire. However, getting to the volcano is not the dangerous part. The contents of the volcano consist of magma from the portal to the Elemental Plane of Fire mixed with aether. This combination means that Mount Spitfire and its surroundings are not only incredibly hot but also highly toxic. Though most of the poison from the heated aether rises into the air as clouds, prolonged exposure to the air around the volcano can have detrimental effects to one's health.

To the people who live on the island, the volcano's constant eruptions are a part of everyday life. Unbeknownst to Calderé Island, the mining operation in Mount Spitfire has increased the frequency of its volcanic incursions. Extracting fire crystals inevitably causes structural damage to the Elemental Plane of Fire, making it more unstable in areas. As fire crystal mining increases, so does the chance of more intelligent elementals, such as **efreeti**, emerging from the portal to enact justice upon the city.

General Features. Mount Spitfire has the following features:

- **Light.** The heated aether from the volcano illuminates the air above the volcano with bright light.
- **High Temperatures.** A character without resistance or immunity to fire and without drinkable water must make a DC 5 Constitution saving throw at the end of

every hour they spend on the volcano or gain 1 level of exhaustion. This DC increases by 1 each hour. A character wearing heavy or medium armor has disadvantage on these saving throws.

- **Poisonous Air.** Characters without resistance or immunity to poison take 2 (1d4) poison damage at the end of every hour they spend on the volcano.
- **Volcanic Incursions.** The volcano is no stranger to elementals such as **fire elementals** and **lava serpents*** emerging.

Fire Crystal Mining. Despite the risks of the volcano, the rewards are high enough that a fire crystal mining operation is stationed here. Though fire crystals are known to naturally emerge, most of the operation's mining occurs through the elemental portal.

These expeditions mean that fire crystal mining is highly dangerous, not only because of the hazardous nature of the volcano, but also because of the perils of the Elemental Plane of Fire. While fire crystal miner salaries are substantial, the work comes with great risk both from the increasingly inhospitable environment and the possibility of encountering elemental creatures during the work.

Fort Ambition

At the edge of the aether, jagged rocks rise from the ground like stalagmites, forming what appears to be a fortress of stone. Cannons dot the surrounding cliffs, each one pointed out to sea. This crumbling fortress once belonged to the Shipwreckers before they claimed Fort Roost Isle. The fortification now lies mostly empty save for waste and debris left behind by its previous occupants.

EOLICOS ISLAND

Eolicos is a desolate, windswept desert. On occasion, temporary portals to the Elemental Plane of Water open, allowing small oases to form and support life before they close; then the biting winds that scour the island tear them away. A permanent portal to the Elemental Plane of Air hangs ominously in the sky above this island, eternally threatening to wipe the slate clean and bury anything built atop its shifting sands and craggy stones.

SENTINEL ISLANDS

Protecting Velstarrón Island are three small islands home to fortresses commanded by one of the powerful pirate crews descended from the *Drake's* crew. These fortresses have staved off invasion with only the threat of raining down cannon fire on any ship that flies a hostile flag.

Over the years, the forts have traded hands many times from crew to crew. Holding a fortress grants a pirate crew immense power, but it takes a great deal of wealth, trust, and coordination to both hold a fortress and raid the seas—and pirates have been bored to tears by holding a fort without raiding from time to time. A gutsy pirate crew could seize command of a fort, giving them a base of operations and a home for friends or crewmates who aren't sailing with them.

Fort Angelos Island

Held by the Children of Asteth and its *Avenging Angel* crew, Fort Angelos is an imposing gothic citadel that glowers down at any would-be invader. The fortification was built by an eccentric Ayrissian trading magnate several years before the onset of the aetherial wars with Karel. Local legends suggest the original builder fashioned a hidden treasure vault beneath the fort, which may still hold a cursed treasure.

NEW CREWS

The *Avenging Angels*, which controls Fort Angelos Island, has been left undefined, and is just one of many who call the Isle of Drakes their home. Appendix D includes tables that may be helpful to define the ship, its officers, and crew. To help make the crew memorable for your players, consider the following:

- **Motivation.** What drives the crew? Are they out for glory, fortune, or revenge? Perhaps they have a greater cause they pursue, or maybe they're desperate and just looking to survive?
- **Experience.** Is the crew filled with veteran buccaneers well used to the trails of sailing on the Silvery Seas, or are the new sailors on their first commission in the Aetherial Expanse?
- **Morale.** Is the crew happy with their captain and officers or is mutiny brewing?
- **Home Port.** Where does the crew stay when not at sea?
- **Outlook.** What are their views on the Karelagne Empire, the Kingdom of Ayriss, and the rival pirate crews of the Drakes?
- **Something Unique.** Can you identify something wondrous or memorable aspect about the ship, an unusual crewmember, a strange enchantment, or perhaps a dark secret or dangerous curse?

Fort Roost Island

Tall and slender, Fort Roost was built into a spire of stone that protrudes sharply from the island, giving it a clear vantage of any ship approaching the Isle of Drakes. Recently, the Shipwreckers (see page 63) claimed the fortress as payment for an outstanding gambling debt owed to them by Captain Dargoth Pentakos who hasn't been seen in the Drakes for over six months. Dargoth's ship, the *Proclaimer*, is rumored to have been sunk by an Ayrissian privateer a few days' journey fireward of Port Kaylo.

"Best seat in the Expanse, the Roost. I can chart out any ship's demise from here. Shall I send them to the Drake Spine rocks, or to the aethersharks?"

—Captain Kriegler of the Shipwreckers

Maladell Island

The byproduct of an herbalist's *bag of holding* rupturing many years ago, Maladell Island is a small island covered in plants from the Material Plane that have since adapted to living in the Astral Plane's otherworldly environment. These plants are carefully tended to by the Blood Lilies, a pirate crew composed entirely of druids (see page 61).

The druids of Maladell Island have shaped a massive tree into a fortress using magic over the course of decades. This fortress is occupied by the ranking members of *Aesphodel's* crew, with unranked crew living in small wooden cabins near the docks.

Given its relatively small landmass, Maladell has no civilian population. Furthermore, were anyone to want to live on the island for a prolonged period, the *Aesphodel's* crew would only allow them if they joined their crew.

MALADELL DOCKS

The island's docks comprise a simple series of wooden piers jutting out into the aether. The Blood Lilies' ship, the *Aesphodel*, is normally docked here. It is a large galleon of neither Karelagne nor Ayrissian make. Instead, it is constructed out of a series of closely knit together trees and roots.

Several *Aesphodel* crewmembers keep watch from the nearby commune and approach any ships who dock to discern their intentions. Many of the unranked crewmembers are **bandits** who can cast the *druidcraft* cantrip.

MALADELL COMMUNE

Druid Settlement

Beside the docks, a large portion of the island is dedicated to a ring of simple wooden cabins, all facing inward toward a fire pit. The fire pit itself is surrounded by benches formed from still-living wood.

Many unranked crew of the *Aesphodel* live in the wooden buildings near the dock, while ranking members reside in their treetop haven: Fort Aesphodel. The crew of the *Aesphodel* aren't greedy pirates and keep few material possessions. These houses are mostly for rest and privacy when ashore. Furthermore, they share what belongings they do have freely among themselves.

QUEST HOOK: VENGEFUL GHOSTS

Previously, Maladell Island was the base of the *Whisperlight Cutlasses*, a violent pirate crew who worshipped Qoz before their demise. The *Cutlasses* did not relinquish their control willingly, and some of the pirates still haunt the roots of Fort Aesphodel as **specters**, draining the life from the tree and protecting a buried shrine to the feathered star god.

FORT AESPHODEL

Tree-Fortress

A gigantic tree at the island's heart towers over the surrounding greenery. A passage in the roots allows access to the tree's interior.

The Blood Lilies didn't always control Maladell Island: they took it from a previous pirate crew who resided there. Once the island became theirs, they tore down the stone fortress that stood there, and replaced it with a massive tree they magically grew together.

Residents. The hollow portions of this tree can serve as a secure fort. Despite this, the Blood Lilies prefer their simple homes and do not actively use the fort except as shelter from particularly extreme elemental phenomena. The exception is Quoiya, a dryad crewmember who is no longer bound to the tree but still finds comfort within.

Desperate Measures. The fort does not have cannons or any other weaponry conventional to such a structure. However, as a last resort, the fort can be activated. Activating the fort's magic requires Quoiya, or another druid that she's trained, to command the tree by touching it as an action. This allows her to see perfectly within 1 mile of the fortress. When activated, the tree bends to face a target of Quoiya's choice, which must be a Huge or larger creature, or a Medium or larger ship. The tree then emits a thunderous beam of green energy from its crown. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 55 (10d10) acid damage. If the target is a ship, it automatically takes 10 damage to its hull. Once used in this way, Fort Aesphodel can't be activated again for 1 week.

MALADELL GARDEN

Druid Managed Farm

Beyond the commune and the fort, the island comprises various fruit trees and vegetable patches. Were Maladell Island larger, perhaps this would be an unruly forest, but the relative smallness of the space means the gardens stay quaint and manageable.

Variants of fruits and vegetables familiar to those hailing from material planes grow here in some form of orderly chaos. While the plants aren't arranged neatly, there is clearly a method of organization present to which outsiders are not privy.

Natural Silos. Fresh water is stored throughout the garden in aeobab trees, special trees with wide, hollow trunks. The Blood Lilies access these stores without hurting the trees by use of the *speak with plants* spell.

Free Fruit. Characters can take fruit in order to sate their hunger. However, if the characters take more than they need or wish to bring food with them off the island, the *Aesphodel* politely request that they trade something in return. Hard work in the gardens is a welcome and accepted payment.

Quoiya, Aesphodel's
Helmsperson





KAYLO

Kaylo is a small island that was uninhabited until an Ayrissian trading company founded Port Kaylo between two of the island's large hills. Now, it's a bustling hub of seafaring trade and commerce thanks to its location along two major wind routes. On one hill stands Fort Bantor, endlessly watching over Port Kaylo, the other hill holds a rich vein of aetherium crystal rumored to traverse the entire island.

The island once belonged to the Kingdom of Ayris. However, three days after Ayris and the Karelagne Empire signed the peace treaty ending their long war, a Karelagne privateer named Manta "Seabear" Gunthorpe and her crew brutally besieged Port Kaylo and executed the Ayrissian governor, seizing the island in the name of the Karelagne Empire. This debacle was blamed on slow communications relaying that the two nations were at peace. Adding insult to injury, the Karelagne Empire awarded Gunthorpe governorship of the island and sent a mere 500 gp along with the butchered Ayrissian governor's body to the Kingdom of Ayris as restitution.

The scars of the siege linger on the island to this day, as it is slowly restored to its former glory as a vibrant seafaring hub of commerce. Although the Karelagne Empire rules over Kaylo, a sizable number of Ayrissian dissidents still reside here.

GOVERNMENT

Kaylo is under the Karelagne Empire's control and the corrupt rule of Governor Manta "Seabear" Gunthorpe (see "Fort Bantor" later in this section). She is a boisterous, broad, and towering astral emergent human cursed with lycanthropy since birth—since before birth, if you hear Manta say it; the humanoid corpse that Manta's astral spirit joined with was already afflicted with werebear lycanthropy. Governor Gunthorpe is known for her crude jokes and ruthless leadership style, brutalizing those who disobey with her massive werebear claws.

PORT KAYLO LOCATIONS

Several locations may draw a sailor's interest when visiting Port Kaylo.

Ailing Grog's Tavern

Welcoming Tavern

Ailing Grog (CG, male astral emergent human **commoner**) is an elderly and spirited retired pirate with two hooks of pure aetherium crystal replacing missing hands. He owns this establishment and sells all food, drink, and lodging services found in the "Equipment" chapter of the Fifth-Edition core rules. Twenty years ago, while out on sail, the ship's surgeon informed Grog that he had only a few months to live after using his aetherium crystal hooks for years to mix his grog. Thus, "Ailing Grog," was born, and he took it as a sign to open up an establishment where he'd work until his dying day. Grog yet lives, and is a valuable source of information for anyone wanting to learn more about Port Kaylo.

Madam Isabeau's

Gambling Den

Madame Isabeau's is a remarkably clean faux dive bar. The establishment is comprised of a large, circular room with a circular bar in the center serving drinks of all sorts. There are six tables of games: flotilla, dirtnaps and bonesacks, liar's dice (see appendix A), blackjack, and poker. Additional tables and cushioned chairs line the circular wall, and a balcony runs the entire perimeter of the room, overlooking everything.

The bar stays busy serving a wide range of clientele. Its owner Doddie (N, female human **commoner**) enjoys small talk and has an ear to the latest gossip running through the port. If suitably tipped, she's willing to point out who in the bar is from the Karelagne Empire, the Kingdom of Ayris, or is a pirate or privateer.

Shipwright Coven Company

Ship Repair

A coven of three **sea hags**—Lela, Olga, and Yula—operate this legitimate shipwright business. They take gold, favors, or souls for payment. The coven sells all types of ship upgrades and ship weapons found in chapter 11. They discreetly accept humanoid sacrifices at a value of 1,000 gp per soul. Lately, their shipyard has been humming with new hands, for the hags have been paid extremely well by the pirate-killing governor for recent repairs to the Karelagne fleet.

Yelp's Sharp Things

Mercantile Shop

Yelp (CG, male **goblin**) sells all types of weapons, armor, and adventuring equipment found in the "Equipment" chapter of the Fifth-Edition core rules. A dwarf killed Yelp's family when he was a child, and he's slow to trust anyone who reminds him of the killer—any person of short stature and wide frame with a bushy black beard. He charges them double and won't buy from them at all.

Madam Sebria's Hostelry

Fine Dining and Entertainment

An upscale establishment owned and operated by Madam Sebria (NG, female astral emergent elf **mage**). Madam Sebria is the widowed spouse of the Ayrissian garrison commander killed during Manta Gunthorpe's attack on the island. Characters can rent a suite for 10 gp a night, which includes a small feast, live entertainment, and unlimited alcohol.

Commander Fearghal Kane of Fort Bantor (see "Fort Bantor" later in this section) is a frequent customer. He normally visits each night to eat fine foods and enjoy the company of others. Madam Sebria bides her time, waiting to see him murdered so her dead husband might be avenged. She discreetly approaches anyone with a swashbuckling look to them at the dinner show, and offers a black diamond rose worth 500 gp to anyone who brings her Commander Fearghal's head.

Market Square

Vibrant Marketplace

A bustling market with foods, wares, tools, mounts, and other goods for sale. The market is known to offer special foodstuffs from several material plane worlds.

Trogis Sharpshiv (NE, male dwarf **buccaneer***), a recent arrival to Kaylo, was unceremoniously kicked off his ship for poor behavior several months ago. In the months since, has gathered a gang of ruffians (**bandits**) who have begun demanding protection money from local merchants. He is careful to not press for too much coin to avoid notice from the local constabulary.

Fort Bantor

Damaged Fortification

Governor Manta "Seabear" Gunthorpe (NE, female astral emergent human **werebear**), Commander Fearghal Kane (LE, male elf **commander***), and two **contingents of soldiers*** occupy Fort Bantor, which overlooks and protects Port Kaylo. Fearghal Kane despises his governor's barbarism, but is a Karelagne patriot to the end.

The textured stone walls of Fort Bantor stand 30 feet tall and 15 feet thick. Each wall, except the fractured earthward walls, is in good shape. The fort's earthward wall was heavily damaged from the Karelagne Empire's attack on the island. Once in power on Kaylo, Governor Gunthorpe stole government funds allocated to repair the wall and instead used the money to fund her own personal lavish galas.

Times are Changing

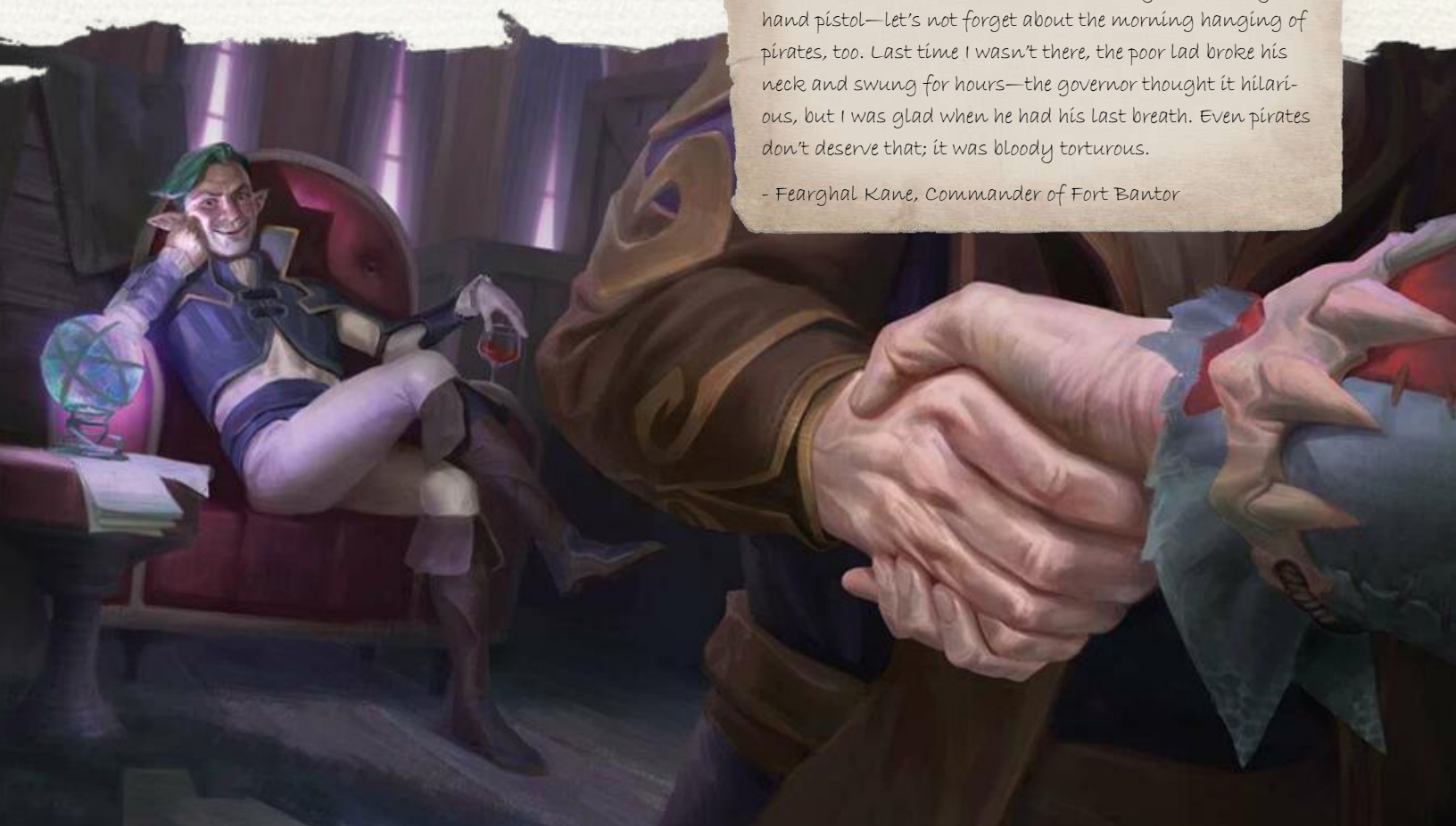
The correspondence with Karel is growing more frequent. It reminds me of my days as an ensign, readying for war throughout the Aetherial Expanse with the bloody Ayrissians.

I sure hope the time for war beckons once more; my saber yearns for the blood of the Empire's enemies. I must play nice with the governor then for now, hoping to secure a promotion. Who knows—maybe one day I'll ascend to the rank of admiral, maybe even become viceroy myself of the cursed isles.

On second thought, governor has a nice ring to it too, ha! It's not like that beast Gunthorpe is going to be around forever.

It's best I return to my quarters at Fort Bantor, not nearly as nice as this place. Can't beat silken sheets, but alas, I must be there in the morning to receive my new fire crystal hand pistol—let's not forget about the morning hanging of pirates, too. Last time I wasn't there, the poor lad broke his neck and swung for hours—the governor thought it hilarious, but I was glad when he had his last breath. Even pirates don't deserve that; it was bloody torturous.

- Fearghal Kane, Commander of Fort Bantor





THE MONSTERA CLUSTER

Lamplight flickers through the vast boughs of tropical undergrowth grown to the height of ships' masts as a group of colonists delves deep into the jungle. The plants have drunk deep of the aether and now glow with celestial variegations. The colonists hold their blades' hilts in a white-knuckled grip—and they're right to be fearful. Though the plants growing here were once from their world, they now have a mind all their own, and brook no intruders to their domain.

This is the Monstera Cluster—named for the monstrous plants that grow upon it. Colonists from the Kingdom of Ayris have made dozens of settlements on upon its shores. Only lightly defended by the Ayrissian fleet, these islands are mostly populated by farmers, brewers, and other civilians. The colonial populace yearns to mine the islands for aetherium, convinced of the mineral's presence from towering aetherflora that grows wild and deadly across them.

"Whatever you give to the Aether is returned ten-fold. Whatever is taken from the Aether is recovered with interest."
—Ayrissian axiom

ISLES OF THE CLUSTER

The Monstera Cluster is made of ten major islands and a cloud of countless islets and other tiny rocks jutting from the waves. Even the meanest skerry is rife with aetherial plants and buoyed by aetherium crystal at its bottom. So many of the smaller islands have already been mined of their aetherium and cast beneath the waves that people have demanded mining on the small islands halt. Local superstition has taken hold, and the people fear that the sinking islets have angered the aetherbeasts and flora, causing the recent surge in attacks upon their coastal settlements.

Port Splendid

The largest port in the cluster is Port Splendid, located on the airward face of Grand Commune Island. Ships pass along a corridor of airways leading from the Isle of Drakes to the Monstera Cluster, Port Kaylo, and beyond to Windcrown. However, any ship passing earthward from the Monstera Cluster is assumed to be crewed by criminals or foolhardy treasure hunters.

Port Splendid is a major hub of trade in the earthward reaches of the Aetherial Expanse. A common saying goes that the city's population "breathes," growing vast on monthly market weeks, and shrinking away in the space between.

Population. Port Splendid accounts for 70 percent of the Monstera Cluster's population, with its latest census recording about ten thousand residents, the majority of whom were humans of Ayrissian origin.

Governor. The city is ruled by an Ayrissian governor named Alfonz Vetterí (NE, male human **commander***), a man known equally for his enormous appetite, enormous muscles, and enormous mustache—to say nothing of the vastness of his hunger for aetherium. He hates the pirates of the Isle of Drakes with every fiber of his being, and wants power to bring them to heel. He pursues this goal single-mindedly, ignoring the other problems of his people, like the aetherbeasts that emerge from the jungles and seas to drive them off the islands.

MONSTERA JUNGLES

When a *bag of holding* meets a *portable hole*, they implode, and for a split second, tear a hole in the fabric of space, sucking everything into the Astral Plane. Somewhere in the chronicles of a halfling village in the wilds of the world of Halint, it's written that a botanist carrying a *bag of holding* filled with tropical plants to market tumbled through a *portable hole* placed by trickster fey. The halfling landed with only minor bruises, but her bottomless bag was dimensionally snared in the *portable hole*, and the two annihilated each other.

The contents of the bag—countless green, leafy plants and their seeds—were strewn into the Aetherial Expanse and took root on a desolate cluster of rocky islands. A thousand years later, colonial ships from the Kingdom of Ayris found these islands overgrown with foliage.

And while the plants were superficially similar to foliage of their own realm, they had grown to towering heights, and had become streaked with celestial variegations as they adapted to feeding on aether.

Like all islands within the Aetherial Expanse, they are buoyed upon the aether by the aetherium deposits that crystallized on their undersides. Each island's flora feed through their roots upon its crystalline core. These tethers make each island a single living organism—one with a vague will guided by the spirits that make up the aether to drive any who would burn its jungles from its shores.

Wildlife

In addition to the aether plants covering the island, a wide range of animals live throughout the Monstera Cluster. Once-domesticated feral animals roam freely; many adapting to the environment by transforming into aether-beast* versions of the original creature (see page 206).

Large predators have made their way here as well. It's unclear how they arrived on these islands but various dinosaurs, such as **triceratops** and **tyrannosaurus rex**, roam the islands making arduous journeys through the jungles dangerous.

Ashley Hankins

QUEST HOOK:

VOICES OF THE DAMNED

For the past few weeks, people in the local Ayrissian colony have been hearing voices in the jungle. Voices of loved ones; people from their old ships. Most are well aware that these voices can't be real, but some are too moved by emotions and investigate the edge of the jungle. Beckoning to them are people—illusions of loved ones urging them into the boughs.

These dread sights and sounds are the illusions of a **jungle siren***, and week by week, this colony will be completely depopulated unless the adventurers can slay this voracious aether plant.

QUEST HOOK:

THE EMERGENT'S CURIOSITY

An astral emergent calling herself Belona recently appeared in town. Locals know her—she was named Maria before she went into the jungle for mysterious reasons and—presumably—was killed and reborn as an astral emergent. Belona's memories of her reawakening are hazy, and wants help exploring the jungle to find what killed Maria, and what she can learn of her past self, and her reasons for entering the jungle.

Belona knows the vague route back to where she awoke—a pool of aether near a large crystal. The group of 8 **strangling creepers*** and 4 **draining creepers*** that killed her are still lurking by this pool. At the pool's bottom is an aethergem the size of her torso! An incredible prize!





PORT MAJEURE

The famed Port of the Gods is the Karelagne Empire's main foothold in the Aetherial Expanse. Ruled by Viceroy Caturix the Silver-Handed (see page 75), Port Majeure is a major trade port and a military hub for the Karelagne Navy and a handful of privateer vessels. Ayrissian merchant ships frequently dock here too, despite lingering tensions from the recently-concluded war between Ayriss and Karel. Pirates occasionally sail here while masquerading as merchant vessels, but this is typically an act of desperation due to the dangers involved in striding into such a heavily guarded port.

Port Majeure stands at the airward end of the Forked Passage's Waterward Fork (the northwest corner of the map). This lane is a popular shipping channel whose consistent trade winds allow smugglers and honest traders alike to easily travel from the Isle of Drakes, through the Monstera Cluster, and to Port Majeure. These winds vex Karelagne Navy officers who long to put an end to astral piracy once and for all, for their ships can't easily reach the Isle of Drakes without passing directly through Ayrissian territory to reach more favorable wind lanes. For more information on the Karelagne Empire, see page 74.

PORT MAJEURE LOCATIONS

Port Majeure is a sizeable island dominated by governmental and military installations. Few Karelagne civilians live here; generally, only the families of high-ranking naval officers and fabulously wealthy explorers call this austere, gilded rock home.

Locations that may attract a sailor's interest when visiting Port Majeure are described below.

Arleno & Daughters Shipyard

Renowned Shipyard

The famous shipwright Haras Arleno is known throughout Karel as the man who designed the *INS Imperatrix*, the ship that secured the Empire's dominion over its northern reaches in its last great war. Arleno has retired, but his three daughters, Cordelia, Margarit, and Leuca, have taken up his business and brought it to the Empire's foothold in the Aetherial Expanse.

Working from half-completed designs for a superior model of the *Imperatrix*, the Arleno sisters were the brains behind the *INS Thunderchild*, a warship to put all other warships to shame. Arleno's tried-and-true designs continue to make this shipyard the backbone of the Karelagne naval war machine, and the Arleno sisters continue tinkering with their *Thunderchild* design in an attempt to push its weapons, armor, and speed to bold new heights.

Palace of the Viceroyalty

Government Building

Atop the island's acropolis stands Viceroy Caturix's seat of power; a lavish structure in a classic imperial style, with a single domed rotunda flanked on four corners by tall, watchful spires. Its interior is pure opulence, decorated with artful murals, and the sounds of a sourceless, magically recorded string quartet drift through its echoing halls.

Fortress of the Admiralty

Government Building

Subordinate only to the viceroy himself, the Karelagne Lord High Admiral commands the military defense of Port Majeure. The Lord High Admiral, Dagodurne Gad (LE, male dwarf **veteran**) is a middling sailor but an excellent tactician and an even better bureaucrat. He conducts the Board of Admiralty with virtuosic ease. Gad is the perfect lapdog for Viceroy Caturix, for while the viceroy longs for total control of the Aetherial Expanse, Gad seeks only a life of opulence and sycophantic praise. The conquest of the Expanse is a small price to pay for such a life.

Gate of the Fatherland

Portal to the Material Plane

Port Majeure's most valuable and best-protected asset is the Gate of the Fatherland, a lighthouse that glows with magical fire. It has the power to open a portal to the Imperial capital of Karel on the Material Plane. If this structure were destroyed, it would cut Port Majeure off from the rest of the Empire for years until a new portal was constructed.

CAPTAIN ALARIC CONCORD

Lawful neutral, male half-orc assassin

The famed ex-pirate, currently pirate hunter Alaric Concord has sailed the Aetherial Expanse for the better part of fifty years, and calls Port Majeure home. His lionlike mane of white hair and meticulously cared for beard marks him as a wise elder, but his bulging muscles and imposing physique remind all who look upon him that Concord's fighting days are far from over.

Concord's presence is a comfort to most in Port Majeure, but his fame is both a consolation and a cause for consternation to Viceroy Caturix. Concord struts around the port as if he owns the place, and for all intents and purposes, he does. Though the Karelagne crown recognizes the viceroy's authority, the people of Port Majeure see Concord as a living legend. They'd gladly follow him over the viceroy if the two ever came into conflict—and the viceroy knows it. The viceroy is willing to pay dearly to keep Concord happy.

Concord is technically a free agent, a privateer not in the service of the Empire, but he possesses a letter of marque from the viceroy assuring him no Karelagne vessel will impede his piratical activity, so long as Concord doesn't attack Karelagne citizens—and as long as he pays a percentage of his depredations to the Empire. He's also renowned for capturing pirate vessels wanted by order of the viceroy. Legend has it Concord's cabin on the *Avenger* is decorated with the Jolly Rogers of every pirate vessel he's captured or destroyed.

His relationship with the pirates of the Isle of Drakes is a complicated one. Concord has a strict code of honor that's been tested by both the Karelagne Empire and the pirates of the Aetherial Expanse throughout his life. If he could be convinced that either the Empire or the pirates (or even the Kingdom of Ayris) were fighting for a truly righteous cause, he'd gladly ally himself with the side of good.



Captain Alaric
Concord

QUEST HOOK: CONCORD'S COURTSHIP

While at sea, Alaric Concord receives envoys from the Karelagne Empire, Ayris, and The Drakes, all wishing to buy the privateer's loyalty. The characters may be hired as guards for any of the parties. When the Karelagne representative is found dead, Concord turns to the characters to find the murderer, unwilling change loyalties without discovering who is attempting to manipulate him. Time is of the essence, as the Viceroy will soon discover the murder's identity and use it as reason to hang the privateer.





WINDCROWN

According to Karelagne sailors navigating the aether around Windcrown, the Ayrissian Port of Free Trade is an ugly lump rising from the Aetherial Expanse. Thousands of merchant vessels swarm around it like biting flies around cows at pasture. For many Ayrissians, Windcrown evokes their kingdom's rise to power. Originally a small settlement, the port quickly grew into a bustling trading hub by catering to the mercantile needs of ship captains and their financial backers.

A light blinks from the heart of the mound every few minutes, signaling the arrival of a new ship from Vea Plumeria, the Ayrissian capital on the Material Plane—and the addition of 1,000 gp to the Ayrissian Office of Planar Transit, plus whatever bribe the ship paid the transit officer on duty to be moved to the head of the queue.

The Ayrissian crown longs to make Windcrown an interplanar hub of trade, where merchants from all corners of the cosmos can buy and sell their exotic wares. At present, however, Windcrown is simply a market where Ayrissian privateers can fence their plunder, merchants can sell astral goods to their home market, and suppliers from Vea Plumeria can sell vital supplies to sailors at a shameless markup. And, of course, where thieves and scoundrels lurk in the shadows, preying on travelers like pirates without a ship.

Still, the crown's ambitions are not without credit. This mingling of the Ayrissian establishment and the Aetherian privateering culture creates a merchant environment more accommodating than most ports under Karelagne rule, and more stable than the Isle of Drakes. Profit and pleasure are found in equal measure, held together by a mutual acknowledgment of, if not respect for, the law. For these reasons, merchants continue to invest in Windcrown's growth, with more and more ships finding their way to its docks.

For more information on the Kingdom of Ayris and its power struggles in the Aetherial Expanse, see page 71.

WINDCROWN LOCATIONS

A few intriguing locations for any sailor to visit while in Windcrown are described below.

Gold Anchor Bank

Merchant Bank

Formed by a tenuous coalition of trade companies, the Gold Anchor Bank offers predatory loans while secretly manipulating market prices of goods traded in the Expanse. Sailors claim the bank is so heavily protected that if Windcrown was destroyed, this fortress would still stand as a gleaming symbol of Ayrissian values.

House of Three Ears

Silent Theatre

Those who are hard of hearing—by cannon fire or by birth—often find their way to the House of Three Ears. Many come to learn Ayrissian Sign Language, after which some join its cast of actors, performing the latest Ayrissian plays or facilitating discreet auctions below the stage. Discretion is ensured by a permanent silence spell upon the premises.

All-Marine High Rollers' Club

Legal Casino

"Glitz and glamor" doesn't even begin to describe the decadent, golden, mermaid statue-adorned, four-story facade of Windcrown's greatest casino, the All-Marine. By order of the governor of Windcrown, the All-Marine is the only legal casino in town. The All-Marine's big-tent approach has allowed it to expand and expand, taking in anyone who wants to run their own blackjack table. Or, better yet, anyone who wants to run a table of flotilla, an edgy pirate-made dice game that's taken the Aetherial Expanse by storm (see page 274).



Golden Mermaid Statue

Bester's Ring

Underground Fighting Ring

The Windcrown constabulary is aware of Rex Bester's (CN, male human **veteran**) aetherbeast fighting ring, but the bribes from Bester and his associates are too good to shut the illegal ring down. This underground fighting ring operates in the basement of the butcher's shop on Wick Street, a run-down avenue in Windcrown's low streets. A butcher, Gruup Meistercut (CN, male dwarf astral emergent **commoner**) has posted a classified advertisement asking for "rare cuts of aetherbeast meat," giving people an alibi for the sedated aetherbeasts they bring into his shop.

Camley Timeworks

Temporal Anomaly

The result of an enterprising alacrity scholar's experiment gone wrong, the rubble in this crater has been slowly piecing itself back together, reversing the explosion that tore it apart several years ago.

GOVERNOR ESTAMUEL CHEMELTHARY

Lawful evil, male half-orc noble

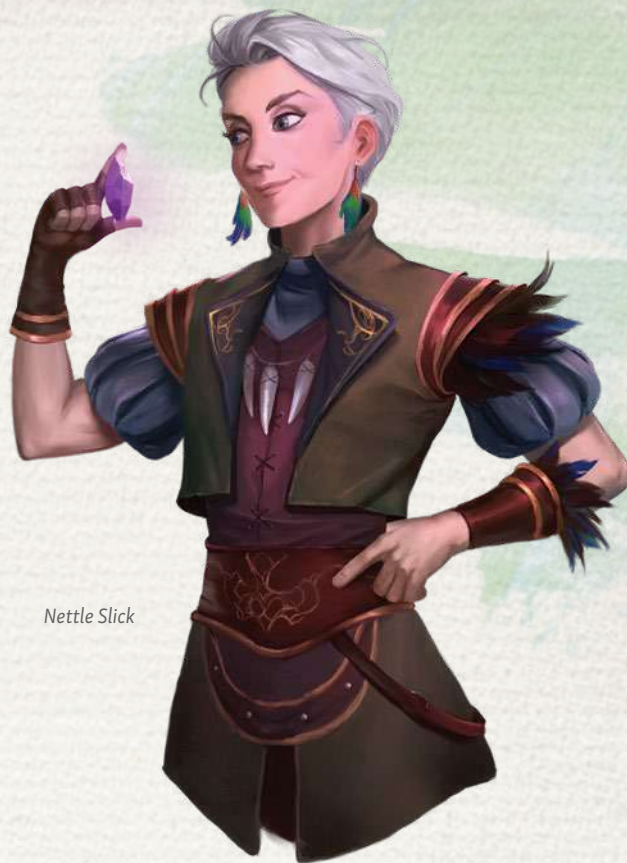
The governor of Windcrown was appointed to the command over this territory by the Ayrissian crown twenty-one years ago, after the previous governor was killed in a pirate raid. The governor, the eldest son of the wealthy Chemelthary Mining Dynasty, is a gray-whiskered half-orc who observes strict adherence to the rules of society, etiquette, and personal style and grooming. Chemelthary has a keen mathematical and business acumen. His appointment to Windcrown's governorship turned his charge from a struggling, wayward port into an economic powerhouse.

Chemelthary is proud of what he has created, but has recently turned his bespectacled gaze toward the criminals within his city. He sees this "homegrown" crime as a sign of internal rot—and more dangerous to his legacy than pirates attacking ships on the high seas.

HIKARU DAVIES

Chaotic good, female human mage

The renowned smuggler Hikaru Davies operates out of Windcrown and the nearby isles. Her sleek, triangle-sailed schooner, the *Light Brigade*, is rumored to have run over a dozen blockades, Ayrissian and Karelagne alike, over the course of Captain Davies's illustrious career. This smuggler is well aware she's growing older. Despite her youthful appearance, she can feel the ache of a hard life in her bones, and she's seeking a way out: one last, big item to smuggle into Ayris, where she can retire and live in comfort and luxury for the rest of her days.



Nettle Slick

Slick's Getaway Shop

Spell Component Shop

Nettle Slick (CN, nonbinary human **druid**) runs a spell component shop on Claremont Street in Windcrown's high streets. Their spell components are of high quality, but the Getaway Shop's real draw is Nettle's skill as a transmuter. They've developed a version of the *alter self* spell that can target other creatures and has a duration of 8 hours. Nettle appraises their customers cannily before offering their services and setting a price, often requesting payment in favors when it's clear their client can't afford to pay.

In the past, Nettle lent their aid to the constabulary when the law needed to go undercover to catch dangerous criminals, but Nettle refuses to aid Windcrown's copper-helm in the pursuit of petty criminals. In fact, Nettle often helps small-time cutpurses and the falsely accused escape the law by disguising them just long enough to find passage out of Windcrown.

QUEST HOOK: THE ANCHOR JOB

Hikaru received a tip that a few Ayrissian Merchant are transferring vast sums of wealth from Ayris to the Gold Anchor Bank via three heavily escorted ships. She hires the characters to help her intercept one of the ships, load the treasure onto the *Light Brigade*, and ensure no one discovers the robbery before Hikaru and the wealth return to Vea Plumeria. The governor eagerly awaits these ships, making this job even more alluring as a final farewell for Hikaru.

OTHER LOCATIONS OF INTEREST

Though much of the Aetherial Expanse has been charted, new islands are often discovered unexpectedly, arising from the depths through natural aggregation of aetherium crystals and because of the constant movement of islands circling the Maelstrom.

BLINKING ISLAND

This remote island is located just on the edge of the aether sea, and is subject to strange effects as the ocean tides swell and recede. Because of its location, few sailors have dared to journey here, fearing a navigational mistake could send their ship over the edge of the Aetherial Expanse. However, in contrast to most other areas along the Expanse's borders, falling off the edge near this island is exceedingly difficult. A strange conflux of powerful currents, turbulent eddies, and perhaps magical interference converge to push vessels away from the edge.

Because few have journeyed here, descriptions of the island are fragmented and inconsistent. Most stories suggest

Supposed Journal Entry of Aloysius Dumas

...so close to the edge of the Aetherial Expanse. Some strange magics must be set over the entire island, to make it flicker and blink so. I asked Erinaronda about it once, and she simply shrugged, saying it had always been the way of things here. Nevertheless, I always make sure to be back on the water before fogfall, and I only sleep on the Albatross... While traveling back and forth from the village to the shore eats up a good portion of my time, I refuse to be caught up in that strange fog ever again. When it washed over me, and then away again, it felt as if I'd lost a part of myself. It was as if no time had passed, yet it also felt like an eternity floating in a lack of existence. I had no edges, and my mind was no longer my own. Needless to say, it was unpleasant.

In a pleasant development, however, it seems Erinaronda and a few of the other villagers have begun to remember me, and recall bits of our previous conversations. I don't understand why their memories of me are returning now, but I'll accept the blessing for what it is. Once she recalled our first conversation, I asked Erinaronda if she'd like to leave the island with me the next time I went. She smiled, though it seemed a bit sad to my eyes, and simply said no. When pressed, she said her place, and her people's place, was on the island. As a community of astral emergents, I suppose they don't find the fogfall as distressing as I do, though I can't imagine they find it pleasant. I'll have to ask Erinaronda about it when I'm next ashore. We...

the island is relatively small and crescent-shaped, forming a sheltered bay around which a small community lives.

Legends claim a Karelagne explorer, Aloysius Dumas, sailed the Aetherial Expanse 200 years ago, well before Karel created its stable portal. These tales describe Aloysius using powerful artifacts that eased his travels across the Silvery Seas. Scholars suggest that if the tales of Aloysius are true, then Blinking Island may hold clues to what happened to the explorer and his magical treasures.

THE GREY FINGERS

Far airward of the trade wind routes between Port Majeure and Windcrown, is a small chain of islands that rise like boney fingers from the aether. The skies above and seas surrounding these islands seem darker than elsewhere in the Expanse. Sailors who've sailed nearby describe the air as being unusually cold. A slow but steady breeze pushes out from these isles which many crews claimed to have made their ship's rigging to hum with an unmistakable moan of sadness and regret.

The islands are mostly barren except for a few lonely trees that struggle to survive on their rocky slopes. Their limbs are gnarled and twisted with sickly leaves growing sporadically from their branches.

Few know the island chain is home to a reclusive celestial who lurks among the many crevices carved into the rocky. Ayrissian arcanists who've bartered for infernal knowledge were told the being is a fallen celestial they referred to as Acedia; a once-powerful being disavowed from its divine patron on a distant world now filled with shadow. The fiendish voices also spoke of an artifact of great power and sadness that the celestial now guards somewhere within these rocky shores.

LAZULI ISLES

In the far earth by water reaches of the Aetherial Expanse rise the Lazuli Isles, though many simply refer to them as the Luckless Isles.

This archipelago is far from any charted wind routes, requiring a long and difficult journey. The natural blue color of its rock gave the isles its original name. Though the smaller airward islands are mostly bare rock with little vegetation, the southern island is covered by a thick forest of palms, perpetually shrouded in mist. The aether surrounding these isles are rocky and difficult to navigate—crews must use shoreboats to make landings.

Many sailors who returned from these islands claim they are cursed. Many have lost crew members who failed to return to their ship after heading ashore. The belongings of these lost crew were often found scattered along the shore as if cast aside, even treasured items were found abandoned among the blue-colored sands with no signs of struggle or tracks to suggest where they've gone.

Those who have returned, claimed to have seen an indistinct figure standing among the island's trees. Divinations to determine the whereabouts of the missing sailors and the identity of this shadowy individual have thus far been unsuccessful.



NTH DEGREE ISLAND

In recent years, the Karelagne Empire has built a research base atop the largest isles in a small archipelago earth by flame of the Constellation Isles. Tight-lipped Karelagne captains speak little about the place, dubbing it only “Nth Degree Isle” after the imperial zealots who are now based here.

SHIPGRAVE REEF

This small archipelago of islands is known for being particularly treacherous for navigation. Many ships have sunk into the aether having failed to notice rocky hazards hidden just beneath the aether’s surface.

The four main islands of Shipgrave Reef (Floe, Tektite, Bulwark, and Sentinel) are all sizeable landmasses more than 2 miles across. These islands are made of volcanic rock created when the sea-cooled magma ejected from the Plane of Fire. The islands and the sand weathered from them are matte black. Small, unstable portals to the Elemental Plane of Air fill the reef with calm but frequently shifting winds.

Floe, Tektite, and Bulwark Islands have tiny, stable portals to the Elemental Plane of Water. This fresh water, combined with the magic of the aether, supports thriving jungle life on some of these islands.

Many sailors have heard tales of lost treasure hidden somewhere on the island. A particularly popular tale speaks of merfolk pirate Amil Markhoff, who carried a magical treasure aboard his ship and who is rumored to have shipwrecked somewhere within the archipelago, never to be heard from again.

STARMINE KEY

The main island of Starmine Key is filled with rich deposits of aetherium crystal, and is home to a mining colony of astral emergent dwarves under Karelagne protection. The community of miners is lead by the friendly and caring Threx Starmine (CG, male astral emergent dwarf **berserker**), a descendant of the astral emergent islanders who saved a marooned dwarven ship on this island centuries ago. The dwarves, and Threx in particular, are growing disgruntled with the Karelagne Empire, as production demands have increased along with a decrease in the price the Empire was willing to pay for their crystals.

THE NTH DEGREE

The Nth Degree is a group of Karelagne zealots based on an island that now bears their name. Rumors have started to swirl throughout the Drakes that the Nth Degree is kidnapping astral emergents for unknown reasons. Whispers of these activities have begun circulating in taverns and on ship decks, especially among those who employ astral emergents as deckhands or call them friends. Astral emergents are becoming ever more nervous, and for safety, some are moving to large cities controlled by anyone other than the Karelagne Empire.

Ayriassian agents believe that the imperial researchers are somehow using these astral emergents to improve aetherial crystal processing, though little else is currently known about their research or how the processing is being improved.

The Karelagne Empire is aware of the Nth Degree’s activities but is currently turning a blind eye to the kidnappings as they’ve been given suggestions that aetherium crystal manufacture may emerge from this work, potentially providing the Empire with a limitless source of wealth and power.



Chapter 3

GODS OF THE EXPANSE

“Those who presume to judge their peers are shipwrecked by the laughter of the gods.”

—Adaibert Stone, *Aetherial Philosopher*

Mortals arriving from their material plane worlds invariably bring their own gods to worship. However, since the formation of the Aetherial Expanse, several divine entities emerged to influence this region of the Astral Plane. This chapter details those gods who continue to have the greatest influence.

THE DIVINE TETRAD

Four gods are commonly worshiped upon the Aetherial Expanse, and have been since time immemorial. Called the Divine Tetrad, these four divine entities were passed down from the astral titans that first gave them praise. Their worship has spread across the Expanse and even found purchase in the distant realms of Ayris and Karel, brought home by their astral sailors. The four cardinal constellations of the Aetherial Expanse are named for

these gods, and sometimes, believed to be the gods themselves, or at least doorways to their domains.

This polytheistic faith has precious little canon, and stories of these gods’ deeds vary wildly between cultures and tale-tellers. It’s easy for a person to contort their thinking to believe their god of choice will bless their actions. Nevertheless, there are some consistencies among the gods’ tales.

ASTETH, THE EMPRESS

The ancient ones told tales of Asteth, the Empress of Flames, a burning, three-headed serpent that emerged from a door of fire. She was a fickle ally, and always behaved in hungry self-interest. The astral titans kept her at arm’s length; close enough to borrow her power, but leaving enough room to retreat, lest they be burned by her caprices.

Asteth is often depicted as a three-headed serpent wreathed in fire, or a muscular humanoid woman whose crowned head is obscured in flame. Clerics of Asteth typically wield the domains of Arcana, Forge, Light, or War.

Asteth in Karel

The Karelagne Empire has adopted the worship of Asteth with gusto, and her flame cults have grown with such rapidity and vigor that the Karelagne crown fears they'll soon become a threat to its political sovereignty. The government has cultivated a nationalistic image of Asteth, portraying her as a mother-goddess of warlike power and the homely hearth. It's popular to name girls born after a troubled birth Asteth, to honor the Empress's power.

Asteth in Ayris

In Ayris, Asteth's fickle will is emblematic of the caprices of the market. Merchants and investors, particularly those who remain in Windcrown or in the Ayrisian capital on the Material Plane, issue prayers to Asteth for a sudden rise in their fortunes, or a favorable market crash—especially one that ruins their rivals.

Asteth Among the Drakes

Goddess of cannon fire and burning ships, Asteth's burning visage has a place on the figurehead of countless pirate ships. The infamous ship *The Drake* was known for bearing her serpentine form on its figurehead.

CYRILL, THE HIEROPHANT

The astral titans had a legend about the creation of the aether. Many centuries before the other titans' arrival on the Astral Plane, Cyrill the first titan was the sworn protector of a plane-faring civilization that settled with the Astral Plane. The devouring hermit-god Qoz came to menace this civilization, and piece by piece rent it asunder until only its cosmopolitan heart remained.

Cyrill knew this civilization would be lost unless he sacrificed all. He recalled his oath, and called upon the spirits of all who had died in Qoz's wake to aid him in creating a ritual that would protect this civilization from Qoz's destruction. Even for a titan, such power was too great to control, and all within this civilization, thousands upon thousands of people died, transformed by Cyrill's incantation into raw magical power: the aether.

In a way, Cyrill was successful; though all he sought to save perished and became the aether, the plane-farers were nonetheless spared from being consumed by Qoz, and, according to legend, live on as the gestalt consciousness of the aether itself. Legend says Cyrill retreated in shame to the Elemental Plane of Water to study the seas and learn to speak the language of the waves so he could communicate with those who became the aether.

Cyrill is typically depicted as a muscular, male, bearded giant holding an aetherium crystal in a hand that's lost its third, fourth, and fifth fingers; the parts of Cyrill torn away by the creation of aether. Clerics of Cyrill typically wield the domains of Arcana, Knowledge, Life, or War.

Cyrill in Karel

Karelagne marines often pray to Cyrill to watch over the dead who were lost to the sea. Few in Karel even know of Cyrill, for his aetherial creation is only a curiosity to people on the Material Plane.



Cyrill in Ayris

In Ayris, the image of Cyrill has become shorthand for the power of aetherium, which has been highly touted by the alacrity scholars of their realm. Cyrill, the Titan of Progress, a blue-hued giant holding a crystal sparking with power, leads the charge of the Ayrisian people on the world stage—according to Ayrisian propaganda posters, at least.

Cyrill Among the Drakes

The pirates of the Aetherial Expanse are better versed in the legends of the astral titans than the sailors of Karel or Ayris. Many pirates and smugglers pay homage to Cyrill with a small animal sacrifice or tithe of gold to a shrine before setting out on the aether. Others forgo sacrifice, but dedicate their work songs to Cyrill, in the hope that his sorrowful ears will hear their voices and bless them with happy seas.

The astral emergents (see page 82) see Cyrill as a creator deity. Without Cyrill, there'd be no aether, and without the aether, they wouldn't exist.

UNAMMON, THE CHARIOT

It's said a whale of titanic size once sailed through the skies of the Astral Plane, buoyed by the winds of the Elemental Plane of Air. The Chariot of the Winds spoke for the air to rise wherever she wished to go, and the planes themselves heeded her command. The astral titans say they once followed in Unammon's jet streams in flying craft to quickly traverse the Expanse from high above the aether's surface.

Legend says the peaceful Unammon came into accidental conflict with Asteth, and the Empress of Flames smote her down with a meteor from the heavens. Unammon crashed into the aether, burning with Asteth's fire, and perished beneath the waves, where she was devoured by the hermit-god Qoz. Yet, her unbreakable spirit lived on within the air itself, sustaining all the permanent portals of air that blow across the Expanse, and playfully birthing the portals that seemingly open and shut without cause.

All superstitious sailors venerate Unammon—and all sailors are superstitious to some degree. Upon the sea, calm winds are life, and stormy weather is all but certain death.

Unammon is depicted as a snow-white beluga whale, sometimes covered with countless tiny, feathered wings and trailing a tail of mist behind her. Clerics of Unammon typically wield the domains of Life, Nature, Peace, Tempest, or Trickery.

Unammon in Karel

Worship of Unammon has spread from the Aetherial Expanse to the saltwater oceans that border Karel's coastline on the Material Plane. Karelagne sailors of all stripes are united by a certain reverence for the playful whale of the skies. Whenever a storm thrums upon the horizon, Karelagne ships fire off a volley, in the hopes of alerting kindly Unammon to their presence and causing her storms to blow elsewhere.

Unammon in Ayris

Though Ayrisian sailors adore Unammon, the Ayrisian crown and parliament fear her. At home, revolutionaries calling themselves the Winds of Change have taken the Chariot of the Winds as their icon, and push for an end to the Ayrisian monarchy.

Unammon Among the Drakes

Rare is the pirate with an ill word to say of Unammon. However, rumors abound that Unammon's bones still soar beneath the aether in a perverse mockery of her playful behavior in ancient times. This legend tells that an ancient demon lives within the whale's rib cage, burning with deathly malevolence where the god's kind heart once was.



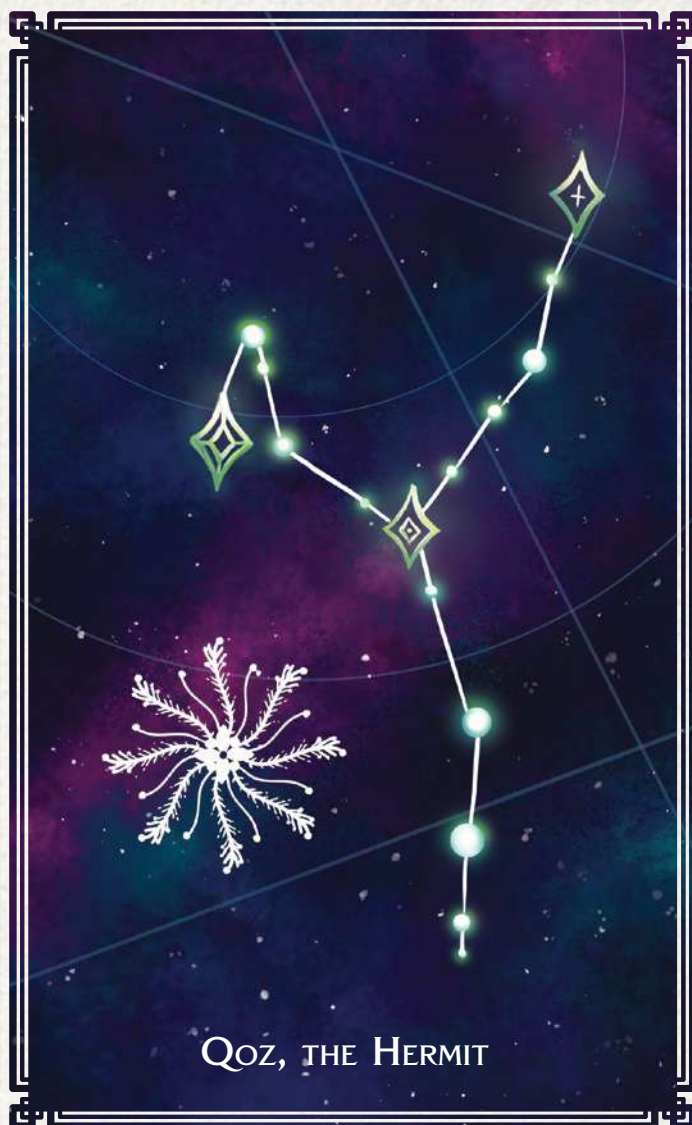
CYRILL, THE HIEROPHANT

QOZ, THE HERMIT

The Sullen Hermit of Deep Earth is said to lurk at the bottom of the aether, dreaming of a time when it will rise again and hunt. Qoz and its kin, the feather stars (see page 240), were the scourge of countless astral civilizations in ancient times. Though none of the giant, island-crushing feather stars remain, legends of their destructive power are still sung across the sea as heralds of the end. Their periods of wakefulness are filled with nothing but devouring, until they fall back into hibernation.

Qoz, their progenitor, sleeps longest, and hungers deepest, for its appetite is roused best by the flesh of gods. Its featherlike appendages are said to be broad as the arms of galaxies, and each strand of feathers made of crystalline matter harder than diamonds. Qoz is never forgotten, but often said to be a thing of myth, for none who have seen it rampage survive.

Qoz is depicted as a feather star with arms that shine like a swirling galaxy. The Karelagne, who personify Qoz



as evil, paint a cruel face from the stars in the galaxy's center. Clerics of Qoz are rare, but cultishly devout, and typically wield the domains of Arcana, Death, Grave, and Twilight.

Qoz in Karel

Qoz has become a figure of ultimate evil within Karel. The empire believes its foundations are stronger than stone and its reign will last until the stars die. Myths of a creature whose rousing makes the planes themselves quake eats at the heart of Karelagne national pride. Karelagne clergy frame all evil acts of the humanoid heart as inspired by Qoz, who dreams cruel intentions into the minds of evildoers.

Qoz in Ayris

The myths of Qoz has hardly made an impact in Ayris. This intangible, cosmic warning has no place in a society where coin is king.

Qoz Among the Drakes

Pirates, superstitious to the last, often invoke the name of Qoz when they curse. "Qoz take you," one might say. "Teeth a' Qoz," another may curse. "With you 'til Qoz wakes," a loyal pirate would swear to a captain, and a stronger promise isn't to be found across the Expanse.

"Quit pokin' Qoz and leave the captain be," a concerned pirate might spit to a junior crewmate inviting disaster by fussing with their irritable captain. "Raising Qoz" is sometimes said instead of "raising hell." Countless other minor epithets abound on pirate ships. Particularly superstitious pirates who catch themselves habitually invoking the Hermit-Devourer's name may hastily append "may it never wake" to the end of an oath. Even the fearless Captain Ralph Terrecks was once overheard before battle roaring, "Get out there and raise Qoz!" before turning his head to the deck, and mumbling "mayitneverwake" into the back of his hand.

OTHER DEITIES

Beyond the primary four, numerous divine beings are revered by the mortals or seek to influence this region of the Astral Plane. Some notable deities are presented below.

CASDIA, THE CHAOTIC CALM

The worship of Casdia was brought to the Aetherial Expanse by those who came to the Expanse from the Karelagne Empire. There, she is known as the Goddess of Change, who chafes against the status quo and whose favor can help to bring a positive reversal of fortune. Oddly, despite her association with change and unsteadiness within the Empire, she has become a symbol of the need to constantly stay on one's toes in the Expanse, with sailors calling on her for literal and metaphorical balance as they travel the waves. Clerics of Casdia typically wield the domains of Nature, Tempest, or Trickery.

Casdia in Karel

Within Karel, views of Casdia have not changed, even as those who have traveled to and within the Aetherial Expanse see her as a steadying influence because of her chaotic nature, and she remains a favorite of gamblers looking for better luck, reformers who want to bring change, and sailors who seek a calm journey across the waters.

Casdia in Ayris

Casdia is generally seen as a Karelagne deity, so belief in her is limited among those who identify primarily as Ayrisian, due to some lingering feelings of ill will towards the Karelagne Empire in the aftermath of the war. Among those who have spent most of their life in the Expanse, or who grew up in it, she is better known, but usually only invoked during games of chance.

Casdia Among the Drakes

Casdia has gained some popularity with pirates, who see her as a symbol of the ups and downs of a pirate's life. As one saying puts it, "Some days you chase Casdia, some days she chases you." As a result, her symbol of the compass rose can often be found carved somewhere on most pirate ships. It is not clear if everyone who copies this carving even knows who Casdia is, but it has become a common trend.



DESDEMONA, THE LADY DEATH

Legends tell of a woman as tall as a ship's mast and quiet as a shadow. They speak of her pale gaze being cast upon the sea as her titanic galleon, the *Adumbral End*, cuts across the aether in search of souls. She has seen the fall of every civilization that dreamed of ruling the Aetherial Expanse, and she cares nothing for the insignificant, replaceable lives that meaninglessly cross these seas. She serves as the right hand to a sea-witch known as Akaste, a dread titan of the ancient world, which time has long since forgotten.

Desdemona is depicted as a towering shadow with pale eyes glinting from beneath her coral-wreathed brow. Falling stars surround her like diamonds in an unseen crown. As she is a lesser spirit, there are no clerics of Desdemona, but there are warlocks who tether themselves to her power. The Lady Death has no interest in these warlocks, but her own patron, the sea-witch Akaste, acts on her behalf, secretly preying upon the desires of these supplicants in exchange for a fraction of her power.

Desdemona is not well-known beyond the Aetherial Expanse. She has no constellation, like the four great Gods of the Expanse, but her coming is marked by the falling of stars from the sky.

Akaste, the Sea-Witch

Unknown to all but Desdemona herself, a titan named Akaste is the fount of the Lady Death's power, and the answerer of all mortals who would seek her sepulchral favor. The witch was once an astral titan who foresaw the fall of her civilization. Akaste drank deep of death when her realm of Astrium fell. Since then, she has repeatedly sent Desdemona as her reaper to fell civilizations when enough souls populate the Expanse to warrant harvest.

There is no secret justification behind Akaste's actions, no sympathetic reason for her gorging on suffering. She delights in others' pain, thrives off their fear, and feasts on their weakness. In battle, she taunts her enemies, drains them, terrifies them—she is merciless and unreasonable, choosing cruelty at every turn, ceaselessly ravaging her enemies until they beg for release. They gain release only when Akaste is satisfied. And Akaste is never satisfied.

Akaste's body dwells within the Bathyal Chariot, within the reanimated bones of a massive aetherwhale. However, her spirit is only present when Desdemona sails the seas at her command. At all other times, Akaste uses the souls Desdemona reaps to project her spirit into the Astral Plane to seek new realms to conquer and innocents to torment while Desdemona guards her physical body.



KIMA, THE SHADOW

Kima was once a goddess of knowledge and learning worshiped by millions, until the destructive power of Qoz and its kin relentlessly attacked the civilizations that knew and worshiped her, killing her followers for no reason other than their all-consuming hunger. She attempted to defend herself and her followers against Qoz, but fell in the battle, barely escaping with her life.

Determined to keep the memory and wisdom of her worshippers alive, Kima traveled from one civilization under threat to the next, staying one step ahead of Qoz while collecting the stories and secrets of those who might soon be lost to the god's destructive power. Some believe that this information included the ritual used by Cyrill to repel Qoz, but Kima has never claimed or sought credit for this action, preferring to keep her role obscured. Due to her secretive nature, Kima is considered more of a legend than a god by many, but those who do follow her usually depict her as she appears to her acolytes, a shadow that takes the vague shape of a three-legged wolf or fox. Clerics of Kima typically wield the domains of Grave, Knowledge, Peace, and Twilight.

Kima in Karel

Worship of Kima in the Karelagne Empire is often found among those who oppose imperial rule and feel that its yoke is similar to the destructive power of Qoz. As such, it is not often practiced openly in Karel, but can be found as an open secret in some outer Karelagne regions, including among the fisherfolk of the Edosians.

Kima in Ayris

In Ayris, Kima is seen as the goddess of secrets, and has a following among some of the thieves that walk the streets of Windcrown, as well as more than a few unscrupulous merchants, but is generally most known for her association with the Kimaries, a set of maps in Kima's hand that are said to lead to an impossible treasure. They have been the center of at least three major con artist operations in Ayris to date.

Kima Among the Drakes

Pirates disagree strongly about the worship of Kima—some believe that her form can be seen most clearly in the smoke that comes from the aftermath of a fire and that carrying her acolytes will lead to their ship ultimately being lost to disaster. Others call upon her to protect them from the many forms of death that can often be found on the seas, as it is believed that one of the secrets she carries has allowed her and her most devout followers to cheat death itself.



ORGLIX, THE MAGICIAN

No god rules the actions of the kraken. The sea itself trembles and froths whenever Orglix moves, a storm of blood-red arms and aetherium fangs. Orglix lacks true godlike power—it still is shackled to a physical form, and it lacks the ability to reshape the world to its whims—but it is a mighty supernatural spirit nonetheless. Despite this limitation, Orglix possesses a power that even the gods envy: the power to experience all of time at once, and to touch its ephemeral currents.

Orglix was born of a nightmare of the astral titans of Astrium in an age long past. The titans delved into magic beyond mortal comprehension to control the aether, raze civilizations in a day, and even divine the future. Orglix was fed by nightmares of magic gone wrong and grew to monstrous proportions over a thousand years of dream-eating until, one day, it became real. The titans captured it, imprisoned it, and experimented upon it until, one day, their civilization ended.

Somewhere, Orglix knew this would happen. It experienced all things at all times, in one perfect, asynchronous, nonlinear moment. It knows all things that are, and all things that are not.

The exceedingly rare clerics who venerate Orglix wield the domains of Aether, Arcana, Death, and Knowledge.

Orglix in Karel

Imperial politicians and scholars have heard much of the myths of Orglix from the Aetherial Expanse. An occult fervor has gripped the upper echelons of Karelagne society as people make ever more sinister offerings to gain Orglix's attention so that they may hear its whispers of their future.

Orglix in Ayris

The people of Ayris don't believe in the tales of Orglix that have filtered into their world from the Expanse. If such a creature existed, all of commerce would collapse. The act of prediction—especially predicting the rise and fall of the market—is sacred to Ayrisians.

Orglix Among the Drakes

The hearty sailors of the Isle of Drakes disparage legends of Orglix and its omniscience. The pirate's creed is that of freedom. If all of the past and all of the future were known, the pirate's short, merry life would have no meaning, for what is the meaning of life if not to take fate into your own hands?



Chapter 4

FACTIONS



“Scratch the colors from an Ayrissian privateer and you’ll find an unconscionable Drake hidden beneath.”

—Admiral Abrexta Kathinel, Claw of the Viceroy

The aetherium-rich seas of the Aetherial Expanse call to all those who discover it. The great powers of Ayris and Karel viciously fought for its control, spending decades in bloody conflict against one another until striking a tentative truce just eight years ago.

Now, the two nations continue to vie for control of the seas, seeking to plunder its riches. They use their power and influence to coerce those they can, and often pay privateers to harass those who stand in their way.

Between those two great powers are numerous pirate crews who prey on vulnerable ships navigating these seas. Most call the Isle of Drakes their home, where they rest between their hunts on the aether.

This chapter explores Karel, Ayris, the Drakes, and a sampling of other factions who can influence events in the Aetherial Expanse.

THE DRAKES

In the Aetherial Expanse, the word ‘drake’ is synonymous with pirates for good reason—the Isle of Drakes has been the home of fortune-seekers, glory-hunters, and thieves for over twenty years. Though the many pirate crews that consider themselves part of the Drakes spend much of their time squabbling for power and resources, they remain true to two key principles: they will never bow to the authority of Ayris or Karelagne, and they will never take the freedom of another.

The Drakes became a force within the Aetherial Expanse thanks in large part to Teruko the Drake, an infamous pirate who sailed during the height of the War of the Invaders. Teruko maneuvered past both the Ayrissian and Karelagne navies on her galleon, *The Drake*, to offer transport to stranded civilians, disillusioned deserters, and sailors looking for new opportunities. She took money for her services from some and skills-in-trade from others. She brought them to a cluster of islands in the Expanse’s earthward reach that she’d taken under her protection. She also made each newcomer swear a single oath—that they would never bend to the power of either the Ayrissian crown or the Karelagne Empire.

When Teruko the Drake was alive, loyalty to her and her ship kept the many pirates of the Isle of Drakes united, with crews working together to share the danger and profit of a pirate’s life, but her mysterious death at sea created a rift in her crew and shattered most of these fragile arrangements. While the Drakes will band together if needed in the face of a common threat—pirate-hunting privateers, for example, or bounty hunters working for Ayris or Karelagne—they



*Chance Rumfiller
Bosun on the Knight’s Corsair*

generally see each other as threats rather than allies, and won't hesitate to turn on each other for their own gain.

Despite their differences, Drakes share a come-what-may approach to life and danger, believing that a short life of freedom is better than a long one under the thumb of an oppressive outside power. Their belief in freedom also means that they generally do not take captives from the ships they attack without offering them the Drake's choice of blood, land, or aether—a quick death, exiled on the nearest landmass, or a spot on the pirate's crew.

While there are many pirate crews that either operate from the Isle of Drakes or consider it their true home, a few have gained enough renown that their names are known separately from the Drakes—the Blood Lilies, the Thorned Knights, the Children of Asteth, and the Shipwreckers. Each have their own agenda, with long-term goals that could shape the future of piracy on the Aetherial Expanse.

THE BLOOD LILIES

Long ago, a group of druids were captured from a vast wood within the Karelagne Empire and brought in chains to the Astral Plane, forced to help the empire cultivate crops in this unusual land. These press-ganged druids escaped slavery, stole a ship, which they renamed the *Aesphodel*, and fled the Imperial Archipelago. They stopped on Maladell Island among the archipelago that would, in a few decades, become the Isle of Drakes.

For years, these druid-pirates preyed exclusively upon the Karelagne Navy, seeking retribution for the imperial enslavement. Their persistent bloody predation on imperial ships earned them their “Blood Lilies” moniker, and for a time, they were one of the most feared crews in the Drakes. Then, a remarkable thing happened. Individuals from across the planes arrived in the Aetherial Expanse, sought out the Blood Lilies of Maladell Island, and joined the crew.

A Shared Dream

Aside from their shared affinity for nature magic, these newest members of the *Aesphodel* all have one commonality: they each experienced a dream about the Aetherial Expanse, which led them here. Though some have more doubts than others, many believe they were all brought to the Aetherial Expanse for a yet unknown purpose. Over time, the once blood-thirsty pirate crew transformed to become the caretakers of Maladell Island.

Atypical Pirates

Due to their unique motivations, the Blood Lilies do not resemble a typical pirate crew. They are peaceful, only attacking in self-defense, and spend more time on land than on aether. When they do leave their island, it is usually to get supplies. Furthermore, they are uninterested in the politics of the Isle of Drakes, remaining a neutral party. Because of this refusal to side with any particular faction, they are viewed with disdain by most other pirate crews, only begrudgingly tolerated as they provide a valuable service of producing fresh fruit and vegetables.

Currently led by Captain Almond (N, nonbinary gnome, see page 257), the Blood Lilies protect their

island from imperial incursion from Fort Aesphodel, a mighty tree-fortress which they shaped into its form with their magic.

Many of the escaped druids who had initially formed the Blood Lilies were moved by the newcomers, and their thirst for revenge was sated. However, a few of the original crew still cling to their imperial hatred and disapprove of Captain Almond's gentler approach. They have begun to whisper that the *Aesphodel* should again paint the Silvery Seas red with imperial blood.

Faction Goals

Under Captain Almond's direction, the Blood Lilies protect Maladell Island with a gentle but firm hand. Their goals include:

Protect Maladell Island. The druids have carefully tended the island, creating a vibrant island paradise. They will forcefully throw back anyone who dares to threaten their control of the island.

Understand Their Visions. Many of the druids who've joined the Blood Lilies in recent years arrived because of a shared vision that drew them from across the planes to this island. No one yet understands what has drawn them here, but they suspect a greater purpose lies ahead.

NOTABLE BLOOD LILIES

The *Aesphodel*'s crew is as remarkably diverse as it is capable. Some of its crewmembers include:

- **Hazel** (N, female tiefling **druid**). A towering tiefling serves as the first mate. Her spectacled stare makes it clear she takes her station seriously.
- **Quoiya** (N, agender dryad **druid**). Freed from their tree bond thanks to absorbing aether, Quoiya, the ship's adventurous helmsperson, interfaces with the vessel's wood to control it.
- **Tiberius the Bear** (NG, male human **druid**). A gentle soul who often takes the form of a large bear.
- **Cozmara** (N, female drow **druid**). The mysterious and timid drow is an unranked crewmember, but her divination powers channeled through aether-soaked tarot cards, have saved the *Aesphodel* many times.
- **Yorfax** (NE, male human **druid**). Part of the original crew, the elder master gunner despises Captain Almond's tamer approach. He is intelligent and cunning, and plans to usurp control of the ship.

QUEST HOOK: FALSE PRETENSES

An agent of the Karelagne Empire has learned of the visions that called many of the druids to Maladell Island, and uses this knowledge to infiltrate the Blood Lilies. The impostor secretly keeps detailed notes about Maladell Island to prepare for an invasion by Karelagne forces. A young druid's apprentice discovers this secret but cannot convince others, and seeks the characters' help to unmask the charlatan to prevent the island's capture.



Captain Maledonna
Ackles

THE CHILDREN OF ASTETH

The Children of Asteth are fanatically devoted both to the goddess Asteth, the Empress of Flames, and their reclusive, authoritarian captain, Maledonna Ackles. Remarkably, Maledonna rarely steps foot on their crimson galleon, *The Avenging Angel*. Instead, she uses a magical mask to control one of the crew, captaining the galleon from the safety of the Children of Asteth's citadel on Fort Angelos Island.

Under Captain Ackles' command, *The Avenging Angel* destroys weaker ships in the punishing flames of Asteth's fury. The captain has a particular hatred for ships of the Karelagne Empire, who she believes have warped Asteth's teachings with their imperial domination.

While they believe that any act of mercy also goes against Asteth's will, the Children of Asteth treat those who survive the flames as sanctified by Asteth, treating them as honored guests who may join the crew or be dropped at a destination of their choosing.

Where the goddess's word is to create flames to shelter the weak, the Children of Asteth believe that her flames are a gift to the strong, and a symbol that those with power are blessed to do as they wish, unless they are halted by a greater power.

Few Drakes trust the Children of Asteth and their gaunt, eerie captain, but their control of Fort Angelos Island makes removing them a thorny prospect.

Faction Goals

The Children of Asteth seek to bathe the Karelagne Empire in a destructive and holy fire. If they were to become the dominant power among the Drakes, they would push for a campaign of destruction against the Empire. In the meantime, their goals include:

Defying the unjust and culling the weak. The Children of Asteth do not believe in half a victory. If the ships they target are not burning on the sea at the end of the battle, they view it as both a failure and a sin.

Crippling the Karelagne Empire. The only exception the Children of Asteth make to their general pattern of overwhelming destruction is if a smaller strike can cause some harm to the Karelagne Empire.

CAPTAIN MALEDONNA ACKLES

Lawful evil, female tiefling knight

The captain of the feared *The Avenging Angel* is a recluse who rarely leaves her abode on Fort Angelos, even when her ship goes hunting. She commands her ship from afar using a death mask in the shape of her own face. One of her crew must wear the magical mask, allowing their consciousness to be subsumed by the captain, who controls the wearer's body as if it were her own. Maledonna's voice echoes from the death mask in metallic, raspy, distant tones.

Maledonna is the sobriquet of Teresa Valor Narav, first daughter of House Narav of Karel and heir to their estate—one which was burned by agents of the imperial crown when she was a child for political reasons too intricate for her young mind to fully comprehend. She despises the Empire with a burning passion, but still nurses a selfish desire to rule and subjugate, and does so as a fearsome, sadistic pirate captain in absentia.

QUEST HOOK: AGAINST THE GRAIN

The Avenging Angel has its sights on a grain shipment being sent in a convoy from Port Majeure to a Karelagne outpost in the Monstera Cluster. Maledonna believes that if it is destroyed, it will either divert the Empire's resources or expose its lack of care for its people as they starve. With their ship too recognizable to do a stealth run and the convoy too large to attack directly, the Children of Asteth need a team to find the correct ship, sneak aboard, and light a flare to identify it for attack.

QUEST HOOK: TO WEAR THE MASK

A deckhand on *The Avenging Angel* claims to have received a vision from Asteth that they, not Maledonna Ackles, are meant to lead the Children of Asteth. They need outside help to steal the captain's Death Mask, make one for themselves, and destroy the original. The deckhand talks of bringing the fires of peace instead of destruction, but a letter in their cabin from the Karelagne Empire suggests they may be working with the crew's sworn enemy.



Captain Charleston Kriegler

THE SHIPWRECKERS

Daredevil captain Charleston Kriegler (CN, male half-elf **bandit captain**) has mastered the art of ship navigation and uses it as a weapon against his enemies. He challenges or manipulates less maneuverable vessels into dangerous waters, then, once the target has run around on a reef, swoops in with threats and demands from his pride and joy, the *Apocalypse*, a terrifying man o'war. The crew specializes in sinking ships, particularly privateers, bounty hunters, and unauthorized merchant ships; the Shipwreckers defend the isles without mercy.

Captain Kriegler and his crew are boisterous storytellers who love to recount tales of their latest successful skirmish, and emphasize how often they get away with the goods without firing a single shot, but the captain's larger-than-life persona, vicious temper, and long memory can drive away pirates looking to make names of their own.

Despite this, *Apocalypse* has one of the lowest crew turnover rates. The Shipwreckers' low ammunition costs leave them with plenty of funds to spend on the crew and their keep on Fort Roost Island.

Faction Goals

The Shipwreckers prefer if their foes surrender rather than fight, focusing on the money and goods they can earn from a confrontation instead of the destruction they can inflict. If they were to become the dominant power among the Drakes, they would have ships work together to drive merchant vessels into danger rather than attacking them directly, though always with the *Apocalypse* leading the way.

In the meantime, the Shipwreckers' goals include:

Seeding the Expanse with New Dangers. The more dangers that lurk in the Aetherial Expanse, the easier it is for the Shipwreckers to ground other ships. They often position ships they have wrecked to serve as artificial reefs for new victims.

Encouraging Foolhardiness. The Shipwreckers thrive when their prey is easily goaded into shows of foolish bravery, and often spread tales of the pride and danger of a pirates' life to susceptible ears.

CAPTAIN CHARLESTON KRIEGLER

*Chaotic neutral, male half-elf **bandit captain***

Broad, muscular, bold, bushy of beard, and brash of voice, Kriegler is captain of the dread ship *Apocalypse* and commander of the Shipwreckers, a crew that prides themselves on claiming prizes without firing a single shot.

Kriegler is an elder politician of the Isle of Drakes and is, by all accounts, the quintessential pirate. A frequent sight in the Isle's famed Seven Stars Tavern, the room falls silent when he enters, then livens again when he reveals himself to be in a generous mood, or clears out when he reveals himself to be in a foul one. Proudful and vicious, Kriegler delights in the power he's accrued over the years and isn't afraid to show it.

Kriegler's boisterous, theatrical attitude is beloved by all, but wise pirates know not to question his tall tales, to test his character, or to contradict him. While his spirits may be high, his pride is a fragile, easily-bruised thing. He's kind to those who flatter him or show him true mettle and strength, but behind closed doors, Kriegler's detractors say he's no more than a bully and a cheat.

QUEST HOOK: THE GREAT RACE

The *Apocalypse* is hosting a race to test the speed and maneuverability of ships across the Aetherial Expanse. They claim it is a celebration of the truce between the Karelagne Empire and Ayris, but plan to sabotage several ships so they can be picked off on their way back to their normal routes. As the hosts of the race, they must be above suspicion, but they are looking for helpers to participate in the sabotage for a cut of the profits.

QUEST HOOK: SHARK BAIT

Captain Kriegler wants to change the attack patterns of a shiver of **aethersharks*** to drive merchant ships towards a reef-filled part of the Aetherial Expanse. He needs a smaller ship to harry them with small-scale attacks until they change direction without being destroyed by the creatures, which are known to remember the ships of their enemies.



THE TENDERS GUILD

When most in the Aetherial Expanse think of the Drakes, they think of one of the pirate crews, but it is the Tenders Guild that ensures the pirates have somewhere to call home.

The Guild was originally formed as a loose alliance of bartenders at the Seven Stars Tavern after the ‘Six-Shot Scuffle,’ an all-out brawl between pirate crews, which nearly burned the place down. The Tenders Guild has grown into a crew for those who are Drakes but spend most of their time on land, from retired pirates to local workers, to those who have either temporarily or permanently found themselves without a berth.

The Guild’s current leader is Red Jacques (CG, female dragonborn **mage**), the proprietor of the Seven Stars Tavern, who is known both for her physical strength and her sage advice, but a contingent of Shipwright Union members have been agitating for a Guild leader who is not associated with the Tavern and are championing Anka (NG male dragonborn **veteran**), owner of the ship repair shop Wrights and Wrongs.

Faction Goals

Despite the continually-bickering pirate crews, the Guild has managed to stay neutral enough to avoid being pulled into disagreements. The Guild’s current leadership is focused on keeping the Isle of Drakes safe, with their goals being:

Information Gathering. The Tenders Guild’s nonpartisan nature has allowed it to gather information, listen to rumors, and keep ahead of any plots by Ayris or the Karelagne Empire to advance on the Isle of Drakes.

Maintain the Peace. They will also attempt to stop any plot by one pirate group against another that would destabilize the fragile peace of the Drakes or put their members at risk.

QUEST HOOK: STIRRING THE POT

Windcrown leadership plans to provoke infighting among the Drakes. They intend to ignite a pirate-on-pirate war to distract and weaken Drake defenses, to make it easier for the Kingdom of Ayris to gain control of the independent island chain.

The characters could become involved from either side. Ayrisian agents are willing to pay well to undertake missions that will distract the Tenders Guild and foment pirate dissension. Alternatively, a Tenders Guild member may suspect outside instigation and seek the characters’ aid to uncover the truth.

“A Drake lives for the open sea, but there must always be somewhere to brew the beer, fix the ship, and spend the treasure.”

—Red Jacques

THE THORNED KNIGHTS

Under the command of the notorious scoundrel Calladin Thorn, who escaped execution as a pirate's child in Ayris a decade ago, the Thorned Knights primarily prey on Ayriissian ships, with Thorn taking on the visage of the Thorned Knight, a mythical killer of unjust kings.

Thorn is ruthless in his pursuit of merchant ships, often pushing his well-armed frigate, the *Knight's Corsair*, to its limits, but he is notoriously kind to children. He keeps a portion of his take to distribute to the children of the Isle of Drakes at First Tide each year, and will summarily execute the entire crew of any ship that he believes has harmed a child.

Faction Goals

The Thorned Knights hate the Kingdom of Ayris above all others—if they were to become the dominant power among the Drakes, they would push for a definitive and demoralizing victory against the kingdom. In the meantime, their goals include:

Symbolic Victories Against Ayris. The Thorned Knights prefer to strike other ships deep within the heart of Ayriissian-controlled territory, within sight of land (and witnesses).

Spread the Thorned Knight's Legend. The Thorned Knights often redirect the ships they board to new ports with gifts from the Thorned Knights, after taking their fair share of the profits.

CAPTAIN CALLADIN THORN

*Chaotic neutral, male half-elf buccaneer**

Calladin Thorn is a competitive thrill seeker and a notorious scoundrel. He was born on the Aetherial Expanse while his parents, the captain and quartermaster of their own pirate schooner, the *Black Rose*, were preying upon Ayriissian merchants in the Monstera Cluster. They were captured by local authorities and brought to Windcrown to be hanged for piracy—and their young son, as a child of pirates, was to be hanged alongside them as an example to others.

Thorn was freed by his parents' second mate, Yaskara Dumik. This loyal half-orc escaped imprisonment and smuggled both herself and Thorn from Windcrown, where they began pirating again themselves. Following the end of the war between Karel and Ayris, Thorn's career brought them to the Isle of Drakes.

Thorn has adopted the persona of the Thorned Knight, a mythical avenger from Ayriissian folklore, to scare his prey. He dresses the part in custom black enchanted plate armor decorated with thorn motifs. Even though his career has been long and illustrious, he's still in his prime, and won't be outdone by any greenhorn crew.

NOTABLE THORNED KNIGHTS

The *Knight's Corsair's* crew is small but capable, and they use the legend of the Thorned Knight to intimidate their targets to great effect. Some of the ship's crew include:

- **Yaskara Dumik** (LN, female half-orc **berserker**). This studious and determined first mate is known for her carousing. She's pressed many a sailor into service after drinking them under the table.
- **Merhild van Dien** (CN, nonbinary human **spy**). Merhild is the ship's reckless and overeager gunner. Their wild laughter can often be heard when in pursuit of a ship.
- **Orabella Hylde** (N, female half-elf **druid**). The ship's quartermaster is beleaguered and tired, keeping the ship provisioned despite her captain's spendthrift ways.
- **Chance Rumfiller** (N, male, human **buccaneer***). Chance joined the crew as a youth when the Thorned Knights captured the privateer he'd been indentured to and is passionately loyal to Captain Thorn as a result.

QUEST HOOK: DOUBLE TROUBLE

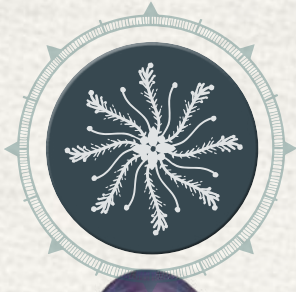
One of the legends of the Thorned Knight speaks of him striking a blow at two distant targets at the same time. To live up to the legend, Captain Thorn seeks a crew that will take a ship decorated to look identical to his own and sink an Ayriissian naval ship called *The King's Champion*, while his ship attacks *The Imperial Legacy*, miles away. If characters agree to this quest, they are approached by a spy from Ayris who suggests that they instead destroy the legend of the Thorned Knights by purposefully losing their battle and publicly surrendering to Ayris, in exchange for a pardon of all past crimes and a hefty sum of money.

QUEST HOOK: SYMBOLIC VICTORY

Captain Thorn would like to capture one of the forts of the Isle of Drakes' Sentinel Islands in the name of the Thorned Knights but needs assistance. He is willing to pay a large sum of money to any pirate or group of pirates who will temporarily join his crew for a mission to infiltrate Fort Roost Island, which is currently under the control of the Shipwreckers, fight or sneak their way to the top of the Fort's stone spire, and hang the flag of the Thorned Knights from it. The flag must hang for at least 1 hour for him to consider the mission a success and pay up.

"Here your reign ends, and suffer for each life you have taken / so the knight did release the king upon a noose of thorns."

—Ballad of King Jerys and the Thorned Knight



Nedir, Leader of the Hungering

THE HUNGERING

While many fear the slumbering god Qoz, there are those who believe its hunger for destruction can be channeled into a force for power and personal gain. Members of the Hungering are taught that every individual has a deep hunger within them that can only be fed in one of two ways: externally, by achieving their goals, or internally, through self-destruction. Those who truly believe in Qoz are rewarded with the former, while those who are too weak or lost to be saved by Qoz's grace fall to the latter, remembered as necessary stepping stools for those who Qoz blesses with power.

DREAMING LEADER

The leader of the Hungering, Nedir (NE, female **aether naiad***), whose ancestral home near Qoz's slumbering body has given her an affinity for the god. Nedir experiences an array of strange dreams that she considers prophecies. She often reaches out to those who feel the pull of destruction or despair, offering them to join the Hungering as a way to focus their pain on a new mission: bringing about Qoz's early ascension and helping the god remake the Expanse in its image. While Nedir has dreamt that this remaking will lead to the death of most of the Hungering, she does not particularly care. Nedir believes she is protecting the Hungering while working toward her goal of restoring Qoz's life and power.

The Hungering maintains a policy of strict secrecy about its plans and goals, guarding even the fact of its existence from most in the Aetherial Expanse. As Nedir teaches, Qoz's power is only for those who have been chosen, and the plans for Qoz's ascension will fail if they are widely known, as its enemies are rampant. Still, she is always on the lookout for potential new recruits, who often come to the Hungering through the Betterment Society, a self-improvement club that has a presence in both Port Majeure and Windcrown.

Once someone has become part of the Hungering, they are not called on for much. Individual members are generally told only to better their lives as best they can, and often provided with resources or connections that make their success that much easier. All that is asked in return is a single promise: if Nedir appears in their dreams with a message from Qoz, they must immediately obey her instructions without question or face deadly consequences.

QUEST HOOK: WAKING NIGHTMARE

A member of the Hungering who has enjoyed great power from the gifts that the group has given them has now had a dream that calls on them to sacrifice someone close to them. Unwilling to do so, they have tried to go on the run, but Nedir continually haunts their dreams. Knowing that she is coming for them, they are hiring guards to fight off whatever Nedir and Qoz will do to them for their disobedience.

THE BETTERMENT SOCIETY

The Betterment Society is focused on the Hungering's goal of self-improvement, as Qoz has no tolerance or sympathy for those who are content with mediocrity. The Society does most of its work improving those around it through Betterment Halls, large spaces in the center of populated areas that offer apprenticeship programs, lectures, and performances geared towards the specific needs of the locals.

In Port Majeure, for example, those who lost a sense of purpose once the truce with Ayris was announced were trained as apprentice shipbuilders by the famed Haras Arleno of the Arleno & Daughters Shipyard. Haras first turned to drink and then to the Hungering as he dealt with the loneliness of retirement.

In Windcrown, by contrast, those who have spent their days as merchants and traders gain physical prowess as fighters with the help of Bester's Ring, an underground fighting ring that counts two Hungering members among its fiercest opponents.

While most who participate in Betterment Society programs never encounter the Hungering, those who take to their programs with particular enthusiasm, single-mindedness, or selfishness are tapped by the Betterment Society for a visit from Nedir, who enters their dreams to "awaken the hunger within."

Faction Goals

The Betterment Society believes that making society stronger is a way to honor the slumbering god Qoz. They use their programs to strengthen participants, while persuading them to value personal power and glory over communal success.

However, the Betterment Society's most important goal is identifying new members for the Hungering. Most Betterment Halls have private classes and mentoring that are offered to promising apprentices—these are used to observe and identify those who might agree with the Hungering's teachings and can be identified to Nedir. Often, the process of determining whether or not a recruit is well-suited for the Hungering is slow and laborious. An unsuccessful recruitment often ends not only in the target's death, but also their recruiter's.

QUEST HOOK: THE BETTERMENT BUTCHER

One of the Betterment Halls has become associated with the deaths of several young people in the area. Only Nedir knows that they were each approached to join the Hungering but declined, and were drowned in their sleep as punishment. She has had members of the Hungering frame a local youth who was friends with all of the victims as the killer, calling them the Betterment Butcher. The accused needs help clearing their name and wants to figure out what really happened in the death of their friends.

THE AETHERED

The Hungering teaches that all creation comes partly from the act of destruction. The Aethered believe that they have found the perfect way to achieve this cycle in their own lives—consuming small quantities of aether each day to break the bonds of the body and eventually make it stronger. The Aethered believe that those who master the intake of aether receive the blessing of Qoz, permanently increasing their arcane abilities and giving them visions of the future that they can use to shape their fate. Even within the Hungering, many scoff at these beliefs, dismissing the visions of the Aethered as a form of aether delirium, but Nedir's tolerance of the group makes it unpopular to speak out against them directly.

While Nedir has yet to decide whether the consumption of aether actually brings the Aethered closer to Qoz, she has always seen their usefulness. The Aethered generally believe that aether in different parts of the Aetherial Expanse has different tastes and qualities, and will travel long distances in the search for the perfect sip. This makes them ideal messengers for the Hungering, as their ramblings are usually dismissed so readily by those around them that they could not reveal the group's secrets if they tried.

Faction Goals

The Aethered view the pursuit of aether as the most profound form of Qoz worship and their thirst for the substance, which tends to grow over time, as a form of hunger. Despite the quantity of aether present in the Aetherial Expanse, they each have their own theories about how, when, and from where to consume aether to receive Qoz's blessing, and often travel and change methods frequently to test these ideas. These trips and experiments are inspired by their visions after consuming aether, though whether these are caused by aether poisoning or are messages directly from the slumbering god is unknown.

QUEST HOOK: PURIFIED

A man calling himself the Wizard of the Waves, traveling in a ship that was cobbled together from the pieces of at least a dozen different vessels, needs help reaching a specific location in the Aetherial Expanse to taste the aether there. He will not be dissuaded from his quest, and is willing to spend a large amount of money for the escort. Unfortunately, his erratic travel patterns in his search for the aether have caught the attention of both Ayris and the Karelagne Empire, who want to capture and question him as a potential spy.

"Every region has its flavors. In the Grey Fingers I note hints of despair, in Port Splendid, the aftertaste of ambition, and in Nuriel Reef, the scent of lost dreams."

—Wizard of the Waves



MERFOLK OF THE CONSTELLATION ISLES

A whisper in the waves. A flash of iridescent motherpearl. Then a bloody shriek. In an instant, the deck of a ship is silenced and awash with blood, and just as quickly the perpetrators vanish beneath the waves again.

This tale is the fearful heart of a thousand rumors and darkly comic ballads told in taverns across the Aetherial Expanse. They speak of the bloody deeds of knife-toothed merfolk—the infamous Sistren of the Constellation Isles. As astral merfolk, their appearance is both humanoid and monstrous, with glassy eyes and wide fins around their neck, often pierced with a half dozen golden rings and coral spurs. Upon land, they walk on two legs, but in the sea, their skin shimmers and flesh fuses together into a long, sinuous tail.

Sailors across the Expanse tend to avoid astral merfolk, assuming they are all members of the Sistren—a deadly mistake. Other merfolk are proud to be honest seafarers—not pirates—and have their own capricious and deadly means of reprisal for such a slight. The true way to recognize a member of the Sistren of the Isles is the motherpearl amulet they wear as a badge of their sisterhood—an iridescent pendant decorated with the icon of their home, the Constellation Isles (see motherpearl sidebar on page 31).

HISTORY OF THE SISTREN

The origin of the Constellation Isles and their infamous Sistren is inexorably intertwined. Legends say that the Constellation Isles were once an island chain near the border between the Elemental Planes of Water and Earth, and in a time beyond memory, those islands and the merfolk who dwelt there tumbled through a planar rift of incredible size. Those who survived awoke in the perpetual eventide of the Aetherial Expanse to find that their island home had fallen, island by island, into a new shape, pulverizing their coral palace and great works of art.

Alone and afraid, the merfolk huddled in what few ruins still remained above the surface of the aether; those who swam below soon fell ill, and succumbed to aether poisoning.

Founding Larmeath

The merfolk were saved when one of their number, a budding sorceress named Larméa, discovered that the aether had a voice—many voices, in fact, a whole chorus!—and that she could commune with them. Five hundred years before the present day, Larméa's attunement to the aether grew so great that she could command the aether itself to rise up, crystallize into aetherium, and to protect the merfolk from its poison. Legend bleeds into history here, and the chronicles assert that this magic divided the merfolk. Only a few who allowed themselves to be changed by Larméa's magic became the first astral merfolk. Over countless generations, their island home became known as Larmeath, and Larméa's bloodline became the Starbinder dynasty that co-rules it to this day.



*Belienne Delaney,
Sistren Wayfinder*

The Schism of Scamallath

Most of the merfolk, however, refused to trust the young sorceress and her strange stories of spirits in the aether. They retreated, ailing, to another ruin-strewn island they called Scamallath. Their leaders were religious zealots who saw their exile as a divine punishment for the decadence of their old life. They came to worship a constellation-goddess they called the Empress—one which other sailors of the Expanse would call Asteth in the coming centuries. Their worship of the Empress granted their high priestesses miraculous powers, at the price of their undying devotion through ritual sacrifice. They too were changed into forms suited to the aether, though slowly over many generations.

The Mermaid's Tears

Years later, one curious princess of Larmeath, named Fianna, was enamored by the planar seafarers who sailed across the aether in small craft, and would trade trinkets of mother-pearl and aetherium jewelry with the sailors. One day, a violent storm capsized one of these vessels Fianna had grown fond of, and the princess used the powers passed down through Larméa's bloodline to save the vessel, and formed a deep bond with one of the human women on board.

Fianna's kind heart brought war to her people. The sailors she saved were returning from a raid on Scamallath, and their ship was gorged with plunder. When the merfolk of Scamallath learned a princess of Larmeath had aided their attackers, they assumed that the pirates and their neighbors had conspired from the beginning, and beseeched the Empress to rain divine wrath upon Larmeath.

The Empress answered in the inscrutable way of gods, and eyewitness history holds that Fianna vanished in the middle of a courtly ball with her sailor companion, in front of dozens of guests. Today, the people of Larmeath believe the Empress banished Fianna to the deepest abyss of the Constellation Isles, where she was imprisoned and unable to surface ever again. She was sought by the merfolk of both Larmeath and Scamallath. Only the latter found her and jeered at her from beyond her divinely constructed prison. All she could do was weep bitter tears and curse the Scamallathans.

Her tears coalesced into aether pearls that glowed with Larméa's magic, becoming a necklace that she wore until she perished in the depths. And the magic they thrummed with was as bitter as the tears that bore them. Her curse lives on in these Mermaid's Tears; at one point, scavengers from Scamallath plucked the pearls from Fianna's corpse, and brought them before their great congregation as a symbol of the Empress's might and goodness—and exposed all the merfolk of Scamallath to Fianna's wrath.

All astral merfolk who beheld the tears were twisted into abominable forms called merrow. In a panic, they returned the tears to their resting place, but it was too late. The people of Scamallath were cursed to remain monstrous merrow for all eternity. And so, curses begat curses, and a cycle of enmity and bloodshed was born between Larmeath and Scamallath.

Birth of the Sistren

At the time of the schism, merfolk from both Larmeath and Scamallath split into a third faction. These women called themselves the Sistren of the Isles—a bond of kinship that would weather any political storms for the good of the Constellation Isles. Aetherbeasts and sailors from beyond the horizon were known to the merfolk even then, and the Sistren created a fortress on the island of Kesforth from which they could repel any invader.

It was a miracle that the Sistren held to their ideals in the wake of the Transformation of Scamallath. Nevertheless, as the Constellation Isles descended into endless skirmishes between the two factions, the Sistren could not bring themselves to interfere, lest their own fellowship fracture too. Instead, they turned their sights outward and built ships to sail the seas. As more and more flags were raised across the Expanse, only piracy—to claim ships, cannons, and aetherium, and to build a bloody, unassailable reputation—could keep their home safe from invaders.

LARMEATH MERFOLK

The astral merfolk of Larmeath are ruled by a matriarchal triumvirate called a trident that is representative of senior, middle, and young ages. The roles oversee merfolk history, present day concerns, and future plans, respectively.

Mira Starbinder (LN, female astral merfolk **mage**) is the eldest member of the trident and knows the location of an artifact called the *Mermaid's Tears** (see page 163). Dillan Kelpcloak (LG, female **astral merfolk tidespeaker***) is the middle-aged member of the trident, and Eydis Pearlsheen (CG, female astral merfolk **spy**) is the youngest member of the trident.

Faction Goals

Larmeath is one of the few stable city-states in the entire Aetherial Expanse, and the trident seeks to safeguard it against the predations of the merrow and internal dissent—at any cost.

Condemn Dissidents. Larmeath is a courtly society that embodies grace and elegance in the face of ruin and danger. The trident allows free expression to an extent, but criminals and dissidents who pose a threat to social harmony are magically cast into the same depths as Fianna, where they slowly, agonizingly transform into merrow through exposure to the Mermaid's Tears. In time, most merrow escape, but the experience leaves their memory of their incarceration hazy.

Cautious Traders. The trident has some interest in trade or bartering if it advances merfolk technology, but are outright aggressive against anyone they suspect would endanger their home, especially if they are near their city at the base of the Larmeath islands.

Protect the Mermaid's Tears. This relic is both a scourge upon Larmeath and an item of national pride. As a symbol of their greatest sorrow and of their hatred toward the merrow of Scamallath, they safeguard the location of the tears at all costs.

SCAMALLATH MERROW

Scamallath is a leaderless island dotted with packs of astral merrow, known as shivers. They generally act like wild wolves—without an “alpha” or a leader. Their pack mentality overrides all. Sometimes, however, a leader emerges with ambition and cunning enough to unite the shivers.

Faction Goals

The astral merrow of Scamallath have suffered terribly at the hands of the Mermaid’s Tears. Whether or not they deserve their fate is a matter for philosophers—the truth of the present is that they yearn to enact their vengeance upon those who have wronged them.

Prey Upon Intruders. At the edge of the Constellation Isles are the Soul Cages, a deadly reef filled with strange magic. The merrow have no qualms about hiding in this reef to prey upon any ship foolhardy enough to navigate it. No ship will trade with them, for they are feared even more than the merfolk, so what they need they must take.

Seek a Cure. The astral merrow have a strange, distant knowledge that they were once something else—something greater than the beasts they were cursed to become. They see their abandoned, crumbling temples to the Empress and ache with a bleak hunger to restore a past they never knew.

QUEST HOOK: COMMON ENEMY

The characters are commissioned to explore a remote reef near Scamallath Isle rumored to hide a magical artifact of ancient origin. On arrival, the characters discover a shiver of astral merrow* in a losing battle with a common enemy such as Karelagne forces, Ayrissian privateers, or a rival pirate crew. The astral merrow are led by one called Ronen, who is a particularly cunning astral merrow (Intelligence 14).

Ronen is an aggressive, violent leader—but she isn’t stupid. If the characters assist her merrow to defeat their common enemy, she may be willing to parlay with the characters. Ronen carries vestigial memories of her past life, and her shiver hoards items of value such as gemstones and weapons. Successful negotiations could yield a tentative alliance with the merrow assisting the characters to find the artifact. If the merfolk of Larmeath learn of this alliance, they will treat the characters with hostility.

SISTREN OF THE ISLES

The Sistren on Kesforth are led by a half-merfolk woman in her fifties named Eldari (LG half-merfolk **knight**). She oversees Sistren operations within the Constellation Isles, and coordinates with other captains and fort commanders elsewhere in the Expanse.

Faction Goals

The Sistren of the Isles’ official credo is to defend the Constellation Isles from all outside threats, and ensure that it always remains a home for the merfolk who, in mythic times, tumbled from the Plane of Water—be they Larmeath or Scamallath.

For the sake of this ideal, they pursue these goals:

Carve a Bloody Legend. The Sistren don’t crave violence. But their goal is to keep the Constellation Isles safe from conquest and plunder. So they wage a campaign of fear against the Expanse. Make the Constellation Isles’ reputation too fearsome to ever attack seriously, while not earning so much ire as to make them a target of military reprisal.

Capture Ships. No forests grow on the Constellation Isles, and alien aetherflora are no good for shipbuilding. In order for the Sistren to raid their way across the Expanse, they need to capture ships—intact—for their own use. Small size and deadly power is best, so that they can strike and flee without fear of retaliation.

QUEST HOOK: RECOVERY MISSION

An eccentric-looking half-elf calling himself Agulus attempts to hire the characters to recover an advanced prototype magitech device. They claim the device was lost when the merchant ship it was on was captured by Sistren pirates. He wants the characters to recover the device from the pirates, for which the half-elf is willing to pay a handsome fee.

If pressed, the half-elf grudgingly shares that the device was a StarDrive component, and they were trying to smuggle it to the Tenders Guild in the Drakes to help the pirate crews better defend themselves against the imperial and privateer attacks.

Agulus is actually a Karelagne agent (NE, male half-elf **spy**) who had planned to steal the StarDrive, but didn’t have a chance to do so because of the Sistren’s attack. If the characters successfully retrieve the device, he may continue the ruse, duping the characters to surreptitiously advance a secret imperial agenda.

SISTREN TITLES AND ADMITTANCE

This faction follows a unique set of rules that members are expected to follow. This includes titles emblematic of individual responsibilities and rules for becoming a member.

The Sistren only accepts women and those with ancestry tying them to the Constellation Isles, meaning most applicants have some merfolk ancestry. To become a full member, applicants must belong to a Sistren vessel’s crew for at least five years. Following this service and the recommendation of the vessel’s Starlet, the applicant may be given a motherpearl sign and be considered a full member of the Sistren of the Constellation Isles. Membership comes with one of the following titles:

Astronomer. Historians and scientists.

Warden. Soldiers and tacticians.

Wayfinder. Travelers and explorers.

Starlet. Sea vessel commanders. Full titles include their previous title, such as Starlet Warden or Starlet Wayfinder. The term “Starlet” is often exchanged for “Captain” if the vessel has non-Sistren crew on board.

Brightstar Commander. Leaders overseeing headquarters, greenlighting expeditions, and approving member ascension.

THE KINGDOM OF AYRIS

Halint is one of the many worlds of the Material Plane, a world of tempestuous seas speckled with mountainous islands, and surrounded by a dozen moons. To the people of this realm, the twin arts of trade and seamanship were indispensable, lest one's isolated colony starve to death in the middle of an uncaring ocean.

The Great Mercantile Kingdom of the Isles of Ayris and the Southern Seas—or, simply, the Kingdom of Ayris—is one of this land's dominant powers, and the only power to have divined the existence of the Aetherial Expanse. This discovery, though first seen as a mere curiosity—or worse, a distraction from the true goal of mercantile dominance over the Southern Seas of Halint—has come to define the power of Ayris on their home world. Halincian people clamor for new “exotic” fruits and goods plundered from the Expanse, and Ayrissian mystics crave aetherium to enhance their powers of foresight, far-travel, and destruction. Though the Kingdom of Ayris presents a peaceful front, their greed cannot be slaked until they have drunk the Aetherial Expanse dry, and plundered every last ounce of aetherium from its isles.

On Halint, the Kingdom of Ayris's home territory is made of five mountainous islands. The Five Peaks of Ayris are all topped by elaborate mansions and are central to their national mythology. They're represented on the Ayrissian naval flag by five diamonds. These islands are called:

- Ayre
- Baten-Tarren
- Valz
- Nennepol
- Luza

THE AYRISSIAN CROWN

The Kingdom of Ayris is ruled by a royal dynasty that stretches back five hundred years. Its history and purity of noble blood is a matter of immense pride to its rulers and to its people alike, for they see themselves as possessing the gods-gifted right to amass wealth and power.

The Opal Crown is worn by King Pietro Jaconno Ayris, Prince of Valz, Grand Duke of Nennepol, and High Tycoon of the Pelagic Exchange (LE, male human **noble**). All Ayrissian coinage bears his face or his regalia. Yet the king of Ayris is an old man. Though his business acumen is all but worshiped throughout Ayris and its holdings in the Aetherial Expanse, his glory days have long since passed. His wife and two children, each with extensive lists of cousins and children and half-children of their own, rule through him by suggestion and manipulation. His proclamations are impulsive, lacking the cunning that once exalted him, and it is all that his four hopeful successors can do to simultaneously curry his favor while manipulating him to advance their own goals within the Aetherial Expanse.



Crown Princess
Naëlana

*"Old wealth reserves you a seat at the table,
but new wealth ensures that you keep it."*

— Lord-Inheritor Phaedon

Faction Goals

The Ayrissian Crown is a faction at war with itself. The many potential successors to the throne smell the reek of death upon the aging king, and are amassing power to be best-prepared to claim the crown when it falls from his liver-spotted brow. The Kingdom of Ayris has one major goal shared among all its royal members, and represented by the current king and his greatest supporter, his daughter Naëläna. Its other goals are divergent, and a source of discord within the Ayrissian Merchant Fleet in the Expanse.

Grow Ayrissian Wealth. All members of this faction seek to fill the kingdom's coffers with enough gold to astound the imagination. The king's eldest daughter, Crown Princess Naëläna (LN, female human **fierce buccaneer***), seeks to ensure that she inherits the throne, and believes that as long as she can afford to pay her soldiers, she can keep it. So long as the Opal Crown sits upon a royal head, wealth shall be its guiding star.

Shift Power to the Expanse. The king's youngest child, Lord-Inheritor Phaedon (CN, nonbinary human **squall caller***), seeks to not only expand the reach of the kingdom, but to make Windcrown its seat of power. They see the Old World of Halint as backward and ailing, just like their father.

Dominant Halint. Two dozen distant, unlikely heirs to the Opal Crown have formed a coalition of their various armies and militias on Halint and are plotting a coup. Led by Prince-Captain Tammon d'Ayre, this secretive alliance of lesser heirs uses smugglers and ambitious traitors to the crown to subvert the goals of the king's children.

QUEST HOOK: WRITING HISTORY

Lord-Inheritor Phaedon has decided that the time has come to wrest power from Ayris. After hearing of the characters' prowess, Phaedon grants them a letter of marque authorizing them to assassinate King Pietro of Ayris. Phaedon also gives them a clay tablet enchanted with a *word of recall*, which, if shattered, casts the spell. Its destination is the entry hall of Windcrown Keep.

The characters are to smuggle themselves into the Ayrissian capital of Veä Plumeria on a cargo ship passing through the planar gate, then use the subtlest means at their disposal to kill the king and his daughter, Crown Princess Naëläna—and make it look natural. From here, how Lord-Inheritor Phaedon plans to make Windcrown the center of Ayrissian sovereignty is up to the GM.

WINDCROWN

The port of Windcrown is the heart of Ayris's operations in the Aetherial Expanse. It is home not just to the kingdom's greatest shipyards, but also a planar gate that allows even the largest galleons swift access to Lavazza Harbor in the Ayrissian capital city of Veä Plumeria, on the island of Luza.

Governor-General Halle DiLuza

Governor-General Halle DiLuza (N, female human **knife master***) is a puppet who has cut her strings, and dances to a tune of her own composing. All official statements made by the Governor-General of Windcrown, the center of Ayrissian power on the Aetherial Expanse, begins by reasserting that the king (complete with all his titles) has personally passed down an order—whether or not the king has any knowledge of the order in question—and the king rarely, if ever, does.

She is in a secret relationship with the king's youngest child, Phaedon, which she began after learning of Phaedon's desire to defy royal tradition and make Windcrown the kingdom's new capital. As a self-made, lowborn woman who only found opportunity for advancement in the wildlands of the Aetherial Expanse, she longs to tear down the current Ayrissian order. In her eyes, its ancient noble houses are filled with opulent graybeards and young opportunists too busy assassinating each other to ever truly rule.

Nasty rumors abound within Windcrown Keep of the relationship between the governor and the young lord-inheritor. Even Windcrown is not safe from the so-called Curse of Ayris—that a secret made is a secret spilled. All but the closest of DiLuza's subordinates see her as a callow social climber, but those close to her know that she genuinely admires and cares for Phaedon, and that she's a true believer in their dream.

QUEST HOOK: MONSTERA CRISIS

Civilians in the Ayrissian colonies of the Monstera Cluster have grown unhappy with their government for providing them insufficient protection against the aetherbeasts that nest there. DiLuza grants the characters a letter of marque valid for one month so that they can protect the colonists from a threat of the GM's choice, such as:

- A pack of **aetherwolves*** led by an astral emergent **druid** who wants to experience the mortal concept of tyranny.
- A raiding party of **astral merrow*** who have scuppered all merchant ships trying to trade with the colony.
- Gianmarco Barzaghi, an Ayrissian pirate-turned-privateer, has started raiding again and preying upon his own people in his schooner, the *Lamprey*

THE STARDOGS

Pirates are a dime a dozen on the starlit waves of the Aetherial Expanse. A rare breed, however, are freebooters backed by royal gold and led by royal blood. Prince-Captain Tammon d'Ayre is the scion of a minor noble house that lusts for the Opal Crown of Ayris—even though he is so distantly related to the king that two dozen would-be heirs must first die to open a path for Tammon's ascension.

First within the court of Ayris, and now within the halls of Windcrown, Prince Tammon leads a coalition of ambitious lordlings to eliminate all obstacles between them and the crown. They call themselves the Stardogs. Plenty of no-name pirates with no understanding of Tammon's true nature are a part of his crew, but his most valued officers are all members of his nation's aristocracy—and he hopes that any who stand in his way will die in the line of duty before he has to get his hands dirty removing them from the line of succession himself.

The Stardogs meet each month in a secret room of the Wolfhound Tavern in Windcrown to plot their next move. They work in secret to support the goals of the governor-general and her forces, but also to enrich themselves at the same time. Prince Tammon is aware of a plot in Windcrown to assassinate the king and his eldest daughter—and he intends to capitalize on that moment by assassinating Lord-Inheritor Phaedon and leveraging the crisis of succession to become king himself, and make all of his supporters extremely wealthy.

The Stardogs' "fleet" is made up of three ships. The fearsome galleon called the *Dire Wolf* is captained by Prince Tammon. The other two ships are the *Unleashed*, a frigate, and the *Bloodhound*, a brigantine.

Prince-Captain Tammon d'Ayre

Prince Tammon (see page 267) will betray whomever he must to win the throne. Two dozen claimants to the throne stand between him and his succession. And while his good looks and winning charisma have turned a number of them into friends sworn to serve him and step aside should a path to the throne open, he trusts none of them to abide by their word.

As a teenager, Prince Tammon began a construction business with a sizeable loan from his father, the Low King of the Mount of Ayre, and before long, he turned a profit. But workaday business ventures bored Tammon. He was blessed with looks, athleticism, and cunning, and drew allies to him like flies to honey. Though he was far removed from true power, he often heard the goddess Asteth urge him in dreams to seize his destiny, and saw himself with the Opal Crown upon his head through a curtain of divine flames.

He knew what this recurring vision meant: claim the throne or die trying—and damn anyone who dared withhold from him his destiny.

"This Kingdom yearns for a new ruler, and who better to rule than someone who knows how to seize coin with wit and strength? Who better than a Pirate-King?"

—Prince-Captain Tammon d'Ayre

QUEST HOOK: CLEAR THE PATH

Tammon fears that an ally of his—Duke-Captain Viaro of the *Unleashed*—has begun plotting against him. This will not stand. Tammon has learned that Viaro is meeting with some of his allies in a cove in the Monstera Cluster. The characters are to wait in a coveside port called Granchiolino, ambush the *Unleashed*, and kill Viaro.

The twist: Viaro is loyal to Tammon, and the prince's paranoia is starting to get the better of him. Nevertheless, failure to kill Viaro will lose the characters Tammon's trust and favor.

QUEST HOOK: THE IRON IS HOT

Tammon has learned of Lord-Inheritor Phaedon's plan to seize power and plans to exploit it. By this time, Tammon has eliminated all of his rivals to the throne. Now, he plots to seize Phaedon's victory from them in one fell swoop: send his trusted allies, the characters, to kill Phaedon and their lover, Halle DiLuza, and open the line of succession to Tammon. Ever-scheming, Tammon plans to arrive just as the characters have done his bidding, and then kill them himself and become a hero to the people of Ayris—one worthy of the Opal Crown.

LETTERS OF MARQUE

When the government needs aid in a war, they issue a letter of marque to patriotic civilian sailors, whom the crown deputizes as privateers. These privateers tend to be either pirates seeking amnesty, or well-armed civilian vessels with romantic notions of piracy, but who want to avoid being branded criminals.

A privateer's actions reflect upon their political patron, to an extent. Governments often carry out proxy wars using privateers, while maintaining plausible deniability of their involvement—because who can truly trust a pirate?

The Kingdom of Ayris also issues letters of marque more broadly, deputizing civilians or even pirates as mercenaries to carry out tasks—often illegal ones—that her navy is too proud to undertake, like smuggling, assassination, and plundering the bases and colonies of the Karelagne Empire.

Most letters of marque have an indefinite duration, but can be rescinded at any time, if the privateer engages in piracy. Some letters only deputize a vessel and her crew for the duration of a specific task.



THE KARELAGNE EMPIRE

The Karelagne Empire is the dominant political and military force in the world of Tholus. While once one of several city-states fighting for dominance over a shared mainland, Karel gained the upper hand over its rivals after its technomages created a stable portal to the Aetherial Expanse and gave the nation direct and exclusive access to aetherium.

The Karelagne Empire is a military democracy ruled by a Sovereign General, who leads all aspects of Karelagne life and policy. The Sovereign General uses a firm grip to keep the Empire's provinces in line, as regional factions seek to reclaim power lost with Karel's ascension. Karelagne strongholds exist in every province, securing the Empire's control over the mainland, and advanced magitech vehicles allow the Empire's outnumbered personnel to dominate these rivals. Despite this, radical factions maintain armed resistance in remote areas, often indiscriminately striking at military and civilian targets.

Thus far, Karel's activities in the Aetherial Expanse have been unaffected by its home world regional dissension. The Empire relies on its Aetherian Navy to protect its astral plane assets and ensure the steady flow of aetherium back to Tholus continues. However, the Empire's secretive "Agency" suspects rebel groups are targeting imperial assets on the Silvery Seas. Because the Empire has grown increasingly hungry for its aetherium shipments, any disruptions to these deliveries could hinder the Empire's ability to respond to provincial rebel activity.

THE AETHERIAN NAVY

The Karelagne military is truly formidable. Since the first astral explorer returned with aetherium crystals from the Aetherial Expanse, military technomages have engineered wondrous armaments, engines, and supporting technologies severely outclassing any rival on its home world.

The Karelagne navy is particularly impressive. Although most Karelian vessels are still made of wood, sail, and rope, they can be produced faster and in far greater quantities than vessels of the Empire's rivals. Its most powerful sailing ships are iron-hulled behemoths with smoke-belching chimneys, branching scrying arrays, and terrible cannons that can hurl devastating blasts of elemental energy.

Naval technomages have begun experimenting with submersibles, though most are prototypes yet to see active service. Surprisingly, airship development has progressed more rapidly, with models ranging from small, two-person skyhorses to massive, daunting war zeppelins, though few of these devices have made it to the Aetherial Expanse because of unresolved and poorly understood arcane problems moving these vehicles through the planar gate.



*Fearghal Kane,
Commander of Fort Bantor*

Faction Goals

Karel's Aetherial Navy has a clear mandate to safeguard Karelagne settlements, mining activities, and imperial ships traversing the aetherial waters. Viceroy Caturix uses all resources at his disposal to aggressively ensure nothing threatens Karelagne interests.

Protect Aetherium. Aetherium is now the lifeblood of the Karelagne Empire. Its massive military is dependent on these magical crystals as is the home world's growing dependance on aetherium powered magitech devices. Imperial ships aggressively respond to any and all threats, preferring to shoot first and ask questions later.

Eliminate Piracy. Pirates from the Isle of Drakes are viewed as a pestilence that needs to be eradicated. The Empire regularly issues bounties to capture or eliminate known pirates and to a lesser extent, sponsors privateers to do the same. Naval captains have been known to liberally interpret piracy to justify attacks of Ayrissian flagged vessels, though the Viceroy is careful to ensure these attacks are infrequent to not threaten the tenuous ceasefire they have with the kingdom.

Viceroy
Caturix



ADMIRAL ABREXTA KATHINEL

Lawful evil, female tiefling mage

The harsh, steel-edged voice of the silver-eyed Claw of the Viceroy echoes through the metallic halls of the Karelagne flagship, the *INS Thunderchild*, like the report of a rifle. She captains her ship with ruthless efficiency, and has led it on three successful arrays of drills in preparation for its debut. Her snarl brings even the most belligerent sailors in line, for her reputation for hurling defiant crew overboard is known throughout both the Empire and the Expanse.

Though Kathinel is an efficient taskmaster, rumor has it her draconian methods have driven many soldiers assigned to the *Thunderchild* to defect and take up a life of piracy, rather than serve aboard her ship. Kathinel cares little for defecting conscripts; her only goal is to prove herself the strongest being in the Expanse. Her origins are a secret to all but herself and her unsettling commander, Viceroy Caturix, but something in her mysterious past drives her forward as if all the devils of the Hells were at her heels.

QUEST HOOK: BELOW SEAS

Shern Terrix (LE, male human **knight**) is a new Keralagne officer raising through the naval ranks. He has volunteered to captain a prototype submersible to recover valuables from a Drake ship that sunk somewhere off the coast of the Monsterra Isles. Few are willing to join him on the maiden voyage, prompting the captain to hire the characters and offer them a share of whatever is found.

VICEROY CATURIX THE SILVER-HANDED

Lawful evil, male half-elf archmage

Rumors abound of the cruelty of Caturix the Silver-Handed, Viceroy of Port Majeure. Rooms fall silent when he enters, a pallid specter draped in midnight-blue robes and festooned with arcane charms and golden body jewelry. His sharp Karelagne military uniform is barely visible through the enveloping darkness of his arcane accoutrements. Adventurers foolish enough to make light of him are treated to a swift and remorseless demonstration of his power: a 9th-level *cone of cold* that lays waste to all in his path. He bears a metallic prosthetic forearm that appears to be made of swirling quicksilver magically attached to his right elbow. It obeys his commands perfectly and can transform into any shape he can imagine; including a +3 *longsword* and a +3 *wand of the war mage*.

Caturix is the embodiment of the Karelagne Empire's dominating hunger. His flagship, the *INS Thunderchild* is an extension of his will to conquer. Though he longs to lead wars of conquest himself, his administrative duties in Port Majeure occupy much of his time, and he delegates command of the *Thunderchild* to his most trusted admiral, Abrexta Kathinel.

Caturix is obsessed with the legends of Astrium and the ancient astral titans that ruled it. Now the Empire's war with Ayris has ended, he considers it the Imperial Navy's main purpose to scout the Expanse for undiscovered magical artifacts or technology. Recently, Caturix has unearthed ancient records of a magical device that allowed the titans of Astrium to harness the aether's full power, though what exactly this means has been lost to time. Caturix has allocated huge sums of Karelagne funds to develop subaetherial vessels to scour the depths of the Expanse for this device. Karelagne technomages are feverishly working to craft these submersibles.

Domas Brandel,
Sovereign General



THE SOVEREIGN GENERAL

Domas Brandel is only the third Sovereign General since the Empire's founding, rising to power after a technological disaster blamed on his predecessor devastated large areas of the Empire. He has ruled successfully for nearly 20 years, and is currently running unopposed in the coming year's elections, though recent rumblings by dissident groups around the Empire are somewhat affecting his image.

Brandel wields his vast political power with skill, expertly outmaneuvering rivals to maintain his grip on power. Hushed whispers suggest that Brandel is an off-world imposter who maintains his control thanks to secretive criminal groups who do his bidding. This is partly true, as he directs the Agency, a secretive organization designed to protect Karel from threats within and without.

The Agency

The Agency is an indispensable facet of the Karelagne Empire, countering threats that cannot be addressed by brute military force alone. Most operations are covert affairs, kept secret from even high-ranking officials. The Sovereign General is particularly interested in ensuring secrecy to avoid public scrutiny, and to keep his popularity within the Empire high.

Personnel within the Agency are kept compartmentalized using a clandestine cell system, whereby agents work in small, autonomous groups receiving directives from a few trusted administrators. Thus, if an individual is apprehended, their ability to divulge identities of other agents is likewise limited.

The scale of the Agency's operations is unclear, with perhaps even its highest levels unaware of the organization's full extent. What is clear is that significant resources are made available for agent operations. Its operatives are provided with the latest magitech equipment, some developed by the Agency's own technomages, and others reverse-engineered from devices 'acquired' in the field. Recently, Agents have undertaken missions in the Aetherial Expanse, targeting both Ayrissian and Karelagne targets viewed as a threat to the Empire.

Faction Goals

The Sovereign General is focused on maintaining his grip on power, whatever the cost.

Eliminate Threats. Domas Brandel uses his significant resources to eliminate rivals and threats to his continued power with ruthless efficiency. He will happily give orders to sink a fully manned Karelagne galleon should he learn a rival is among its passengers.

Acquire Magitech. The Sovereign General fully recognizes that the Karelagne Empire's strength is due in no small part to its aetherium-powered magitech advancements. He regularly sponsors missions to acquire new advances that can bolster the Empire's power. Brandel continues to secretly fund arcane portal research, despite an Empire-wide ban on these activities that was put into place after the Folly Disaster that created a monstrous-filled wasteland at the center of the Empire. It is believed Brandel looks to open gates to other Material Plane worlds for the Empire to conquer.

AGENT BLACKWORD

*Neutral evil, male human **master agent****

The Sovereign General has assigned Agent Blackword, one of the Agency's top assassins, to operate out of Port Kaylo. He is a non-descript individual, using a variety of aliases, and expertly blending into ship crews as an unranked sailor to discretely eliminate his targets. He often provokes crew uprisings to make it easier to kill his target in the ensuing shipboard chaos. Several Karelagne officers with questionable loyalty have died at the end of his blade thanks to this tactic.

Agent Blackword wears a magitech pendant beneath his shirt that functions like a *ring of mind shielding* to obfuscate his identity from magical divination.

QUEST HOOK: VALUE OF LIFE

While the characters are aboard a Karelagne transport, they find themselves pursued by the *Nova Runner*, a pirate frigate secretly employed by the Agency. The frigate transmits an ultimatum, turn over the fugitive Yarith Shudarsk (CG, male gnome **technomage***) in the next two hours, or be blown apart. However, no one on the ship claims to be, or even have heard of, Yarith Shudarsk.

BRIGHTBOOK

Opening a gateway to the Aetherial Expanse changed everything for Karel. Its turbulent aether seas, both poisonous and magical, revealed wondrous vistas and magical resources never seen on their home world of Tholus. Probably most consequential to Karel's transformation into the Karelagne Empire was the acquisition of aetherium crystal, which enabled the development of magitech: arcane-powered devices that revolutionized Karel's armaments and unleashed a creative torrent of magical engineering.

Technomages are the creative talents behind magitech. They view restrictions on their efforts as short-sighted and a failure to accept the realities that magitech is the future of the arcane arts.

To be a skilled technomage, one needs to understand not only the principles of theoretical arcane knowledge, but of the practicalities of engineering, materials, and manufacturing. Numerous schools of magitech engineering have opened across the Empire thanks to an insatiable demand for the latest and greatest magitech creations.

Because aetherium is costly and hard to obtain, most magitech is invented by the Empire and to a lesser extent, large businesses. The occasional rich entrepreneur or eccentric inventor has been known to create impressive magitech innovations, but these are often hoarded rather than shared with the citizenry.

Disgruntled Creators

Many technomages are increasingly frustrated by the Empire's approach to magitech development. New advancements are usually absconded by the military for Imperial armaments. Independent technomages are often sanctioned for not supporting Imperial efforts, while particularly skilled individuals often disappear from public view, squirreled away by the military to remote labs.

A handful of influential magitech experts have quietly organized themselves into a group called Brightbook. From their perspective, technomages ushered in the Empire's rise and they should be the ones ruling it. They are opposed to the Sovereign General's tight-fisted governance, and seek to create a new order where they—magitech's creators—define a glorious future for the Empire. But first, they must overthrow the Sovereign General.

Work In Secret

Thus far, few are aware of Brightbook's existence. Its founders have been careful to stay secret, knowing any Imperial response would be swift and harsh. Brightbook has established a handful of hidden meeting spaces in Imperial cities, but increasingly see the Aetherial Expanse as an ideal location to base their efforts, away from the Sovereign General's many eyes. Although the organization is still small, they have several powerful imperial figures counted among their ranks, and have made steady progress to connect with like-minded individuals throughout the Empire.

Faction Goals

Brightbook disapproves of the Empire's current governance, but this doesn't mean they are altruistic. The dozen or so individuals directing Brightbook's activities have not yet agreed on a consistent vision for the future. However, there is a consensus that the current military rule overseen by the Sovereign General must be removed. Brightbook is positioned to fill the resulting leadership vacuum.

Seek Allies. As the organization is still in its formative stages, members seek to develop a network of like-minded individuals. Several are also happy to use enemies of the Empire to achieve their objectives, fully expecting to jettison assets when they are no longer useful. Positioning technomages to lead the Empire is all that matters.

Infiltrate the Chain of Command. Brightbook members recognize it will take time to build an organization strong enough to depose the Sovereign General. They intend to leverage the Empire's military might against itself, looking to insinuate members in military leadership roles or find ways to gain leverage over existing commanders. Brightbook currently counts several naval captains under their influence.

TALENCE AURABINDER

*Neutral, male human **technomage****

An up-and-coming professor at the University of Karel, Talence Aurabinder has built a scholarly reputation on his understanding of channeling energy from aetherium crystals. He has thus far avoided being 'acquired' by the military, but worries that one day he will be put to work in a remote Imperial research center.

Talence was introduced to Brightbook by Velaasa Sorn, a popular Imperial socialite known for throwing her fortune at projects that strike her fancy.

Thanks to Velaasa's introductions, Talence has quietly met with several Ayrissian scholars who are equally disgruntled with their own standing. They have discussed the possibility of a new dominion on the Aetherial Expanse controlled by arcane artificers with both the Karelagne Empire and the Kingdom of Ayris under its control. They see the independent-minded folk of the Drakes as a potential tool to achieving this vision.

QUEST HOOK:

DOUBLE-BARREL CHARGEBLASTER

Brightbook has developed an experimental coilgun. They've discreetly given the new weapon to the brash pirate crew of the *Crimson Serpent*, who are unknowingly testing the weapon's capabilities and dangers. The characters may be traveling with the *Crimson Serpents* or hired by the Karelagne Empire to retrieve the weapon and discover its origins.





Part 2

PLAYER'S GUIDE

Alellia has always known that she would end up on the sea—at least, that's what she tells herself the minute she starts rowing. It seems silly for her to have doubts when anyone can tell that she's got aether in her bones. But confidence, like courage, can take time to grow fully.

For years, she's kept her tentacles pulled back and down and still, wrapped tightly in an old fishing net and tucked into a hooded shirt, her finlets strapped down to her arms by iron-buckled leather. Devain had teased her constantly, the way that friends who love you do, and asked if they should cut their wings or Mizel use a fishing cloth to cover every inch of flesh so no one ever knew about the sparkle in his skin. And she would laugh and tell them that she wasn't trying to hide herself, but there were moments when she wished she could fit in anywhere, an indistinguishable piece of some much greater whole.

Jura was a friendly place, attracting passing visitors who needed somewhere to restock—sailors of metal given life by distant technomages, shipwrecked Ayrissian merchants who'd taken Maelstrom in their hearts, stout and bearded scrabblers who'd give their lives to save their ship, and with a cry could turn to beasts that lurked deep in the aether. But Drakes had captured Alellia's heart, their bards singing a rousing chant and quartermasters making deals while boatswains climbed the rigging, testing them for strength. And though she dreamed of piracy, she wondered if they'd take her in if she seemed wild or too much like the creatures they faced while at sea. Better to seem manageable, tentacles and fins tucked in, and hope somebody noticed her and put her on their crew.

It was Devain who changed her mind, who found the book washed up on shore. Captain Kavisa's Guide to Life for Those Who Dare to Wander. And while she read up on the many details of a pirate's life, from boons to ranks to ways to join, of course, Devain was off to try new elemental magic, skipping directly to the hardest and most complicated page. Of course, they had to get it wrong and plunge into the aether, wings dragging them underneath, gulping down enough of it to fill their lungs with poison. Of course, she couldn't reach them with her hair tied up in fishing rope and finlets tight against her skin, unable to flick freely. Of course, she ripped the coverings off and dove, brought Devain back to the surface, made them take the antidote, and didn't care who saw her as long as they were saved. And when Devain recovered, and she told them how some Drakes had seen her, tentacles and fins and self in all her desperate glory, and told her that they'd take her in if she wanted to join their ship, of course, they smiled and wished her well and didn't say I told you so. They'd always known Alellia would end up on the sea.





Chapter 5

CHARACTER CREATION

*“Shining stars, shimmering aether, and nerves of steel
give the aether its metaphorical and actual gravitas, not
unlike me, your most humble servant.”*

—Jactans, notorious astral emergent swashbuckler

Those who sail on the Aether Sea are far from monoliths. Different creatures from countless worlds find their ways to the Aetherial Expanse, either accidentally or for their own reasons. While this setting contains a few unique species of its own, this pliable universe is available to all, and largely welcoming. Whether the other creatures there are welcoming is another story!

CHARACTERS IN THE AETHERIAL EXPANSE

The Aetherial Expanse offers players new rules for creating characters to explore the world and enhance roleplay. Keep in mind, because of its unique location, you can create any character you want from a variety of locales with your GM's blessing.

BUILDING YOUR CHARACTER

Use the following guidelines and normal Fifth-Edition character-building rules to create a character for an Aetherial Expanse campaign.

Choose an Ancestry

Although the Aetherial Expanse lies within the Astral Plane, its scores of planar gates allow people from countless planes and other worlds to find their way to this magical place. The wildly independent privateers that ply these enchanted waters care little about where a crewmember comes from, so long as they pull their weight and help the crew.

Characters adventuring in the Aetherial Expanse can be members of any ancestry, be they the standard species from the Fifth-Edition rules or other Fifth-Edition supplements.

Additionally, three new ancestries designed for use in the Aetherial Expanse are described herein: astral emergents, astral merfolk, and automatons (see “New Ancestries” later in this chapter).

Since the Aetherial Expanse is a plane between planes, it's entirely possible a magical mishap could have drawn in creatures from a species unique to any world, such as the laneshi or ogressh from Etharis (described in *Grim Hollow: The Player's Guide*), into the Aetherial Expanse.

Ridley Ono
First Mate, Osprey's
Roost



TRAIT SELECTION

In a typical Fifth-Edition game, characters are given a list of traits or abilities based on their race, species, ancestry, or whatever term is used by the source material. If you choose to use that method for your own Aetherial Expanse game, you can do so. Specific traits for the new ancestries provided here are given with the ancestry information later in this chapter.

However, you can also allow players to build unique characters with diverse traits unassociated with any particular ancestry. These traits are divided into three categories: combat, exploration, and roleplaying. These distinctions can help supplement your background and class choices, or they can accommodate a player's vision for their individually unique character.

See "Customizing Ancestries" later in this chapter for more information on creating completely unique characters by choosing traits individually instead of relying on the packaging of traits within an ancestry.

Choose a Class

Any typical Fifth-Edition class can be found in the Aetherial Expanse, as can any specialized classes that the GM and players decide.

The dangers of the aether mean that adaptation is important to survival. The magically inclined learn to use the power of aether to their advantage. Others use elemental forces that leak onto the plane. Some just work to maximize their strength.

The Aetherial Expanse introduces 24 new subclasses. In addition to these subclasses, fighters, paladins, and rangers can select from an additional four fighting styles that cater to seafaring and ship combat.

Ability Scores

You can generate your character's ability scores in any way available in the game's rules and approved by your GM. You may increase your starting ability scores based on your ancestry or simply choose 2 scores to increase by +2 and +1 respectively.

"Stick a disparate lot on a ship bound for uncharted Aetherial waters and you'll end up with one of two results: A tightknit crew who would die for one another...or a splintered ship with dead sailors."

—Selenya, Velstarrón Dockmaster

Describe Your Character

There are many ways that individuals can find themselves on the Astral Plane. Some come to explore the vast expanse, others to seek potential fortune in the largely unexplored aether, and even more just to get away from a plane that no longer serves them.

The Aetherial Expanse offers players six new backgrounds that can ground their character in the world (or give them their sea legs). On top of additional character traits, these new backgrounds can also be blended with the Seafarer Advancement to incorporate officer rank. These backgrounds are detailed in Chapter 9.

Seafarer Advancement Mechanics

An Aetherial Expanse campaign could also include the Seafarer Advancement, discussed in detail in Chapter 7. Seafarer Advancement is an Aetherial Expanse advancement mechanic that encourages players to become part of a ship's crew and gain features (and potentially boons) as they travel and work on an aether-faring vessel. This mechanic also integrates new navel rules and opens opportunities for ship combat and crew teamwork.

NEW ANCESTRIES

The Aetherial Expanse is home to three new ancestries: the astral emergent, astral merfolk, and automatons. Using these ancestries invites players to submerge themselves and their characters into the unique flavor of an Aetherial Expanse campaign.



Ara Wavecrest
Boatswain on the No Cigar

ASTRAL EMERGENT

You were born from the thoughts and dreams of mortal beings. Your consciousness was once a string of thoughts and desires lost within the aether's vastness. Then, your peaceful existence as thought alone was disturbed when a body crashed into the aether. This body was torn, broken, and dying—or dead already. Your essence surged into this shattered vessel, and you willed the aether to heal its flaws.

Not long after, you emerged from the waves and marveled at your new, physical form. It was a body, one that had limbs, senses, and lifeblood: things you could only dream of as a flickering, aetherial thought. The body you emerged from the astral waves with was once rent asunder but is now healed; the former wounds glowing with the light of stars and nebulae.

Your features resemble those of the creature who died beneath the aetherial waves, but your thoughts and feelings are wholly new, fashioned from the collective consciousness of the cosmos.

Astral Emergent Base Traits

All astral emergent characters have the following traits:

Age. Astral emergents age at the same rate as members of their vessel's species. You likely inherited the body of an adult seafarer lost to the aetherial waves. You recall hazy echoes of that person's memories, including how to speak, move, eat, and any other functions a humanoid needs to survive.

Creature Type. You are a Humanoid of the same subtype as your vessel species.

Languages. You can speak Common and Aetherian, the language of aetherbeasts.

Size. You are Medium or Small. You choose the size of the vessel species you select.

Traditional Astral Emergent Traits

If you prefer to use the Fifth Edition's standard approach for defining species traits, your astral emergent character has the following traits:

Ability Score Increase. Your Constitution score increases by 1, and two other ability scores of your choice also increase by 1.

Speed. Your walking speed is 30 feet, and you have a swimming speed equal to your walking speed. If your vessel had other movement options, such as a flying speed, those limbs no longer function to provide that form of movement.

Aetheric Adaptation. You are immune to the effects of aether poisoning (see page 20).

Formed of Aether. The Aetherial Expanse wishes to reclaim your body. You take 1d4 force damage when you touch aether for the first time on a turn or start your turn in contact with it. While fully immersed in aether, as an action at the start of each of your turns, you can make a DC 13 Charisma check to fight against the aether and reverse the process. On a success, you gain 1d8 temporary hit points instead of taking the force damage.

One with the Sea. When you die, you can't be resurrected except by a *wish* spell. Your form melts away as your body and mind return to the Aetherial Expanse. A creature that casts *speak with dead* while touching the aether must make a successful DC 21 Charisma (Investigation) check to discern your mind from among the flickering egos within the sea.

Unusual Nature. You don't require air, food, or drink. When you sleep or fall unconscious, your form flickers and wavers, becoming translucent and revealing the constellation of lights that make up your bones.

VARIANT: RESURRECTING ASTRAL EMERGENTS

Most astral emergents are content to explore the Aetherial Expanse from a new, humanoid perspective for a time, and then simply return to the aether to resume their unity with the sea. However, an astral emergent with a strong, individual identity or a strong sense of purpose, such as a player character, can be called back from the sea after death.

To resurrect such an emergent, a new body must be found. This body can be a deceased organic creature's, or magically constructed from a material like clay, stone, or iron at the GM's discretion. Once a body is procured, the individual spirit must first be contacted with a *speak with dead* spell, then a *raise dead* or a *resurrection* spell must be cast while the body is lowered into the aether.

ASTRAL MERFOLK

The merfolk of the Aetherial Expanse make their home in the Constellation Isles, where they're locked in eternal enmity with their age-old foes, the astral merrow. The merfolk of the Constellation Isles tell tales of tumbling into this world of eternal, starlit twilight long ago. And though many of their kind died—or worse, mutated into merrow—over time, they became at home in the aether.

The magic of the Aetherial Expanse has made their skin bright with shining colors, giving them the uncommon ability to shapechange their long tail fins into legs with webbed feet, which allow them to walk comfortably on land. Though astral merfolk are most at home in the aether and try to steer clear of the greed of land dwellers, the allure of those who walk on land and sail on wooden ships often proves too great to resist.

The astral merfolk have built a society in the Constellation Isles around the isle of Larmeath. They try to live a peaceful life despite the constant predation of their fallen kin, the merrow. Nevertheless, some merfolk dream of more than a placid life in Larmeath disrupted by vicious merrow attacks. Longing for more from their charmed life, these merfolk seek out pirate ships, and the glory and danger those ships chase.

Astral Merfolk Base Traits

All astral merfolk characters have the following traits:

Age. The lifespan of an astral merfolk is about the same as a human's.

Creature Type. You are Humanoid.

Languages. You can speak Common and Aetherian, the language of aetherbeasts.

Size. You are Medium.

Traditional Astral Merfolk Abilities

If you prefer to use the Fifth Edition's standard approach for defining racial traits, your astral merfolk character has the following traits:

Ability Score Increase. Your Dexterity score increases by 1, and two other ability scores of your choice also increase by 1.

Speed. Your walking speed is 0 feet and you have a swimming speed of 30 feet. As an action, you can transform your tail fin into a pair of legs. While transformed, you lose your swimming speed and increase your walking speed to 30 feet.

Aetherbeast Affinity. You learn the *animal friendship* spell, and when you reach 3rd level, you also learn the *animal messenger* spell. You can cast these spells without expending a spell slot a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus (both spells count toward the same limit), and you regain all expended uses when you finish



Gaelus
Half-Merfolk Soldier

a long rest. When cast this way, the spell can only target aetherbeasts. You can also cast these spells using spell slots you have of the appropriate level. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for these spells.

Aetheric Adaptation. You can breathe both air, aether, and water, and are immune to the effects of aether poisoning (see page 20).

Slipstream. When you take the Dash action while swimming, you gain extra movement equal to twice your swimming speed. Until the end of your turn, when you take the Dash action, you don't provoke opportunity attacks while swimming. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you complete a short or long rest.

AU-M057
Automaton Rebel Leader



AUTOMATON

When the Karelagne Empire discovered the portal to the Aetherial Expanse, everything changed on their homeworld. One of the most profound changes was the unlocking of the potential for aether and aetherium to allow for the creation of magitech technology.

The technology brought about by magitech revolutionized many aspects of life in the Empire, from manufacturing to warfare. And it also created a new type of being: the automaton.

The first automatons were fairly simple beings, powered by aetherium and built for mundane, specific tasks. As years passed, however, these constructed beings began to display varying levels of sentience. Recently, as more and more of these beings were created and put to work in Karel, some have taken on personalities as complex and nuanced as any organic creature. And most importantly, they have begun to desire more than the tasks they were created to perform.

Those who were too vocal or vehement in their demands caused unrest, and even panic, in some communities. One of the best ways to ensure an automaton rebellion never happened was to assign those constructs to work in the Aetherial Expanse. However, in doing so, they also gave these creatures more of an opportunity to leave the employ of the Empire and seek their own destinies.

Nearly all automatons are given a designation when created. Standard imperial identification begins with AU (for aetherium unit), followed by a hyphen and another

abbreviation for their profession (e.g., M for mechanic, L for laborer, etc.), and a unique three-digit identification number. Automatons who rebel against their makers sometimes take other names or designations, while others keep their old designations as a reminder of what their lives used to be like.

Most automatons have a roughly humanoid shape, but are comprised of inorganic materials and powered by an aetherium battery. More advanced versions might have swappable parts to support performing different tasks.

Automaton Base Traits

All automaton characters have the following traits:

Age. Your age depends on when you were created and given life. The longer you have been alive, the more time you've had to develop your individual personality and socialize with others. Otherwise, automatons have no prescribed lifespan.

Creature Type. You are a Construct.

Languages. You speak Common.

Size. You are Medium.

Traditional Automaton Abilities

If you prefer to use the Fifth Edition's standard approach for defining racial traits, your automaton character has the following traits:

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by 2, and one other ability score of your choice also increases by 1.

Speed. Your walking speed is 30 feet.

Artificial Form. You are a Construct, but your enchanted form still benefits from healing spells. You can also heal yourself by spending Hit Dice and finishing a long rest.

In addition, you are immune to diseases, and you don't need to eat, drink, sleep, or breathe. You still need to rest for a full 8 hours during a long rest to gain long-rest benefits.

If the *mending* spell is cast on you, you can spend a Hit Die to regain a number of hit points equal to its roll plus your Constitution modifier (minimum of 1 hit point).

Additionally, at the discretion of your GM, you can benefit from further magitech enhancements, such as from a technomage wizard's Infuse with Aetherium ability.

However, your aetherium power core is volatile. If you are reduced to 0 hit points, roll a d6. On a 1, you die as your aetherium battery explodes. Each creature within 10 feet of you must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) force damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one.

Magical Savvy. You learn one cantrip of your choice from any spell list and can cast it using the associated ability score: Intelligence for wizard spells, Wisdom for cleric and druid spells, and Charisma for bard, sorcerer, and warlock spells. If the spell appears on multiple spell lists, choose one to determine the spellcasting attribute for that spell.

Natural Attack. Your unarmed strikes deal damage equal to 1d6 + your Strength or Dexterity modifier, and the type of damage is either bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing based on the type of natural weaponry you choose.

Well Protected. When you are not wearing armor, your AC is equal to 13 + your Dexterity modifier.

CUSTOMIZING ANCESTRY

“Surprised I can talk to beasts? You shouldn’t be. I grew up on Maladell Island. The druids there taught me that and so much more.”

—Kunis, Aesphodel Crewmember

Because of the wondrous nature of the Aetherial Expanse, humanoids from countless planes and practically any ancestry can find their way to its magical seas. So long as you’re an effective crewmember, most pirates sailing the Silver Seas care little whether you’re a hulking, rhinoceros-headed humanoid or descended from elven nobility.

Characters for an Aetherial Expanse-themed campaign can choose a different method of character creation. To support this remarkable array of potential species, the remainder of this chapter provides players with everything they need to know when creating their unique characters.

AETHERIAL ANCESTRY

When you choose an ancestry, you can build that ancestry from the ground up. A player creating a new character selects the character traits that define their ancestry in a freeform fashion, allowing them to customize their character in their own way.

Chapter 6 lists a multitude of character traits that can be used for Aetherial Expanse characters, with those traits divided into three categories to focus on combat, exploration, and roleplaying.

From this wide range of possibilities, you choose 8 traits to create your starting character, with those traits granting unique benefits that shape your character’s baseline capabilities and their place in the world. For a standard game, those eight traits should include 3 combat traits, 2 exploration traits, and 2 roleplaying traits, with 1 trait left over to place where you’d like. This creates a well-rounded character able to meet many of the challenges of the Aetherial Expanse.

If you want to play a character who looks and feels like a member of any of Fifth Edition’s classic ancestries, you can do so by consulting the recommended traits in the “Standard Species” section later in this chapter.

Adjusting Numbers. The GM can change the number of traits—or the numbers of the different types of traits, depending on the challenge level and focus of the campaign. For a lower-powered campaign, reduce the number of traits allowed; likewise, for higher-powered campaigns, more traits can be permitted.

Similarly, changing the number of traits of a particular type can shift the focus of a campaign to give players more roleplaying or exploration abilities while keeping the combat traits the same.

Physical Features

In addition to selecting your ancestry traits, you can also decide the look and form of your character’s body. An elf from one world may look different than an elf from another, so the player can have leeway in deciding what their elf character looks like.



Sala Fairfind
Ayrissian Trader

A few limits are set below, but otherwise, your physical features are entirely up to you, and you can engage in any amount of cosmetic tinkering with your character you’d like. Even if your starting point is one of the Aetherial Expanse ancestries, you can shape and alter the standard physical form of any of those ancestries. However, your body’s physical features can’t reproduce the effect of any trait without taking that trait, and can’t create benefits if there’s no trait to cover those benefits.

For example, you might describe your character as having thick hide, armored skin, or copious mats of body hair. But those cosmetic effects have no bearing on your AC unless you take the Well Protected trait.

Your character can have extra arms or a tail that you use the same way you use your arms and hands. But extra appendages don’t make it any easier to climb or carry more gear unless you take the Climber or Powerful Build traits and describe their effects as coming from your extra arms or tail.

Likewise, no number of extra appendages will let you make additional attacks, because there’s no trait providing that benefit. However, you’re free to describe multiple attacks as making use of your extra arms or tail in any way you like.

Taking Character Traits

Taking a character trait once establishes a baseline benefit for your character. For example, you can take the Darkvision trait if you want to see in shadow or darkness, the Eager Deceiver trait if you want to have innate proficiency in the Deception skill, and so forth.

You can also take each trait a second time to grant an additional benefit, and many traits can be taken three or more times if they are built around specific choices or options that change each time you take the trait. Taking a trait more than once grants an additional benefit over and above the trait's baseline benefit, improving the baseline benefit in some way. For example, taking the Darkvision trait a second time gives you the Improved Darkvision trait, allowing you to see even further in the dark.

All rules and limitations that come with a trait the first time you take it apply to the benefit granted by taking the trait again, unless the trait specifies otherwise. For example, the Impromptu Artisan trait allows you to craft simple equipment as long as you have an appropriate proficiency, raw materials, and additional equipment. If you take that trait twice, you can craft more complex equipment, but the requirements for materials and equipment don't go away.

TRAITS AS REWARDS

The character traits you select for your character help define who that character is and what they can do. They are an intrinsic part of the character. However, the magic of the Aetherial Expanse can make itself known throughout the campaign at the GM's discretion.

The GM might bestow temporary traits on characters as rewards during the game, taking the form of a temporary surge of magical power. When you gain a new trait this way, it follows the same rules as when you take traits at character creation. Specifically, if you've taken a trait once and gain it again as a reward, you gain the benefit for taking it twice. Likewise, if a trait can only be taken twice and you've already done so, you can't take it again.

Threx Starmine
Leader of Starmine Key



Natural or Magical

Most character traits doesn't specify whether a given trait is natural or magical in nature, giving you the freedom to decide how the trait has shaped your character.

One character with the Damage Resistance trait might be possessed of reflective skin that bounces away lightning, while another's could be fueled by a past contact with aether. A character with thick, leathery skin has a perfect physical explanation for their Well Protected trait. But a character with a seemingly normal physique might select the same trait to represent a supernatural resilience. Even a trait that specifically focuses on defending against magical effects (such as Awakened Mind or Magical Fortification) might be mundane in origin, representing a natural resilience or aptitude powerful enough to interact with magic.

That said, even if you decide that some or all of your character's traits are magical, they remain an intrinsic and natural part of you, fueled by your physical, mental, and spiritual strength. As such, traits to which you give a magical origin can't be dispelled with *dispel magic* and similar effects, and are unaffected by magical dead zones or wild magic zones, the *antimagic field* spell, and so on.

Select Your Traits

Your character has a number of universal traits noted below. You also select eight character traits from the "Combat Traits," "Exploration Traits," and "Roleplaying Traits" sections below. The traits you select give your character innate benefits related to combat, exploration, or roleplaying.

Universal Traits

In addition to the traits that personalize your character's talents, knowledge, and outlook, all characters in an Aetherial Expanse campaign share the following universal traits.

HUMANOID TYPE

Your character is a Humanoid unless it is specifically noted as something else. Your character's appearance could resemble a typical humanoid, a fey creature, or some monstrosity.

ABILITY SCORE INCREASE

You can adjust your starting ability scores by increasing one ability by 2 and another ability by 1. Alternatively, you can increase three ability scores by 1. Look to the rules for your character's intended class for suggestions about which ability scores are important (note this replaces the specific ability score increases normally defined by a choice of species).

LANGUAGES

The languages of the Aetherial Expanse and connected worlds may be different. Take the starting languages of the world you are from, and work with the GM to see if your character would know additional languages as a default.

SPEED

Most characters are assumed to have a base speed of 30 feet. Small characters and any character for which it makes narrative sense may reduce their base speed to 25 feet to gain an additional trait.

STANDARD SPECIES

You may wish to create a character whose form and nature reflects the standard species found in Fifth Edition's core rules, but you also want to diverge slightly to create a unique character who's been changed by your time in the Aetherial Expanse.

The Aetherial Expanse traits may be modeled on an existing species trait, but might be slightly different than what is presented in the core rules. If you are using these new trait rules, use the updated traits here.

For those species that have more or less than the suggested 8 traits, add or subtract traits from the list as desired, or swap traits, to fit the campaign type.

AETHERIAL EXPANSE SPECIES

The new species presented earlier in this section can also be represented using Aetherial Expanse traits using the suggested traits presented below.

Individual traits are fully described in Chapter 6.

ASTRAL EMERGENTS

Combat Traits

- Magical Fortification
- Unchecked

Exploration Traits

- Aetheric Adaption
- Swimmer

Roleplaying Traits

- Embrace the Past
- Formed of Aether
- One with the Silvery Sea

ASTRAL MERFOLK

Exploration Traits

- Aetheric Adaption
- Aquatic Transformation
- Slipstream

Roleplaying Traits

- Aetherbeast Affinity
- Nature's Voice
- Swimmer

AUTOMATONS

Combat Traits

- Natural Attack
- Well Protected

Exploration Traits

- Magitech Fabrication

Roleplaying Traits

- Magical Savvy

DWARF

Combat Traits

- Damage Resistance (Poison)
- Toughness
- Weapon Aptitude

Exploration Traits

- Darkvision
- Environmental Awareness
- Steady

Roleplay Traits

- Artisanal Focus (one of smith's tools, brewer's supplies, or mason's tools)
- Crafter's Eye

ELF

Combat Traits

- Awakened Mind
- Focused Mind
- Weapon Aptitude

Exploration Traits

- Darkvision
- Meditative Rest
- Shroud of the Wild

Roleplay Traits

- Magical Savvy
- Inborn Perception

HALFLING

Reduce base speed to 25 feet to gain an additional trait.

Combat Traits

- Brave
- Creature Cover
- Lucky

Exploration Traits

- Helping Hand

- Pass Through
- Power Nap

Roleplay Traits

- Artisanal Focus (one of brewer's supplies, cook's utensils, or potter's tools)
- Nimble Moves

HUMAN

No traits are specific to humans.

You may select any that reflect your character concept.

DRAGONBORN

Combat Traits

- Breath Weapon
- Damage Resistance (same as breath weapon)
- Weapon Aptitude

Exploration Traits

- Natural Movement
- Powerful Build

Roleplay Traits

- Firm Influence
- Keen Survivor

GNOME

Reduce base speed to 25 feet to gain an additional trait.

Combat Traits

- Magical Fortification

Exploration Traits

- Darkvision

Roleplay Traits

- Impromptu Artisan
- Magical Savvy
- Masterful Aptitude
- Nature's Voice

HALF-ELF

Combat Traits

- Fey Ancestry
- Skirmish Tactics

Exploration Traits

- Darkvision

Roleplay Traits

- Expert Deceiver
- Masterful Aptitude

HALF-ORC

Combat Traits

- Awesome Critical
- Restless Endurance

Exploration Traits

- Darkvision
- Powerful Build
- Tireless

Roleplay Traits

- Firm Influence

TIEFLING

Combat Traits

- Natural Attack (Horns)
- Ruthless Response

Exploration Traits

- Darkvision

Roleplay Traits

- Firm Influence
- Magical Savvy



Vial of Liquid Aether

Magitech Timepiece





Chapter 6

CHARACTER TRAITS

“My adoptive grandmother taught me to swing a hammer and hear metal sing beneath its blows. No one can ever take that away from me.”

—Filippo, Armorer to House Mongaro

This chapter describes the character traits you can use to create custom character ancestries as described in chapter 5. The chapter begins with a list of traits followed by descriptions of each trait presented in alphabetical order.

These traits are meant to replace the traits you would normally receive when you choose a race, species, or ancestry for your character. When you choose these traits, consider not just what they provide your character in terms of game mechanics, but also how your character came to possess these traits.

Was your trait something that you were born with? Is it a feature that runs in your family, either from a genetic anomaly, a long-held familial curse, or a deal with an extraplanar being that was passed on to future generations?

Was your trait something that you came upon later in your life? Did it just happen to you, or was it gained through years of focus and training? Was the trait enabled by magic, or is it naturally occurring?

Whatever the genesis of your trait, you should also imagine how your trait's presence affected—and continues to affect—your life. Did the trait make you an outcast in your society, or did it make you more accepted? How did you use your trait over the years to make a life, and how did others react to—or try to use—your trait's manifestation?

The answers to all of these questions can establish a wonderfully rich backstory and personality for your character.

TRAIT LIST

Character traits are grouped into three categories: Combat, Exploration, and Roleplay. Traits of each group are listed below in alphabetic order, along with the name of the trait if it is taken more than once.

COMBAT TRAITS

Artificer Expertise → Expert Gadgeteer
Awakened Mind → Reawakened
Awesome Critical → Maximum Critical
Brave → Infectious Bravery
Breath Weapon → Potent Breath
Charging Attack → Furious Charge
Creature Cover → Subtle Cover
Damage Resistance → Damage Immunity
Divine Sangromancy → Sangromancy Savant
Fey Ancestry → Fey Blooded
First Strike → Strong Strike
Focused Reserves → Focused Edge
Focused Mind → Immutable Mind
Larger Target → Even Larger
Light Armor Training → Light Armor Expertise
Lucky → Aether-Blessed Aura
Magical Fortification → Extended Fortification
Master of Distraction → Hindering Distraction
Medium Armor Training → Heavy Armor Training
Menacing Roar → Incomparable Roar
Mighty Shove → Overwhelming Shove
Natural Attack → Swift Strike
Pack Tactics → Pack Instinct
Personal Bastion → Mobile Bastion
Quick Initiative → Focused Initiative
Quick Slip → Astute Slip
Reach Attack → Opportune Reach
Relentless Endurance → Unparalleled Endurance
Ruthless Response → Focused Ruthlessness
Sea Monster Hunter → Unparalleled Hunter
Skirmish Tactics → Supreme Skirmisher
Slippery → Supreme Slip
Stalwart Reserves → Stalwart Edge
Timely Boon → Born Lucky
Toughness → Extra Tough
Unchecked → Slip Free
Weapon Aptitude → Weapon Specialist
Well Protected → Protective Cover

EXPLORATION TRAITS

Aerial Form → Aerial Expert
Aetheric Adaption → Aetheric Habitation
Amorphous Form → Mass Control
Aquatic Transformation → Slipstream
Artificer Expertise → Expert Gadgeteer*^c
Artificial Form → Magitech Fabrication
Burrower → Quickened Burrow
Burst of Speed → Furious Speed
Climber → Trapeze Artist

Darkvision → Improved Darkvision
• (Optional) → Sunlight Sensitivity
Driver → Remarkable Driver
Environmental Awareness → Adaptive Awareness
Fade Away → Long Fade
Fleet of Foot → Shared Fleetness
Helping Hand → Helpful Tactics*^c
Hold Breath → Amphibious
Intrinsic Orientation → Expert Orientation
Inured to the Elements → Immune to the Elements
Irrepressible Sight → Resolute Sight
Meditative Rest → Restorative Rest
Natural Movement → Shared Movement
Pass Through → Nimble Passage
Power Nap → Extreme Resilience
Powerful Build → Powerful Shove*^c
Resilient Ears → Determined Hearing
Shroud of the Wild → Faultless Shroud
Standing Leap → Incredible Leap
Steady → Stand Fast
Swimmer → Quickened Swim
Tireless → Vigorous

ROLEPLAY TRAITS

Aetherbeast Affinity → Aetherbeast Master
Animal Friend → Animal Ally
Artisanal Focus → Artisanal Expertise
Athlete's Spirit → Athlete's Resolve
Born Healer → War Doctor
Commanding Insight → Exceptional Insight
Connection to Nature → Bond with Nature
Crafter's Eye → Crafter's Cunning
Eager Deceiver → Expert Deceiver
Embrace the Past → Sought Memories
Firm Influence → Terrifying Influence
Formed of Aether → One with the Silvery Sea
Friendly Ear → Trustworthy
Gifted Performer → A Sight to Behold
Impromptu Artisan → Master Artisan
Improviser → Expert Improviser
Inborn Perception → Piercing Perception
Instinctive Stealth → Calculated Disappearance
Instrumental → Virtuoso
Intuitive Acrobat → Stunt Expert
Keen Survivor → Determined Survivor
Magical Insight → Magical Historian
Magical Savvy → Magical Savant
Masterful Aptitude → Focused Mastery
Mindful Investigator → Thorough Sleuth
Moved by Faith → Force of Faith
Nature's Voice → Primal Voice
Nimble Moves → Exquisite Legerdemain
Persuasive Knack → Tongue of Gold
Polyglot → Language Expert
Shapechanger → Master Mimic

*^c When this trait is taken twice, the second trait is considered a Combat Trait.

TRAIT DESCRIPTIONS

The following traits define your character, establishing who they were at birth and what they've become since then. Though your character's abilities are largely defined by your choice of class, these traits provide the tools to tailor your character's other physical, mental, and magical abilities.

Aerial Form (Exploration)

You have wings that allow you to soar into the sky. You have a fly speed of 15 feet in addition to your other forms of movement.

Aerial Expert. If you take this trait twice, your fly speed is 30 feet. When you take the Dash action and fly the entire length of that movement, you can use a bonus action to make a melee weapon attack against a creature that you can see. When you use this ability, your Dash movement does not incur opportunity attacks. You can use this feature a number of times per long rest equal to your proficiency modifier.

Aetheric Adaption (Exploration)

You form is adapted to surviving the Aetherial Expanse's poisonous seas. You are immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Aetheric Habitation. If you take this trait twice, you also have advantage on checks to swim in the Aetherial Sea, and you can breathe aether.

Aetherbeast Affinity (Roleplaying)

You learn the *animal friendship* spell, and when you reach 3rd level, you also learn the *animal messenger* spell. You can cast these spells without expending a spell slot a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus (both spells count toward the same limit), and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest. You can also cast these spells using spell slots you have of the appropriate level. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for these spells. These spells can only target aetherbeasts.

Aetherbeast Master. If you take this trait twice, you regain expended uses when you complete a short rest. You can also, at 7th level, learn the *dominate beast* spell, using it in the same manner as the other two spells and affecting only aetherbeasts.

Amorphous Form (Exploration)

Your form is not constrained to any one shape. You can choose to make any number of your limbs absorb back into your body as an action. When you squeeze through a space one size smaller than you could normally fit, you do not suffer penalties to your attack rolls and Dexterity saving throws, and attacks against you are not made with advantage.

Mass Control. If you take this trait twice, in addition to the previous trait abilities, you can also squeeze through a space as narrow as 1-inch wide as long as you wear or carry nothing that would block this movement. You can also change your size between Small and Medium, which does not change your statistics or abilities.

Animal Friend (Roleplaying)

You've always had a way with beasts. You have proficiency in the Animal Handling skill.

Animal Ally. If you take this trait twice, you can choose to have advantage on an ability check you make using the Animal Handling skill. You can use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus. You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Aquatic Transformation (Exploration)

You can transform your body to accommodate both land and water travel. You can switch between having a tail fin or a pair of legs as an action. With a tail fin, your walking speed is 5 feet and you have a swimming speed of 30 feet. With your legs, your swimming speed is 15 feet and your walking speed is 30 feet.

Slipstream. If you take this trait twice, when you take the Dash action while swimming with your tail fin, you gain extra movement equal to twice your swimming speed. With a swim speed of 30 feet, for example, you can move up to 90 feet on your turn if you dash. Until the end of your turn, you don't provoke opportunity attacks while swimming.

Artifice Expertise (Exploration/Combat)

You have a knack for tinkering that allows you to make strange devices and repair broken objects. You have proficiency with tinker's tools.

You can use your tinker's tools and 10 gp worth of metal to spend 10 minutes creating a small clockwork machine. The machine must fit in the palm of your hand, and can serve one of the following functions:

Smoker. The device exudes smoke in a 5 foot cube. Any objects or creatures within this cube are considered lightly obscured.

Lighter. The device emits a small flame the size of a candle's that can light flammable objects.

Compass. The device always points in one cardinal direction on a specific plane, usually north on a material plane or airward on the Aetherial Expanse.

(This is an Exploration trait.)

Expert Gadgeteer. If you take this trait twice, you can make your machines in 1 minute instead of 10 minutes. Additionally, any of your machines can gain the following additional function.

Distractor. You can turn a device into a distraction.

As a bonus action, you place or toss the device into a space within 30 feet of you. A creature sharing a space with the device must succeed on a DC 10 Intelligence saving throw. On a failure, attacks against that creature have advantage until the start of your next turn. A distracted creature can use an action to destroy the device. You can give three of your devices the distractor feature each day.

(This is a Combat trait.)



Katarina Sofia Kemi

Artificial Form (Exploration)

You were built for a specific function, but now you must carve your own path. This unnatural origin lends you certain advantages, but forever marks you as different.

You are a Construct, but your enchanted form still benefits from healing spells. You can also heal yourself by spending hit dice during short rests and finishing long rests as normal.

You are immune to diseases, and you don't need to eat, drink, sleep, or breathe. You must still rest for 8 hours during a long rest to gain the benefits.

This trait cannot be taken if you have the Power Nap trait.

Magitech Fabrication. If you take this trait twice, your form was fashioned by the artifice of technomages who empowered your form with aetherium.

If the *mending* spell is cast on you, you can spend a Hit Die to regain a number of hit points equal to its roll plus your Constitution modifier (minimum of 1 hit point). Additionally, you permanently gain one magitech augmentation from a technomage wizard's Infuse with Aetherium ability but with a permanent duration (see page 136).

However, your aetherium power core is volatile. If you are reduced to 0 hit points, roll a d6. On a 1, you die as your aetherium battery explodes. Each creature within 10 feet of you must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) force damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one.

This trait cannot be combined with the Relentless Endurance trait.

Artisanal Focus (Roleplaying)

The culture of your ancestors celebrates craftsmanship. Choose an artisan's tool. You gain proficiency with that tool.

Artisanal Expertise. If you take this trait multiple times, you gain proficiency with a new tool each time. Additionally, choose one set of tools for which you have taken Artisanal Focus. You can choose to have advantage on ability checks made with those tools.

Athlete's Spirit (Roleplaying)

Your speed and power have kept you from falling overboard or being left behind on more than one occasion. You gain proficiency in the Athletics skill.

Athlete's Resolve. If you take this trait twice, you can choose to make any Athletics ability check with advantage. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Awakened Mind (Combat)

Growing up around the dangers of the Expanse has given you a mental focus that allows you to shrug off magical effects. You automatically succeed on saving throws against magical effects that would leave you stunned, incapacitated, or unconscious. This does not include effects that leave you unconscious because you are reduced to 0 hit points.

Reawakened. If you take this trait twice, you also have advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws.

Awesome Critical (Combat)

When fortune favors your blade, you know how to make it count. When you score a critical hit with a melee weapon attack, you can roll one of the weapon's damage dice one additional time and add it to the extra damage of the critical hit.

Maximum Critical. If you take this trait twice, when you use Awesome Critical, you can add the maximum of the weapon's original damage dice to the extra damage of the critical hit, rather than rolling them. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus. You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Born Healer (Roleplaying)

You've been helping those you care about with scrapes and sickness for as long as you can remember. You gain proficiency in the Medicine skill.

War Doctor. If you take this trait twice, you choose to make any Medicine ability check with advantage. You use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Brave (Combat)

Some call you courageous, others call you foolish, but no one calls you fearful. You have advantage on saving throws to avoid being frightened.

Infectious Bravery. If you take this trait twice, you can use your reaction to bolster the spirit of your allies, granting one ally who can see or hear you advantage on a saving throw against being frightened. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Breath Weapon (Combat)

You possess the ability to channel destructive energy through your breath. When you select this trait, choose a damage type: acid, cold, fire, force, lightning, necrotic, poison, psychic, radiant, or thunder. Then choose an area of effect: a line that is 5 feet wide and 30 feet long, or a 15-foot cone.

When you use an action to expel your breath weapon, each creature in the area of effect must make a Dexterity saving throw (DC equals 8 + your Constitution modifier + your proficiency bonus). A target creature takes 2d6 damage of the chosen type on a failed save, and half as much damage on a successful one. The damage increases to 3d6 at 6th level, 4d6 at 11th level, and 5d6 at 16th level. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus. You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Potent Breath. If you take this trait multiple times, you gain an additional choice in type of breath weapon with its own number of uses, damage type, and area of effect.

Additionally, when you use your breath weapon, one target of your choice has disadvantage on the saving throw. You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

Burrower (Exploration)

You've spent countless hours digging for secrets buried in the earth, granting you the ability to burrow with uncanny swiftness. You have a burrowing speed equal to your walking speed that lets you burrow through earth and sand, but not ground that is mostly or entirely rock. The tunnel you make collapses behind you, making it impossible for other creatures to follow you, and you must hold your breath while you burrow.

Quickened Burrow. If you take this trait twice, you can use the Dash action as a bonus action while burrowing.

Burst of Speed (Exploration)

Your sprinting ability is something that few can contend with. When you move on your turn, you can double your speed until the end of your turn. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus. You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Furious Speed. If you take this trait twice, you don't provoke opportunity attacks when using Burst of Speed.

Charging Attack (Combat)

You can close the distance between you and your foes without a moment's hesitation, and this split-second difference is enough to give you an edge over your opponents. If you move at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hit it with a melee weapon attack on the same turn, you can make another attack against the same target as a bonus action with the same weapon.

Furious Charge. If you take this trait twice, when you use Charging Attack, you gain advantage on the first attack roll. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus. You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Climber (Exploration)

You are just as comfortable scrabbling up a vertical surface as you are walking on even ground. You gain a climbing speed equal to your walking speed.

Trapeze Artist. If you take this trait a second time, you can use the Dash action as a bonus action while climbing.

Commanding Insight (Roleplaying)

People have a difficult time hiding their true motives from you. You gain proficiency in the Insight skill.

Exceptional Insight. If you take this trait twice, you can choose to make any Insight check with advantage. You can use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Connection to Nature (Roleplaying)

You've learned to pay close attention to the environment around you. You have proficiency in the Nature skill.

Bond with Nature. If you take this trait twice, you can choose to have advantage on all ability checks you make using the Nature skill.

Crafter's Eye (Roleplaying)

You have an eye for the make and structure of crafted objects. When you make an Intelligence (History) check related to an item, device, building, or material and you have proficiency in the associated artisan tool, you are considered proficient in History and can add double your proficiency bonus to the check instead of your normal proficiency bonus.

Crafter's Cunning. If you take this trait multiple times, you can choose a different artisan tool with which you are proficient, and you gain the benefits associated with that tool.

Creature Cover (Combat)

You've perfected the strategy of using meat shields to avoid danger. You can attempt to hide even when you are obscured only by a creature, as long as that creature is at least one size larger than you.

Subtle Cover. If you take this trait twice, you can attempt to hide while obscured by a creature the same size as you, or by two or more creatures one size smaller than you.

Damage Resistance (Combat)

The weather can make for a cruel, but effective teacher. Exposure to the elements has given you a tolerance to its effects. You have resistance to one of the following damage types of your choice: acid, cold, fire, lightning, poison, or thunder.

Damage Immunity. As a reaction to taking the damage type you have chosen as part of the Damage Resistance trait, gain immunity to that type of damage until the end of your next turn. You regain use of this feature upon completing a short rest.

Darkvision (Exploration)

You've grown accustomed to darkness. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

Improved Darkvision. If you take this trait twice, the range of your darkvision increases to 120 feet.

(Optional) Sunlight Sensitivity. You can take this trait instead of Improved Dark Vision. Your ancestors lived in dimly lit areas for so long that you have difficulty functioning in bright sunlight. You increase the range of your darkvision to 120 feet. However, while you are in sunlight, you have disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Divine Sangromancy (Combat)

A divine power swells within you. Whenever an allied creature within 30 feet of you regains hit points, you may spend a Hit Die and add the result to the amount of hit points gained by the ally.

Sangromancy Savant. If you take this trait twice, you regain hit points equal to your hit die roll that adds hit points to the allied creature.

Driver (Exploration)

The ability to travel efficiently is a necessary ability for any crew, and you've chosen to take on the responsibility. You gain proficiency with either land or water vehicles, or with navigator's tools.

Remarkable Driver. If you take this trait twice, any ability checks made with the tool or vehicle you gained proficiency in are made with advantage.

Eager Deceiver (Roleplaying)

Your lies are as well-crafted as they are far-fetched. You can manage to sell even the tallest of tales. You gain proficiency in the Deception skill.

Expert Deceiver. If you take this trait twice, you can choose to make any Deception ability check with advantage. You can use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Embrace the Past (Roleplaying)

Your mind is filled with stories of the past. You have proficiency in the History skill.

Sought Memories. If you take this trait twice, you can choose to have advantage on all ability checks you make using the History skill.

Environmental Awareness (Exploration)

Your connection to a specific environment allows you to read its past. Choose an environment: desert, forest, grassland, hills and mountains, snow and ice, swamp and marsh, underground, underwater, or volcanic. While in that environment, whenever you make an ability check to assess structures, monuments, or natural features; to find food or drinkable water; or to track creatures, you are considered to have proficiency in the appropriate skill and add double your proficiency bonus to the check.

Adaptive Awareness. If you take this trait multiple times, you gain its benefit for a new environment each time. Additionally, when you make an ability check using Environmental Awareness, you can choose to have advantage on the check. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus. You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Fade Away (Exploration)

You vanish and reappear like a trick of the light. You momentarily obscure yourself to hide from sight. As a bonus action, you can attempt a Dexterity (Stealth) check to hide, becoming invisible to creatures who fail an opposed Wisdom (Perception) check until the start of your next turn. You become visible early if you attack or cast a spell. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus. You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Long Fade. If you take this trait twice, you make your Fade Away Dexterity (Stealth) check with advantage.

Fey Ancestry (Combat)

A drop of fey blood in you grants protection from magic that befuddles the mind. You have some natural resistance to those effects. You have advantage on saving throws against being charmed.

Fey Blooded. If you take this trait twice, magic cannot put you to sleep. In addition, you enter a trance state instead of sleeping, meditating deeply for 4 hours in order to gain all the benefits that a human does from 8 hours of sleep. You cannot benefit from the Power Nap trait if you take this trait twice.

Firm Influence (Roleplaying)

You have a knack for inspiring fear. You gain proficiency in the Intimidation skill.

Terrifying Influence. If you take this trait twice, you can choose to make any Intimidation ability check with advantage. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

First Strike (Combat)

Hesitation is a weakness that you've learned to take deadly advantage of. When you hit a creature that hasn't taken a turn in the combat yet, your attack deals an extra 2d6 damage. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus. You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Strong Strike. If you take this trait twice, you can maximize extra damage dice from First Strike, rather than rolling. You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

Fleet of Foot (Exploration)

Whether with graceful steps or reckless speed, you can get where you need to be in shorter time than most. Your walking speed increases by 5 feet.

Shared Fleetness. If you take this trait twice, your walking speed increases by another 5 feet, for a total increase of 10 feet. Additionally, as a bonus action you can grant creatures of your choice the ability to move at your walking speed for 1 minute, as long as those creatures remain within 30 feet of you and can see you. You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

Focused Reserves (Combat)

You find the will to keep fighting when you most need it. You are able to shrug off harsh blows through sheer force of will. As a reaction when you would take damage, you roll a d6 for each point of your proficiency bonus. You gain temporary hit points equal to the total. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus. You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Focused Edge. If you take this trait twice, you can reroll 1s and 2s but must take the new rolls.



Focused Mind (Combat)

You refuse to be swindled by magical trickery. You have advantage on saving throws against being charmed.

Immutable Mind. If you take this trait twice, when you fail a saving throw against being charmed, you can use your reaction to succeed on the save instead. You can't use this feature again until after you finish a long rest.

Formed of Aether (Roleplaying)

The Aetherial Expanse invests your form and the Starlight Seas wish to reclaim your body. You were born from the thought and dreams floating in the aetherial seas. You don't require air, food, or drink. When you sleep or fall unconscious, your form flickers and wavers, revealing the constellation of lights that make up your bones.

If you've been dead for more than 1 minute, you can't be resurrected except by a *wish* spell. Your form melts away, as your body and mind return to the Aetherial Sea.

One with the Silvery Sea. If you take this trait twice, you are better able to resist the Aetherial Sea's deathly pull. If you have failed two death saving throws, you make further saving throws with advantage.

Friendly Ear (Roleplaying)

You have an innate quality that encourages people to confide in you. By conversing with a creature for at least 1 minute, you can attempt to charm them. The creature must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw, the DC of which equals 8 + your Charisma modifier + your proficiency bonus, or be charmed by you for one hour. You also learn one piece of information that the target knows that relates to the topic of your conversation, at the GM's discretion. Regardless of whether or not the target makes the save, they remain unaware of your attempt. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you complete a short or long rest.

Trustworthy. If you take this trait twice, a creature has disadvantage on the saving throw, and is charmed for 8 hours on a failure.

Gifted Performer (Roleplaying)

The performing arts are an important tool for keeping up crew morale, and you've prepared yourself to raise your allies' spirits with a song or story for downtime on the sea. You gain proficiency in the Performance skill.

A Sight to Behold. If you take this trait twice, you can choose to make any Performance ability check with advantage.

Helping Hand (Exploration/Combat)

There is no need to choose between helping yourself and helping your friends when you're quick or clever enough to do both. You can use the Help action as a bonus action to assist allies making ability checks. (*This is an Exploration trait.*)

Helpful Tactics. If you take this trait twice, when you use Helping Hand, you can also assist allies making attack rolls. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus. You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest. (*This is a Combat trait.*)

Hold Breath (Exploration)

All you need is a heaving gasp and a stubborn resolution in order to go without breathing for an inordinate amount of time. You can hold your breath for up to 1 hour.

Amphibious. If you take this trait twice, you are able to breathe both water and air.

Impromptu Artisan (Roleplaying)

Why buy, when you could make it yourself? If you possess artisan's tools with which you have proficiency, and if you have access to appropriate raw materials and any additional necessary equipment (as the GM determines), you can use part of a short rest to craft any one nonmagical item worth 10 gp or less, including:

- Adventuring gear
- A weapon or shield
- A unique item that performs a simple function approved by the GM

The gear you create is workable, but not high quality and can't be sold except as the GM determines.

Master Artisan. If you take this trait twice, you can use Impromptu Artisan as part of a long rest, during which you craft one nonmagical item worth 50 gp or less.

Improviser (Roleplaying)

You never let your lack of experience stop you from trying something. As a bonus action, choose one skill or tool that you don't have proficiency with. You gain proficiency in that skill or with that tool for 1 hour. You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

Expert Improviser. If you take this trait twice, you have advantage on ability checks you make using the skill or tool you select with Improviser.

Inborn Perception (Roleplaying)

Things hidden beneath the waves can prove deadly if you don't see them coming. You gain proficiency in the Perception skill.

Piercing Perception. If you take this trait twice, you can choose to make any Perception ability check with advantage. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Instinctive Stealth (Roleplaying)

You try to stay out of sight as much as possible. You gain proficiency in the Stealth skill.

Calculated Disappearance. If you take this trait twice, you can choose to make any Stealth ability check with advantage. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Instrumental (Roleplaying)

Sea shanties and ballads are welcome diversions for a life on the sea, and instruments can make for great company. You gain proficiency with two instruments of your choice.

Virtuoso. You can take this trait any number of times, selecting different instruments each time.

Intrinsic Orientation (Exploration)

Your instinctive sense of where you are helps you avoid going astray. You always know which way is Airward in the Aetherial Expanse (or North on a prime plane). You have advantage on ability checks made to avoid becoming lost, to navigate, or to track.

Expert Orientation. If you take this trait twice, when you fail an ability check made to avoid becoming lost, to navigate, or to track, you can choose to succeed instead. You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

Intuitive Acrobat (Roleplaying)

You keep your body loose and limber and ready for anything. You gain proficiency in the Acrobatics skill.

Stunt Expert. If you take this trait twice, you can choose to make any Acrobatics ability check with advantage. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Inured to the Elements (Exploration)

Neither scorching sun nor freezing cold will cause you to despair. You have advantage on Constitution saving throws made to resist the effects of extreme cold or extreme heat.

Immune to the Elements. If you take this trait twice, you automatically succeed on Constitution saving throws to resist the effects of extreme cold or extreme heat.

Irrepressible Sight (Exploration)

You keep your eyes wide open in the face of danger, regardless of the pain it may cause you. You have advantage on saving throws against being blinded.

Resolute Sight. If you take this trait twice, when you fail a saving throw against being blinded, you can use your reaction to succeed on the save instead. You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

Keen Survivor (Roleplaying)

You never know what you could encounter in the Aetherial Expanse, but you're always ready and willing to adapt to any environment in order to survive. You gain proficiency in the Survival skill.

Determined Survivor. If you take this trait twice, you can choose to make any Survival ability check with advantage. You can use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Larger Target (Combat)

A bigger foe is just a bigger target with more to fear from a fall to the ground. If you hit a creature that is one size larger than you, you can choose to deal extra damage equal to your proficiency bonus. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus. You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Even Larger. If you take this trait twice, Larger Target applies to any creature that is more than one size larger than you as well.

Light Armor Training (Combat)

Through practice or training, you understand how to wear light armor effectively. You gain proficiency with light armor.

Light Armor Expertise. If you take this trait twice, your AC increases by 1 when wearing light armor.

Lucky (Combat)

When all else fails, fortune is on your side. When you roll a 1 on a d20 for an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, you can reroll the die but must use the new roll. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Aether-Blessed Aura. If you take this trait twice, you have advantage on the reroll made with the Lucky trait.

Magical Fortification (Combat)

You've trained your body and mind to resist certain magical effects. Choose an ability score: Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma. You have advantage on saving throws using that ability score against spells and other magical effects.

Extended Fortification. If you take this trait multiple times, you have advantage on saving throws using a new ability score each time. Additionally, if you fail a saving throw against a spell or other magical effect and you do not have proficiency with that saving throw, you can use your reaction to reroll the save. You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

Magical Insight (Roleplaying)

Not all magical properties of the Aetherial Sea have been recorded, but you keep yourself up to date on what information there is. You gain proficiency in the Arcana skill.

Magical Historian. If you take this trait twice, you can choose to make any Arcana check with advantage.

Magical Savvy (Roleplaying)

Either through intensive study or because you are innately magical, you have the ability to invoke magical spells. You learn one cantrip of your choice from any spell list, which you cast using the associated ability score: Intelligence for wizard spells, Wisdom for cleric and druid spells, and Charisma for bard, sorcerer, and warlock spells. If the spell appears on multiple spell lists, choose one to determine the spellcasting attribute for that spell.

Magical Savant. You can take this trait multiple times, selecting a different cantrip or selecting a 1st-level spell from the same list as a cantrip you have previously chosen. You can cast that 1st-level spell once without expending a spell slot and regain the ability to do so when you complete a long rest. If you have levels in the associated spellcasting class, you always have this spell prepared, and it doesn't count against the number of spells you can prepare each day.



Master of Distraction (Combat)

You're willing to support your allies by putting yourself in harm's way. As an action, you put on a tactical display (bravado, cowardice, confusion, or some other tactic) that gets your enemies' attention. Until the end of your next turn, any attack on an enemy within 10 feet of you that can see you has advantage. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus. You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Hindering Distraction. If you take this trait twice, when you use Master of Distraction, one affected enemy of your choice also has disadvantage on attacks it makes against your allies until the end of your next turn.

Masterful Aptitude (Roleplaying)

You've made yourself stand out by specializing in a specific discipline. Choose one of your skill or tool proficiencies. Your proficiency bonus is doubled for any ability checks you make that use the chosen proficiency.

Focused Mastery. If you take this trait multiple times, you gain its benefit for a new skill proficiency or tool proficiency each time. Additionally, when you make a check using a skill or tool for which you've taken Masterful Aptitude, you can choose to have advantage on the check. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus. You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Meditative Rest (Exploration)

A full night's rest is a luxury you don't have, but luckily you don't need it anyway. When you rest, you meditate deeply for 4 hours, dreaming but remaining conscious. After resting in this way, you gain the same benefit that other humanoids do from 8 hours of sleep.

Restorative Rest. If you take this trait twice, you need to spend only 2 hours in your meditation to gain the benefit of 8 hours of sleep, and you gain a d6 at the end of each long rest. Before the end of your next long rest, you can roll the d6 and add it to any d20 roll you make. You can wait until after you roll the d20 before deciding to do so, but you must use the d6 before you know the success of the roll.

Medium Armor Training (Combat)

Through practice or training, you know how to move and defend yourself while wearing medium armor. You gain proficiency with medium armor and shields.

Heavy Armor Training. If you take this trait twice, you gain proficiency with heavy armor.

Menacing Roar (Combat)

Your battle cry can cause even trained soldiers to flee for their lives. As a bonus action, you emit a roar, shout, or other loud vocal outburst. Each creature of your choice within 10 feet of you that can hear you must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw (DC equals 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Constitution modifier) or become frightened of you until the end of your next turn. You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

Incomparable Roar. If you take this trait twice, when you use Menacing Roar, one target of your choice has disadvantage on the saving throw.

Mindful Investigator (Roleplaying)

A mind for detail isn't necessarily a common thing to find in these waters, but that just makes you all the more useful to your crew. You gain proficiency in the Investigation skill.

Thorough Sleuth. If you take this trait twice, you can choose to make any Investigation ability check with advantage. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Mighty Shove (Combat)

Your powerful blows send your targets reeling. When you hit a creature no more than one size larger than you with a melee attack, you can use a bonus action to attempt to shove that creature. The target must succeed on a Strength saving throw (DC equals 8 + your Strength modifier + your proficiency bonus) or be pushed up to 10 feet away from you.

Overwhelming Shove. When you use Mighty Shove, the target creature has disadvantage on the saving throw.

Moved by Faith (Roleplaying)

You have great respect for, or at least great knowledge of, the myths and legends that seek to explain your world. You have proficiency in the Religion skill.

Force of Faith. If you take this trait twice, you can choose to have advantage on ability checks you make using the Religion skill.

Natural Attack (Combat)

You're able to use your body's unique traits to inflict harm upon your foes. Your unarmed strikes deal damage equal to 1d6 + your Strength or Dexterity modifier, and the type of damage is either bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing based on the type of natural weaponry you choose.

Swift Strike. If you take this trait twice, you can use your unarmed strike as a bonus action. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Natural Movement (Exploration)

A life of travel has inured you to the quirks and dangers of your homeland. Choose an environment: desert, forest, grassland, hills and mountains, snow and ice, swamp and marsh, underground, underwater, or volcanic. While in that environment, moving through nonmagical difficult terrain costs you no extra movement, and ability checks made to track you have disadvantage.

Shared Movement. If you take this trait multiple times, you gain a new environment each time. Additionally, while in any environment chosen for Natural Movement, you can grant creatures of your choice the benefit of Natural Movement for 1 hour, as long as those creatures remain within 30 feet of you and can see you.

Nature's Voice (Roleplaying)

You've noticed the unique language nature speaks, and you've begun to speak it back. Through sounds and gestures, you can communicate simple ideas with Beasts and Plant creatures, understanding if a creature is hungry for example. This gives you no specific ability to control such creatures, and you can't understand or learn detailed information from them.

Primal Voice. When you use Nature's Voice, you have advantage on Charisma checks you make to interact or influence Beasts and Plant creatures.

Nimble Moves (Roleplaying)

You are adept at skills as uncontroversial as knot weaving to those as unrepentable as pickpocketing. You gain proficiency in the Sleight of Hand skill.

Exquisite Legerdemain. If you take this trait twice, you can choose to make any Sleight of Hand ability check with advantage.

Pack Tactics (Combat)

You have developed a synchronicity with your allies that makes you deadly when fighting alongside them. If you start your turn with at least one ally who isn't incapacitated within 5 feet of another creature you can see, you can use your reaction to gain advantage on attack rolls against that creature until the end of your turn.

Pack Instinct. If you take this trait twice, you no longer need to use your reaction to gain advantage from Pack Tactics.

Pass Through (Exploration)

You've learned to navigate a crowd with ease. You can move through the space of any creature that is of a size larger than yours.

Nimble Passage. If you take this trait twice, another creature's space is not difficult terrain for you.

Personal Bastion (Combat)

When all else fails, curling up like a rock might get you out of danger. As an action, you become motionless and gain the following effects:

- You gain a +4 bonus to AC
- You have disadvantage on Dexterity saving throws
- You have advantage on Strength and Constitution saving throws
- Your speed is 0 and you can't benefit from any bonus to your speed
- You lose concentration
- You can't take actions, but you can take reactions and you can use a bonus action to end the effect of this trait

Mobile Bastion. If you take this trait twice, when you use Personal Bastion, your speed is reduced only to half, you do not have disadvantage on Dexterity saving throws, and you can make use bonus actions that don't involve movement.

Persuasive Knack (Roleplaying)

When crews decide to stow their swords in order to parley, you are comfortable handling negotiations. You gain proficiency in the Persuasion skill.

Tongue of Gold. If you take this trait twice, you can choose to make any Persuasion ability check with advantage. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Polyglot (Roleplay)

Cultures crash together and butt heads often, and you've learned multiple languages as a result of living in a diverse melting pot. You learn two languages of your choice.

Language Expert. You can take this trait any number of times, selecting different languages each time. Unless allowed by the GM, you cannot select secret languages such as Druidic or Thieves' Cant.

Power Nap (Exploration)

You know how vital it is to grab shut eye when the opportunity presents itself. When taking a short rest, you can choose to sleep for 1 hour. If you do so, you reduce your exhaustion by one level and regain a Hit Die in addition to the other benefits of a short rest.

Extreme Resilience. If you take this trait twice, you can choose to regain a single resource that would normally refresh on a long rest. For example, a sorcerer could choose to regain a sorcery point on a short rest, even though they normally refresh on a long rest.

Powerful Build (Exploration/Combat)

Your formidable strength allows you to handle more than your own body weight. You count as one size larger when determining your carrying capacity and the weight you can push, drag, or lift. A Small creature with this trait can use weapons with the Heavy property with which they are otherwise proficient as if they did not have the Heavy property. (*This is an Exploration trait.*)

Powerful Shove. If you take this trait twice, you can move or knock foes prone with ease. When you use an attack action to shove a creature 5 feet or knock it prone, you have advantage on the opposed check to do so. (*This is a Combat trait.*)

Quick Initiative (Combat)

No matter what you are doing or where you are, you're always ready for things to escalate into a battle. You add your proficiency bonus to your initiative rolls.

Focused Initiative. If you take this trait twice, when you roll initiative, you can treat a d20 roll of 9 or lower as a 10.

"Ain't seen nothing like it. The feller done pulled himself into a ball and it was like the arrows bounced right off his back."

—Crewmate of Raphael Leatherback

Quick Slip (Combat)

Thanks to your creative and opportunistic approach to stealth, it is difficult to keep track of you in the midst of combat. You can take the Hide action as a bonus action on each of your turns. You must have appropriate cover and succeed on a Dexterity (Stealth) check to successfully hide, as normal.

Astute Slip. If you take this trait twice, you have advantage on the Dexterity (Stealth) check when you use Quick Slip.

Reach Attack (Combat)

Your long limbs allow you to strike opponents from farther away. Your reach increases by 5 feet. This extra reach doesn't apply to opportunity attacks.

Opportune Reach. If you take this trait twice, your extra reach from Reach Attack applies to opportunity attacks.

Relentless Endurance (Combat)

Fury drives you onward, beyond normal endurance. When you are reduced to 0 hit points but not killed outright, you can drop to 1 hit point instead. You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

This trait cannot be combined with the Magitech Fabrication trait.

Unparalleled Endurance. If you take this trait twice, when you use Relentless Endurance, you drop to 1d6 hit points + your proficiency bonus.

Additionally, when you use Relentless Endurance, you can choose to use a reaction to spend up to five Hit Dice, rolling them and gaining that number of hit points in addition to the other benefits.

Resilient Ears (Exploration)

Your ears have proven themselves reliable even against destructively loud noises. You have advantage on saving throws against being deafened.

Determined Hearing. If you take this trait twice, you have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks involving hearing. Additionally, when you fail a saving throw against being deafened, you can use your reaction to succeed on the save instead. You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

Ruthless Response (Combat)

You react brutally and swiftly in response to attacks leveled against you. When you take damage from a creature within your reach, you can use your reaction to make a melee weapon attack against that creature. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus. You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Focused Ruthlessness. If you take this trait twice, you have advantage on attacks made using Ruthless Response.

Sea Monster Hunter (Combat)

Sea monsters are common in the Aetherial Expanse, and so are the tactics for dealing with them. When you hit an aquatic creature at least one size larger than you with a weapon attack, you can deal additional damage to it equal to your proficiency bonus. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Unparalleled Hunter. If you take this trait a second time, you have advantage on weapon attack rolls made against aquatic creatures or creatures that are swimming.

Shapechanger (Roleplaying)

Some say that your ability to impersonate others can only be explained by the supernatural. As an action, you can transform into another creature that you have seen. The creature must be of the same general size and body type as you. You choose all your other features as you wish (including number of limbs, presence or absence of a tail, and so forth), but your statistics are the same in your new form.

Master Mimic. If you take this trait a second time, you have advantage on Charisma checks made when trying to impersonate a specific person or creature whose appearance you are copying.

Shroud of the Wild (Exploration)

Stories tell of mysterious folks who appear to vanish into thin air with the help of only the most meager of obstructions. You can attempt to hide even when you are only lightly obscured by foliage, heavy rain, falling snow, mist, and other natural phenomena.

Faultless Shroud. If you take this feature twice, you have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks to hide while using Shroud of the Wild.

Skirmish Tactics (Combat)

You are able to strike your opponents and quickly move out of reach before they can retaliate. When you hit a hostile creature with a weapon attack, opportunity attacks against you by that creature are made with disadvantage until the end of your turn.

Supreme Skirmisher. If you take this trait twice, when you hit a hostile creature with a weapon attack, you can take the Disengage action as a bonus action until the end of your turn.

Slippery (Combat)

You are strangely difficult to grab a hold of. You have advantage on Strength (Athletics) and Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks to escape a grapple.

Supreme Slip. If you take this trait twice, when you fail a Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to escape a grapple, you can use your reaction to succeed instead. You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

Standing Leap (Exploration)

The ability to fling yourself great distances has many uses, especially when it comes to boarding or escaping ships. Your long jump is up to 20 feet and your high jump is up to 10 feet, with or without a running start.

If your walking speed is lower than your long jump, you can only leap a distance equal to your walking speed.

Incredible Leap. If you take this trait a second time, your long jump increases to 30 feet and your high jump increases to 15 feet.

Additionally, when you jump out of the reach of a creature threatening you, the jump movement does not provoke opportunity attacks from that creature. You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

Stalwart Reserves (Combat)

Hitting your adversaries renews your spirit with confidence and vigor. When you hit a creature with a melee attack, you can use your reaction to roll a d4 for each point of your proficiency bonus and gain temporary hit points equal to the total. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus. You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Stalwart Edge. If you take this trait twice, you can take the maximum number of temporary hit points rather than rolling.

Steady (Exploration)

You have good balance and a reliable stance that keeps you steady, even in the face of overwhelming force. You have advantage on saving throws against being knocked prone.

Stand Fast. If you take this trait twice, standing from prone only takes five feet of movement instead of half your movement. Additionally, when you fail a saving throw against being knocked prone, you can use your reaction to succeed on the save instead. You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

Swimmer (Exploration)

The difference between living and dying can frequently come down to how fast an adventurer can swim. You have taken heed of this and trained accordingly. You have a swimming speed equal to your walking speed.

Quicken Swim. If you take this trait twice, you can use the Dash action as a bonus action while swimming.

Timely Boon (Combat)

You have a reputation for getting yourself out of danger, even in the face of seemingly impossible odds. When you fail a saving throw, you can use your reaction to roll a d4 and add it to the save, potentially turning it into a success. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus. You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Born Lucky. If you take this trait twice, you roll a d8 instead of a d4 when you use Timely Boon.

Tireless (Exploration)

Your determination allows you to push through sleep deprivation and overexertion when the situation commands it. You have advantage on saving throws connected to gaining or removing levels of exhaustion.

Vigorous. If you take this trait twice, when you fail a saving throw against exhaustion, you can use your reaction to succeed on the save instead. You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

Toughness (Combat)

The daily bruises and scrapes of an adventurer's life have only made you more durable. Your hit point maximum increases by 1, and it increases by 1 every time you gain a level.

Extra Tough. If you take this trait twice, instead your hit point maximum increases by 2, and it increases by 2 every time you gain a level.

Additionally, when you attempt a saving throw against an effect that would decrease your hit point maximum, you can attempt the save with advantage. You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

Unchecked (Combat)

You are remarkably difficult to pin down. You have advantage on saving throws against being restrained.

Slip Free. If you take this trait twice, when you fail a saving throw against being restrained, you can use your reaction to succeed on the save instead. You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

Weapon Aptitude (Combat)

Either through training, or simply because you've always used the tools available to you, you've become familiar with a variety of weapons. You have proficiency with three weapons of your choice.

Weapon Specialist. If you take this trait multiple times, you gain proficiency with three new weapons each time. Additionally, choose one weapon with which you have proficiency. You gain a +1 bonus to damage rolls with that weapon.

Well Protected (Combat)

Even without armor, your physical traits, such as a scaly hide or protective carapace, keep you safe from injury. When you are not wearing armor, your AC is equal to 13 + your Dexterity modifier.

Protective Cover. If you take this trait twice, you can also hide behind your natural armor for even further protection. When you make a Dexterity saving throw or are targeted with a ranged attack, you can use a reaction to gain advantage on the saving throw or impose disadvantage on the ranged attack. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus. You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.



Chapter 7

SEAFARER ADVANCEMENT

“Now listen here, wet-back. Either ya does as I says, or by Qoz, I’ll fling ya ta the Aether. I ain’t no cap’n, but here on deck, ya answer to lill’o me.”

—Smiling Jim, Boatswain on the Flirt

With its vast seas of aether, the Aetherial Expanse calls on players to use sailing ships to explore its magical waves.

This chapter details optional new character advancement features you can add to your games when the player characters become officers of a sailing ship. These features integrate with the naval rules presented in part 4 of this book.

This chapter begins by outlining the base officer station option and is followed by an optional expanded officer option that gives additional features to characters as they gain seafaring experience. Each officer station is detailed with its base and expanded features. Finally, the chapter finishes with a list of boons that can be added to both PCs and NPCs alike.

OFFICER STATION RANKS

If you plan to run naval-themed campaigns where the player characters engage in dramatic ship-to-ship battles while navigating the high seas, these optional Officer Station rules help to integrate the characters into their ship’s operations.

When the players explore the Aetherial Expanse on a sailing ship, they will likely assign themselves to their vessel’s officer stations. Ten officer stations are detailed in the following sections.

BASE IMPLEMENTATION

Anyone can fill any of a ship’s officer stations, but individuals with ranks in that station offer significant advantages to the vessel’s operation.

Using the base officer station implementation, new characters begin play with officer ranks equal to their proficiency bonus and gain a new rank whenever their

proficiency bonus increases. These ranks can be assigned to a single officer station of their choice or distributed across multiple officer stations.

As an example, a 1st level character has a proficiency bonus of +2, giving them 2 officer station ranks. The character could apply the 2 ranks to first mate, or 1 rank in first mate and 1 rank in navigator.

Narratively, these ranks can represent natural skill or be attributed to a character's class, background, or another backstory element. Ultimately, these ranks support the type of story the player wants to tell with their character. For instance, if a character is of noble birth in the Ayrissian Kingdom, they may have already received formal education as a ship captain.

Player characters can also gain ranks in the same way that NPCs can—by receiving a promotion after surviving a journey or ship combat. The players are free to discuss who they think should receive promotion, and the GM is encouraged to listen to them, but ultimately, the decision lies with the ship's captain.

Each officer station has a base feature available to anyone with at least 1 rank in that officer station. Additional ranks in a station typically increase the effectiveness of this feature.

Maximum Ranks

The number of ranks a character has in a single officer station cannot exceed 5. Regardless of the number of additional ranks a player character may have gained through promotion or other means, the number of ranks in a single officer station cannot exceed their proficiency bonus.

OPTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION: EXPANDED OFFICER RANKS

Player characters assigned to a ship station with ranks in that role gain a basic benefit that improves with the number of ranks they possess. You may wish to include these optional rules to give player characters additional features as they increase their ranks in an officer station.

The Expanded Officer Ranks provide features at each of the 5 ranks for each station. These features include station-specific abilities for both combat and non-combat ship activities, and an opportunity to earn flavorful boons.

Each non-boon rank is denoted as either a “Ship Combat” feature that comes into play during such situations, “Voyage” for features that are applicable outside of ship combat, and “Mastery” for the final rank, which varies based on station, and sometimes provides multiple benefits.

Progression through these ranks follows the rules outlined with the standard Officer Station Rank rules, with characters having a total number of ranks equal to their proficiency bonus plus any additional ranks granted through gameplay achievements.

As the maximum Officer Station rank remains at 5, characters granted extra ranks through gameplay may need to spend those ranks on learning additional stations and gaining boons. While there is no limit to how many

boons a single character can gain by progressing through different station ranks, the overabundance of the same boon on a ship provides diminishing returns for characters adventuring together (see “Boons” on page 106).

Achievement-based progression is optional and can be highly thematic. Example achievements that could warrant such advancement are listed with each officer station. These achievements are by no means exhaustive and should serve as inspiration rather than the only criteria for station advancement. It should also be noted that most achievements listed can't be achieved individually—they require teamwork to succeed!

EXPANDED BACKGROUNDS

The new backgrounds presented in chapter 9 include bonus officer ranks described in this chapter. Each new background grants a free officer station rank, resulting in new player characters potentially starting with 3 ranks.

A player character's maximum number of ranks in a single officer station is always limited to their proficiency bonus. Player characters using one of these new backgrounds must spread their 3 ranks across at least two officer stations.

Player characters with a background from another source that does not grant a free Officer Station rank may wish to add a single officer rank of their choice with their GM's permission. However, a more thematic alternative is for the player character to start without the bonus rank and have them earn it during their first voyage when they are suddenly called to take on an unfamiliar station.

Captain Reeve Arati
of the No Cigar



OFFICER STATIONS

The ten officer stations are described below. The first five stations (captain, first mate, quartermaster, navigator, and helmsperson) are vital, and vessels lacking an individual assigned to these stations function poorly, with the specifics left for GMs to determine as appropriate for each situation.

CAPTAIN

Without a captain, a crew is aimless and ineffective, and no ship would willingly set sail without one. A good captain needs to be level-headed to know when to fight, when to flee, and when to parley.

Base Captain Feature (Voyage). When the ship's mettle pool resets, it gains a number of additional dice equal to your captain rank (see "Mettle" on page 199).

Expanded Features

Rank 2. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 3. Inspirational Command (Ship Combat).

You can expend 1 mettle die to grant one of the ship's officers inspiration. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your captain rank, and you regain all uses when you dock at a port.

Rank 4. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 5. Master Commander (Mastery). Other than if your mettle pool is reset, whenever you would gain mettle, you gain 1 additional mettle die. For example, if you would gain 2 mettle dice from an action, you gain 1 additional mettle die from that action, netting 3 mettle dice from that action.

Hazel,
First Mate of
the Aesphodel



Captain Achievements

Captains earn their promotions through the respect of the crew, the reputation of their ship, and extraordinary events at sea. Some suggestions for achievements as a captain are:

- Force a ship with a larger mettle pool to surrender.
- Increase your ship's reputation by 10.
- Defeat a Gargantuan sea creature.

FIRST MATE

A clear chain of command is vital for the daily operation of any vessel. As second in command, the first mate performs the duties of the captain when needed, disciplines the crew, and leads boarding parties.

Base First Mate Feature (Ship Combat). When you roll your mettle pool during a boarding action, you can reroll a number of mettle dice equal to your first mate rank (see "Boarding Action" on page 188).

Expanded Features

Rank 2. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 3. Leadership at Sea (Voyage). When outside of ship combat, choose one officer other than yourself or the captain. That officer regains one use of an expended Officer Station feature that otherwise requires docking in port. Once you use this feature, you must dock at a port before you can use it again.

Rank 4. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 5. A Captain's Mettle (Mastery). Whenever you would lose more than 1 mettle die, you can reduce the amount lost by 1 (to a minimum of 1).

First Mate Achievements

First mates earn promotions by leading boarding actions, overseeing the crew, and fulfilling the captain's duties when required. Some suggestions for achievements as a first mate are:

- Successfully both lead and repel a boarding party.
- Earn reputation while assigned to the captain's station.
- Have three officers – other than the captain – earn achievements.

QUARTERMASTER

The quartermaster keeps a watchful eye over the ship's supplies, ensuring the vessel has enough food and water for travel, and tracks rations to discourage theft. On pirate vessels, the quartermaster also divides the loot and plays an important leadership role alongside the captain and first mate, acting as a tiebreaker if the captain and first mate disagree on something important.

Base Quartermaster Feature (Voyage). At the end of a travel leg, choose 1 type of ship supply (grub, grog, or gear) expended during that leg. You regain 1 unit of the selected supply. You can use this ability a number of times equal to your quartermaster rank. You refresh all uses of this feature when you dock at a port.

Expanded Features

Rank 2. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 3. Secret Stash (Ship Combat). During ship combat, you can produce a secret reserve of special ammunition. The ammunition can be of any type listed on the special ammunition table found in chapter 12 (see page 174). You produce a quantity of ammunition whose total value equals 100 gp times your quartermaster rank. This is also the maximum size of your Secret Stash. Items in your stash must be expended as they're produced – they cannot be added to the ship's stores. Once you expend your stash for the first time, it does not automatically refill. Instead, it refills when you make ship-related purchases at port. Every 5 gp spent on regular ship purchases refills 1 gp of your stash. You're a quartermaster – keep a ledger!

Rank 4. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 5. Acquisitions Specialist (Mastery). You can negotiate a substantial discount on a single line item of ship equipment or ship upgrade purchased at a port stop. For the purposes of this feature, a single line item refers to buying multiples of the same item (i.e. 10 of the same canon). Make a Charisma (Persuasion) check. The discount percentage is equal to the result of your check.

Quartermaster's Achievements

Quartermasters earn their promotions by managing supplies and engaging in negotiations. Some suggestions for achievements as a quartermaster are:

- Save the ship a total of at least 1,000 gp on hiring pirates.
- Have ammo produced from your Secret Stash score a dramatic hit during combat.
- Allow your ship to complete an extra journey leg without purchasing supplies.

NAVIGATOR

A good navigator is worth their weight in gold, as charting a reliable course through the Aetherial Expanse requires years of experience and a good working knowledge of current wind routes.

Navigators with magical talents are called Wayfinders, and they can use their spellcasting ability modifier instead of Intelligence when making Navigation checks (see page 176).

Base Navigator Feature (Voyage). You can reroll a failed Intelligence (Navigation) check. You can do this a number of times equal to your navigator rank, but no more than once per travel leg (see page 176). You regain all uses of this feature when the ship docks at a port.

Expanded Features

Rank 2. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 3. Planned Momentum (Ship Combat). During ship combat, when your ship is in irons, you can move 2 squares instead of 1. You can use this feature once per ship combat.

Rank 4. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 5. Aethersense (Mastery). If you would roll on a Travel Complication table, you can roll twice and encounter the more beneficial complication.

Alternatively, when you succeed on a Navigation check during a journey, you may choose to still encounter one of the ships from the Travel Complication table. The GM determines the type of ship. Regardless of which option of this feature you use, you must dock at a port before you can use it again.

Navigator's Achievements

Navigators earn their promotions through skilled navigation – including locating important landmarks and other ships. Some suggestions for achievements as a navigator are:

- Complete a multiple-leg journey without any navigation-related complications.
- Track down a ship you're searching for while at sea.
- Discover a lost or mythical location.

HELMSPERSON

A ship is lost without a steady hand on the wheel. A good helmsperson must be calm under pressure and be able to guide their vessel through danger with little margin for error.

Base Helmsperson Feature (Ship Combat). Once per round during ship combat, you can move your ship 1 square for free during the Movement Phase. You can do this a number of times equal to your helmsperson rank. You refresh all uses of this ability at the end of ship combat.

Expanded Features

Rank 2. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 3. Dramatic Maneuver (Voyage). When you fail to dodge a hazard during a pursuit, you can reroll your check, and you must take the new result. Once you use this feature, you must dock at a port before you can use it again.

Rank 4. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 5. Handles Like a Dream (Mastery). When at the helm of a Medium or Huge ship at the start of combat, you can improve your ship's mobility to that of the next smaller ship (a Huge ship becomes balanced, while a Medium ship becomes high.) This benefit lasts until the end of ship combat, and you must dock at a port before using it again. While at the helm of a small ship, there is no longer a limit to the number of times you can use your base helmsperson feature.

Helmsperson's Achievements

Helmspersons earn their promotions by performing ship maneuvers and managing the ship's speed. Some suggestions for achievements as a helmsperson are:

- Catch or outrun another ship during a pursuit.
- Defeat another ship in combat after successfully "Crossing the T."
- Move the ship 3 more squares during a combat turn than is granted by its base speed.

BOATSWAIN

The boatswain (or ‘bosun’) is usually a sailor with extensive experience who has climbed the ranks to oversee the ship’s general operations. This means they oversee the quality and maintenance of the sails, ropes, and so on. The boatswain teaches and directs the rest of the crew when working—swabbing the deck, setting sails, and dropping anchor.

If the boatswain station is empty, your ship loses a point of speed.

Base Boatswain Feature (Ship Combat). When firefighting (see “Firefighting” on page 184), you automatically put out a number of fires equal to the boatswain’s rank.

Expanded Features

Rank 2. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 3. Lower Deck Taskmaster (Voyage). The exemplary maintenance of the ship results in faster sailing and easier repairs. While not in combat, your ship’s travel speed increases by 1 knot. This increase does not affect your combat or chase speed. Additionally, once per day, your ship gains 1 additional hit point whenever you spend gear to repair damage. While not in port, you can use this feature a number of times equal to your rank, regaining all uses when you dock at a port.

Rank 4. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 5. Double-Time (Mastery). You can lose up to 10% (rounded down) of your unranked crew before suffering the associated penalties listed for running either below Maximum Crew or below Skeleton Crew numbers (see Casualties on page 188).

Boatswain’s Achievements

Boatswains earn their promotions when they lead by example and push unranked crew to perform at their best. Some suggestions for achievements as a boatswain are:

- Put out 5 fires during the same turn in combat.
- Win a ship combat without losing any unranked crew.

COOK

Life out on the aether is hard enough at the best of times. A crew routinely eating nothing but hardtack won’t stick their neck out for you.

If you don’t have a cook, you must apply a –1 penalty to each mettle die whenever you roll them.

Rank 1. Cook Station (Voyage). When you complete a travel leg during a journey, reduce the number of grub you need to consume by the cook’s rank (see “Spending Supplies” on page 179).

Expanded Features

Rank 2. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 3. Clap o’Thunder (Ship Combat). At the start of a Boarding Action during ship combat, you can expend 1 grog to take the maximum result on one of your ship’s mettle dice (do not roll that die). You can use this feature once per ship combat.

Rank 4. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 5. Go Fish (Mastery). You can make just about any creature’s meat edible. When you recover a freshly killed body of a living creature, you can convert that body into grub. You gain 1 grub from a Medium creature’s body, 2 grub from a Large creature, 4 grub from a Huge creature, and 25 grub from a Gargantuan creature. When it comes to smaller creatures, you need eight Tiny creatures or two Small creatures to create 1 grub. For swarms, use the size of the swarm.

Cook’s Achievements

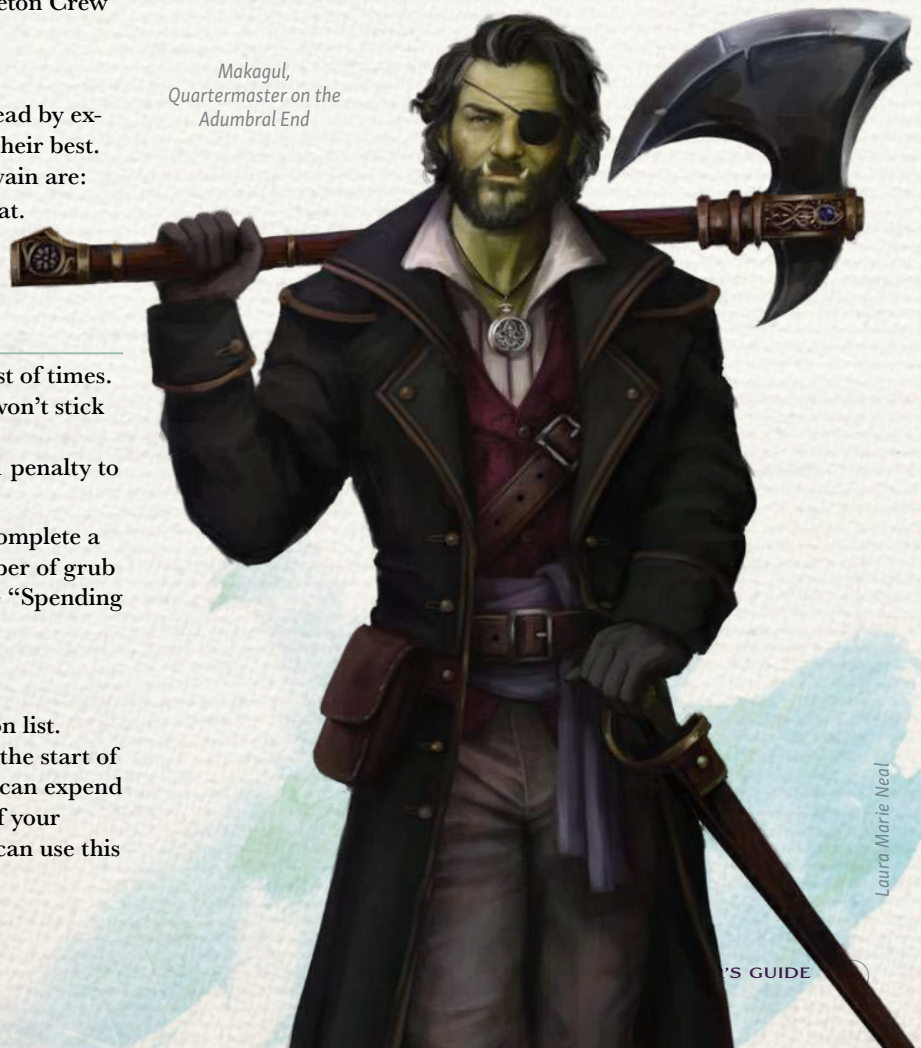
Cooks earn their promotions by making the most of their grub and grog, and keeping the crew fed! Some suggestions for achievements as a cook are:

- Allow the ship to extend its journey by an extra leg without acquiring additional grub or grog.
- Use your Clap o’Thunder to help turn the tide of a battle through the additional mettle it provides.

HUMANOID MEAT

Most crews are against eating the flesh of other humanoids – whether of the same species or different. Unless otherwise specified by your GM, when you create grub out of humanoid flesh, the ship loses 1 mettle. Additionally, the ship loses 1 mettle per travel leg during which such grub is consumed.

*Makagul,
Quartermaster on the
Adumbral End*



Laura Marie Neal

MASTER GUNNER

The master gunner is usually a gunner who has risen through the ranks and is now in charge of teaching unranked crew how to load, aim, and fire the ship's weapons. The master gunner is also responsible for checking the quality and quantity of ammunition, and ensuring that ship weapons are kept in good condition.

If the master gunner station is empty, you cannot use unique ammunition.

Rank 1. Master Gunner Station (Ship Combat). When you fire weapons during the Attack Phase, you can reroll a number of misses equal to the rank of the master gunner, whether you have the weather gage token from a target or not. If you do have the weather gage, this ability stacks with its effects. In other words, you can reroll a miss (because you have the weather gage), and if that reroll is also a miss, you can reroll a second time (because you have a master gunner aboard).

Expanded Features

Rank 2. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 3. Shoot the Breeze (Voyage). In your experience, most problems can be solved with cannons. When your ship encounters a non-combat hazard while at sea (see "Hazards" on page 182), you can devise a way to assist in circumventing it using cannons. This might include shooting through thick fog to increase visibility or scaring off wildlife threatening the ship. Your actions reduce the Dodge DC associated with overcoming the obstacle by 2. Your GM may choose an alternative benefit of similar power. Once used, you must dock at a port before using this feature again.

Rank 4. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 5. Fire Everything! (Mastery). The target number for your cannons to hit is reduced by 1 (to a minimum of 2).

Master Gunner's Achievements

Master gunners earn their promotions by making things go boom – ideally, other ships! Some suggestions for master gunner achievements are:

- Hit with all cannons during a single volley in combat.
- Defeat another ship in combat after only a single round of combat.

SHIPWRIGHT

Sometimes referred to as a carpenter, a shipwright is never without work. Wear and tear is common, and the aether is rife with hazards waiting to shred a ship's hull to ribbons.

If the shipwright station is empty, you can't make repairs at sea, and you must dock at a port to use gear to restore hit points to your ship (see "Ship Repair" on page 191).

Rank 1. Shipwright Station (Voyage). When you dock in a port, your ship immediately regains hit points equal to your shipwright's rank without spending any gear. You can't use this feature again until seven days have passed or you've completed at least one travel leg.

Expanded Features

Rank 2. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 3. Maintenance at Sea (Voyage). Once per travel leg, when you spend at least 1 hour at sea without engaging in Ship Combat, your ship regains a number of hit points equal to your shipwright's rank without spending any gear.

Rank 4. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 5. Repurpose (Mastery). When you recover gear from another ship or another source at sea, you gain 1 additional gear for every 3 gear recovered. Additionally, you can scrap a ship upgrade or a ship weapon to gain 1 gear per every 200 gp of that item's cost. Once you scrap an item in this manner, you can't do so again until you dock at a port.

Shipwright's Achievements

Shipwrights earn their promotions by keeping the ship in tip-top shape and affecting repairs. Some suggestions for achievements as a shipwright are:

- Repair the ship from 2 or fewer hit points to full without stopping at a port.
- Escaping capture by making temporary repairs to a ship whose hit points drop to 0 during combat.

OPTIONAL RULE – TEMPORARY HIT POINTS

Sometimes, shipwrights can get their ships moving under the direst situations.

During the Status Phase of ship combat (see page 184), you can attempt temporary repairs to keep the ship moving. Spend 2 gear to roll an Intelligence ability check, adding your shipwright rank to the roll. If the result exceeds your ship's maximum hit points, the ship gains 1 temporary hit point.

Gear spent this way are lost regardless of the result. Temporary ship hit points do not stack and are lost at the end of combat.



Johild Blackbone,
Gunner on the
Adumbral End

SURGEON

Boats are dangerous places to live and work, even if they never see combat. It's the surgeon's job to keep the crew up and moving during a journey.

If the surgeon station is empty, stricken officers and unranked casualties do not automatically recover after ship combat.

Rank 1. Surgeon Station (Ship Combat). During the Status Phase of ship combat, you can cancel a number of casualties caused by enemy cannon fire equal to your surgeon's rank each round.

Expanded Features

Rank 2. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 3. Daily Exercise Routine (Voyage). When you complete a travel leg without engaging in Ship Combat, you can expend 1 grub to conduct exercises among the unranked crew, making them more nimble and likely to avoid attacks. During your next ship combat, when members of your unranked crew would be instantly killed – such as by a hullbuster – they are instead considered a standard casualty (and can be recovered). The number of crew affected by this feature equals your surgeon rank and does not stack from multiple journey legs. If unused, the daily exercise benefits expire once the ship docks at a port.

Rank 4. Boon. Choose one boon from the boon list.

Rank 5. Who Lives and Who Dies (Mastery). During ship combat, when an officer would take a second casualty (see “Casualties” on page 188), you can choose to redirect that casualty to another living officer that has already taken a casualty during this combat. You can use this feature once per ship combat.

Surgeon's Achievements

Surgeons earn their promotions by keeping the crew alive and well. Some suggestions for achievements as a surgeon are:

- During the same ship battle, cancel total injuries equal to half your ship's maximum crew.
- Save an officer from certain death.

Zilro Rikter,
Surgeon on the
Adumbral End



BOONS

Boons are special capabilities that experienced seafarers acquire during their travels.

If multiple officers have the same boon, their effects do not stack. If a boon has a limited number of uses, each officer can use it when it's not already in effect.

BOON LISTING

Boons are presented in alphabetical order. This is not considered an exhaustive list. NPCs may occasionally have unique boons that are not available to players!

Aether Assassin

You are skilled at disguising your ship for stealth operations. When your ship makes a check to approach another ship stealthily, you can add 1d4 to that check.

Aether Poisoning Resistance

When suffering from aether poisoning, if you succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, you can prevent the condition from advancing to its next stage for 24 hours. Until cured, you can resist advancing each poisoning stage a number of times equal to your Constitution modifier (a minimum of once). See “Aether Poisoning” on page 20.

Avast Me Hearties!

Once per day during a boarding action, three dice in your mettle pool become d6s when you roll them.

Beast Chaser

When your ship engages in combat with a creature at sea, the first two points of damage the ship takes from that creature (or creatures) during combat are ignored. Additionally, during the first round of combat, you and all characters of your choice on your ship have advantage on any saving throws against being knocked down or overboard.

Blow the Man Down!

Once per day during traditional combat of a ship boarding action, all allies who can see you can move up to half their speed and take one action.

Butcher of the Seas

During one round of ship combat, when your ship deals damage that results in rolling casualties, reroll any number of 1s rolled on the casualty d4s and take the new result. Once you use this boon, you can't use it again until you dock at a port.

Cannonward Shield

When hit by cannon fire, roll 1d4 and cancel that many hits. Once you use this boon, you can't use it again until this officer has completed a long rest.

Champion of the Unknown

When your ship gains a reputation for assisting a far-flung community or crew with a total reputation of 10 or less, it gains 1 additional point of reputation. Your ship can gain this bonus only once per community.

Do-or-die

When your ship runs out of mettle dice, roll 1d4 and gain that many mettle dice. Once you use this boon, you can't use it again until this officer has completed a long rest.

Fire in the Hole!

The first hit produced by your cannons during a ship combat encounter automatically starts a fire.

Grog Waterer

Your ship only requires one grog for every two travel legs.

Intimidating Demeanor

When initiative is rolled for traditional combat during a ship boarding action, opposing combatants must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or have disadvantage on their initiative check.

Lucky Looter

Prize money from captured ships is increased by 50 percent.

Merciful Demeanor

At the end of the Status Phase of ship combat, if the opposing ship has only 1 mettle die remaining, roll that die. On a roll of 1 or 2, the ship surrenders if narratively appropriate. Ships crewed by undead or crews who would never surrender are unaffected. Alternatively, the GM may trigger a surrender earlier when appropriate. This boon is ignored if your ship used any special ammunition other than Chainshot or Hullbusters during the battle.

Never Say Die

Once per day, when a crew member drops to 0 hit points, you can choose to have them drop to 1 hit point instead.

Pack Rat

You keep your own supplies, "just in case." Anytime while at sea, you spontaneously produce 1 each of grub, grog, and gear. Once you use this boon, you must dock at a port before using it again.

Recruiter

When you make a Charisma check to Haggle while hiring a pirate, you can add 1d4 to that check. Additionally, at the GM's discretion, you may have advantage on social interactions with any members of the crew that you helped recruit (such as during a time of mutiny).

Rigrunner

When your ship gains 2 or more points of reputation as a result of a single action under a False Flag, you can assign 1 point of that reputation to your true flag. Once you use this boon, you must dock at a port before you can use it again.

Sharp Spotter

This character has advantage when rolling to notice hidden hazards beneath the aether, and always spots another ship on the horizon before they spot you. If characters on opposing ships possess this boon then they would simultaneously see each other.

Skilled Mentor

If you are downed or otherwise leave your station during Ship Combat, an unranked crewmember (so long as at least 1 is alive) maintains your station as if they had 1 rank in it. If another officer takes over the station and has fewer ranks than you, they gain a temporary +1 to their rank in that station until the end of combat. Once you use this boon, you must dock at a port before you can use it again.

Tactical Genius

During ship combat, if 1 additional square of movement would allow your ship to "Cross the T," your ship can move 1 additional square into that position. Once you use this boon, you can't use it again until you dock at a port.

Wind-Kissed

Your ship can move an extra square this turn in ship combat or pursuit. Once you use this boon, you can't use it again until this officer has completed a long rest.



Captain Windhowler of the
Fanged Stallion



Chapter 8

CLASS OPTIONS

“The truth of who we are is the vision we hold firm in the face of adversity.”

—Gin-deh-li, Ascetic Disciple

This chapter presents new class options that, with your GM’s approval, can be used to create characters for adventure campaigns in the Aetherial Expanse. Each design calls to elements of this magical swashbuckling setting, including Karelagne’s military might, Ayris’s competitive mercantilism, and the Drake’s fierce independence.

Within this chapter, you’ll find new fighting styles for fighters, paladins, rangers, and two dozen new subclasses designed for the Aetherial Expanse.

FIGHTING STYLE OPTIONS

Warriors within the Aetherial Expanse have developed new fighting techniques to survive the threats of this wondrous part of the Astral Plane.

When fighters, paladins, or rangers choose a Fighting Style, the following new styles are added to their list of options.

Close-Quarters Combat

You excel at fighting in the cramped quarters of a ship’s hold. You have advantage on attack rolls when at least three spaces adjacent to you contain hostile creatures or impassable terrain.

Double-Action Gunslinger

When you take the Attack action and attack with a firearm that you’re holding in one hand, you can use a bonus action to attack with a different firearm that you’re holding in the other hand. You don’t add your ability modifier to the damage of the bonus attack, unless that modifier is negative.

Submerged Lunge

You’ve trained to use thrusting weapons to great effect while fighting beneath the waves. While submerged, you have advantage on attack rolls against creatures that don’t have a swimming speed. Additionally, you deal one additional weapon damage die when you deal piercing damage with a melee attack while submerged.

Swashbuckling Flourish

You’re a showboater who dazzles enemies with style. While wearing light or no armor and wielding no shield, you add your Charisma modifier to your Armor Class and Dexterity saving throws.

NEW SUBCLASSES

The following table summarizes the subclasses detailed in the remainder of this chapter.

SUBCLASSES		
CLASS	SUBCLASS	DESCRIPTION
Barbarian	Path of Aether Transformation	Empowers their rage with the transformative effects of aether
Barbarian	Path of the Wronged	Channels their outrage through focused violence
Bard	College of the Blade Dancer	Moves with deadly grace
Bard	College of Shantyfolk	Inspire crewmates through the power of their song
Cleric	Aether Domain	Driven to protect the Aetherial Expanse or claim its power
Cleric	Tyranny Domain	Serves divine powers of tyrannical order
Druid	Circle of the Elements	Calls upon primordial forces
Druid	Circle of Feathered Stars	Draw upon the powers of ancient, otherworldly beasts
Fighter	Battle Commander	Excel in battle by coordinating ally attacks
Fighter	Corsair	Intimidate opponents with fear and violence
Monk	Way of the Ascetic	Overcome physical impediments through mental discipline
Monk	Way of the Conduit	Use ki to channel primordial energies
Paladin	Oath of the Sovereign	Sworn to protect their nation and its leaders
Paladin	Order of the Drakes	Willing to die for freedom and independence
Ranger	Aether Prowler	Empowered by the aether’s noxious magical power
Ranger	Expanse Wayfinder	Unparalleled explorers of the Starlight Seas
Rogue	Cloaked Blade	Flourishes cloak and blade with deadly precision
Rogue	Veiled Guardian	Stealthily guards through deadly reprisal
Sorcerer	Phantom Shrouded	Harnesses the spectral dreams lost beneath the Starlight Sea
Sorcerer	Primordial Soul	Infused with elemental power
Warlock	The Reaper	Sworn a pact to an apocalyptic entity
Warlock	The Swarm	Draws upon the power of insectile fiends
Wizard	Alacrity Scholar	Magically manipulate time and movement
Wizard	Technomage	Use aetherium to enchant items



BARBARIAN

Warriors who are driven by an unquenchable fury can often be the difference between victory and defeat in the crowded battles aboard sailing ships. Presented herein are two new barbarian subclasses, the Path of Aether Transformation and the Path of the Wronged.

PATH OF AETHER TRANSFORMATION

“No one escapes contact with the aether unscathed or unchanged. Some merely become entranced or enamored of the mystical, magical flow, while others are more deeply invested emotionally, psychologically, or physically. In some extremely rare and tragic cases, all three.”

—Falandrin the Thirster, Pirate and Philosopher

Aether, the Expanse’s magical fluid, infuses your body and soul, allowing you to draw upon it to energize your physical prowess at the cost of logic and reason. As the twisting, mystic veil descends across your mind, aether’s transformative energy courses through your veins. Your form shifts, taking on features of beasts from the Starlight Seas.

Aether Rage

3rd-level Path of Aether Transformation feature

When you use your Rage feature, it becomes fueled by aether. Silvery light shines from within your form, emanating from your eyes and mouth, whipping at your hair and clothes, and enveloping you in an argent aura.

While raging, you gain immunity to poison and force damage, and you are immune to the poisoned condition. Your hands grow silvery claws that are treated as natural weapons that you can use to make unarmed strikes, dealing 1d10 + your Strength modifier slashing damage. Your melee weapon and natural attacks are considered magical while you rage.

“From the sea she emerged, rending the hull of the ironclad with claws of starlight. Some say emergents are the Expanse personified, but I have seen the Expanse demonized.”

—Kasiah Cleftear, survivor of the INS Regalwright

Deep-Infused Rage

6th-level Path of Aether Transformation feature

When you use your Rage feature, you can select one of the abilities below. The effect lasts for the duration of the rage.

Poison Claws. You deal an additional 1d6 poison damage on your successful natural weapon attacks as the aether within your body pours forth to infect the wounds you inflict.

Magical Resistance. You have advantage on saving throws against spells and magical effects.

Supernatural Hide. Your skin thickens and hardens, giving you +2 to AC.

Astonishing Recovery. At the start of each of your turns, you heal a number of hit points equal to your proficiency bonus.

Call of the Aether

10th-level Path of Aether Transformation feature

The aether in your body has transformed you into a creature closer to the aether natives than your initial origin. You are immune to aether poisoning and gain a swim speed equal to your speed.

Additionally, you can cast *detect magic* as an action without expending a spell slot or material components. You cannot use this ability again until you finish a short or long rest.

Transformative Rage

14th-level Path of Aether Transformation feature

While raging, your claws increase in size and sharpness, dealing 2d10 + Strength modifier slashing damage on a successful strike. Additionally you may select two abilities from the Deep-Infused Rage feature instead of one.

PATH OF THE WRONGED

“Out here in the Expanse, all anyone truly has is their self-respect. Don’t let anyone take it from you. And aye, sometimes you’re going to have to take up the axe to keep what’s yours, but don’t think twice about making them pay dearly when they wrong you. It’s the only way they’ll learn.”

—Lucky Foad, Boatswain of the AMS Euphoria

The people of the Kingdom of Ayris value honor and respect as fundamental virtues. Barbarians that walk the Path of the Wronged take these concepts to the extreme, holding their personal sense of self-respect and dignity proudly aloft. To these warriors, nothing is more important than respect, and they expect everyone to take it just as seriously.

When one of these barbarians suffers an insult to their honor, they respond with violent outbursts to express their outrage clearly and directly. They use that rage to deliver swift, harsh lessons on the importance of respect. Those who survive are left with grievous scars to ensure they’ll never forget the price of wronging someone willing to stand up for themselves.

Path of the Wronged



Path of Aether Transformation



Outrage

3rd-level Path of the Wronged feature

Immediately after you take damage from a creature you can see while you are raging, you can use your reaction to gain temporary hit points equal to half your level, and you can move up to half your speed toward that creature. You lose any remaining temporary hit points when your rage ends.

If you take damage from an attack made by a creature you can see when you are not raging, you can activate your Rage feature as a reaction.

Grudgebearer

6th-level Path of the Wronged feature

When an enemy creature forces you to make a saving throw, you gain a Grudge Die, a d6. You can have no more than one Grudge Die at any time.

Once within the next minute, you can roll the Grudge Die and add the number rolled to one attack roll or saving throw you make. You can choose to roll the Grudge Die after you roll the d20, but before you know the result. Once you use the Grudge Die, you lose it.

At 14th level, the Grudge Die becomes a d8.

Defiant Outburst

10th-level Path of the Wronged feature

When you would be reduced to 0 hit points but not outright killed, you can use a reaction to let loose a bellicose cry. You and creatures friendly to you who can hear you and are within 60 feet of you regain 1d12 hit points. If you were not raging when you used this reaction, you can also activate your Rage feature as part of the reaction.

You regain this ability when you finish a long rest.

Suffer No Insult

14th-level Path of the Wronged feature

When an enemy creature you can see damages you with an attack or forces you to make a saving throw, you can use your reaction to swear a vengeful oath against it. When you do so, you gain the following benefits for one minute:

- Your attack rolls against the target are made with advantage.
- You can't be frightened of the target or charmed by it.
- If the target ends its turn within 5 feet of you, you can use your reaction to make a melee attack against it.

You regain this ability when you finish a short or long rest.



BARD

Crews sailing the Silvery Seas almost always look to those who can inspire them or lessen the boredom of long voyages, making skilled bards sought after crewmembers. This section describes two new bard subclasses, the College of the Blade Dancer and the College of Shantfolk.

COLLEGE OF THE BLADE DANCER

“Death by Blade Dancer?! What a deliciously sweet way to die.”

—Yuhas Falstaff, Notorious Scoundrel

The Avar Academy is a storied place of learning on the Karelagne Empire’s homeworld. This prestigious school combines the arts of music, magic, and martial prowess, famous within the empire for developing the beautiful but deadly fighting style known as the Dance of Daggers. Bards trained in this technique move swiftly, their blades and bodies so mesmerizing that their opponents often fail to notice the blade at their throat until it’s too late.

Spinning Blades

3rd-level College of the Blade Dancer feature

You have learned to channel your song through your blades to redirect incoming attacks. You gain the *two-weapon fighting* fighting style.

While wielding a light finesse weapon in each hand, your Armor Class equals 10 + your Dexterity modifier + your Charisma modifier. You must be wearing no armor to gain this benefit.

Additionally, any light finesse weapon you wield gains the thrown property (range 20/60). When you throw a light finesse weapon with the thrown property, it returns to your hand after the attack is resolved if you choose.

Piercing Troubadour

3rd-level College of the Blade Dancer feature

You gain proficiency in the Performance skill, as well as one other musical instrument of your choice. If you are already proficient in the Performance skill, you gain expertise with Performance instead.

Additionally, you learn the *resonant blades* cantrip, which doesn’t count against your number of cantrips known.

Swift to Act

6th-level College of the Blade Dancer feature

Your internal rhythm makes you capable of reacting quickly. When you roll initiative, you can expend one use of your Bardic Inspiration die and add the roll to your initiative. Additionally, you have advantage on the first attack roll, ability check, or saving throw you make after initiative is rolled.

Cacophonous Song

14th-level College of the Blade Dancer feature

Having achieved true mastery of the Dance of Daggers, your blades becoming an extension of your will. Immediately after making a ranged attack with a thrown weapon, you can choose to have the weapon land at the feet of the target. As a bonus action, you can then cause a sonic burst to emanate from the weapon. All creatures within 15 feet of the weapon must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or take 8d6 thunder damage and become deafened. On a successful saving throw, a creature takes half damage and is not deafened. You regain the use of this ability after finishing a short or long rest.

Additionally, your command of vocalization has become truly transcendent. When you make a Charisma (Performance) check that involves singing, treat a roll of 9 or lower as a 10.

COLLEGE OF SHANTFOLK

“As we left port with wind in our sails / The aether did swell and beasts chase our tail / Yet never a moment did we have to fear / for Chantal the Chanter fills our hearts and our ears!”

—The crew of the Celestial Wake

Nearly every port across the Expanse is home to crews carrying the burden of their lives with them. Many are far from home and at the predation of horrible monsters, ranging from those with giant teeth and claws to those who wear a kindly smile. Yet the troubles of the Starlight Sea are a lot easier to shoulder with the warm voice of a trained Shantfolk chanter within earshot.

The College of Shantfolk is a group of bards who are empathetic to the needs of the many. Their songs work into the hearts and minds of their allies and reinforce the soul. Their chants help others reach their greatest potential, and many captains feel it unwise to leave port without a trained Shantfolk chanter.

Chant of Glory

3rd-level College of Shantfolk feature

Whenever you grant an ally your Bardic Inspiration die, they add your Charisma modifier to their Athletics and Acrobatics checks until they use your Bardic Inspiration die.

Additionally, whenever an ally that you can see expends your Bardic Inspiration and rolls either the highest or lowest number on that die, you regain one use of your Bardic Inspiration as you break into story and song regarding their exploits.

Chant of Success

3rd-level College of Shantfolk feature

Whenever an ally benefits from your Song of Rest feature, they carry your words and songs of inspiration with them.

Choose one ally who benefited from your Song of Rest. That ally gains a Bardic Inspiration die that does not count against your limit and that does not expire until used. At 9th level, you can choose two allies to gain this benefit, and at 15th level, you can choose three allies.

Additionally, whenever mettle is rolled (and you are part of the crew), roll your Song of Rest die and add the result to the mettle roll (see “Mettle” on page 199).

Chant of Hope

6th-level College of Shantfolk feature

Amplified by your chanting song when resources are low, you push your allies just a bit further.

While you have no remaining uses of Bardic Inspiration, the result of the next Bardic Inspiration die spent is considered the highest possible result. This does not trigger the Chant of Glory benefit of regaining a use of Bardic Inspiration.

Additionally, if you complete a short rest while you have no Bardic Inspiration dice available, any Song of Rest die used is considered the highest possible result.

Heartstrings

14th-level College of Shantfolk feature

Your soul has become entwined with those you care about most. You gain the following benefits:

- The number of uses of Bardic Inspiration increases to your Charisma modifier plus half your proficiency bonus (minimum 1).
- If an ally fails to use your Bardic Inspiration die after 10 minutes, you regain that Bardic Inspiration.
- Whenever an ally uses a Bardic Inspiration, you can grant a different ally one of your Bardic Inspiration dice as a reaction.
- Allies who are reduced to 0 hit points and who fail a death saving throw while they have one of your Bardic Inspiration dice, instead lose the Inspiration die and count that saving throw as a success.

College of Shantfolk



College of the Blade Dancer



CLERIC

The unique nature of this region of the Astral Plane has drawn the attention of many divine powers. This section explores two new divine domains with ties to the Aetherial Expanse, the Aether Domain and the Tyranny Domain.

AETHER DOMAIN

“The voices of the aethereal deep sing to me of lives lost and a coming doom to forestall.”

—Naugh the Wanderer

The Aetherial Expanse has drawn the attention of divine beings. You act as a divine conduit to protect the region’s arcane essence or claim its power.

AETHER DOMAIN SPELLS

CLERIC LEVEL	SPELLS
1st	<i>faerie fire, unseen servant</i>
3rd	<i>lesser restoration, misty step</i>
5th	<i>hypnotic pattern, spirit guardians</i>
7th	<i>conjure aether mephits*, wall of aether*</i>
9th	<i>conjure aether elemental*, legend lore</i>

Bonus Cantrip

1st-level Aether Domain feature

You gain the *aether shroud** cantrip if you don’t already know it.

Aetherial Resilience

1st-level Aether Domain feature

Your divine connection grants you resilience to aether’s poisonous effects. You can float in aether for up to 1 hour without succumbing to aether poisoning. If you spend more than 1 hour floating in aether, or you ingest a single mouthful of aether, you can avoid its poisonous effects by succeeding on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw.

You can repeat this saving throw with continued aether exposure; however, each additional hour of exposure or additional mouthfuls ingested increases the DC by 2.

Surge of the Starlight Sea

1st-level Aether Domain feature

You draw upon the magical powers infused throughout the Aetherial Expanse and all the planes it touches to manipulate magical effects around you. As a reaction, when a creature within 30 feet of you that you can see

makes a saving throw against a spell or magical effect, you can give that creature either advantage or disadvantage on its saving throw.

You can’t use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

Channel Divinity: Aetherial Shroud

2nd-level Aether Domain feature

You can use your Channel Divinity to engulf a creature within a cloud of aether. As an action, you present your holy symbol. A single creature within 30 feet of you that you can see must make a Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is restrained until the end of its next turn and takes 2d6 + your cleric level force damage. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and is not restrained.

Channel Divinity: Manifest Consciousness

6th-level Aether Domain feature

You can use your Channel Divinity to cast *spirit guardians* without expending a spell slot. When *spirit guardians* is cast this way, you can also read the thoughts of creatures affected by this spell as if you were also under the effect of a *detect thoughts* spell.

Potent Spellcasting

8th-level Aether Domain feature

You add your Wisdom modifier to the damage you deal with any cleric cantrip.

Limitless Surge

17th-level Aether Domain feature

You can use your Surge of the Starlight Sea feature up to three times instead of once. Uses refresh at the end of a long rest.

TYRANNY DOMAIN

“We rule over the weak-minded as the Sovereign General rules over the Empire—with exacting standards and an adamant grip. So, listen closely, and do exactly as I say.”

—Myuniss III, Grand Patriarch of Adon in Karel

Tyranny clerics are concerned with domination over creatures through willpower. In the Aetherial Expanse, clerics of the Karelagne Empire emulate their Sovereign General’s tyrannical rulership, drawing power directly from them. This dedication to the despotic allows clerics of this domain to exercise control over others, compelling subordinates to bend to their iron will. These clerics uphold peace and order by any means necessary.

Domain Spells

1st-level Tyranny feature

You gain domain spells at the cleric levels listed in the Tyranny Domain Spells table. See the Divine Domain class feature for how domain spells work.



Tyranny Domain



Aether Domain

TYRANNY DOMAIN SPELLS

CLERIC LEVEL	SPELLS
1st	charm person, comprehend languages
3rd	detect thoughts, enthrall
5th	fear, tongues
7th	compulsion, dominate beast
9th	dominate person, modify memory
17th	mass dominate person*

Bonus Proficiencies

1st-level Tyranny Domain feature

You gain proficiency in one skill chosen from Insight, Intimidation, or Persuasion. Additionally, you gain proficiency with heavy armor and martial weapons.

Oppressive Smite

1st-level Tyranny Domain feature

Your strikes are empowered with oppressive energy that impedes those who oppose you. If you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack, that creature can't take reactions until the end of your next turn.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Wisdom modifier (a minimum of once). You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Channel Divinity: Bonds of Tyranny

2nd-level Tyranny Domain feature

You can use your Channel Divinity to shut down the weak-willed.

As an action, you present your holy symbol, and choose a number of creatures up to your Wisdom modifier (minimum of one creature) that can see or hear you within 30 feet of you. Those creatures must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or be incapacitated until the end of your next turn.

Adamantine Mind

6th-level Tyranny Domain feature

You become indomitable, granting you special abilities:

- You gain resistance to psychic damage.
- You become immune to the charmed condition.

Divine Strike

8th-level Tyranny Domain feature

You gain the ability to infuse your weapon strikes with oppressive psychic energy. Once on each of your turns when you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can cause the attack to deal an extra 1d8 psychic damage to the target. When you reach 14th level, the extra damage increases to 2d8.

Inescapable Subjugation

17th-level Tyranny Domain feature

Your ability to control the minds of others is overwhelming. Creatures have disadvantage on saving throws against being charmed by you, and spells you cast that charm creatures are doubled in duration and don't require concentration.



DRUID

The Aetherial Expanse's enchanted nature sparks a connection with some to the very essence of this part of the Astral Plane. Presented herein are two new druid subclasses, the Circle of the Elements and the Circle of Feathered Stars.

CIRCLE OF THE ELEMENTS

"I am but a vessel, a conduit through which the elemental energies of creation flow. In the whispering winds, the crackling flames, and the cascading waters, I find my purpose. The Expanse beckons; I answer its call."

—Pahnea, Circle of the Elements Devotee

The Circle of the Elements is a sect of druids deeply entrenched in the sacred communion with primordial forces, allowing them to forge an unbreakable link to the Elemental Planes, founts of nature's raw power. Infused with the potent essence of the Aetherial Expanse, they deftly twist the primal elements to their will, conjuring forth rifts of roiling energy. These rifts, akin to violent maelstroms of fire, ice, wind, and more, act as conduits between realms, enabling the druids to wield destructive forces at their adversaries. The very presence of these rifts leaves foes in awe, struggling to fathom the chaotic symphony these druids command, and the might they unleash upon the world.

Voice of the Planes

2nd-level Circle of the Elements feature

Through your travel across the planes, you've deepened your bond with the primal forces that shape the ebb and flow of the expanse. When you choose this circle at 2nd level, you learn to speak, read, and write Primordial.

Additionally, you learn one cantrip from the following list: *acid splash*, *aether shroud**, *fire bolt*, *peal of thunder**, *ray of frost*, or *shocking grasp*. Whenever you finish a long rest, you can replace the cantrip you learned from this feature with another listed cantrip of your choice.

Planar Conduit

2nd-level Circle of the Elements feature

At 2nd level, your connection to the Expanse allows you to harness its energy to create rifts between dimensions. As an action, you can expend a use of your Wild Shape to open a 5-foot-diameter elemental rift in an empty space within 30 feet of you. This rift creates an aura of unstable energy that crackles and surges around it. The rift lasts

for 10 minutes. It ends early if you dismiss it (no action required), are incapacitated, die, or use this feature again.

A creature other than you within 10 feet of the rift when it opens must make a Dexterity saving throw against your spell save DC or take 2d6 damage of one of the following types of your choice: acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder.

As a bonus action on your subsequent turns if the rift is still open, you can call upon the rift's energy to lash out at your enemies. Make a ranged spell attack against a target creature you can see within 10 feet of the rift. On a hit, the attack deals damage of the chosen type equal to 1d6 + your Wisdom modifier.

While the rift is open, you can use your action to walk through it. Doing so allows you to teleport to an unoccupied space you can see within 90 feet. After the rift is used in this way, it closes, ending this feature's effects.

Elemental Erosion

6th-level Circle of the Elements feature

When you reach 6th level, you've figured out how to leverage your connection to the elemental forces to chip away at your enemy's defenses. When you cast a spell that requires a saving throw that deals acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage and the target succeeds on their saving throw, you can use your reaction to have them roll it again, potentially turning the success into a failure. You can use this ability a number of times equal to your Wisdom modifier. All expended uses are regained on a long rest.

Rolling Fog

10th-level Circle of the Elements feature

By 10th level, you are able to further your dominion over the Expanse. You gain the following option when you use your Planar Conduit feature:

Rolling Fog. As a bonus action, you cause aetherial vapor to pour out of the rift, obscuring the area in a 15-foot-radius sphere centered on the rift. The mist spreads around corners, and its area is heavily obscured. Each creature that starts its turn in the mist must make a Constitution saving throw or spend its entire turn coughing and choking. Creatures that do not need to breathe have advantage on their saving throw. This mist dissipates at the end of your next turn unless you spend your bonus action to maintain it.

Amplified Aether

14th-level Circle of the Elements feature

At 14th level, you have learned how to mix your magic with the aetherial, empowering your elemental magic to great heights. When you cast a cantrip that deals acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage, you can treat the dice rolled for that spell as their maximum result.

Additionally, when you cast a spell that deals acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage, you can reroll damage dice that result in a 1 or 2. You must use the new result. Once you have used this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

Circle of Feathered Stars



Circle of the Elements



CIRCLE OF FEATHERED STARS

“When I was young, we sang songs of Qoz’s beastly giants dreaming in the Aether’s depths. Few understand these children’s tales are true, and the deluded fools seek to awaken the terrors from their slumber. Pray to all the gods you know this never happens.”

—Starlight Astronomer Jenda Pearleye

Feathered Stars druids revere the beastly and otherworldly giants whose very bones lie beneath many of the islands of the Expanse. These druids watch over the slumbering titans of the deep, mystically drawing upon their eldritch powers for good or for ill. Some fear the feathered star’s return, looking to ensure they remain dreaming beneath the depths, while others seek their return to unleash their destructive potential.

Circle Spells

2nd-level Circle of Feathered Stars feature

Your spiritual bond with the enigmatic feathered stars allows you to access spells related to their magical nature. At 2nd level, you learn the *dancing lights* cantrip.

At 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level, you can access the spells indicated in the Circle of Feathered Stars Spells table. Once you gain access to one of these spells, you always have it prepared, and it doesn’t count against the number of spells you prepare each day. Spells on the table that aren’t on the druid spell list count as druid spells for you.

CIRCLE OF FEATHERED STARS SPELLS

DRUID LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	<i>darkness</i> , <i>lesser restoration</i>
5th	<i>aetheric communion</i> *, <i>tongues</i>
7th	<i>control water</i> , <i>freedom of movement</i>
9th	<i>greater restoration</i> , <i>telepathic bond</i>

Power of Ancient Guardians

2nd-level Circle of Feathered Stars feature

You can manifest aspects of feathered stars to empower yourself. As a bonus action, you can expend one use of your Wild Shape feature to manifest this power for 10 minutes, until you die, or until you dismiss it as a bonus action.

While manifesting this power, you gain the following benefits:

- Your skin calcifies; your armor class can't be less than 16. This armor class increases to 17 at 6th level, 18 at 10th level, and 19 at 14th level.
- You are immune to aether poisoning and can breathe aether.
- You gain blindsight out to 30 feet.
- You gain a swim speed equal to your walking speed.
- The first time on a turn that you deal damage with an attack or cantrip, you can deal an additional 1d4 radiant damage. This damage increases to 1d6 at 6th level, 1d8 at 10th level, and 1d10 at 14th level.

Mythical Aspect

6th-level Circle of Feathered Stars feature

Your connection to the mysterious celestial guardians deepens. While benefiting from your Power of Ancient Guardians feature, you gain resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks, and your attacks are considered magical.

Sheltering Arms

10th-level Circle of Feathered Stars feature

When a creature you can see within 15 feet of you is targeted by a weapon attack, you can use your reaction to impose disadvantage on the attack roll. If you are benefiting from your Power of the Ancient Guardians feature, the target has resistance to the damage if the attack hits.

Radiant Wrath

14th-level Circle of Feathered Stars feature

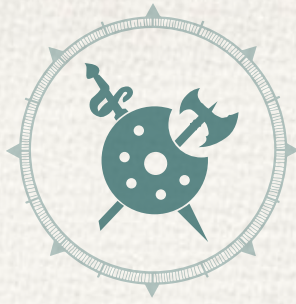
The wrath of enraged feathered stars is terrible to behold, and you can summon that fury as a storm of effulgent stars. As an action, you can force each enemy within 60 feet of you to make a Constitution saving throw (DC equal to your druid spell save DC). On a failure, each target suffers 4d6 radiant damage and is blinded until the end of your next turn. On a successful save, a target takes half the damage and is not blinded.

You can use this feature once, then must finish a short or long rest to do so again.

"If it took a god's sacrifice to quell Qoz, what else do you think is capable of stopping a feathered star once awake?"

—Jin Tohl, Cleric of Cyrill





FIGHTER

Violent confrontations are an ever-present reality on the pirate-infested Seas of the Aetherial Expanse. Crews always need skilled men-at-arms who know how to fight in crowded deck skirmishes. This section describes two new martial archetypes that fit perfectly into naval campaigns on the Silvery Seas, the Battle Commander and the Corsair.

BATTLE COMMANDER

“Our enemies reel beneath our assault. Strike! Strike again! Strike Hard!”

—Horentius Steelback, Karelagne Naval Captain

Sailors who survive deadly naval skirmishes on the Starlight Seas are often either incredibly lucky, or intuitively understand the surging chaos of shipboard combat. Battle commanders understand it takes more than luck to win the day. They are combat leaders, expertly manipulating the tides of battle using strategic insight and bold maneuvers. They draw their opponents into ill-fated sorties, and spur their comrades to victory with shouted commands from the front line. They exploit the slightest misstep to initiate devastating attacks upon their foes. Few warriors are as effective in the turmoil of mass combat as the battle commander.

Bonus Proficiency

3rd-level Battle Commander feature

You gain proficiency in one of the following skills of your choice: Deception, History, Intimidation, or Persuasion.

Direct the Attack

3rd-level Battle Commander feature

As a reaction to rolling initiative, you can swap your initiative count with one of your allies. One weapon attack that ally makes on their first turn can be made with advantage.

Commanding Voice

3rd-level Battle Commander feature

You can direct your allies in the heat of combat. Your allies must be able to see or hear you to benefit from this feature.

Direct the Assault. As a bonus action, you direct one ally within 30 feet to use their reaction to make a melee attack.

Defensive Formation. As an action, you and each ally within 5 feet of you have resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage until the start of your next turn.

Fall Back. As a reaction to an ally within 30 feet of you taking damage, you can allow that ally to use their reaction to move up to half their movement speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Inspiring Presence

7th-level Battle Commander feature

You can inspire your allies to persevere through adversity. As an action, you grant a bonus to the Wisdom, Intelligence, and Charisma saving throws of your allies within 60 feet who can see or hear you. This bonus lasts for 1 minute, and the bonus is equal to your proficiency bonus.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1), and you regain all uses after you complete a long rest.

Always at the Ready

10th-level Battle Commander feature

Each ally within 60 feet who can see or hear you has advantage on initiative checks.

Focused Assault

15th-level Battle Commander feature

When you damage a creature with a weapon attack, each ally within 10 feet has advantage on attack rolls against the same target until the start of your next turn.

Sudden Assault

18th-level Battle Commander feature

You can spur your allies into a deadly assault. In place of one of your weapon attacks, you can direct allies within 30 feet of you to use their reaction to make an attack with advantage against a target within your reach. These attacks score a critical hit on a die roll of 15-20.

You must finish a short or a long rest before you can use this feature again.

CORSAIR

“Fear is a weapon I wield, not a sensation I know. I am the ghostly tale whispered fearfully by sailors on stormy nights.”

—Captain Fawlene Brick

With a steely gaze that cuts sharper than any blade, the corsair stands as a living legend among pirates, and a nightmare in the hearts of sailors. As captains of dread and lords of the Expanse, corsairs command both the respect and fear of their crews.

The corsair is a tempest that knows no mercy, a relentless tide that sweeps enemies off their feet and leaves no room for respite. In the heat of battle, each felled opponent only fuels their fiery onslaught, propelling them forward like an aetherium shell through a ship's hull. To face a corsair in combat is to stand on the precipice of doom.

Reckoning Force

3rd-level Corsair feature

Starting at 3rd level, you have learned to lace your words with the raw power of your formidable strength, making your threats resonate deep in the bones of friend and foe alike.

You have advantage on weapon attacks targeting creatures frightened by you, and you have advantage

on saving throws against being frightened. Additionally, whenever you make a Charisma (Intimidation) check, you gain a bonus to the check equal to your Strength modifier.

As a bonus action, you can target one creature within 30 feet of you that can see you. That creature must succeed on a Charisma saving throw, with the DC set by your Charisma (Intimidation) check. On a failed save, that target is frightened by you until the end of your next turn.

Dreadful Shroud

3rd-level Corsair feature

When you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you radiate an aura of chilling menace, forcing foes to turn tail and flee into the wind. As an action, an eerie smoke emanates from you, cloaking you in an otherworldly mist. Each creature of your choice within 15 feet must make an Intelligence saving throw (DC 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Strength modifier) or be frightened of you for 1 minute. A creature can attempt the saving throw again at the end of their turns, ending the effect on a success.

You can invoke this haunting visage a number of times equal to your Strength modifier (minimum of once). You regain all expended uses of it when you finish a long rest.

Make Way

7th-level Corsair feature

At 7th level, you move with such authority that foes think twice before daring to strike. All opportunity attacks made against you are now at disadvantage.

Additionally, you can now use your Second Wind feature twice. You regain expended uses when you finish a short or long rest.

Unyielding Resolve

10th-level Corsair feature

Starting at 10th level, your will becomes as unbreakable as the tide. You are immune to being frightened. Creatures frightened by you take additional damage equal to your proficiency bonus when hit by your weapon attacks.

Ruthless Determination

15th-level Corsair feature

When you reach 15th level, you are inevitable. You do not merely hope to withstand – you decide to. When you use your Indomitable feature, you can choose to automatically succeed instead of rolling. Once you have used the Indomitable feature in this way, it counts against the number of uses of Indomitable you have left.

Give No Quarter

18th-level Corsair feature

At 18th level, your fury has grown to rival that of The Maelstrom. When you strike, it is a signal to all: surrender is not an option, and retreat is a fool's hope. When you reduce a creature to 0 hit points or score a critical hit with a weapon attack, you can use your reaction to move up to half your speed and make another attack. If the target of the original attack was frightened, you also gain 20 temporary hit points.

Corsair



Battle Commander





MONK

The remote islands on the Aetherial Expanse encourage some to live in contemplative introspection, with a few monastic orders establishing cloisters in this wondrous place. This section details two new monk traditions, the Way of the Ascetic and the Way of the Conduit.

WAY OF THE ASCETIC

“The flow of Aether is pure and unadulterated, free from control and constraint. It ebbs, eddies and drifts as it will, untethered by attachment, emotion or conceit. To be as the Aether is to be free of burdens and shackles, both psychological and physical.”

—Gin-deh-li, Ascetic Disciple

While most monastic traditions ascribe lower value to possessions and material wealth of most societies, monks of the Way of the Ascetic fully understand that which others do not: objects lack permanence at a fundamental level, being made up of miniscule particles that can be manipulated or ignored entirely if one has sufficient will and discipline.

Eschew Weapons

In order to master matter, you must relinquish any reliance on it. You can only use weapons made of wood, stone, and glass, or naturally occurring materials that do not need to be forged or constructed via complex processes. Any bludgeoning weapon can be made from stone or wood and retain its effectiveness, while piercing weapons can be made from stone or glass. The GM has final adjudication over weapons effectiveness based on materials available.

Mind Over Matter

3rd-level Way of the Ascetic feature

You can use your ki to overcome some of the substance of matter, gaining the following benefits:

Fragile Objects. When you successfully strike a non-magical object, you can expend a ki point to cause it to lose any resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage until the end of your next turn. This includes the damage from the attack used to activate this ability.

Construct Bane. You can spend a ki point before attacking a construct or animated object. The next successful attack you make before the start of your next turn is considered a critical hit.

Ignore the Blade. As a reaction when you take bludgeoning, piercing or slashing damage, you can reduce the damage dealt by an amount equal to your proficiency bonus.

Value in Utility

6th-level Way of the Ascetic feature

You may use your ki to alter the structure of weapons, changing them from other materials into magically hardened wood, stone, or glass. You expend a ki point to change a non-magical weapon in this way, or two ki points if the weapon is magical. The weapon is now considered magical but its properties do not otherwise change. The change is permanent.

Insubstantial Matter

11th-level Way of the Ascetic feature

You can alter your physiology to slip through the gaps in solid objects. As a bonus action, you can spend 1 ki point to make yourself partially insubstantial until the start of your next turn. While this feature is active, you have resistance to bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage, and you can pass through solid matter as if it were only difficult terrain. If this ability ends while you are within a solid object, you will be ejected into the nearest clear space, taking 1d6 force damage plus 1d6 force for each 5 feet of forced movement.

Mastery Over Matter

17th-level Way of the Ascetic feature

Your mastery over both your body and physical objects reaches its peak, and you gain the following benefits:

Polymorph. As a bonus action, you may spend 4 ki points to use the spell *polymorph*, maintaining it each round by spending an additional ki point. You can end it at any time.

There Is No Spoon. Your Fragile Objects ability no longer requires ki to use.

Repurpose Energy. If you destroy a construct or animated object by reducing it to 0 hit points with an unarmed strike, you regain ki points equal to your proficiency bonus.

WAY OF THE CONDUIT

“Within her nimbus of fire and air, I saw a terrible pain wracked her face. Duty had bound her to wield her terrible power.”

—Jocasta Sin, on the Witch of the Lapping Waves

The Aetherial Expanse is inundated by countless portals to the elemental planes. Many in the Expanse associated these with the cardinal constellations representing the gods that have the greatest influence on this portion of the Astra Plane. Monks who follow the Way of the Conduit have learned to attune themselves to these elemental energies, becoming conduits for their primal power.

Cardinal Channel

3rd-level Way of the Conduit feature

As a bonus action, you can spend 1 ki point to align your astral energies with the universe. Choose one of the following benefits:

Asteth's Brand. Your body radiates heat or cold, enough that you can survive even magical weather extremes. For the next hour, you no longer gain exhaustion due to cold or heat, and have resistance to cold or fire damage.

Cyrill's Guilt. You carry the burden of others, giving of yourself for their comfort. If another creature has the blinded, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, or stunned conditions, you can touch that creature to transfer to yourself any selected conditions you do not already suffer from. If you are immune to a transferred condition, that condition ends immediately; otherwise, the transferred condition has the same duration as for the original target, and you can make any saves as normal to end the condition.

Astral Tap

6th-level Way of the Conduit feature

You increase your connection to the cosmos. You can expend between 1 and 3 ki points when you hit a creature with an unarmed attack. This augments the attack in one of the following ways:

Night's Flame. The creature damaged by your unarmed attack takes 2d6 fire damage per ki point spent. The target takes this damage again at the start of their next turn unless they use their reaction immediately to extinguish the flames.

Starry Zephyr. The creature hit by your unarmed attack is pushed directly away from you up to 10 feet per ki point spent and knocked prone. If the creature would enter the space of a solid object or creature, both targets take 1d6 bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet moved.

Way of the Conduit



Guidance of the Stars

11th-level Way of the Conduit feature

When you use your Astral Tap feature, you can gain an additional benefit for each:

Night's Flame. The target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or become incapacitated until the end of their next turn.

Starry Zephyr. The target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or become restrained by an invisible force until the end of their turn.

Astral Form

17th-level Way of the Conduit feature

When you spend ki points to use your Astral Tap feature, you gain the following benefits for 1 minute:

- Choose one damage type from the following list: acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder. You are immune to that damage type.
- You gain truesight out to a range of 60 feet.
- You gain a fly speed equal to your walking speed.
- Your movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Once you've used this feature, you cannot use it again until you complete a short or long rest.

Way of the Ascetic





PALADIN

Even among the notoriously rowdy seafarers who explore the Silvery Seas, you can find those who follow a moral code, and who are dedicated to ideals beyond their own ambitions. This section explores two new paladin subclasses, the Oath of the Sovereign and the Order of the Drakes.

OATH OF THE SOVEREIGN

“Loyalty. Duty. Sacrifice. These are important virtues for any knight, but so too are discipline and might. We swear ourselves to these virtues, and upon those pillars stands the eternal glory of Karelagne. Through our oaths, we are the walls and the high towers. We are the spears and shields. We are the Empire.”

—Gezalik Georgius, Grand Spear of the Fatherland,
to graduates of the Imperial Military Academy

Most paladins in service to the Karelagne Empire swear the Oath of the Sovereign, which requires them to uphold the Empire’s sovereignty at all costs, champion its ideals, and defend the Empire’s loyal citizenry, for what is the Empire without its people?

Knights of any nation who swear an Oath of the Sovereign extoll honor and unwavering loyalty to the state and its rulers. They consider no sacrifice too great, so long as it is given in service to their realm. Though they are bound by honorable duty and lofty ideals, these Sovereign Knights also understand that the rule of law must be defended and upheld with force of arms and martial might, galvanizing them to fight to uphold their nation’s supremacy.

Tenets of the Sovereign

A paladin who swears the Oath of the Sovereign pledges to serve their realm without question or doubt.

Loyalty and Sacrifice. Serve the realm with all that you are.

Defend the Realm. Be the realm’s shield against threats in all forms, and offer no clemency to enemies of the state.

Order is Security. Respect and propagate the hierarchies that bring order to the dangerous chaos threatening civilization.

Strength in Unity. The nation is strongest when its citizens are united by common cause; lead them to it.

Oath Spells

3rd-level Oath of the Sovereign feature

You gain oath spells at the paladin levels listed.

OATH OF THE SOVEREIGN SPELLS

PALADIN LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	command, unseen servant
5th	find steed, flame blade
9th	magic circle, protection from energy
13th	guardian of faith, resilient sphere
17th	geas, wall of force

Channel Divinity

3rd-level Oath of the Sovereign feature

You gain the following Channel Divinity options.

Marshalling Order. As an action, you can use your Channel Divinity to call your allies to action. Choose a number of creatures up to your Charisma modifier who can hear or see you within 30 feet. Each target can use their reaction to immediately move up to their speed. This movement doesn’t provoke opportunity attacks.

Shield of the Realm. When a creature within 30 feet of you that you can see takes damage, you can use your reaction to grant the target resistance to that damage. The creature also gains temporary hit points equal to your paladin level.

Exemplar of the Realm

7th-level Oath of the Sovereign feature

You become an embodiment of steadfast honor and discipline, as well as stoicism in the face of adversity. When you make a Charisma check, treat a roll of 9 or lower on the d20 as a 10.

Additionally, friendly creatures within 10 feet of you reduce bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage taken by an amount equal to your Charisma modifier. At 18th level, the range of this aura increases to 30 feet.

Glorious Strikes

15th-level Oath of the Sovereign feature

When you use your Divine Smite feature, you can reduce the additional radiant damage it deals by 1d8. If you do so, each creature hostile to you within 10 feet of the target must make a Charisma saving throw against your paladin spell save DC. On a failure, the creature takes 2d8 radiant damage and is frightened of you until the end of its next turn. A creature takes half damage and is not frightened on a successful save.

Sovereign Majesty

20th-level Oath of the Sovereign feature

As an action, you can manifest the dread presence of the realm’s ruler to radiate oppressive glory for 1 minute, ending early if you are incapacitated or killed. During this time, when a hostile creature ends its turn within 10 feet of you, it must succeed on a Charisma saving throw against your paladin spell save DC or become stunned until the end of your next turn.

Once you use this feature, you can’t do so again until you finish a long rest.

ORDER OF THE DRAKES

“Bear any storm, face any foe, to keep the fires of freedom alight. We are the storm that guards the free, and our oath is the wind that never falters.”

— Teruko the Drake

In the star-speckled seas that surround the Isle of Drakes live paladins who swear not to a god, but to a principle: absolute freedom. These isles are not just land; they are a symbol of resistance against the oppression of the Karelagne Empire and the Kingdom of Ayris. To the paladins of this oath, the freedom to live as one sees fit is the only cause worth serving, and they are willing to fight and die for this independence.

Tenets

While the Oath of the Drakes is more akin to guidelines, paladins who swear by it share and uphold these same values:

Freedom, No Matter the Cost. The essence of life is the freedom to chart one's own course. No sacrifice is too great, no challenge too daunting, when personal liberty is at stake.

Have Your Wits About. In life's intricate dance, always be one step ahead. Rely on cleverness and cunning to navigate the tides of fate. A sharpened tongue can fare just as well as a blade.

Break Every Chain. Reject all bonds, whether physical or societal, and rise against those who seek to oppress.

Promise and Deliver. A vow is as unyielding as the sea. Once given, a promise must never be broken.

Oath Spells

3rd-level Order of the Drakes feature

You gain oath spells at the paladin levels listed.

OATH OF THE DRAKES SPELLS

PALADIN LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	disguise self, expeditious retreat
5th	arcane's magic aura, alter self
9th	galvanizing words, nondetection
13th	aetheric bedlam, greater invisibility
17th	soul tide, passwall



Oath of the Sovereign



Oath of the Drakes

Magherusan Alina Silvia, Ashley Hankins

Channel Divinity

3rd-level Order of the Drakes feature

When you take this oath at 3rd level, you get the following Channel Divinity option.

Veil of the Phantom Sea. With divine grace, you blend into your surroundings as effortlessly as a ship in the fog. As a bonus action, you can choose a number of creatures you can see within 30 feet of you, up to a number equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum of one creature). For 10 minutes, you and the chosen creatures gain a +5 bonus to Dexterity (Stealth) checks and Dexterity saving throws.

Mariner's Mastery

3rd-level Order of the Drakes feature

At 3rd level, you adapt to the skills necessary for life at sea and among pirates. You gain proficiency with thieves' tools and one of the following skills of your choice: Deception, Stealth, or Sleight of Hand.

Additionally, when you use your Divine Sense, you can also perceive the location of humanoids within the 60 foot area, even if they are behind total cover.

Aura of Unbound Steps

7th-level Order of the Drakes feature

At 7th level, you inspire a sense of freedom and mobility. While you're not incapacitated, you and creatures of your choice within 10 feet of you are unaffected by difficult terrain, and your speed cannot be reduced by magic.

At 18th level, the range of this aura increases to 30 feet.

Chainbreaker

15th-level Order of the Drakes feature

When you reach 15th level, you become an agent of liberation. As an action, you can touch a creature and release it from any bindings or restraints, be it physical or magical. This removes the grappled, restrained, and paralyzed conditions, and includes spells like *hold person* or *web*. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1). All uses are restored at the end of a long rest.

Spirit of the Unfettered

20th-level Order of the Drakes feature

At 20th level, you become a paragon of free will. As a bonus action, you gain the following benefits for 1 minute:

- Your movement increases by 30 feet and does not provoke opportunity attacks.
- You can take the Hide or Dodge action as a bonus action.
- You are immune to the charmed condition.

"Borders are just lines on a map. My blade however, will leave more than just lines on your person."

—Aurum Cooley, Captain of the Waveblazer





RANGER

Captains sailing across the Aetherial Expanse are always desperate to include among their crews veterans who know how to survive its dangerous and unpredictable seas. Presented herein are two new ranger subclasses that fit the bill, the Aether Prowler and the Expanse Wayfinder.

AETHER PROWLER

“Aye, I’ve seen a Prowler before. Live, breathe, eat, and—I swear—excrete the stuff. Gas like none other.”

—Captain Reeve Arati

Aether prowlers embrace the dangerous allure of liquid starlight. Trainees build a tolerance for aether by exposing themselves to greater and greater concentrations of vapor until aether crystallizes within their lungs. Those who breathe too quickly fall victim to aetheric decay. But those who demonstrate persistence and patience learn to generate their own vapor, cloaking their attacks and suppressing their prey.

Aether Magic

3rd-level Aether Prowler feature

Starting at 3rd level, you learn an additional spell when you reach certain levels in this class, as shown in the Aether Prowler Spells table. The spell counts as a ranger spell for you, but it doesn’t count against the number of ranger spells you know.

AETHER PROWLER SPELLS

RANGER LEVEL	SPELL
3rd	<i>sleep</i>
5th	<i>blur</i>
9th	<i>blink</i>
13th	<i>confusion</i>
17th	<i>hold monster</i>

Starlit Suffusion

3rd-level Aether Prowler feature

You can breathe aether and are immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

As a bonus action, you exhale a cloud of harmless aether vapor 60 feet in diameter centered on you. The cloud spreads around corners, and the area is considered heavily obscured for all creatures except you. The cloud lasts for 1 minute, until you cast a spell, or until dispersed by a wind of at least 10 miles per hour, at which point it dissipates.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and expended uses of this feature are recovered at the end of a long rest.

Aetherial Attack

3rd-level Aether Prowler feature

As a bonus action, you softly exhale an aether-infused breath and imbue a weapon or up to 20 pieces of ammunition you possess with magic. For the next minute, each time you deal damage with the weapon or ammunition, you deal an additional 1d6 psychic damage. At 11th level, the additional damage increases to 2d6.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and you regain all expended uses of this feature when you finish a long rest.

Astral Affinity

7th-level Aether Prowler feature

You are at home in the aether, using its magical properties to your benefit. Your movement speed is doubled and you have advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects while you are immersed in aether. You, but not other creatures, are considered immersed in aether while in the cloud of aether created by your Starlit Suffusion feature.

Empowered Miasma

11th-level Aether Prowler feature

When you use your Starlit Suffusion feature to create a cloud of aether, all creatures of your choice within the area are considered immersed in aether, having disadvantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Arcane Absorption

15th-level Aether Prowler feature

The aether that permeates your body absorbs magical energy. When you take damage from a spell or magical effect, you can use your reaction to gain temporary hit points equal to half the damage.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

EXPANSE WAYFINDER

“While the Aetherial Expanse is a mysterious and often treacherous place, it is no more foreboding than anywhere else. If you know how to interpret the environment – any environment – you can traverse it. There’s no place quite like it. I imagine even I will lose myself to it one day, willingly and blissfully carried to the unknown beyond.”

—Callista Ravenmane, Aetherial Guide

Expanse wayfinders are at home on the Aetherial Sea, perhaps more so than any non-native creature. Deep curiosity and respect for the natural forces at play allow them to read the currents and navigate its often-treacherous flows, seeking out the limits of its vastness. Even when they leave the Aetherial Expanse, they carry the magic of the place with them.

Student of the Silvery Sea

3rd-level Expanse Wayfinder feature

The Aetherial Sea becomes an additional favored terrain for your Natural Explorer feature, and you gain that terrain for free. You can still select other terrains as normal.

Expanse Wayfinder Magic

3rd-level Expanse Wayfinder feature

You learn an additional spell when you reach certain levels in this class, as shown in the Expanse Wayfinder Spells table. Each spell counts as a ranger spell for you, but it doesn't count against the number of ranger spells you know.

EXPANSE WAYFINDER SPELLS

RANGER LEVEL	SPELL
3rd	<i>comprehend languages</i>
5th	<i>gust of wind</i>
9th	<i>tongues</i>
13th	<i>locate creature</i>
17th	<i>legend lore</i>

Corsair of the Aetherial Waves

3rd-level Expanse Wayfinder feature

Your experience with treacherous tides and powerful winds has given you insight into fighting effectively when on a ship or within the aether itself.

You gain proficiency with Athletics and Acrobatics. If you already have proficiency with these skills, your proficiency bonus is doubled for ability checks using those skills.

Additionally, when you are on a ship at sea or floating in the aether or in water, the first weapon attack you make each round deals an additional 1d6 damage of the weapon's type on a hit due to your clever maneuvering and precise aim.

Warp and Weave

7th-level Expanse Wayfinder feature

Your alacrity in navigating unstable conditions makes you harder to hit as you move. If you move at least 5 feet on your turn and do not end in the same place you started, your Armor Class increases by 1 and opportunity attacks against you are made at disadvantage until the start of your next turn.

Taking the Plunge

11th-level Expanse Wayfinder feature

You have trained yourself to be more resilient to the poisonous aether. You gain a swim speed equal to your walking speed. If you already have a swim speed, it increases by 10 feet. You also have advantage on all ability checks to hold your breath while submerged, and you have advantage on saving throws to resist poison and the onset of aether poisoning.

Aether in the Blood

15th-level Expanse Wayfinder feature

You have been exposed to so much aether it has become part of you. You are immune to aether poisoning, and your swim speed in aether or water is increased by 10 feet. Additionally, while immersed in aether or water, you can cast *misty step* at will, so long as you start and end your movement in contact with the liquid aether or water.

Expanse Wayfinder

Aether Prowler





ROGUE

The ships sailing the Silvery Seas are filled with all manner of scoundrels and ne'er-do-wells looking for fortune or seeking to escape their past. However, some roguish folk come from disciplined organizations on their homeworlds. Presented herein are two new rogue subclasses, the Cloaked Blade and the Veiled Guardian, associated with the Karelagne Empire and the Kingdom of Ayris, respectively.

CLOAKED BLADE

"Death comes quickly to a distracted foe."

—Zheng Ironsliver, Whispered Wind operative

The Whispered Wind began as a loose alliance of gossip traders before growing into a powerful independent faction in the Karelagne Empire. The organization is the Empire's preeminent information broker, making its operatives available to any with enough gold to spend. The organization's "Cloaked Blades" are notorious rogues who've cultivated an aura of fear and respect thanks to myths of their deadly efficiency. They employ a cloak-and-dagger style of combat, both literally and figuratively, weaving past their opponents and striking with deadly precision.

Deceptive Flourish

3rd-level Cloaked Blade feature

You gain proficiency in one of the following skills of your choice: Acrobatics, Performance, or Sleight of Hand.

You also gain an additional way to use your Sneak Attack feature. While wielding a cloak in one hand, you can use a bonus action to make a Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Charisma (Performance) check against a creature within reach that you can see contested by the target's Wisdom (Insight) check. If you succeed, until the start of your next turn you can use your Sneak Attack against that target even if you don't have advantage on the attack roll, but not if you have disadvantage on it.

Distracting Step

3rd-level Cloaked Blade feature

With a swirl of your cloak, your opponents become distracted by your tactical withdrawal. When you take the Disengage action, you can use your reaction to make a melee attack with advantage against one creature before the end of your turn. Creatures have disadvantage on opportunity attacks against you until the start of your next turn. You must be wielding a cloak in one hand to benefit from this feature.

You can use this ability a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and you regain all expended uses of it when you finish a long rest.

Fleeting Form

9th-level Cloaked Blade feature

Your study of movement enables you to briefly obscure your form. You can cast the *blur* spell, without using a spell slot or material components. Casting the spell in this way also does not require concentration. Once you have used this ability, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

Cloak Dancer

13th-level Cloaked Blade feature

Your movement is mesmerizing in a way that awes all who see it. You can use your Dexterity modifier in place of your Charisma modifier when making a Performance check while dancing.

Additionally, you are now exceptionally skilled at using your cloak in a defensive manner. When you use your reaction to invoke your uncanny dodge ability, you can make a Performance (Dexterity) check. The result of this check replaces your Armor Class or saving throw for the purposes of defending against the damaging attack. If the attack would then miss, you take no damage. If the attack would still damage you, you take half damage as per the normal uncanny dodge ability.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency modifier, and you regain all expended uses of it when you finish a long rest.

Deadly Distraction

17th-level Cloaked Blade feature

You can use your movement to deadly effect. Once per turn, if you have advantage on an attack roll thanks to your Distracting Step feature and hit a creature, you can force the creature to make a Wisdom saving throw (DC 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Dexterity modifier). On a failed save, you can immediately make another attack with the same weapon against the same creature. You can also use sneak attack against this creature even if you've already used sneak attack on this turn.

VEILED GUARDIAN

"In shadows I move, but in loyalty I stand. My charge may not see me, but they always have my protection."

—Daoud Biracem, Sworn Guardian of House Ipato

Trained in the art of subtle security, a veiled guardian is an expert in both evasion and protection. Silent as the night and steadfast as a seasoned sentinel, these rogues blend seamlessly into the entourage of the wealthy and influential. In the face of peril, a veiled guardian emerges as the unseen shield that stands unwavering between their charge and the lurking threats of the world.

Vigilant Counter

3rd-level Veiled Guardian feature

When you choose this archetype at 3rd level, your keen senses and quick reflexes allow you to counter threats as they appear, striking preemptively to protect your charge. When a creature you can see makes an attack of oppor-

Veiled
Guardian



tunity against an ally within 20 feet of you, you can use your reaction to move up to your speed and make a melee weapon attack against the triggering attacker. You can use this ability a number of times equal to your Dexterity modifier. You regain all uses of this feature when you finish a short or long rest.

Guard From the Shadows

3rd-level Veiled Guardian feature

At 3rd level, you've mastered the art of protective maneuvering, expertly deflecting blows, and drawing attention. You have a pool of d6 Guardian Dice that you can spend to intervene on others' behalf. The number of Guardian Dice is equal to half the number of Sneak Attack dice you have (rounded down). Your pool regains all expended Guardian Dice when you finish a short or long rest.

Additionally, you gain the following abilities:

Parrying Shade. As a reaction when a creature you can see targets an ally within 5 feet of you with an attack, you can spend 1 or more Guardian Dice. Roll the spent Guardian Dice and reduce the attack's damage by the total rolled on the dice. If the attack's damage is reduced to 0, you also impose disadvantage on the target's next attack roll before the start of your next turn.

Diverting Gambit. As a bonus action, you can spend 1 Guardian Die from your pool and designate a target within 30 feet of you. Until the start of your next turn, that target has disadvantage on any attack roll that isn't against you. This does not work if the creature your target is attacking has a similar feature.



Cloaked Blade

Whispercatcher

9th-level Veiled Guardian feature

When you reach 9th level, your senses have become extraordinarily keen, tuned to the subtlest sounds that herald danger. You have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing.

In addition, you gain the following option for your Guard From the Shadows feature:

Umbral Aegis. You can spend a Guardian Die to cast the *darkness* spell without requiring material components. When you cast *darkness* using this feature, you can see normally through the darkness created by the spell.

Swift Extraction

13th-level Veiled Guardian feature

Starting at 13th level, your expertise allows you to swiftly remove your charge from harm's way, guiding them through the chaos of battle as if they were dancing through a grand ballroom. When you take the Dash action, you can choose one creature within 30 feet of you. That creature can use its reaction to move up to its speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Stalwart Protector

17th-level Veiled Guardian feature

At 17th level, you have mastered the art of foresight and preparation, never entering into a conflict unprepared. When you roll initiative and have no unspent Guardian Dice remaining, you regain two Guardian Dice.

Additionally, you gain the following option for your Guard From the Shadows feature:

Defender's Last Stand. As a reaction when you or an ally within 60 feet of you take damage that would reduce them to 0 hit points, you can spend a Guardian Die from your pool. Roll the die and add your rogue level. The target gains hit points equal to the total.



SORCERER

Some mortals feel drawn to the unique magical confluence of the Silvery Seas. These people often manifest remarkable powers seldom seen elsewhere. This section presents two new sorcerous origins tied to the Aetherial Expanse, the Phantom Shrouded and the Primordial Soul.

PHANTOM SHROUDED

“Those who study aether may taste a fraction of its power, but only one whose heart beats with the aethertide can claim its true potential.”

—Silas Seaward, Wayfinder of the AMS Sweetbreeze

You are touched deeply by the Starlight Sea. Perhaps you were bathed in its power during a desperate moment beneath its surface where you glimpsed its true nature, or you may be descended from one of the spirits making up its shimmering depths. Regardless of your exact relationship to the aether, your blood flows in unison with the phantoms riding its currents. They recognize you as one of their own, heeding your arcane calls.

When you tap the power within yourself to fuel your magic, you reach impossibly deep, all the way into the aetherial depths’ endless well of souls. Submerging your own soul into that spiritual essence clads you in the wisdom and power of countless spirits, granting you arcane might unimaginable to those without your unique birthright.

Phantom-Shrouded Magic

1st-level Phantom Shrouded feature

You learn additional spells at certain levels in this class, as indicated on the Phantom Shrouded Spells table. You count each of these spells as a sorcerer spell, but it doesn’t count toward the number of sorcerer spells you know.

PHANTOM SHROUDED SPELLS

SORCERER LEVEL	SPELLS
1st	<i>comprehend languages, unseen servant</i>
3rd	<i>augury, spiritual weapon</i>
5th	<i>speak with dead, spirit guardians</i>
7th	<i>banishment, guardian of faith</i>
9th	<i>legend lore, soul tide*</i>

Depths of Knowledge

1st-level Phantom Shrouded feature

The amalgam of minds comprising the Starlight Sea presents you with a deep well of experience to draw from. When you make an ability check, you can draw upon these spirits to roll 1d4 and add the number rolled to the ability check. You can use this feature after making the ability check, but you must do so before knowing the outcome.

Once you use this feature, you can’t use it again until you complete a short or long rest, unless you spend a sorcery point to use it again.

The die you roll for this feature changes when you reach certain levels in this class. Replace the d4 with a d6 at 5th level, a d8 at 10th level, and a d10 at 15th level.

Swirling Spirits

6th-level Phantom Shrouded feature

When you cast a spell of 1st level or higher on your turn, you can immediately use a bonus action and spend 1 sorcery point to conjure disembodied spirits that momentarily swirl around a creature you can see within 60 feet. You can choose if the spirits help or hinder the creature.

If you want the spirits to help, that creature gains temporary hit points equal to 1d4 + your Charisma modifier + the spell’s level.

If you want the spirits to hinder, that creature must make a Charisma saving throw against your spell save DC. On a failure, it suffers force damage equal to your Charisma modifier + the spell’s level, and its speed becomes 0 until the start of your next turn. On a success, it takes only half damage, and its speed isn’t reduced.

Ride the Aetherial Tide

14th-level Phantom Shrouded feature

Once on your turn, immediately before you cast a spell of 1st level or higher, you can roll 1d10. If the result is greater than the level of the spell slot used to cast the spell, you can apply one of your Metamagic options to that spell by spending 1 fewer sorcery points than normal.

Phantom Mantle

18th-level Phantom Shrouded feature

You can use an action to wrap a mantle of the Starlight Sea’s spiritual essence around you for 1 minute or until you dismiss it with a bonus action. While empowered in this way, you have resistance to all damage except force damage, and you can add your Charisma modifier to your Armor Class.

You can use this feature once and can’t do so again until you complete a long rest, unless you spend 6 sorcery points to use this feature again.

“All those souls...all that experience and wisdom. What forgotten knowledge do you think we could gain if we only learned to listen?”

—Zali Carrowood, Aetherial Sage

Primordial Soul

Phantom
Shrouded

PRIMORDIAL SOUL

*“The foundations of existence roil within the Maelstrom.
My soul yearns to release its fury.”*

—Terrauk, Primordial Soul

From the churning depths of primal forces, primordial souls wield the very essence of creation to reshape the world's fabric. Like the Maelstrom itself, woe to whomever gets caught in their storm.

You stared into the Maelstrom. It stared back. In that moment, you found yourself enveloped by elemental chaos. The unbridled energy of the Maelstrom courses through your veins, playing at your fingertips, waiting to be unleashed.

Primordial Magic

1st-level Primordial Soul feature

Your connection to primordial energy allows you to learn spells from the druid class. When your Spellcasting feature lets you learn or replace a sorcerer cantrip or a sorcerer spell of 1st level or higher, you can choose the new spell from the druid spell list or the sorcerer spell list. You must otherwise obey all the restrictions for selecting the spell, and it becomes a sorcerer spell for you.

In addition, choose an affinity for the source of your elemental power: air, earth, fire, water, or aetherial. You learn an additional spell based on that affinity, as shown

on the Elemental Affinity Spells table. It is a sorcerer spell for you, but it doesn't count against your number of sorcerer spells known. If you later replace this spell, you must replace it with a spell from the druid spell list.

ELEMENTAL AFFINITY SPELLS

ELEMENTAL AFFINITY	SPELL
Air	<i>thunderwave</i>
Earth	<i>entangle</i>
Fire	<i>burning hands</i>
Water	<i>fog cloud</i>
Aetherial	<i>primal squall*</i>

Elemental Resilience

1st-level Primordial Soul feature

Starting at 1st level, you have learned to weave the elements into a protective barrier, mitigating the force of incoming attacks. Choose a damage type: acid, cold, fire, force, lightning, or thunder. As a reaction, you soften the blow of incoming attacks of the chosen type. When you do so, the damage you take from the attack is reduced by 1d10 + your Charisma modifier + your sorcerer level.

You can change the type of damage used by this feature when you finish a long rest.



Environmental Legion

6th-level Primordial Soul feature

At 6th level, your mastery over the primordial deepens, allowing you to conjure forth creatures from the Elemental Planes. You learn the *summon primordial minion** spell if you do not know it already. When you cast *primordial minion*, you can summon one additional elemental.

Additionally, any attacks made by an elemental summoned or created by a spell that you cast are considered magical for the purpose of overcoming immunity and resistance to nonmagical attacks and damage.

Plane Hopper

14th-level Primordial Soul feature

When you reach 14th level, you learn the *plane shift* spell, and can cast it once without expending a spell slot. If you do not have the material component necessary for *plane shift*, you can choose to forgo using it and cast it anyway. When you cast the spell without the material component, you open a portal to a random plane of existence. Roll 1d6. The number rolled on that die determines what plane you are transported to, as shown on the Planar Destination table.

You can use this feature again after completing a long rest.

PLANAR DESTINATION

D6	PLANE OF EXISTENCE
1	Astral Plane
2	Elemental Plane of Air
3	Elemental Plane of Earth
4	Elemental Plane of Fire
5	Elemental Plane of Water
6	Ethereal Plane

Whirlpool's Wrath

18th-level Primordial Soul feature

Starting at 18th level, you can spend 6 sorcery points as a bonus action to surround yourself with the fury of The Maelstrom. Doing so gives you a fly speed equal to your walking speed.

A swirling mass of aether and wind extend out from you to a distance of 15 feet, and moves with you for the duration. Any creature in the storm must spend 2 feet of movement for every 1 foot it moves when moving closer to you. The strong wind keeps fog, smoke, and other gases at bay. The attack rolls of ranged weapon attacks have disadvantage if the attacks pass into the storm. Creatures in gaseous form can't pass through it.

The storm remains for 1 minute. It ends early if you are incapacitated, if you die, or if you dismiss it as a bonus action.



WARLOCK

The soul-infused depths of the Aetherial Expanse attract unknowable beings willing to offer a fraction of their supernatural power to foolish mortals who forge pacts with them. This section details two such entities, the Reaper and the Swarm.

THE REAPER

“You think you’ve known fear, boy? Then I pray you never find yourself facing down the unstoppable, tireless chase of a Reaper.”

—Bem Joringard, Veteran of the Expanse

Many beings want to indiscriminately cause as much destruction on as grand a scale as possible. On the opposite side of that coin is the Reaper: an individual empowered by an otherworldly being to destroy with the accuracy of a surgeon.

Expanded Spell List

1st-level Reaper feature

The Reaper lets you choose from an expanded list of spells when you learn a warlock spell. The following spells are added to the warlock spell list for you.

REAPER EXPANDED SPELLS

Spell Level	Spells
1st	<i>expeditious retreat, ray of sickness</i>
2nd	<i>blindness/deafness, see invisibility</i>
3rd	<i>bestow curse, speak with dead</i>
4th	<i>locate creature, phantasmal killer</i>
5th	<i>arcane hand, planar binding</i>

Reaper’s Scythe

1st-level Reaper feature

Your connection to your patron provides you with a spectral weapon and proficiency in wielding it.

As a bonus action, you can summon forth a spectral scythe. This weapon uses the same stats as a longsword, and it remains in your hands until you dismiss it (no action) or drop it.

When you attack with your spectral scythe, you can use your Charisma modifier, instead of Strength or Dexterity, for the attack and damage rolls. You can choose to deal necrotic damage with attacks made with your spectral scythe.

Shred and Tear

1st-level Reaper feature

Whenever you deal necrotic damage to a creature using your Reaper’s Scythe, you gain temporary hit points equal to your warlock level. You can use the ability a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier. You regain uses of this ability after completing a short rest.

Aether Harvest

6th-level Reaper feature

You harvest the energy of a dying soul to empower limited magics. If a creature is killed by your Reaper’s Scythe, you gain a special additional spell slot. This spell slot lasts until you complete a short or long rest. If you already have a special spell slot gained from Aether Harvest, nothing else happens.

This special spell slot can only be used to cast spells on the Reaper Expanded Spells list.

Once you’ve used this feature a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier, you cannot use it again until you complete a long rest.

Reaper’s Shroud

10th-level Reaper feature

You emit an aura of darkness that others can feel the presence of by looking at you. You gain resistance to cold and necrotic damage, and immunity to the frightened condition.

Additionally, whenever you make a weapon attack while you possess temporary hit points, you can use your reaction to empower the strike by losing your temporary hit points. If the attack deals damage, you deal additional damage equal to the temporary hit points lost.

Grim Ferry

14th-level Reaper feature

Evoking the legendary navigators of the river of death, your form changes to that of a hooded, cloaked skeleton. As an action, you gain the following benefits for 1 minute:

- Swim speed of 40 feet
- Immunity to poison damage and the poisoned condition
- You can use your action to evoke fear in other creatures. You target one creature you can see within 60 feet. The target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or become frightened of you for 1 minute. The frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. The DC for this saving throw is 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier.
- As an action, you can teleport to any unoccupied spot you can see within 60 feet.
- As a bonus action, you can remove all the temporary hit points you currently have, and heal a creature within 30 feet that you can see a number of hit points equal to the temporary hit points you surrendered.

Once you’ve used this feature, you cannot use it again until you’ve completed a long rest.

The Swarm



The Reaper



THE SWARM

“We’re always encouraged to see things from a new perspective. Why stop at a single new perspective when you could split into thousands? Embrace the hive mind and fracture yourself.”

—Zson Dorair, Cult Leader

Your warlock pact has been forged with fiendish insect-like powers from a distant plane. These hive-mind fiends bestow upon you the ability to split yourself into a swarm of scuttling insects, and use your own hive-mind to influence others.

Expanded Spell List

1st-level Swarm feature

The Swarm lets you choose from an expanded list of spells when you learn a warlock spell. The following spells are added to the warlock spell list for you.

SWARM EXPANDED SPELLS

Spell Level	Spells
1st	<i>entangle</i> (appears as swarm of spiders), <i>fog cloud</i> (appears as swarm of flies)
2nd	<i>animal messenger</i> , <i>detect thoughts</i>
3rd	<i>conjure animals</i> (swarms only), <i>spirit guardians</i>
4th	<i>giant insect</i> , <i>stoneskin</i> (appears as a covering of beetles)
5th	<i>cloudkill</i> (appears as swarm of flies), <i>insect plague</i>

Swarm Form

1st-level Swarm feature

You can use a bonus action to magically transform into a **swarm of insects**. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest. You can stay in swarm shape for a number of minutes equal to half your warlock level (rounded down, minimum 1). You then revert your normal form, unless you expend another use of this feature. You can revert to your normal form earlier by using a bonus action on your turn. You automatically revert if you fall unconscious, drop to 0 hit points, or die. While you are transformed, the following rules apply:

- Your game statistics are replaced by the statistics of the **swarm of insects**, but you retain your alignment, personality, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores. You also retain all of your skill and saving throw proficiencies.
- When you transform, you assume the beast’s hit points and Hit Dice. When you revert to your normal form, you return to the number of hit points you had before you transformed. However, if you revert as a result of dropping to 0 hit points, any excess damage carries over to your normal form.
- You can’t speak or wield weapons.
- You can cast cantrips normally so long as they don’t require material components. However, you can only

cast other spells if they lack both verbal and material components. You can continue to concentrate on spells cast before taking on your swarm form.

- You retain the benefit of any features from your class, race, or other source and can use them if the swarm is physically capable of doing so. However, you can't use any of your special senses, such as darkvision, unless your new form also has that sense.
- You choose whether your equipment falls to the ground in your space or merges into the swarm. Equipment that merges with the swarm has no effect until you leave the form.

Empowered Swarm

6th-level Swarm feature

Your swarm form is empowered with abilities derived from bestowed psychic powers:

- When you transform, you gain temporary hit points equal to your warlock level + your Charisma modifier. These temporary hit points disappear when you transform back into your true form.
- Your swarm form gains a flying speed of 30 feet.
- Your swarm form's blindsight increases to 30 feet.
- While in your swarm form, you can telepathically communicate to any creature with an Intelligence score of at least 1 you can see within 30 feet of you. You can instantaneously share words, images, sounds, and other sensory messages with the creature, which understands the meaning of your words and takes in the scope of any sensory messages you send to it.

Mind Manipulation

10th-level Swarm feature

You can unleash a swarm of tiny phantasmal horrors on your foes. You learn the spell *phantasmal killer*. It counts as a warlock spell for you, but it doesn't count against the number of spells you know. You can also cast it once without a spell slot, and you regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest.

Whenever you cast this spell, your patron's hive-mind invigorates you, recovering a spent use of your Swarm Form feature before you finish a long rest.

Swarm Casting

14th-level Swarm feature

You can cast many of your warlock spells while in your swarm form. You can perform the somatic and verbal components of a warlock spell while in swarm form, but you aren't able to provide material components.

Additionally, while in swarm form, you can cast a cantrip that has a casting time of 1 action as a bonus action.





WIZARD

In the magic-filled seas of the Aetherial Expanse, most wizards see limitless possibilities. Included below are two wizard subclasses, the Alacrity Scholar and the Technomage.

ALACRITY SCHOLAR

“When you see one, you’ll know it. You’ll go to hit them and find you’re swinging at nothing but thin air.”

—Tobias Renas, Retired Pirate

Ayrissian mages are famous for developing the remarkable Stardrive, a powerful arcane-powered engine capable of propelling ships across the Aetherial Expanse at incredible speeds. This technology manifested from studying the effects of magic on time and motion. Spellcasters who’ve mastered these concepts refer to themselves as alacrity scholars, and have learned to apply these concepts to applications beyond sailing vessel propulsion.

Wizards who follow the tradition of the alacrity scholar have unlocked arcane secrets that can subtly manipulate time and motion to keep themselves or those under their care protected from danger. It’s not uncommon for wealthy Ayrissian merchants to employ these spellcasters to protect themselves from unscrupulous thieves and rivals.

Quick Aether Recovery

2nd-level Alacrity Scholar feature

You’ve learned to harness the arcane potential remaining in a failed spell to invoke a second attempt.

Whenever you cast a cantrip that targets one creature with a spell attack or forces a saving throw, if the spell attack roll fails to hit the target or if the target succeeds at their saving throw, you can use your bonus action to cast the same cantrip on the same target.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, regaining all uses on a short or long rest.

Rapid Response

2nd-level Alacrity Scholar feature

You respond to threats quicker than most. Add your proficiency bonus to initiative checks.

Quick Teleport

6th-level Alacrity Scholar feature

Being a magic user draws a lot of attention, and being able to stay nimble is important.

As a reaction to being targeted with a weapon attack, you can expend a spell slot to teleport yourself to an unoccupied space you can see within 10 feet for each level

of the spell slot used. If that teleportation puts you outside the range or reach of the weapon attack, the attack automatically misses. If you are still within range or reach of the attack, the attack is made with disadvantage.

Quick Casting

10th-level Alacrity Scholar feature

The speed with which you cast spells is remarkable.

Whenever you cast a spell with a 1st level or higher spell slot, you can also cast a cantrip as a bonus action.

Additionally, if another creature attempts to use a reaction to you casting a spell that has an instantaneous duration, you can use your reaction to finish your spell before their reaction occurs.

For example, if you make a spell attack and the target attempts to cast *shield*, your attack uses the target’s normal AC and their *shield* spell increases their AC after your attack is already resolved.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency modifier, regaining all uses on a long rest.

Chronal Lock

14th-level Alacrity Scholar feature

When you start your turn suffering from the stunned, incapacitated, or paralyzed conditions due to a spell or magical effect, you can choose to spend a spell slot of 3rd level or higher to remove those conditions at the start of your turn. You can then act normally on that turn. Additionally, you gain temporary hit points equal to 3 times the level of the spell slot spent.

Also, if you have the surprised condition, you can still use your reaction.

TECHNOMAGE

“Correct application of magitech principles requires a comprehensive understanding of aetherial flux and its effect on the underlying metallic substrate. Failure to correctly align arcane vectors could lead to an embarrassing Gilbert-Pretzel event. Nobody wants that.”

—Zontas Serrow, Portal Technomage

As a technomage, you are an expert at leveraging your arcane expertise to create magitech devices. Your years of magical study and aetherial research allow you to infuse objects with magical potential.

Magitech Expertise

2nd-level Technomage feature

You gain proficiency in the Arcana skill if you don’t already have it. Your proficiency bonus is doubled whenever you use this skill to make an ability check.

Infuse with Aetherium

2nd-level Technomage feature

You know how to enhance mundane objects with aetherium. Whenever you finish a short or long rest, you can touch a construct or mundane object to augment it with aetherium, transforming it into a magical item if it is not already.

Alacrity Scholar



Technomage



You can apply a number of augmentations equal to your Intelligence modifier. However, no single object can possess more than two augmentations and no more than one of each type of augmentation. If you create a new augmentation exceeding your maximum, you choose which previous augmentation to dismiss.

The augmentations remain indefinitely but ends immediately when you become incapacitated or die. You can apply the following augmentations:

- **Enhance Damage.** You augment a weapon, or the unarmed strikes of a construct, to deal additional damage equal to your Intelligence modifier (minimum of 1), with the damage type of the additional damage chosen at the time of augmentation from the following list: acid, cold, fire, lightning, poison, or thunder.
- **Structural Enhancement.** You augment a construct or object, making it more resistant to attack. The object's Armor Class increases by 1.
- **Infused Spell.** You can augment a construct or hand-held object (such as a weapon, spellcasting focus, or tool) to store a cantrip you know that requires 1 action to cast.

A creature wielding the augmentation can take an action to produce the spell's effect as if they cast the spell using your spellcasting ability modifier and DC. If the spell requires concentration, the creature must concentrate. Once the infused item is used to cast the spell, a creature holding it must complete a short or long rest before the spell can again be cast.

Enhanced Infused Spell

6th-level Technomage feature

You can augment objects with spells from your spellbook that you can cast, in addition to cantrips you know. Infusing a spell in this way does not expend a spell slot, and the spell is stored at its normal level. You can infuse objects with spells that have a casting time of 1 action and that are of a level no higher than half your proficiency bonus, rounded down. These spells may now be cast twice from the object instead of once.

Empowered Spell Infusions

10th-level Technomage feature

Spells or cantrips you have infused into an object can now be cast three times instead of twice.

Arcane Resilience

14th-level Technomage feature

You can now infuse an object with resistance against magic. Any creature possessing the infused object has advantage on saving throws against spells and magical attacks, and the creature has resistance against the damage of spells and magical attacks.

You cannot infuse more than one object with this enhancement. Attempting to infuse a second object with this enhancement causes the previously infused object to lose this enhancement.



Chapter 9

BACKGROUNDS

“I’ve heard rich merchants speak of their days on Halint, spent relaxing in the sun just watching the clouds float by. But I ain’t never had that luxury and there ain’t no sunshine here neither.”

—Mugs Bilgebreath, Windcrown Street Urchin

BACKGROUNDS OF THE EXPANSE

Many from material plane worlds, particularly those from Karel or Ayris, view the Aetherial Expanse as a new frontier filled with riches waiting to be harvested by those with an entrepreneurial spirit. This has brought scores of people to the Expanse to seek their fortune. Some have arrived to escape hardship and start a new life on the magical seas.

These new arrivals may not always be welcomed by those who call the Expanse their home. Many do not look kindly on outsiders seeking fortunes in their figurative backyard. Others view the Silvery Seas as something wondrous and worthy of protection from those who’d despoil its beauteous enchantment.

This setting provides an opportunity for characters from nearly any setting, plane, or world to seek their

fortune, find their fate, or escape a difficult life. You can choose almost any background for this campaign setting, provided your GM approves your selection.

This chapter presents six new backgrounds designed for the Aetherial Expanse that you can select when creating your characters for this campaign setting.

BONUS CHARACTER TRAITS

The new backgrounds presented herein include bonus character traits introduced in chapter 5 and detailed in chapter 6. Some of these backgrounds also include an officer rank, as described in chapter 7.

Using Other Backgrounds

If you select a background for your character from another Fifth-Edition source that does not provide additional traits or a feat, you gain either two bonus traits or one bonus trait and one seafaring officer rank.

Bonus Traits. You can select any trait found in chapter 6, though if you gain two traits, only one can be from the Combat Traits list (see page 89).

Officer Rank. You gain one rank in any officer station described in chapter 7, provided the number of ranks does not exceed your proficiency bonus.

AYRISSIAN MAGNATE

“Only the truly powerful and refined are worthy adversaries to test my business acumen. Everyone else is but an obstacle to my mercantile greatness.”

—Maqarth di Nennepol, Windcrown Merchant

You are a skilled and cunning merchant or privateer of the Kingdom of Ayris. You use finely honed trading skills to further Ayris’s power through commerce and tact, knowing that each situation may require a delicate touch.

Skill Proficiencies: Insight, Persuasion

Tool Proficiencies: Jeweler’s kit

Languages: One of your choice

Equipment: A jeweler’s kit, a ledger of Ayrisian laws and regulations, a stunning map of the Starlight Seas with trade routes clearly marked, a set of fine clothing, and a pouch containing 25 gp

Bonus Trait: Friendly Ear

Officer Progression: If you use the optional Seafarer Advancement Rules (see chapter 7), you increase your officer station rank by one in your choice of first mate or quartermaster

Feature: Ruthless Negotiations

Your reputation as a shrewd merchant and negotiator precedes you. You can exploit legal loopholes and apply pressure during intense diplomatic trade negotiations. You have advantage on Insight and Persuasion checks when interacting with rivals in matters of trade. Additionally, you can use your skills to mediate disputes and foster diplomatic ties.

Suggested Characteristics

The merchants of the Aetherial Expanse are often the lifeblood of the seas. They are usually skilled diplomats who can pivot their persona to suit different situations. They are at home on the seas as much as they are in trade negotiations, and tend to view others based on their perceived wealth and prosperity.

PERSONALITY TRAIT

D8	PERSONALITY TRAIT
1	Satisfaction is paramount. I take pride in providing quality.
2	I have never been comfortable with the status quo and am driven to expand my influence.
3	I need to stay informed. I always seek new information, practices, and strategies.
4	I weigh every decision carefully for risks, ensuring I’m prepared for any circumstances.
5	I love rarities and enjoy the challenge of acquiring exotic goods.
6	I come from a long line of traders. I strive to uphold my family name – at least in public.
7	My natural skill at business has allowed me to indulge in a life of leisure and pleasure, sometimes to excess.
8	Numbers are magic to me. I have a deep understanding of financial matters and analyze investments with precision.

IDEAL

D6	IDEAL
1	Innovation. I seek to continually push and challenge the boundaries of what can be accomplished.
2	Unity. Trade and commerce foster greater understanding between cultures and realms. It is a true bridge to promote unity.
3	Tradition. The values and traditions of the past guide me unerringly toward truth and success.
4	Discovery. Uncovering lost or hidden treasures is my true passion. The thrill of discovery is worth any struggle.
5	Resilience. I believe my true character is shown when I persevere through adversity.
6	Prosperity. Wealth is best enjoyed and shared with others. I use my wealth to uplift those around me.

BOND

D6	BOND
1	I’m determined to honor my mentor’s name by achieving great success.
2	I have come to possess a strange magical object. I must learn more about its origins and powers.
3	It is my purpose to bring rivals together so we may all thrive.
4	I am fiercely protective of my employees and work to ensure their success, even at the cost of my own.
5	Past failures haunt me, and I am driven to seek redemption or make amends.
6	I have gained knowledge of a terrible secret. I must protect this information at all costs to keep it from the wrong hands.

FLAW

D6	FLAW
1	I am consumed with the need to maintain my reputation.
2	The idea of failure terrifies me and sometimes paralyzes me with indecision.
3	I am fixated on material possessions and tend to neglect important relationships as a result.
4	Change is frightening, and I resist it even when the world adapts around me.
5	I have a deep distrust of other’s intentions. It is difficult for me to believe in the goodwill of others.
6	I am addicted to the thrill of risk-taking and seek out situations that provide an adrenaline rush.

Aether
Lantern



AETHERIAL MYSTIC

"Keeping your eyes only upon the heavens will make you stumble upon the earth."

—Gin-deh-li, Ascetic Disciple

You believe the elemental planes are extensions of the gods, and the aether is their lifeblood. To truly understand the heavens, we must sail their seas and experience all its glory.

Skill Proficiencies: Nature, Religion

Languages: One language of your choice

Equipment: A depleted aetherium crystal, a book of general elemental knowledge, an astral compass, and a pouch containing 5 gp

Bonus Trait: Focused Mind

Officer Progression: If you use the optional Seafarer Advancement Rules (see chapter 7), this background increases your officer station rank by one in a single officer station chosen from navigator or helmsperson

Feature: Planar Affinity

Your devotion to the Aetherial Expanse has somehow manifested within you, an affinity for the elemental planes. Once a day, you can open yourself to one of the elements: earth, air, fire, or water. In doing so, you may choose one of the following abilities:

- You create a minor breeze to blow through a small area.
- You call forth a fingerling of fire to dance on the tip of your hand.
- You create a tiny, earthen statue made of stone and plant life.
- With a touch, you bring moisture to the driest of things. You make a 3-inch square of dampness.

Suggested Characteristics

Aetherial Mystics come from many walks of life; however, most tend to be curious, seeking adventure to find enlightenment in the mortal realms, and exploring the unknown in search of divine knowledge.

PERSONALITY TRAIT

D8	PERSONALITY TRAIT
1	To hide my insecurities, I am boisterous and loud. I use bravado to distract those around me.
2	Hope is the true path of the gods. I am overly positive, constantly spouting platitudes and encouragement.
3	Fire burns in my blood, tempering me. I am quick to anger and forgive, holding my passions tightly.
4	I emulate water's steady course. I am serene, hoping others take solace from my presence.
5	The stability of earth rules my soul. I am firm in my beliefs and take time to make decisions.
6	The plane of air blows through my mind. I flit through topics, and I see things others miss.
7	Nature echoes uniquely in my soul. I manifest random personality traits of both natural and planar creatures.
8	Hesitation is a weakness and must be rooted out. Experience is everything.

IDEAL

D6	IDEAL
1	Destiny. The gods grant everyone the possibility of a great destiny. I must shepherd those around me to reach their full potential.
2	Divinity. I seek the true source of aether so that I might bathe in the presence of the gods.
3	Service. I must teach and train those interested in meditation and self-reflection.
4	Leadership. People are like children, always squabbling. I must make difficult decisions for them.
5	Champion. Life is harsh and I stand up for those in need, even if they do not wish it.
6	Learning. I seek to understand the aetherial waters and unlock the secrets hidden beneath its waves.

BOND

D6	BOND
1	The planes were once one, and I strive to unite them once more.
2	I seek to save the souls of those who traverse the planes by being their holy mystic.
3	I have a great destiny and am single-minded in my drive to walk my true path.
4	Nature is a distilled form of aether, and to travel its waters is to live in true harmony.
5	I seek to widen all the elemental portals to allow more of the aether to spread.
6	The gods live in the unknown depths of the seas. One day, I will greet them with reverence.

FLAW

D6	FLAW
1	I am patient, seeking to see the twists and turns of life as they end without interference.
2	I have a sweet and trusting disposition, no matter how cruel or unkind the world has been.
3	I desire to serve the greater good, going to extremes and putting myself in danger unnecessarily.
4	Having gone without for most of my life, I become jealous of those who have things I do not.
5	Everything ends, and our actions don't matter. I push for acceptance instead of trying to better them.
6	Even the nicest of people are plotting to hurt me, and I live my life waiting to be proven right.



Ayrissian Hedral Orb
Arcane Focus

Andrei Iacob



EXPANSE IMMIGRANT

"No one's ever going to drive me from my home again."

—Gabord Green, New Resident of Velstarrón Island

You've arrived in the Expanse hoping for a better life. You may have come to seek fortunes you never had, opportunities you were never given, or a peace you never knew. Regardless of the reason, you've endured hardship to reach the Expanse, and intend to make this wondrous place your home.

Skill Proficiencies: Perception, Survival

Tool Proficiencies: One type of artisan's tools

Languages: One of your choice

Equipment: A keepsake from where you grew up, a set of traveling clothes, one set of artisan's tool, and a belt pouch containing 10 gp

Bonus Trait: Inured to the Elements

Officer Progression: If you use the optional Seafarer Advancement Rules (see chapter 7), you increase your officer station rank by one in your choice of boatswain or cook

Feature: Survivor's Scrabble

You overcame many challenges, enduring a difficult journey to reach the Aetherial Expanse. You learned how to survive under the most difficult conditions and have started to build a life for yourself beside the Silvery Seas. You have advantage on Survival checks to gather food and water, and to understand environmental threats.

Suggested Characteristics

Expanse Immigrants are tough folk who don't give up easily. Many are stoic, having endured numerous hardships, though others relied on their cheery dispositions to pull through tough times. They're inclined to be protective of things they care about, as most have lost things of value to reach the Expanse.

PERSONALITY TRAIT

D8	PERSONALITY TRAIT
1	I always find the silver lining, no matter how terrible the situation.
2	I've seen just about everything on my travels. Nothing can surprise me.
3	The Expanse is a magical, wondrous place. I want to experience all of it!
4	I still look over my shoulder, wondering if the troubles I fled have followed me here.
5	The gods must have blessed me for me to have found this place.
6	Planning is a waste of time. Taking action is all that matters.
7	I hold on to anything of value. I've already lost so much.
8	I find new people fascinating and can talk for hours with everyone I meet.

IDEAL

D6	IDEAL
1	Community. Caring for each other is how we overcome strife and hardship.
2	Independence. Here I am free. No one tells me what to do.
3	Perseverance. I never quit. Every setback pushes me to try harder.
4	Honor. The only sure thing is that I will always keep my promises.
5	Ambition. Now that I am in the Expanse, I will achieve greatness.
6	Might. My strength lets me overcome obstacles in my way.

BOND

D6	BOND
1	Someone sacrificed everything so that I could come here. I won't let them down.
2	A kind stranger helped me in a time of need. I am to do the same for someone else.
3	I fled my home because I spoke out against tyranny. I will fight against it wherever I go.
4	I was once desperately poor. I will always help those in need.
5	I came to enact vengeance on someone who fled to the Expanse.
6	I will protect my companions with my life.

FLAW

D6	FLAW
1	I'm bitterly jealous of anyone who has more than I do.
2	I can't trust anyone, not even those I love.
3	I'm quick to anger and won't tolerate any kind of disrespect.
4	I'm deathly afraid of the creature that nearly killed me.
5	I abandoned a loved one to a terrible fate.
6	I am always right, and no one can change my thinking.



The Cursed Book of Alacritic Secrets

Vasburg

KARELAGNE NAVAL MAGEWRIGHT

"Few things are as beautiful as a ship under full sail, breaking through the aether."

—Morgan Fairchance, Captain of the *INS Glory*

You have spent your life in service to the glory and power of the Karelagne Navy, utilizing your technical and magical prowess to build advanced aether vehicles to ensure nothing stands against the Empire's might.

Skill Proficiencies: Arcana, Investigation

Tool Proficiencies: Tinker's tools, vehicles (choice of air, land, or sea)

Equipment: A naval uniform, ink drawing of the first ship you worked on, tinker's tools, and a pouch containing 20 gp

Bonus Trait: Improviser

Officer Progression: If you use the optional Seafarer Advancement Rules (see chapter 7), you increase your officer station rank by one in your choice of shipwright or boatswain

Feature: Swift Ship Mend

Years of service in the Karelagne Navy have enabled you to swiftly diagnose and mend vehicles. You fix problems on the fly, using your instincts and experience to guide you.

While under duress, you gain advantage on checks made to repair a vehicle of your chosen type.

Suggested Characteristics

Naval Magewrights are the lifeblood of a vehicle, a necessary component to keep sailing. They use a combination of magic and technology to patch things together quickly in emergencies. Many are steadfast and responsible, while others reflect the unpredictable nature of the sea with personalities as chaotic as their repair methods.

PERSONALITY TRAIT

D8	PERSONALITY TRAIT
1	I find people barely tolerable. None are as interesting as the vehicles that sail the seas.
2	My understanding of the vehicles on the aether seems unconventional. I always trust my gut when making choices.
3	I love being around others, always enthusiastically sharing my knowledge and expertise.
4	Blending magic and technology is an art form. All my creations include intricate designs that are both functional and exquisite.
5	The winds and seas of the Expanse speak to me. My whispered responses have labeled me a weather witch, a moniker I wear with pride.
6	I remain unfazed by even the most shocking situations, facing them with a strange, calm detachment.
7	Becoming a skilled magewright was not a path I chose. I resent being forced to live my life in the navy.
8	Others falsely believe that my soft voice means that I am weak. I use this to my advantage.

IDEAL

D6	IDEAL
1	Art. The Starlight Seas are the epitome of art. I seek to manipulate its currents to create stunning ephemeral creations.
2	Discovery. Sailing the expanse is exciting, but nothing thrills me more than discovering an unsolved puzzle or unraveling a mystery.
3	Understanding. I spend my time constructing elemental sea charts and searching for a deeper meaning in the universe through its currents.
4	Meaning. I am transfixed by language, often overanalyzing other people's speech to find meaning where there is none.
5	Protection. I believe that the planar portals are incursions endangering my native plane. With the knowledge I gain, I seek to repair these rifts.
6	A Dream. When I was young, a dream spoke to me of another elemental plane. I have obsessed over its existence my whole life, but have yet to find this unnamed plane.

BOND

D6	BOND
1	I have an affinity for magic and technology, and work to blend them together more seamlessly.
2	I have an easy manner that encourages others to trust me with their deepest secrets. I use my sympathetic ear to impart the wisdom of the seas.
3	I was gravely injured when a strange elemental creature saved my life. I have vowed to repay its kindness.
4	My family has served on my ship for generations, and it is my heritage and legacy. I ensure it remains a true home to its crew.
5	Long ago, a dying crewmember's mind was stamped upon mine. I use the memories imprinted upon me to ensure they are never forgotten.
6	I am driven to make my current ship outstrip all others with new innovations in naval magic.

FLAW

D6	FLAW
1	Due to an explosion, my ears ring constantly, sometimes making it difficult to hear important commands or whispers.
2	I am obsessed with the perfect ship, which causes me to overwork, neglect other aspects of my life, and be perpetually exhausted.
3	I have become so reliant upon magic and ritual that I struggle to perform tasks without them.
4	Jealousy has clouded my heart, and I work to undermine my superior officers or subtly sabotage my ship.
5	I am as unpredictable as the seas. My volatile nature makes those around me nervous and stressed.
6	I suffer from bouts of memory loss. This causes me to repeat tasks I've already accomplished or to lose track of time and events.

MAGE CRAFT DISSIDENT

"Fools sing their songs of lament and prose, unaware their downfall is of their own making."

—Zheng Ironsliver, *Whispered Wind Operative*

Mage Craft Dissidents are spellcasters who have cast off the crutch of technology, believing its usage will lead to civilization's downfall. Utilizing the aether by drinking tiny amounts of the poisonous liquid, these spellcasters enter what they call "wraith dreams" - vivid hallucinations believed to be eerie premonitions of the future, often involving impending doom and disaster.

Skill Proficiencies: Arcana, Insight

Languages: One of your choice

Equipment: A set of common clothes, a small book of arcane lore, a tiny vial of liquid aether, and a pouch containing 10 gp

Bonus Trait: Tireless

Officer Progression: If you use the optional Seafarer Advancement Rules (see chapter 7), you increase your officer station rank by one in your choice of quartermaster or surgeon

Feature: Wraith Dreams

Imbibing small quantities of aether, you can induce a state of lucid dreaming called wraith dreams, which gift you with visions of the future. Once a day, these dreams grant you advantage on a single knowledge check. However, if you drink more than a mouthful of aether, you are still subject to the harmful effects of aether poisoning.

Suggested Characteristics

Mage Craft Dissidents are secretive by design, often thought fools or deemed too dangerous. Generally, being followers of time, they seek to hide in plain sight, waiting for their visions to be proven right.

PERSONALITY TRAIT

D8	PERSONALITY TRAIT
1	I believe everything is interconnected and I look for ways to find my connections to everything I encounter.
2	I view time as a false construct and ignore demands to delay or rush any action.
3	Having seen visions of the dismal future, I work tirelessly to save the world from this horror.
4	Only the most powerful wielders of the arcane should be allowed to use aether. It disgusts me to see others use it flippantly.
5	I try to appear more intelligent than I am. I overuse metaphors - often incorrectly.
6	Being the center of attention terrifies me. Mice are louder than I am, and I speak in the softest of tones.
7	I am harshly rigid in my life. Everything has a purpose and must be planned out exactly.
8	Concerned with being misunderstood due to my speech, I speak slowly and overexplain things.

IDEAL

D6	IDEAL
1	Prevent Catastrophe. Our understanding of the Starlight Sea is flawed. We must learn its true purpose before it consumes us.
2	Nature. True magical power is found in the verdant reaches of the wilds. We must preserve these spaces before all magic is lost.
3	Ancestors. The spirits of our loved ones flow around. I wish to understand these spirits and bring them peace.
4	Education. I work tirelessly to educate those around me about the sorrows and pain of technology.
5	Self-Improvement. I seek to harness the echoes of the world that flow through time and space.
6	Longevity. Time tears away cherished memories and ravishes our bodies. Stalling its march drives my actions.

BOND

D6	BOND
1	In the mists of the Starlight Sea are indistinct shapes, lost souls killed by technology. I must put their souls at rest.
2	Elemental confluxes fascinate me, and I investigate their energies to harness them for my designs.
3	I am determined to rediscover lost magics and use them to displace technology.
4	The silence of space is frightening. Filling it with laughter and love drives me.
5	Magic speaks to us in dreams. I help others understand their dreams and navigate the mysteries they reveal.
6	We stopped caring about our histories, so we are doomed to repeat them. I will not make that mistake. I will record history as best as I can.

FLAW

D6	FLAW
1	Technology revolts me so strongly that I can act irrationally when forced to utilize it.
2	I have become reliant upon drinking aether. If I go too long without, I become erratic and unreliable.
3	I am unable to resist ceaselessly lecturing people about the dangers of technology.
4	Unsatisfied with being overlooked, my mannerisms and speech are overly exaggerated.
5	Wraith dreams have left me unable to tell reality from fantasy, leading me to make strange leaps in logic.
6	I casually disregard minor problems until they become overwhelming.

Aether Compass



Andrei Iacob

STARLIGHT SEA RAIDER

“Those who sail the Starlight Seas are a motley bunch, as varied as individual blades of grass. Some beautiful, some grotesque, and some indescribable. You should fear them all.”

—Tobias Renas, Retired Pirate

You learned that to survive, you had to carve out your destiny and embrace a life of chaos. Your life is hard but one in which you thrive. You have become skilled at intimidation, information extraction, and enforcement. Your ability to instill fear and obedience makes you an invaluable asset to your crew.

Skill Proficiencies: Intimidation, Investigation

Tool Proficiencies: Thieves' tools

Languages: One of your choice

Equipment: A trophy from a slain enemy, a set of rugged clothes, thieves' tools, and a belt pouch containing 15 gp

Bonus Trait: Intrinsic Orientation

Officer Progression. If you use the optional Seafarer Advancement Rules (see chapter 7), you increase your officer station rank by one in your choice of boatswain or master gunner

Feature: Drake's Talon

Your fearsome reputation grants you special insight into other's weaknesses. You have advantage on Investigation and Intimidation checks made to gather information from captives through fear and menace.

Suggested Characteristics

Starlight Sea Raiders often find solace in the sea from their tumultuous lives, feeding a drive for adventure as they sail across the aetherial waters.

PERSONALITY TRAIT

D8	PERSONALITY TRAIT
1	I seize the chances that others overlook and take any steps necessary to complete my goals.
2	The cultures I have been exposed to have shaped me. I prioritize the survival of my crew above others.
3	Despite my violent reputation, I feel hidden empathy for the downtrodden, doing what I can to protect them.
4	I find purpose in joviality. I play pranks and tell jokes, using humor to deflect stress and conflict.
5	Life has left me prone to nervous energy, as I expect the next pitfall is just around the corner.
6	To prosper, I hardened myself and have no tolerance for weakness or frivolity.
7	The elemental portals fascinate me. The wonder I experience never lessens.
8	I believe the seas have their own singular consciousness. I am extremely respectful of them, treating them like a revered elder.

IDEAL

D6	IDEAL
1	Service. Those that I encounter are lost souls. I take them under my wing to teach them the wonders of the seas.
2	Independence. People are going to betray me in the end. The only person that I rely on is myself.
3	Discovery. I believe there are ill-fated civilizations or elemental doorways lost beneath the aether.
4	Engagement. I am a philosopher at heart and engage in lengthy discussions with the people around me.
5	Perfection. I strive to create the perfect rhythm or song, using my skills to affect the emotions of those around me.
6	Understanding. I seek to categorize the planes in hopes that it will bring further understanding to my own life.

BOND

D6	BOND
1	There are invisible threads between the floating islands of the Expanse, and they must exist in harmony.
2	I share a mythical bond with my ship and know it has been infused with more than simply aether.
3	The moonlight sirens have touched my soul. Others must experience their song for me to be fulfilled.
4	My shadow is a chained soul that speaks through me. Freeing them from their imprisonment dominates me.
5	Underneath my skin whirls a portion of aether. It has begun to spread, but I refuse to have it removed.
6	The elemental creatures of the planes need someone to bridge the gap between them. I am that person.

FLAW

D6	FLAW
1	The guilt of past mistakes consumes me, causing me to second guess my decisions.
2	My disregard for rules leads me to violate oaths or codes purely out of spite.
3	The magic in the seas speaks to me. I am distracted as their whispers fill my ears.
4	My allegiances fluctuate with the tides, making it difficult to predict my actions.
5	I have a deep fear of the sea. I avoid tasks that take place in the open, preferring to be below decks.
6	I have a poor sense of direction and struggle to navigate, getting easily lost or turned around.



Spyglass





Part 3

MAGIC

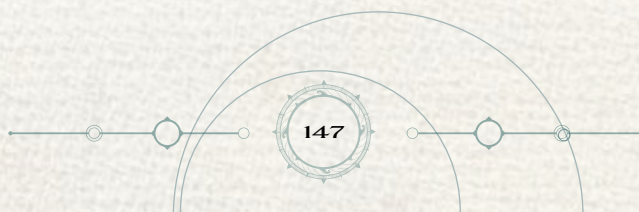
“Just a water, please. No, nothing extra.”

Becoming a mage is great for a lot of things, but getting a decent drink isn't one of them. Should've told us that back at the Academy. Come for the spells and the items. End up with ten ways to tell your local barkeep that even if you've got a bit of a reputation, it doesn't mean you're downing aether like it's cheap whisky. No matter what the rumors say.

Even if I had gotten into aether somehow, which I hadn't, I certainly wouldn't be getting it from an overeager barkeep who'd probably put Qoz knows what in there, hoping I'd either get hooked on some new drug they'd mixed into it or spontaneously combust and give them a selling point to bring in new customers. Here lie the burnt remains of Kerria Spellshot. She tipped okay, but she was a little bit snarly. And she almost killed eight sailors in the Windcrown Convoy Incident a few months back, but everyone says it's okay now.

Deep breaths, Kerria. The client'll be here in a moment. Take your mind off whatever the barkeep has going on, and, even worse, the guilt you're hoping “just water” is enough to wash down. I know my instructors think I'll get over what happened out on the Expanse one of these days, come back to the Academy, and get behind a desk in the library like nothing changed. I was cleared, after all, completely absolved of any official wrongdoing. No way I could've known how much the lightning belt would amplify my spell. Or that some fishing convoy would paint their ships up to look like some of the most feared Drake ships in the Expanse to try to bluff folks away from them. Or that they would burn so easily. But there are some things you can't unhear, and it turns out that the screams of sailors as you zap them with lightning is one of them. Even if you save them afterward, once you realize what's happening, throwing portals like you've been slinging them for years.

The Academy didn't blame me for the incident, really. They even gave me a medal for heroic poise in the face of imminent danger. But the truth is, I blame them. They're the ones who started promising apprentice services to the merchant convoys, dragging folks like me out of the library and into the sea. Without the Academy, I would've never known how my guilt goes hand in hand with the way my heart still races when I think about feeling that magic come alive in my hands. I heard someone say I looked like Asteth come down to burn the world when I faced that convoy. And I felt it. Powerful and dangerous and alive. And all I want now is to feel it again. Even if it means sitting in a seedy tavern, waiting on someone with a problem to solve, sipping my water with business cards in hand: Kerria Spellshot, Terror of the Windcrown Convoy. For Hire.



Chapter 10

NEW SPELLS

LEVEL	SPELL	SCHOOL	CONC.	RITUAL	CLASS
0	Aether Shroud	Conjuration	N	N	Warlock, Wizard
0	Peal of Thunder	Evocation	N	N	Druid
0	Resonant Blades	Transmutation	N	N	Bard
1st	Primal Squal	Conjuration	N	N	Druid, Sorcerer, Wizard
2nd	Aether Soul-Link	Necromancy	N	N	Warlock
2nd	Aetheric Adaptation	Transmutation	N	N	Druid, Ranger, Sorcerer, Wizard
2nd	Starlight Cannonball	Illusion	N	N	Sorcerer, Wizard
3rd	Aetheric Communion	Divination	N	N	Bard, Cleric, Wizard
3rd	Chronovoyance	Divination	Y	N	Bard, Cleric, Druid, Warlock, Wizard
3rd	Galvanizing Words	Enchantment	N	N	Bard, Cleric, Paladin
3rd	Siren's Call	Enchantment	Y	N	Bard, Sorcerer, Wizard
3rd	Summon Primordial Minion	Conjuration	N	N	Druid, Sorcerer, Wizard
4th	Aetheric Bedlam	Abjuration	N	N	Wizard
4th	Conjure Aether Mephits	Conjuration	Y	N	Druid, Wizard
4th	Wall of Aether	Evocation	Y	N	Druid, Sorcerer, Wizard
5th	Conjure Aether Elemental	Conjuration	Y	N	Druid, Wizard
5th	Soul Tide	Conjuration	N	N	Cleric, Sorcerer, Wizard
6th	Aetherial Rift	Conjuration	Y	N	Sorcerer, Warlock, Wizard
6th	Hive Mind	Transmutation	N	N	Druid, Wizard
7th	Create/Collapse Elemental Portal	Conjuration	N	N	Druid, Wizard
9th	Mass Dominate Person	Enchantment	Y	N	Bard, Sorcerer, Wizard

"You still don't understand. Even my briefest scrying of our shadowy futures makes it clear that our understanding of the arcane is infantile. We must continue to unlock the vexatious puzzle box that is magical theory, for there is so much more to learn. Oh, what wonders we have yet to uncover!"

—Kaircatoro, *Alacrity Scholar*

SPELL DESCRIPTIONS

The spells are presented in alphabetical order.

Aether Shroud

Conjuration Cantrip

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

You conjure a cloud of shimmering aether to strike a target you can see within range. The target must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or take 1d6 force damage, and be sheathed in the aetherial energy until the start

of your next turn. If the target casts a spell or makes a magical attack while enshrouded by this spell, the target takes 1d6 poison damage and this spell ends. Creatures with the Aetheric Adaption trait are immune to this poison damage.

This spell's force and poison damage increase by 1d6 when you reach 5th level (2d6), 11th level (3d6), and 17th level (4d6).

Aether Soul-Link

2nd-level Necromancy

Casting Time: Reaction

Range: Self

Components: None

Duration: Instantaneous

You exchange a portion of your life force, channeling it into a spell on which you are concentrating. When you cast this spell, you spend a number of Hit Dice equal to the level of the spell you are concentrating on as though you had spent the Hit Dice during a short rest, but you regain no hit points by doing so. Instead, the spell you're concentrating on extends its duration based on its original duration:

- A spell with a duration measured in rounds extends its duration by a number of rounds equal to your Charisma modifier.
- A spell with a duration measured in minutes extends its duration by a number of minutes equal to your Charisma modifier.
- A spell with a duration measured in hours extends its duration by 1 hour.
- A spell with a duration measured in days extends its duration by 1 day.

Once a spell has had its duration extended in this way, it cannot benefit from another casting of Aether Soul-Link.

Aetherial Rift

6th-level Conjunction

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 10 miles

Components: V, S, M (a vial of liquid aether)

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

You manipulate the aether of the Aetherial Expanse to conjure two rifts within it. The first rift opens in an unoccupied space within 10 feet of you, and the second rift opens in an unoccupied space at a location within 10 miles of you that you are familiar with (have visited or seen before). Both rifts are 5 feet wide and 10 feet tall and appear as fissures in space that look the same when viewed from any direction.

A creature or object that moves into a rift is instantly transported to the other rift, appearing in the unoccupied space nearest to the rift. If the caster moves into the rift, both rifts collapse, ending the spell, and the caster is transported to a random location in the Aetherial Expanse.

Aetheric Adaptation

2nd-level Transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 hour

You touch a creature and alter its form, allowing it to safely exist in the aetherial seas. For the spell's duration, the creature can breathe aether, is immune to the effects of aether poisoning, and has advantage on ability checks made to swim in aether.

If the creature is already suffering from aether poisoning, the creature's symptoms are suppressed and further progression of aether poisoning stages is halted for the spell's duration. This spell does not cure an aether-poisoned creature of the affliction.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, you can target two additional creatures, and the spell's duration increases by 2 hours for each spell slot above 2nd.

Aetheric Bedlam

4th-level Abjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self (60-foot radius)

Components: S, M (a vial of liquied aether)

Duration: 1 hour

You release a cloud of diluted vaporous aether charged with magical static that envelops all creatures and objects within a 60-foot-radius sphere around you. For the duration, each creature in the area is lightly obscured, and a divination spell cast within the sphere or that targets any creatures or objects within the sphere fails.

Any attempt at mentally communicating or reading the mind of a target within the sphere fails. Additionally, a creature casting a divination spell or attempting a mental link with targets within the sphere must make a Wisdom saving throw, taking 9d6 psychic damage on a failed save and half as much damage on a successful one as it receives magical feedback consisting of garbled words and images.

Until the spell ends, the sphere moves with you, centered on you. The spell lasts for the duration or until you use an action to dismiss it.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, the duration of the spell increases by 1 hour for each slot level above 4th.

Aetheric Communion

3rd-level Divination

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Unlimited in the Aetherial Expanse

Components: V, S, M (a still pool or body of liquid aether)

Duration: 1 minute

You recite an incantation over an undisturbed pool or body of aether, place your hand within it, and focus on a creature you have met before. If the target is outside the Aetherial Expanse, the spell fails. If the target is within the Aetherial Expanse, the creature hears every word you speak aloud for the duration of the spell while you are touching the aether. Removing your hand from the aether does not end the spell, but the target can only hear you while you are touching the aether.

Though you can't see the target through this spell, you are magically aware of whether the target can hear you and if it is touching aether. While the spell lasts, you can hear anything the target says if it touches aether while speaking aloud.

If you target an unwilling creature, it can make a Charisma saving throw when you cast the spell, causing the spell to fail immediately on a success.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the duration increases by 2 minutes for each slot level above 3rd.

Chronovoyance

3rd-level Divination

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a hand mirror)

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

Peering into the mirror, you pierce the veil of time. When you cast this spell, the image seen in the mirror presents a view as if time moved backward from the moment the spell is cast. For each second you observe the mirror, it reflects the same amount of time in reverse, viewed through the mirror regardless of whether the mirror existed in that location in the past. For example, if you look in the mirror for 3 minutes, you can see 3 minutes backward in time from when the spell was cast.

All events are watched in reverse, making it difficult to understand spoken words. A DC 15 Wisdom check deciphers backward speech. If you watch events at double speed, this Wisdom check is made at disadvantage.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell with a spell slot of 4th level or higher, increase the spell's duration by 10 minutes for each level above 3rd, allowing you to peer further into the past.

Conjure Aether Elemental

5th-level Conjunction

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 90 feet

Components: V, S, M (a small piece of aetherium)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You call forth an **aether elemental*** that materializes in an unoccupied space that you can see within range. The elemental disappears when it drops to 0 hit points or when the spell ends.

The elemental is friendly to you and your companions for the duration. Roll initiative for the elemental, which has its own turns. It obeys any verbal commands that you issue to it (no action required by you). If you don't issue any commands to the elemental, it defends itself from hostile creatures but otherwise takes no actions.

If your concentration is broken, the elemental doesn't disappear. Instead, you lose control of the elemental, it becomes hostile toward you and your companions, and it might attack. An uncontrolled elemental can't be dismissed by you, and it disappears 1 hour after you summoned it.

Conjure Aether Mephits

4th-level Conjunction

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 90 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You summon four **aether mephits*** that appear in unoccupied spaces that you can see within range. An aether mephit summoned by this spell disappears when it drops to 0 hit points or when the spell ends.

The summoned creatures are friendly to you and your companions. Roll initiative for the summoned creatures as a group, which has its own turns. They obey any verbal commands that you issue to them (no action required by you). If you don't issue any commands to them, they defend themselves from hostile creatures but otherwise take no actions.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell with a 6th-level slot, you summon eight aether mephits; with an 8th-level spell slot, you summon twelve aether mephits.

AETHER MEPHIT

Small Elemental (Mephit), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 27 (6d6+6)

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
5 (-3)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +3

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Aetherian

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Death Burst. When the mephit dies, it explodes in a cloud of aether vapor. Each creature within 5 feet of it must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

ACTIONS

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 +1) slashing damage plus 2 (1d4) poison damage.

Aether Breath (Recharge 6). The mephit exhales a 15-foot cone of aether vapor. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

Innate Spellcasting (1/Day). The mephit can innately cast *faerie fire*, requiring no material components. Its innate spellcasting ability is Charisma.

Create/Collapse Elemental Portal

7th-level Conjunction

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S, M (a natural object native to the target plane)

Duration: 1 hour

You create a temporary portal 30 feet in diameter that leads to a location in an elemental plane. You can specify a target destination in general terms, and the portal

takes you to that destination. The portal lasts for 1 hour and allows any creatures or objects to enter the portal or emerge from it at the GM's discretion. Creatures that start their turn within 60 feet of the portal's center on either side of the portal must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or receive a condition depending on the table below, caused by the swirling mass of the corresponding element surrounding the portal. A creature makes the saving throw again at the start of each of its turns to end the condition if it remains in the area.

As a bonus action, you can end the spell and collapse this, or another, temporary elemental portal, causing all creatures within 60 feet of the portal's center to make a Dexterity saving throw or take 12d6 damage of the associated damage type listed on the table below on a failure, and half as much on a success. The portal evaporates on its own without incident once the spell ends.

ELEMENTAL EFFECTS

ELEMENTAL PLANE	CONDITION	DAMAGE TYPE
Air	Grappled	Slashing
Earth	Grappled	Bludgeoning
Fire	Blinded	Fire
Water	Suffocating*	Bludgeoning

*rules for Suffocating are outlined on page 17

Galvanizing Words

3rd-level Enchantment

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V

Duration: 1 minute

You let out a raucous command that cuts through the din of battle, shaking your allies out of panic and refocusing them into a united force. Choose up to five creatures within range. Each affected creature immediately gains 5 temporary hit points. Additionally, affected creatures have advantage on saving throws to resist or end being charmed or frightened.

While this spell is in effect, when you deal damage to a creature on your turn, a creature affected by this spell has advantage on its next attack roll or ability check. Once an affected creature loses the temporary hit points granted by this spell, the spell effects end for that creature.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the temporary hit points increase by 5 for each slot level above 3rd.

Hive Mind

6th-level Transmutation

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: 24 hours

You create a telepathic link between up to four willing creatures within 120 feet of you. The spell ends for a creature if it is no longer within 120 feet of another linked

creature. Until the spell ends, each linked creature can communicate telepathically with other linked creatures.

Linked creatures don't need to share a language to communicate in this way, but must be able to understand at least one language. Also, each linked creature is immune to the charmed and frightened conditions while within 30 feet of at least one other linked creature.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 7th level or higher, you can affect one additional creature for each slot level above 6th.

Mass Dominate Person

9th-level Enchantment

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You attempt to beguile up to twelve humanoid targets that you can see within range. Each target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or be charmed by you for the duration. If you or friendly creatures are fighting a target, the target has advantage on the saving throw.

While a target is charmed, you have a telepathic link with it as long as you are both on the same plane of existence. You can use this telepathic link to issue commands to one or more targets while you are conscious (no action required), who do their best to obey. You can specify a simple and general course of action, such as "Attack that creature," "Run over there," or "Fetch that object." If the targets complete the order and don't receive further direction from you, they defend themselves to the best of their ability.

You can use your action to take total and precise control of the targets. Until the end of your next turn, the creatures take only the actions you choose, and don't do anything you don't allow them to do. During this time, you can also cause the creatures to use a reaction, but this requires you to use your own reaction as well.

Each time a target takes damage, it makes a new Wisdom saving throw against the spell. If the saving throw succeeds, the spell ends for that creature.

Peal of Thunder

Evocation Cantrip

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: S

Duration: Instantaneous

You snap your fingers, and a sound echoes out. Choose one creature that you can see within range. That target must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or take 1d10 thunder damage. If there are two creatures within range that are within 5 feet of each other, they must both make the saving throw, taking 1d6 thunder damage on a failure.

The spell's damage increases by one die when you reach 5th level (2d10 or 2d6), 11th level (3d10 or 3d6), and 17th level (4d10 or 4d6).

Primal Squall

1st-level Conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 90 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

You reach into the depths of elemental chaos, allowing the energy to coalesce in your hand. Choose one creature within range and make a ranged spell attack against the target. On a hit, the target takes 1d6 damage. The number rolled on that die determines the attack's damage type: 1-Acid, 2-Cold, 3-Fire, 4-Force, 5-Lightning, or 6-Thunder.

Hit or miss, the energy strikes out against nearby creatures. The target and each creature within 10 feet of it must make a Dexterity saving throw or take 2d4 damage of the type rolled.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, each target takes 2d4 extra damage of the type rolled for each slot level above 1st.

Resonant Blades

Transmutation Cantrip

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Self (5-foot radius)

Components: V, M (two light, finesse weapons worth at least 2 gp each)

Duration: 1 minute

You let loose a song that echoes forth, the vibrations of your voice channeling through your blades. For the duration, two weapons with the light and finesse properties used in the casting of this spell deal thunder damage instead of their normal damage type; you can also use your spellcasting ability instead of Strength or Dexterity for the attack and damage rolls of attacks using these weapons. The spell ends if you cast it again or end your turn with either of the weapons involved in the spell's casting unwielded.

Siren's Call

3rd-level Enchantment

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You perform an enthralling piece of music, causing creatures of your choice that you can see within range and that can hear you to succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or become charmed by you. While charmed by this spell, creatures have disadvantage on attacks on their turns unless they spend at least half of their movement and end that movement closer to you.

If a creature charmed by this spell starts its turn within 5 feet of you, it also becomes incapacitated. At the end of each turn while incapacitated by this spell, the creature can attempt another Wisdom saving throw, ending this effect on a success.

A creature who takes damage from you or your allies can immediately attempt another Wisdom saving throw to

end all spell effects. The spell ends if you are incapacitated or can no longer speak.

Creatures that can't be charmed or are deafened automatically succeed on this saving throw.

Soul Tide

5th-level Conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self (20-foot radius)

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

You conjure a flood of disembodied souls from the depths of the Starlight Seas to wash over foe and ally alike. The tide of aetherial energy surges outward from you in a 20-foot radius centered on you. The energy passes through solid objects but is stopped by magical barriers like those made by a *wall of force* or *resilient sphere* spell.

You and your allies within range each gain a number of temporary hit points equal to 2d6 + your spellcasting ability modifier. Additionally, creatures of your choice within range must make a Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature suffers force damage equal to your spellcasting ability modifier, is pushed away from you until it is outside the spell's radius, and is knocked prone. On a success, the creature suffers only half damage, is pushed only 5 feet away from you, and is not knocked prone.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 6th level or higher, the temporary hit points and damage increase by 1d6 for each slot level above 5th. Additionally, if cast with a 7th- or 8th-level spell slot, the radius increases to 25 feet. If cast with a 9th-level spell slot, the radius increases to 30 feet.

Starlight Cannonball

2nd-level Illusion

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 ft (15-foot radius)

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

You manipulate light and sound to create a shimmering cannonball that fires from between your hands, as you make a ranged spell attack at a target within range. All creatures of your choice within 15 feet of you when you cast the spell must make a Constitution saving throw or be deafened for 1 minute. A creature affected this way may attempt a Constitution saving throw at the end of each of its turns to end this effect.

If the target of the cannonball is a creature, on a hit, the target creature is blinded until the end of your next turn. If the target is an object, the target object takes 4d6 force damage and sheds dim light in a 15-foot radius until the end of your next turn. If an object is destroyed this way, all creatures within 15 feet of the object must make a Dexterity saving throw or shed dim light in a 15-foot radius until the end of your next turn.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, you may make an additional ranged spell attack on another target within range for each slot level above 2nd.

Summon Primordial Minion

3rd-level Conjuration

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (bottle of contained aetherial vapor)

Duration: Instantaneous

This spell reaches into the elemental chaos to summon a creature under your command. It appears in an unoccupied space you can see within range. This creature uses the **primordial beast** stat block. When you cast the spell, roll a d6. The number rolled on that die determines the creature's elemental affinity: 1-Acid, 2-Cold, 3-Fire, 4-Force, 5-Lightning, or 6-Thunder.

The creature resembles a beast of your choosing formed from raw elemental energy that corresponds with the number rolled.

On each of your turns, you can use a bonus action to mentally command any creature you summon with this spell if the creature is within 60 feet of you (if you control multiple creatures, you can command any or all of them at the same time, issuing the same command to each one). You decide what action the creature will take and where it will move during its next turn, or you can issue a general command, such as to guard a particular chamber or corridor. If you issue no commands, the creature only defends itself against hostile creatures. Once given an order, the creature continues to follow it until its task is complete.

The creature is under your control for 24 hours, after which it stops obeying any command you've given. To maintain control of the creature for another 24 hours, you must cast this spell on the creature again before the current 24-hour period ends. This use of the spell reasserts your control over up to four creatures you have summoned with this spell, rather than summoning a new one.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, you summon or reassert control over two additional elemental creatures for each slot level above 3rd.

Wall of Aether

4th-level Evocation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S, M (small piece of aetherium)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

A shimmering wall of aether materializes on the ground at a point you choose within range. You can make the wall up to 60 feet long, 20 feet high, and 1 foot thick; or create a ringed wall up to 20 feet in diameter, 20 feet high, and 1 foot thick.

The wall consists of a roiling mass of solid, liquid, and gaseous forms of aether. The wall glows faintly with flickering lights dancing across its surface, providing dim light for 30 feet. Areas behind the wall are lightly obscured. The wall vanishes when the spell ends. The wall's space is difficult terrain.

When the wall appears, each creature within its area must make a Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 2d8 force damage and 2d8 poison damage, or half as much damage on a successful save. A creature that ends its turn in the wall's area takes 2d8 force damage and 2d8 poison damage. Creatures with Aetheric Adaption are immune to the wall's poison damage.

A ranged attack that enters the wall's space imposes disadvantage on the attack roll. Creatures within 10 feet of the wall of aether have advantage on saving throws to resist the effects of spells, spell attacks, and spell-like abilities.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, the damage increases by 1d8 force damage for each slot level above 4th.



PRIMORDIAL BEAST

Medium Elemental

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 17 (3d8 + 3)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

Damage Immunities acid, cold, fire, force, lightning, or thunder (from elemental affinity)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Primordial; understands the languages you speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 xp)

Proficiency Bonus +2

ACTIONS

Primal Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 2) slashing damage plus 3 (1d4) elemental affinity damage.

Unbridled Chaos (Recharge 6). The primordial beast shudders with elemental energy. Each creature within 10 feet of the beast must make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw, taking 5 (1d8) elemental affinity damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

BONUS ACTIONS

Elemental Jaunt (1/day). In a burst of elemental energy, the primordial beast teleports up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space it can see.



Chapter 11

ITEMS AND ARTIFICE

*“You don’t need to show me how it works.
I know what I’m doing.”*

—Last words of the pirate Toerik Boscrown

The inherent magic infusing the Aetherial Expanse has led to wondrous creations by the civilizations that have plundered its riches. In addition, lost within the depths of the Silvery Seas and scattered across the Expanse’s many isles are forgotten magical treasures left by planar travelers, or deposited by the uncounted ephemeral gates that open onto this region of the Astral Plane.

This chapter offers a sampling of the remarkable items adventurers can discover as they journey across the Aetherial Expanse.

MAGITECH

It is inarguable that the discovery of the Aetherial Expanse led to the rise of both the Kingdom of Ayris and the Karelagne Empire. Each nation learned to unlock the magical potential of aetherium, crafting devices, powering arcane engines, and allowing each to become their home world’s dominant power. Magitech is the collective term used to describe the fruits of this arcane engineering.

MAGIC ITEMS AND MAGITECH

From a game mechanic standpoint, there’s no practical difference between a standard magic item and a magitech item. Narratively, these items are quite different, with magitech created by arcane crafters skilled at extracting magical energy from aetherium crystals, often driving clunky, mechanical contraptions. In contrast, typical magic items are directly infused with magic from traditional arcane, divine, or natural sources.

Karelagne Magitech

The discovery of aetherium crystals led the Karelagne military to establish arcane schools of learning focused on exploiting the new resource. Their technomages unleashed a creative torrent of magical engineering, revolutionizing armaments and spurring the development of devices that radically changed their home world.

Most Karelagne technomages are methodical in their approach to magitech creation, systematically studying aetherium through observation and experimentation. Though closely guarded by the Empire, technomages review magitech innovations with their peers, allowing for a rapid dissemination of advancements across the Empire.

Ayrissian Magitech

Ayrissian alacrity scholars have developed their own arcane artifice traditions. In contrast to the clinical methodology used by Karelagne technomages, Ayrissian artificers are more esoteric and mystical in their approach. The kingdom's competitive, mercantile nature limits the speed with which discoveries are shared.

Groups of artificers covertly pursue magitech advancements, often hiding their discoveries beneath layers of mystical cyphers and impenetrable occult jargon. Most Ayrissians recognize that a new magitech discovery could lead to a river of riches, provided no one else learns the secret.

FIREARMS

The roar of cannon fire is a feared sound easily recognized by most residents of the Aetherial Expanse.

GUNPOWDER

Most ships sailing the Aetherial Expanse rely upon gunpowder for their cannon's ammunition. Gunpowder is a common but closely guarded commodity, without which most ships are defenseless against the near-constant threat of pirate attack.

Personal firearms, though still relatively rare, are increasingly seen in the hands of ship crews and local militias across the Expanse.

GUNPOWDER SUPPLIES

ITEM	COST	WEIGHT	SPECIAL
Gunpowder, bomb	150 gp	1 lb.	Explosive
Gunpowder, flask	35 gp	2 lb.	Explosive
Gunpowder, keg	250 gp	20 lb.	Explosive

Gunpowder, Bomb

These hand-sized explosives are devastating in close-quarters combat on the decks of a ship.

As a bonus action, you ignite the gunpowder bomb; as an action, you throw it at a point up to 60 feet away from you. The bomb explodes at the end of your turn, requiring creatures within 5 feet of it to make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. Creatures who fail the save take 10 (3d6) fire damage, or half as much damage on a successful save.

Longer Fuse. Most bombs have a short fuse, but a longer fuse can be fashioned to delay the explosion by up to four turns.

Gunpowder, Flask

Creatures armed with gunpowder firearms, such as pistols or muskets, typically carry a supply of gunpowder on their person in a small waterproof container. These containers can come in a variety of forms such as a leather pouch or a hollowed-out animal horn. Typically, a personal flask holds enough gunpowder for up to 10 shots from a standard weapon.

If a full personal flask of gunpowder is ignited, it explodes. Creatures within 10 feet of the explosion must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 10 (3d6) fire damage, and half as much damage on a successful save. The explosion ignites any flammable objects in the area that aren't worn or carried.

Gunpowder, Keg

Ships normally store gunpowder for their guns in kegs, which are usually fashioned from water-resistant wooden containers.

If a full keg of gunpowder is ignited, it explodes. Creatures within 10 feet of the explosion must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 24 (7d6) fire damage, and half as much damage on a successful save. The explosion ignites any flammable objects in the area that aren't worn or carried.

OPTIONAL RULE: BOMB TIMING UNCERTAINTY

When a character fashions a longer fuse for a gunpowder bomb, they must make a DC 13 Intelligence check. A character proficient in alchemist tools, or who have at least one rank in the Gunner position (see chapter 7), can add their proficiency bonus to the roll. On a success, the bomb explodes when intended. On a failure, the GM secretly rolls 1d6 and consults the Bomb Timing Error table.

BOMB TIMING ERROR

D6	DETONATION
1	The fuse smolders for the intended duration but then the bomb fails to detonate.
2	The bomb explodes immediately after the fuse is lit.
3	The bomb explodes 1 turn after the fuse is lit.
4	The bomb explodes 1 turn after intended.
5	The bomb explodes 2 turns after intended.
6	The bomb explodes 4 turns after intended.

QUEST HOOK: A BLESSED BLOOM

While the characters are in a town, they are called out to visit a local gunsmith named Pir. He's heard rumours of a bright, glowing blue flower growing at the top of a cliffside accessible past a dense forest. The flower's appearance is a clear sign of a rich vein of aetherium crystal, and Pir's always wanted to expand his wares to include magitech firearms. He makes an offer to the characters—if they can acquire the aetherium crystals from this new source, he'll create an aether pistol for that half-price.



OPTIONAL RULES: TARGETING WIELDED OBJECTS

Creatures wielding an object usually try to avoid attacks against the object, but the Object Armor Class table does not reflect these efforts. GMs may consider using one or more of the following optional rules to account for this:

Creature Dexterity. The object's AC is increased by the creature's Dexterity modifier.

Creature Cover. The creature may use its body to protect the object. Half cover provides a +2 AC bonus, and three-quarters cover receives a +5 AC bonus. Attacks that miss objects protected in this way will hit the creature protecting it if the same attack roll would hit the creature's armor class.

Creature Saving Throw. If an attack roll is enough to hit the object's AC, the creature wielding the object could make a Dexterity saving throw, with the DC equal to the attack roll. On a success, the creature moves the object out of the way, and the attack misses. On a failure, the object is hit by the attack.

Object Size. Intuitively, smaller objects are more difficult to hit than larger ones. The *animate objects* spell suggests an AC based on the size of the targeted object. The object's AC could then be the greater of the AC identified on the Object Armor Class table, or from the *Animate Objects* Armor Class table:

ANIMATE OBJECTS ARMOR CLASS

SIZE	AC	SIZE	AC
Tiny	18	Large	10
Small	16	Huge	10
Medium	13		

MAGITECH FIREARMS

One of the Karelagne Empire's earliest magitech developments was the creation of aetherium-powered firearms that unleash bursts of arcane force to damage their targets. This weaponry is challenging to scale for use on ships, forcing most of the Karelagne navy to rely on standard gunpowder cannons.

Personal-sized weapons, such as aether pistols and aetherlocks, are expensive and hard to find, as are the refined crystals that power them. Their rapid rate of fire compared to gunpowder weapons makes them highly sought after. More advanced firearms exist that deal other damage types instead of standard piercing damage, but these require special crystals to power them.

Replacement Crystals

Most magitech firearms come with standard-sized crystals made from refined aetherium already installed. Replacement crystals cost at least 25 gp each, though unscrupulous merchants charge significantly more when given the opportunity.

Firearm Weapon Proficiency

Both gunpowder and magitech firearms are considered martial ranged weapons. Bards and rogues are also proficient with gunpowder pistols and aether pistols.

Weapon Properties

New magitech weapon properties are described below.

Aetherium-powered. Attacks from aetherium-powered firearms are considered magical. Aetherium crystals powering these ranged weapons hold up to 9 charges. Making a ranged attack with the weapon uses 1 charge. An aetherium crystal regains 1d8 + 1 charges daily at dawn. If you expend the crystal's last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the crystal crumbles to dust and is destroyed.

Casting *dispel magic* or entering an anti-magic field permanently drains aetherium crystals, and weapons loaded with a drained crystal become inert until reloaded with a replacement crystal.

A bonus action is required to load an aetherium crystal into the weapon, as does removing a crystal from it.

Arcane focus. These weapons can be used as a spellcasting focus by bards, sorcerers, warlocks, and wizards. Spellcasters are proficient with this weapon and can use their spellcasting ability in place of Dexterity as the ability modifier for attack rolls.

FIREARM DESCRIPTIONS

Firearms commonly encountered on the Aetherial Expanse are detailed below.

Aetherburst Wand

Martial Ranged Weapon (Magitech)

Cost: 100 gp

Damage: 1d6 bludgeoning

Weight: 1 lb.

Properties: Aetherium-powered (range 20/60), arcane focus

Commonly wielded by technomages, these magitech weapons emit bursts of concussive force.

Aetherlock

Martial Ranged Weapon (Magitech)

Cost: 500 gp

Damage: 2d6 piercing

Weight: 8 lb.

Properties: Aetherium-powered (range 80/320), two-handed

These magitech firearms come in various forms, but invariably include a long metal-alloy tube connected by wires to an aetherium crystal affixed to a wooden stock.

Aether Pistol

Martial Ranged Weapon (Magitech)

Cost: 250 gp

Damage: 1d8 piercing

Weight: 1 lb.

Properties: Aetherium-powered (range 30/120)

Covert agents of both the Kingdom of Ayris and the Karelagne Empire often use these rare weapons.

Gunpowder Musket

Martial Ranged Weapon (Firearm)

Cost: 300 gp

Damage: 1d12 piercing

Weight: 3 lb.

Properties: Ammunition (range 40/180), loading, two-handed

These cumbersome firearms boast double the range of gunpowder pistols, dealing deadly attacks from a distance.

Gunpowder Pistol

Martial Ranged Weapon (Firearm)

Cost: 150 gp

Damage: 1d10 piercing

Weight: 3 lb.

Properties: Ammunition (range 30/90), loading

These handheld firearms are a favorite weapon of buccaneers on the Expanse. Pistols hurl spherical metal projectiles at targets to devastating effect.

TARGETING OBJECTS

The Fifth Edition's combat rules are designed to support creature-on-creature combat. However, the rules also suggest Armor Classes for objects if they are attacked, as shown on the Object Armor Class table.

OBJECT ARMOR CLASS

SUBSTANCE	AC	SUBSTANCE	AC
Cloth, paper, rope	11	Iron, steel	19
Crystal, glass, ice	13	Mithral	21
Wood, bone	15	Adamantine	23
Stone	17		

OPTIONAL RULE: DANGEROUS MAGITECH

Devices powered by aetherium crystals could themselves be poisonous, either through extended use or with their destruction. When a magitech device is greatly damaged, the aetherium crystals powering it may erupt in a dangerous explosion.

Chance of Exploding. Magitech devices have a 5 percent chance of exploding for every 10 points of bludgeoning damage, or 5 percent for every 20 points of any other damage type. GMs may wish to increase the likelihood of an explosion if the device is extremely old or already damaged.

Explosive Damage. When a magitech device explodes, the resulting explosion deals damage based on the item's rarity as follows:

- **Common:** 1d4 force damage in a 1-foot radius
- **Uncommon:** 2d6 force damage in a 5-foot radius
- **Rare:** 3d6 force damage plus 1d6 poison damage in a 10-foot radius
- **Very Rare:** 4d6 force damage plus 2d6 poison damage in a 20-foot radius
- **Legendary:** 10d6 force damage plus 4d6 poison damage in a 60-foot radius

This damage assumes the item can be held by a Humanoid. GMs are encouraged to adjust this damage based on its function and size as desired.

FIREARMS

ITEM	TYPE	COST	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	PROPERTIES
Aetherburst Wand	Martial Ranged	100 gp	1d6 bludgeoning	1 lb.	Aetherium-powered (range 20/60), arcane focus
Aether Pistol	Martial Ranged	200 gp	1d8 piercing	2 lb.	Aetherium-powered (range 30/120)
Aetherlock	Martial Ranged	400 gp	2d6 piercing	8 lb.	Aetherium-powered (range 80/320), two-handed
Gunpowder Musket	Martial Ranged	250 gp	1d12 piercing	10 lb.	Ammunition (range 40/180), loading, two-handed
Gunpowder Pistol	Martial Ranged	125 gp	1d10 piercing	3 lb.	Ammunition (range 30/90), loading

MAGICAL ITEMS

RARITY	ITEM	CATEGORY	ATTUNEMENT
Common	Tiny or Small Elemental Mote	Wondrous Item	No
Uncommon	Aethershield Bracers	Wondrous Item (Magitech)	Yes
Uncommon	Blasting Stick (Mark 1)	Wondrous Item (Magitech)	No
Uncommon	Flask of Goo	Wondrous Item	No
Uncommon	Grapple Gun	Wondrous Item (Magitech)	No
Uncommon	Map Totem	Wondrous Item	No
Uncommon	Medium Elemental Mote	Wondrous Item	No
Uncommon	Potion of Swift Fins	Potion	No
Uncommon	Shimmering Mace	Weapon (Mace)	No
Uncommon	Sistren Honorary Sign	Wondrous Item	No
Uncommon	Smoke Bomb	Wondrous Item	No
Uncommon	Stun Rod	Weapon (Magitech, Mace)	No
Rare	Aether Diving Suit	Wondrous Item	No
Rare	Aetherium Dowsing Staff	Wondrous Item	No
Rare	Blasting Stick (Mark 2)	Wondrous Item	No
Rare	Coral Cloud Ring	Ring	Yes
Rare	Dagger of Diving	Weapon (Dagger)	Yes
Rare	Large Elemental Mote	Wondrous Item	No
Rare	Lightning Spear of Unammon	Weapon (Spear)	Yes
Rare	Oil of Qoz	Poison (Injury)	No
Rare	Ring of the Dagger Dancer	Ring	Yes
Rare	Ring of Sending	Ring	No
Rare	Scrying Array	Wondrous Item	Yes
Rare	Sparrow's Spoils	Wondrous Item	No
Rare	Stunning Earring	Wondrous Item	No
Very Rare	Blasting Stick (Mark 3)	Wondrous Item	No
Very Rare	Huge Elemental Mote	Wondrous Item	No
Very Rare	Kuree's Sealing Foam	Wondrous Item	No
Very Rare	Staff of Submerged Flame	Staff	Yes
Very Rare	Vibrating Blade	Weapon (Magitech, Shortsword)	Yes
Legendary	Blinking Wheel	Wondrous Item	No
Legendary	Gargantuan Elemental Mote	Wondrous Item	No
Legendary	Mermaid's Tears	Wondrous Item	No
Artifact	Carina, Reaper of the Firmament	Weapon (Sickle, Scythe)	Yes
Artifact	Singularity	Wondrous Item	Yes



Aether Diving Suit



Blasting Stick



Aetherium Dowsing Staff



Blinking Wheel

MAGIC ITEMS

The following mundane and magical items are presented in alphabetical order.

MAGIC ITEM DESCRIPTIONS

Aether Diving Suit

Wondrous Item, Rare

A thin suit of elven fabric that covers the entire body except the head, arms, and feet. The suit is imbued with magical wards that prevent aether poisoning for up to 24 hours, and allows creatures wearing it to breathe and swim while submerged in aether. Additionally, while wearing the suit, you gain a swimming speed equal to twice your walking speed.

Aetherium Dowsing Staff

Wondrous Item, Rare

This iron staff is studded with shards of aetherium crystal. It has 10 charges and regains all expended charges daily at dawn. As an action, a creature can expend 1 charge, hold the staff upright, and cast *locate object*, targeting only aetherium. If there's a deposit of aetherium (other than the staff) within 1,000 feet of the staff, it responds by tilting toward it. The closer the deposit, the deeper the staff tilts.

Aethershield Bracers

Wondrous Item (Magitech), Uncommon (Requires Attunement)

These thick metal bracers are popular with technomages working in dangerous locations. As a reaction to taking damage, you can empower these bracers, reducing the damage you take by up to 2d4 damage. Once used, the bracers can't be used again in this way until you've completed a long rest.

Blasting Stick

Wondrous Item (Magitech), Varies

Developed by Karelagne technomages, these effective throwing bombs consists of a 1-foot wooden handle topped with a fist-sized metal cylinder weighing 2 pounds.

You can use an action to throw the blasting stick into a space within 60 feet of you. The stick explodes on impact and is destroyed. Each creature within its area of effect must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or take damage and be stunned for one round, or half as much damage on a successful save and not be stunned.

Several variants of the blasting stick exist. The amount of damage, the blast's area of effect, and the DC of the saving throw are determined by its version, as shown in the Blasting Stick Versions table.

BLASTING STICK VERSIONS

VERSION	RARITY	AREA OF EFFECT	SAVE DC	DAMAGE
Mark 1	Uncommon	5-foot radius	12	14 (4d6) force damage
Mark 2	Rare	10-foot radius	14	21 (6d6) force damage
Mark 3	Very Rare	15-foot radius	16	35 (10d6) force damage

Blinking Wheel

Wondrous Item, Legendary

This ship's wheel is made of light, polished wood and is engraved with whorls evoking clouds or fog. When affixed to a ship, the Blinking Wheel grants the ability to teleport the entire ship over short distances.

If you're touching the wheel, you may use an action to teleport the ship, including all items and creatures aboard, to an unoccupied space you can see within 3 squares (roughly 300 feet). If the space is occupied, or there isn't enough room for the ship, or the space isn't in contact with a body of aether or water, the teleportation fails. Once this property has been used, it can't be used again until the next dawn.

ELEMENTAL MOTES

When elementals are killed on the Astral Plane, their bodies coalesce into a globe of energy. Sailors of the Aetherial Expanse have learned how to use these motes for various purposes aboard their ships. Hunting elemental beasts for their motes is acceptable, but killing an intelligent elemental for the purpose of using their essence is considered a deeply callous and desperate act akin to cannibalism. Ruthless pirates with a reputation for doing whatever it takes to survive are known for this level of cruelty, but no pirate with even a scrap of honor would consider such an act.

The size of an elemental's mote is dependent on the size of its physical form. Tiny creatures leave behind a mote the size of a pin's head, Small creatures coalesce into a mote the size of a marble, and Medium creatures leave motes the size of an adult human fist. Large creatures leave motes the size of an adult human skull, Huge creatures leave motes about 6 feet in diameter, and Gargantuan creatures leave behind elemental motes at least 25 feet in diameter.

Tiny, Small, and Medium motes can easily be stored in a glass bottle available in any ship's galley. Large or larger motes must be stored in specially-made containers, as their elemental power will burst through any container that isn't airtight, watertight, or treated to resist intense heat or vibration. If an elemental mote isn't contained, its energy unravels and is consumed by the aether after 1 round (Tiny), 1 minute (Small), 10 minutes (Medium), 1 hour (Large), 1 day (Huge), or 1 month (Gargantuan).

Carina, Reaper of the Firmament

Weapon (Sickle, Scythe), Artifact (Requires Attunement)

Desdemona, the Lady of Death (see chapter 3), wields Carina, a shifting reaper's weapon that was once a simple sickle she brought with her to face the astral titan Akaste. Imbued with power, it is both her devastating arm and her reminder of the life she had at the beginning of time. When the Lady of Death bestows her weapon to another, it is a sign of great trust, as well as hope that she might be free of this calling.

The Reaper's Reach. If you are holding the sickle and have proficiency in martial weapons, you can spend 10 minutes in ritual meditation with the sickle to transform it into a scythe. The artifact reverts to its sickle form if you complete the ritual again or end your attunement to it.

The Gleaner's Star (Sickle Form). As a sickle, Carina is a magic weapon that grants a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it, and you gain a +3 bonus to spell attacks and to the saving throw DCs of your spells.

The Harvester's Star (Scythe Form). As a scythe, Carina is a magic weapon that grants a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it, deals 2d6 slashing damage on a hit, and has the Heavy and Two-handed properties. When you hit with an attack using Carina in its scythe form, the target takes an extra 2d8 necrotic or radiant damage (your choice).

Starlight. As an action, you can cast *dancing lights* from Carina at will. When cast through Carina, *dancing lights* lasts for 1 hour (no concentration required).

Blessing of the Firmament. Carina has 6 charges and regains 1d4 charges daily at dawn. While holding Carina, you can expend the necessary number of charges to activate one of the following properties:

- You can expend 1 charge as an action to cast *guiding bolt* (+9 to hit) from Carina. In sickle form, you cast the spell at 3rd level. In scythe form, the spell can be cast instead of an attack if you have a feature that gives you extra attacks, but it only deals 2d6 radiant damage.
- You can expend 2 charges to cast *bane* or *bless* (spell save DC 17). When cast from Carina, the spell requires no concentration.
- You can expend 3 charges as a bonus action to inspire nearby allies with celestial light. Each creature of your choice within 30 feet of you has advantage on its next ability check, attack roll, or saving throw.

Destroying the Sickle. To destroy the sickle, it must be coated in a mixture of fiendish and celestial blood, sprinkled with corpse dust, then cast into the void of the Astral Plane at the very edge of the Aetherial Expanse.

Coral Cloud Ring

Wondrous Item, Rare (Requires Attunement)

As an action, you summon razor-sharp coral blades and hurl them from you in a 30-foot cone. Each creature within the area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 8d4 slashing damage on a failed save and half as much damage on a successful one. The creature automatically fails the save if it is an aetherbeast. Once you have used this feature, you cannot do so again until the next dawn.

In addition, all successful weapon attacks you make against aetherbeasts while wearing the ring deal an additional 1d4 of the weapon's damage.

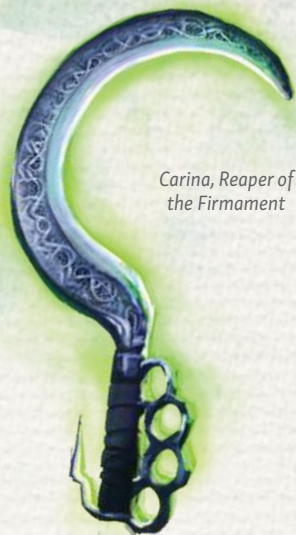
Dagger of Diving

Weapon (Dagger), Rare (Requires Attunement)

While you are submerged and holding this weapon, and you take the Dash action, you shoot swiftly through the water or aether. Opportunity attacks made against you when dashing in this way are rolled with disadvantage. In addition, if you attack a creature immediately after using the Dash action, the dagger does an additional die of damage.

*"Oh, how you slice through the sea, lovely Carina.
How you glint and gleam in the darkness like a star
breaching the waves. There is beauty in your pain.
There is pain in your disdain. A shadow passes by
those who dare to hold you in their palms. No mortal
is worthy of you, lovely Carina."*

—from "Elegy to the Falling Star"



Carina, Reaper of the Firmament



Coral Cloud Ring



Flask of Goo

Elemental Mote



Dagger of Diving



Elemental Mote

Wondrous Item, Rarity Varies

An elemental mote swirls and crackles with raw planar power within its container. You can open this container as an action to release the mote and cast a spell, based on the type of mote released (see below). The duration of this spell changes based on the mote's size.

Unless the mote's container is held and directed by a creature or secured by an object, the spell's direction changes to a random direction on initiative count 20 (losing ties) each turn.

ELEMENTAL MOTE STATISTICS

SIZE	RARITY	SPELL DURATION	SPELL SAVE DC
Tiny or Small	Common	1 minute	11
Medium	Uncommon	10 minutes	13
Large	Rare	1 hour	15
Huge	Very Rare	1 day	17
Gargantuan	Legendary	1 week	19

Air Mote. A mote of elemental air is a swirling sphere of wind, visible only due to dust and other particulates caught in its vortex. When released, you cast *gust of wind* (no concentration required). Sailors often use air motes to fill their sails (see chapter 14).

Earth Mote. A mote of elemental earth is a vibrating, clattering hunk of stone and soil that constantly unmakes and remakes itself into different types of rock. When released, you cast *move earth* (no concentration required).

Creators of island settlements have long used earth motes to flatten hills and fill trenches, making these motes highly sought after on civilian and military islands alike.

Fire Mote. A mote of elemental fire is a crackling, guttering ball of flame that sustains itself even without air. When released, you cast *burning hands*; this spell has a duration longer than instantaneous, as determined by the mote's size (see above). Any creature that starts its turn in the area of the spell must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or take damage as normal.

Fire motes are often used by town-dwelling island settlers as part of slash-and-burn tactics when destroying jungles. Even jungle-dwelling island settlers sometimes use these motes for starting controlled burns, or for clearing a jungle overgrown with invasive Material Plane flora.

Water Mote. A mote of elemental water is a splashing orb of crystal-clear water that constantly forms into a ball of ice, then rapidly melts, splashes, and reforms into a sphere. When released, you cast *control water* (no concentration required). Alternatively, you can cast *create or destroy water* (create water mode only). This spell has a duration longer than instantaneous, as determined by the mote's size (see above), and only creates 1 gallon of water per minute.

Flask of Goo

Wondrous Item, Uncommon

This apple-sized crystal sphere is filled with a black tarry substance. As an action, you can throw the flask into a space within 60 feet of you. The sphere breaks on impact, covering a 10-foot-square area with sticky goo. The goo is difficult terrain and dissipates after 1 minute. When the goo appears, each creature standing in its area must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or become restrained by the goo. A creature that enters the area or ends its turn there must also succeed on a Strength saving throw or become restrained. Creatures can use an action to make a DC 13 Strength check, breaking free on a success.

"Log 87: After adjusting the reagent's proportions, we finally have something very close to our original intentions! We have informed Hared's family of his unfortunate demise. To be lost in the pursuit of research is a worthy death. In solidarity, we gave his wife the hardened foam where his corpse is now embedded."

—an unknown Ayrissian alchemists' personal logs

Grapple Gun

Wondrous Item (Magitech), Uncommon

This pistol-like device includes a spool of thin metal wire wound on a spool connected to a dart in its muzzle.

As an action, you can fire the grapple gun at a target up to 60 feet from you. A creature who succeeds on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw avoids the dart. Targets struck by the dart are considered grappled (escape DC 15). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained. On subsequent turns, you can use an action to reel in the dart at a rate of 20 feet per round. When reeling in the dart and for as long as you hold on to the grapple gun, targets that weigh less than your push, drag, or lift capacity are pulled toward you; otherwise, you are pulled toward the target. You can speak a command word as a bonus action to disengage the dart from its target.

Kuree's Sealing Foam

Wondrous Item, Very Rare

Originally developed by Ayrissian alchemists, this rare substance is treasured by shipwrights needing to urgently patch holes in a sinking ship's hull.

This thick yellow liquid rapidly foams when exposed to the air and must be stored in an airtight glass flask until used.

In Combat. You can use an action to throw the flask up to 30 feet. The flask breaks on impact and is destroyed, rapidly covering the ground within a 5-foot radius of where the flask landed with a 2-foot-deep layer of yellow foam that immediately hardens. Each creature in the foam must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is restrained for as long as the hardened foam remains or the creature breaks free. On a successful save, the creature is not restrained but their speed is reduced to half until the end of their next turn.

If a creature is restrained by the foam, they take 7 (2d6) poison damage at the start of their turn. The creature can use an action to make a DC 15 Strength check, freeing itself on a success.

The hardened foam is flammable. Any 5-foot space of foam exposed to fire burns away in 1 round, dealing 2d4 fire damage to any creature that starts its turn in the flaming foam.

After 1 minute of exposure to air, the foam is no longer poisonous.

Ship Repair. The sealing foam can be used to repair a ship's hull. If you have at least 1 shipwright rank (see chapter 7), you can use an action to repair 1d4 hit points to the ship. If you do not have at least 1 rank, you repair half as much damage and you must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or become restrained in the hardening foam as described above.

Lightning Spear of Unammon

Weapon (Spear), Rare (Requires Attunement)

Said to be fashioned from one of Unammon's bones, this spear is topped with a glittering silver tip that leaves a trail of sparks when wielded.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls with this magic weapon, and it deals an additional 2d6 lightning damage on a critical hit.

Once per day after you throw this spear, you can use a bonus action to transform into a 5-foot-wide bolt of lightning that instantly travels in a straight line toward the spear, where you return to your normal form in the nearest unoccupied space with the spear in hand. Each creature in the line must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 2d6 lightning damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one.

Map Totem

Wondrous Item, Uncommon

These totems inscribed with runes project illusory maps of the Aetherial Expanse in a 10-foot square area. When a creature speaks within 30 feet of a map totem, the totem incorporates what they say onto the map of the Aetherial Expanse. Many pirate captains use these to help plan their voyages and raids.

Mermaid's Tears

Wondrous Item, Legendary

While wearing this necklace of dark teardrop pearls, you have a swim speed of 60 feet; you can breathe water, air, and aether; and you are immune to aether poisoning. You are also immune to being frightened and charmed, and you have resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage while you are completely submerged.

Siren's Lure. As an action, you can target a creature within 120 feet that can see and hear you. You hum the target a sweet melody. The creature must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed by you for the next hour. The creature turns hostile against anyone who damages you, even its own allies. The creature makes the saving throw again at the end of every hour or whenever it takes damage, becoming immune to the luring effect of the necklace for 24 hours on a success.

Feathered Star Command. As an action, you can target a feathered star that you can see within 500 feet of you. For the next 24 hours, the feathered star is charmed by the wearer of the necklace. While the creature is charmed, you have a telepathic link with it as long as the two of you are on the same plane of existence. You can use this telepathic link to issue commands to the creature while



Grapple Gun



Lightning Spear
of Unammon



Potion of
Swift Fins



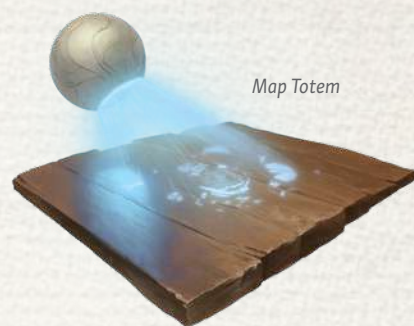
Oil of Qoz



Mermaid's Tears



Kuree's Sealing
Foam



Map Totem

you are conscious (no action required), which it does its best to obey. You can specify a simple and general course of action, such as “Attack that creature,” “Move over there,” or “Fetch that object.” If the creature completes the order and doesn’t receive further direction from you, it defends and preserves itself to the best of its ability. Once used, the feathered star command property can’t be used again until the next dawn.

Curse. When you first put on the necklace, you must immediately make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw. On a successful save, you maintain control of the necklace’s power. On a failed save, you succumb to it. Your singular focus becomes to destroy anything that has no natural place in aether or water, such as ships, buildings, and humanoids.

MERMAID’S TEARS: REMOVING THE CURSE

The curse on the Mermaid’s Tears can be removed through a ritual. The ritual involves the artifact being fully submerged in purified seawater while being clasped by two willing humanoids. One of these humanoids must have merfolk ancestry and the other must have no merfolk ancestry. The Tears must be submerged and held in this way for 8 hours. If at any point during the 8 hours the two willing humanoids let go of the artifact or become hostile toward each other, the ritual fails.

At the end of the 8 hours, the spell *remove curse* must be cast on the Tears, after which the curse property of the item is removed. Once the curse is removed, the item also requires attunement to use.

Oil of Qoz

Poison (Injury), Rare

The secrets to creating this exceedingly rare poison are closely guarded by Qoz’s clergy. Few have had success replicating the substance, though researchers have concluded that the venom of a mysterious deep-sea creature is used in its creation. Survivors have reported seeing disturbing visions while under the poison’s influence.

A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 10 minutes. The poisoned creature is incapacitated for the duration.

Potion of Swift Fins

Potion, Uncommon

This potion has the consistency of jelly, with small flakes resembling fish scales submerged within. When you drink it, your swim speed is doubled for 1 hour.

Ring of the Dagger Dancer

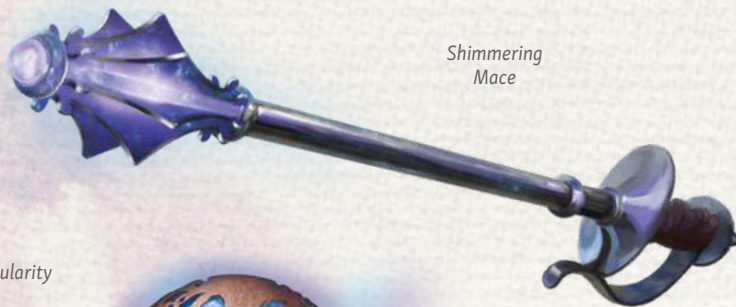
Ring, Rare (Requires Attunement)

This ring bears the symbol of three daggers on a musical staff. The Avar Academy on the Karelagne Empire’s home world uses rings like these to train prospective dagger dancers.

When a creature wearing this ring makes a Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check, it can choose to use its Performance modifier instead. Once the ring has been used, it cannot be used again until the next dawn.



Ring of Sending



Shimmering Mace



Scrying Array



Singularity



Sistren Honorary Sign

Ring of Sending

Ring, Rare

This ring has 7 charges and regains expended charges daily at dawn. While wearing this ring, you can use an action to expend 1 of its charges to cast the *sending* spell.

Scrying Array

Wondrous Item, Rare (Requires Attunement)

This scrying array is a towering, aetherium-infused arcane focus that permits diviners to extend their powers of clairvoyance up to 50 miles in any direction with perfect precision, and up to 100 miles to see flickering shadows of ships, islands, creatures, and phenomena in that radius. A diviner attuned to the scrying array is aware of all things within 50 miles of the ship, and is otherwise incapacitated while attuned. The diviner is vaguely aware of things within 100 miles, and must make a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to pick out the specifics of any one of the shadow forms they see while using the array.

Shimmering Mace

Weapon (Mace), Uncommon

The dark metal head of this weapon faintly shimmers with aetherial light.

You have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon. Additionally, when you score a critical hit with this weapon it deals an additional 2d6 force damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be pushed 10 feet away from you.

Singularity

Wondrous Item, Artifact (Requires Attunement)

The Singularity is a spherical artifact crafted by astral titans that stores limitless amounts of aetherial energy, and instantly extracts energy from aetherium crystals. The energy stored inside the sphere creates a massive explosion, instantaneously creating and annihilating a new Material Plane within the sphere.

Those who wield the Singularity can unleash its energy to destroy entire islands in an instant, or they can use it to store and release powerful spells.

Extract Aetherium Crystal. As an action, the Singularity can instantly absorb an aetherium crystal within 500 feet of it and store the energy within that crystal inside the Singularity itself.

Release Energy (2/day). As an action, a creature that's attuned to the Singularity and is touching it can target a creature or an object within 500 feet. The target takes 100 force damage as it is engulfed in aetherial energy.

Spell Storing. The Singularity can store up to 9 levels worth of spells at a time. When found, it contains one or more spells of the GM's choice.

Any creature can cast a spell of 1st through 9th level into the Singularity by casting the spell at the sphere. Spells targeting the Singularity have no effect and are stored inside. The level of the slot used to cast the spell determines how much space it uses.

Sistren Honorary Sign

Wondrous Item, Uncommon

The Sistren of the Constellation Isles sometimes give an honorary sign to their allies to show that they are considered a friend of the faction. This sign, not exclusive to women, is also made from mother-of-pearl and is always in the shape of the Constellation Isles.

When worn, the wearer is under the effects of the *aetheric adaption** spell.

Smoke Bomb

Wondrous Item, Uncommon

This small crystal sphere measures 2 inches in diameter and weighs an ounce. A black mist appears to slowly swirl within the sphere.

You can use an action to throw the sphere into a space within 30 feet of you. The sphere breaks on impact. A burst of opaque smoke explodes, creating the effect of a *fog cloud* spell centered on the point.

Sparrow's Spoils

Wondrous Item, Rare

These palm-size gold coins show scenes of a long-feathered bird flying along an aurora in the sky. When the coins are both held by you, you can use an action to cast the *find familiar* spell, summoning a blue-and-purple macaw whose name you understand to be Sparrow. Sparrow uses **owl** statistics and grants you advantage on ability checks made to search for treasure. The spell doesn't work if you lose one of the coins.

Staff of Submerged Flame

Staff, Very Rare (Requires Attunement by a Bard, Druid, Sorcerer, Warlock, or Wizard)

The staff has 4 charges. While holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *burning hands* (cast at 3rd level), *fireball*, or *flaming sphere* (cast at 3rd level).

Spells cast from this staff ignore resistances to fire damage if the resistance is due to the creature being submerged.

The staff regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff blackens, crumbles into cinders, and is destroyed.

Stunning Earring

Wondrous Item, Rare

This silver hoop earring is commonly fashioned with three silver teardrop shapes dangling from it.

As an action, you can detach a teardrop and throw it at a target up to 60 feet away, destroying the teardrop on impact. Each target within a 5-foot radius of where the teardrop landed must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save the creature takes 12 (5d4) force damage and is stunned until the start of your next turn. Creatures that succeeded on the save take half as much damage and are not stunned.

Stun Rod

Weapon (Magitech, Mace), Uncommon

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and rolls and it deals an extra 1 point of lightning damage on a successful hit. When you roll a 20 on an attack roll made with this weapon, the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the start of your next turn.

Vibrating Blade

Weapon (Magitech, Shortsword), Very Rare (Requires Attunement)

This magitech-empowered weapon is built with a razor-sharp aetherium-alloy blade. When unsheathed, the weapon's blade silently vibrates.

You gain a +1 to attack and damage rolls made with this magic sword and it deals an additional 2d6 force damage on a successful hit.







Part 4

NAVAL RULES

Day 1

I can't believe it. I'm going to sail the Silver Sea. Me, Tario Tallowhart, who used to get seasick just looking at the aetherium lapping up against the edge of Port Majeure. Mama would laugh if she could see me now, in that half-turned-to-coughing way she had, talking about how leaving Karel for the clean air of the Expanse had done wonders for her breathing, and she knew it would get into my skin eventually. We'll see; it's not like I'm running the thing. Just a grubber helping the quartermaster keep the galley stocked. Almost didn't make it on 'cause the captain really wanted a surgeon instead, but Cook promised to poison everyone if they didn't get some help, and that was that.

Day 23

Found out why the captain needed a surgeon when the cook took a boning knife to the throat. And not even in a battle. Just from hitting a mine. A chain of mines, really—they call them constellations 'cause they go off one after the other like stars in the sky. Cook managed to live long enough to promote me (but not long enough to share the secret ingredient in their seafarer's stew). So now I'm a cook. And I'm picking up a book on medicine next time we hit a port. Better safe than bleeding to death in the galley.

Day 89

Drakes. Again. We've stayed ahead so far, but one of the brigs keeps nosing around us and it's got way more cannons than we do. We're gonna try kicking up an aetherium mist and hiding off the edge of an island until "either they get bored, or we get boarded." Captain told me if we get captured to play along and then poison them all. Apparently, that's the secret ingredient. Also, the reason a lot of cooks get killed after a boarding. Lovely.

Day 90 (almost)

Told 'em I was the surgeon and the captain was the cook. Everyone needs a good surgeon.

Day 117

Turns out a bad surgeon's worse than none at all, at least according to what the wayfinder was screaming. Pirate captain gave me a map and a looking glass and two days to figure it out.

Day 118

Still not even sure how to avoid sailing straight into the wind. Drakes mocked me for an hour.

Day 119

Nearly ran us aground. Someone wrote a song about it. Might not be cut out for sailing with others. Sea's moving a lot. Probably something down there. Could avoid it if we turn in time. All I have to do is tell the navigator, but who can shout over all this singing?

Didn't turn in time. No longer worried about the captain or crew. Hole in the ship is concerning though. Might just have to swim for it.

Day 121

Picked up by a ship and offered a berth. Told 'em I was a cook. Offered to make 'em my favorite stew.

Day 122

Looking forward to a bit of quiet.

—From the personal log of Tario Tallowhart





Chapter 12

NAVAL OPERATIONS

“Yup. She ain’t pretty, but by Asteth’s burning bosom, she’ll bring ya through the roughest seas. Why, I’d bet ya a hold-full of bars she’d even bring ya through the Maelstrom if you were stupid enough to try!”

—Harald Hillock, Notorious Ship Merchant

Few things on the Silvery Seas are as valuable as a good ship—but no two ships are exactly alike, and different vessels boast different strengths. One crew might value a small and mobile boat, while another may seek out a ship with more stopping power. Enterprising sailors are always looking for a better ship, so vessels change hands frequently, sometimes through trade and sometimes by force.

This chapter provides new rules for running seafaring campaigns by detailing ship characteristics, and the rules needed for exploration and combat. For rules pertaining to a ship’s crew, refer to Chapter 13.

SHIPS

It’s difficult to explore the Aetherial Expanse without a good ship. The following section details ship characteristics that describe your vessel’s capabilities as it explores the Silvery Seas.

SHIP TYPES

The first key factor of a ship is its type. There are six main types of ship on the Aetherial Expanse, and these types determine the base capabilities of a given vessel. These ships are measured by length from the tip of their prow to their stern, and by width from their widest point.

Sloop

The most common small ship on the aether. Sloops have single masts and make up for their smaller sails and slower speeds with higher maneuverability. Sloops are usually 45 feet long and 15 feet wide at their widest point.

Schooner

Larger than a sloop, schooners tend to have more space, making them popular fishing vessels and merchant ships. Most schooners are typically 100 feet long and 20 feet wide at their widest point.

Brigantine

Relatively fast and exceedingly popular, brigantines usually have two masts—the foremast is square-rigged, while the mainmast is gaff-rigged, lending the ship balanced speed and mobility. Brigantines, or “brigs,” have a wide range of sizes within their class, but the typical two-masted brig is 130 feet long and 25 feet wide at its widest point.

Frigate

Frigates are designed for both speed and maneuverability, but unlike similar mid-sized ship types, frigates are built for war. Lightly armored compared to larger vessels, frigates are the most maneuverable of all warships. Frigates have a great deal of variation within their class depending on their nation of origin, but the typical three-masted frigate is 150 feet long and 40 feet wide.

Galleon

The galleon cuts an imposing silhouette on the aether. As a fully rigged ship, the galleon has three or more masts, making it big and fast but harder to control. Galleons make up the bulk of military navies on the Aetherial Expanse. Most galleons are about 150 feet long and 50 feet wide, with four-masted galleons running as long as 170 feet.

Man o’ War

The biggest of the battleships. A man o’ war is a mobile fortress, armed to the teeth, capable of chasing down any ship with ease. Huge, fast, and deadly, the two serious drawbacks of the mighty man o’ war are its poor handling and its steep construction cost. These ships are fleet-leading flagships that use smaller vessels to protect them from nimble pirate craft capable of outmaneuvering their bulk. Each man o’ war is unique, but on average, a man o’ war is 200 feet long, four-masted, and 60 feet wide.

QUEST HOOK: TO KEEL

Out on the open sea, the character’s spot an unbelievable sight: a gleaming, translucent merchant vessel floating just beneath the waves. This vessel does not move from this spot and faint whistling can be heard when approaching the vessel. A variety of aetherbeast lurk within the vessel. Hidden within a lower deck is a remarkable necklace mounted with an aetherium crystal as its centerpiece. When this necklace is removed from the hull, or if the crystal is extracted from its setting, the vessel begins to break apart and sink to the bottom of the sea.

SHIP SIZE

Each ship type has a size, which corresponds to creature sizes: Tiny, Small, Medium, Large, Huge, and Gargantuan. Ship sizes are not literally the same as creature sizes. Instead, they’re an abstract representation of the ships’ relative size to one another.

Most vessels carry one or more Tiny ships—typically a rowboat that ferries crew from ship to shore. Some unique ships are Gargantuan, but no ship of common manufacture is larger than Huge.

SHIP SIZES

SHIP TYPE	SIZE	SHIP TYPE	SIZE
Longboat (or shoreboat)	Tiny	Frigate	Medium
Sloop	Small	Galleon	Large
Schooner	Small	Man o’ War	Huge
Brigantine	Medium	Unique	Gargantuan

The ship type also determines the size of its crew as described in chapter 13 on page 198.

HIT POINTS AND MOBILITY

The size of a ship determines its hit point maximum, as well as its Mobility.

Mobility determines how fast a ship can turn and is an important factor for ship combat (see page 186).

When a ship falls to 0 hit points, its speed drops to 0.

SHIP HIT POINTS AND MOBILITY

SIZE	HP MAX	MOBILITY
Tiny	9	High
Small	12	High
Medium	15	Balanced
Large	20	Balanced
Huge	25	Low
Gargantuan	unique	Low

Ship repairs to regain a vessel’s hit points is covered in the Ship Repair section later in this chapter. (see page 191).

SPEED

A ship’s speed is given in knots. The distance a ship can cover on a voyage is provided in the Travel Speed table under “Travel” starting on page 178. During the Movement Phase of ship combat, a ship can move a number of squares equal to its speed.

Speed isn’t always tied to size, but bigger sails tend to be the main factor in propulsion, so bigger ships are almost always faster.

TYPICAL SHIP SPEED

SHIP TYPE	SPEED	SHIP TYPE	SPEED
Sloop	3 knots	Frigate	6 knots
Schooner	4 knots	Galleon	8 knots
Brigantine	5 knots	Man o’ War	9 knots

WHAT ARE KNOTS?

Historically, knots were used as the standard measure of speed for sea-going vessels. This measure originally used a standard “chip log” attached to a specially knotted rope. The chip log would be thrown into the water with the rope allowed to pull out from the ship as it continued to sail forward. A sailor would count the knots that passed their hand within a fixed time. This number represented the speed of the vessel in knots.

In modern use, 1 knot equals 1 nautical mile per hour. A nautical mile is approximately 1.15 miles per hour.

SHIP SPEED VERSUS TRAVEL LEGS

The naval rules described in this chapter utilize Ship Speed during ship-to-ship combat. However, if the player characters travel established Wind Routes, the concept of Travel Legs is likely a more effective way to manage long sea voyages.

CREATURES ATTACKING SHIPS

Ships are so big that most attacks from creatures do no damage to them—but player characters often have access to highly destructive abilities!

During ship combat boarding action (see page 184) or during normal melee combat aboard a ship, player characters might attack a vessel directly with weapons, spells, or abilities. All ships have an AC of 15, but are immune to all damage dealt by creatures unless that damage exceeds a damage threshold:

- Attacks that deal fewer than 15 points of damage do not affect Tiny or Small ships
- Attacks that deal fewer than 20 points of damage do not affect Medium, Large, or Huge ships
- Attacks that deal fewer than 25 points of damage do not affect Gargantuan ships

If a creature deals damage equal to or in excess of the target number, the ship loses one hit point per instance of that damage, and any extra points of damage are ignored.

For example, if a character attacks a sloop and deals 16 damage, the sloop loses 1 hit point because 16 exceeds the threshold of 15. The remaining 1 point of damage is ignored. If a dragon attacks a galleon and deals 43 damage, the galleon loses 2 hit points because 43 damage exceeds the threshold of 20 twice. The remaining 3 points of damage are ignored.

There are always exceptions to the rule. If a character spends several rounds attempting to chop through a hull using an axe, they most certainly will damage the ship. However, such special-case situations are left to the GM to adjudicate.

WEAPON SLOTS

The rumble of ship cannons is unmistakable, and those who hear it never forget it.

Each type of ship has a number of weapon slots in which you can equip weapons. Only warships can carry heavy weapons.

SHIP WEAPON SLOTS

SHIP TYPE	BOW SLOTS	PORT SLOTS	STARBOARD SLOTS	STERN SLOTS
Sloop	-	4	4	-
Schooner	-	5	5	-
Brigantine	-	6	6	-
Frigate*	-	8	8	1
Galleon*	2	10	10	2
Man o' War*	2	12	12	3

**Can equip heavy weapons*

WEAPONS

Each ship weapon has a weight, range, and target die. Weight, as mentioned above, precludes some ships from equipping certain weapons. Find more about the range of each cannon in “Cannon Range” on page 187. The target die determines a cannon’s accuracy: when you fire a weapon, you roll the target die, hitting your target on a 6 or higher.

On a hit, cannons do one point of damage to a ship, potentially injuring or killing crew, and potentially starting fires. Some weapons and ammunition also have additional effects or requirements, as detailed in the Ship Weapons table.

Carronade

A shorter, stubby cannon capable of shooting rounds with immense power at the cost of range.

Culverin

A small, slender cannon, the original culverins were hand cannons adapted to use on naval vessels. They lack the power of a long gun but are lighter, cheaper, and easier to handle.

Coilgun

This arcane weapon is a result of Karelagne naval engineers’ experimental merging of magic and technology. A metallic coil channels magically generated electricity until it leaps from the coil like a bolt of lightning, dealing heavy damage to distant targets.

Falconet

This slender gun lacks the power to penetrate a ship’s hull. Instead, its light payload is used to wreak havoc on a ship’s deck, inflicting casualties upon a crew while leaving the ship relatively undamaged.

Flamethrower

Another Karelagne fusion of magic and technology, this short-range gun draws directly upon the flames of the Elemental Plane of Fire to spread death across the deck of a ship.

Long Gun

The quintessential naval cannon, the long gun, is the baseline against which all other guns are measured. Operating even a single cannon typically requires a crew of five or more gunners to move, clean, pack, load, and reposition the gun after every shot.

Long Nine

This cannon is designed with a long barrel, making it useful for firing upon distant targets. It can only be mounted on the prow or aft weapon slots. Its name refers to the cannonballs it could fire, smaller than usual and weighing only nine pounds.

Saker

The lightest, cheapest gun fit for attacking hostile ships, the saker is a common sight aboard smaller pirate craft like sloops, and aboard merchant vessels who just want to blow smoke to scare off pirates in search of easy prey.

Swivel Gun

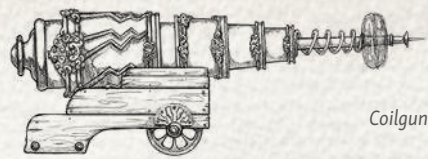
The smallest and lightest gun fit to be mounted on a ship, this hand cannon is fitted to a ship's railing on a swivel, allowing it to be easily aimed by a single gunner. Far too light to damage a ship's hull, it's used mainly to snipe crew.

Wrath Cannon

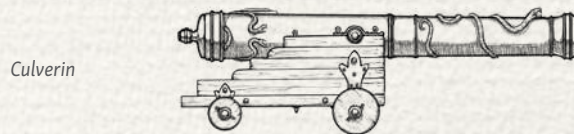
The zenith of modern Karelagne military science, the wrath cannon fires explosive, 20-pound aetherium shells from range. Ships equipped with these deadly weapons are siege-breakers that can bombard fortifications and enemy ships with ease.

MINES

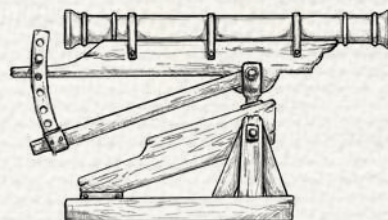
Mines are explosive munitions that can be placed beneath the aether's surface and typically detonate on impact with a ship. Multiple types of mines exist and are used for many different purposes.



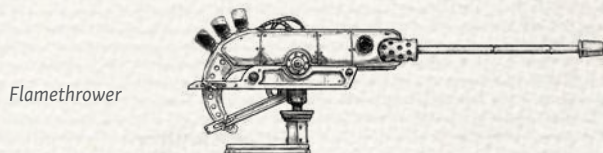
Coilgun



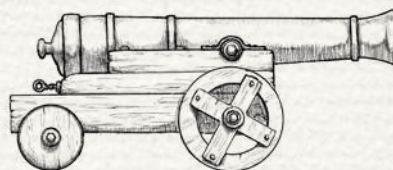
Culverin



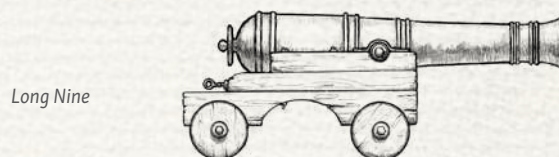
Falconet



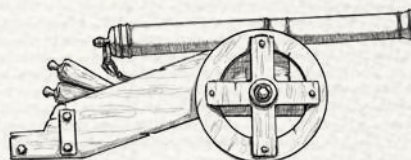
Flamethrower



Long Gun



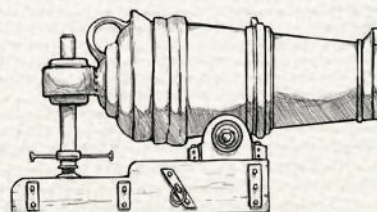
Long Nine



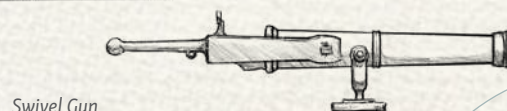
Saker



Wrath Cannon



Carronade



Swivel Gun

SHIP WEAPONS

COMMON WEAPONS	TARGET DIE	RANGE	WEIGHT	COST PER GUN	ADDITIONAL EFFECTS
Carronade	d12	Short	Heavy	950 gp	–
Culverin	d8	Standard	Light	600 gp	–
Falconet	d12	Short	Light	500 gp	Hits do no ship damage but still produce casualties.
Long Gun	d10	Standard	Heavy	1,000 gp	–
Long Nine	d10	Long	Heavy	1,100 gp	Can't be mounted in port or starboard weapon slots.
Saker	d6	Standard	Light	300 gp	–
Swivel Gun	d8	Short	Light	150 gp	Hits do no ship damage but still produce casualties. Four swivel guns can be installed in a single weapons slot.

RARE WEAPONS	TARGET DIE	RANGE	WEIGHT	COST PER GUN	EFFECTS
Coilgun	d10	Long	Heavy	1,500 gp	–
Flamethrower	d12	Short	Light	750 gp	Hits do no damage but automatically start a fire. Roll for casualties as normal. Flamethrowers cannot use unique ammo.
Wrath Cannon	d12	Long	Heavy	2,000 gp	Must fire aetherium shells. Deals 2 damage per hit.

MINES

TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Constellation	A series of mines linked by a magical cord in different shape configurations. Triggering one mine triggers the rest in the series in a cascade. Each ship within a 60-foot radius of the mines takes 2d10 bludgeoning damage and is knocked off course. (A ship in the area of more than one explosion is affected only once.)
Emotional	The red pulse of this mine is like that of a dispersed ego rejoining the aether. Creatures within 60 feet of the blast must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute.
Gazer	This tiny mine resembles a rock with crystals radiating from it. When triggered, the crystals explode and mark ship hulls, creatures' skin, and other items with a glowing mark perceptible only to wayfinders. Wayfinders have advantage on Intelligence (Navigation) checks made to find the marked ship. The effect remains until the mark is removed using an action to touch the affected area.
Imposter	Dummy mines with no explosive properties, they are interspersed with other mines along a perimeter of protection or used in training exercises.
Lamplighter	Hovering 10 feet above the aether, this mine resembles the light of a small dinghy. Any ship that gets within 75 feet triggers the mine and takes 3d8 bludgeoning damage, and any creatures on deck take 2d8 radiant damage.
Standard	A floating mine in the shape of an upside-down teardrop stamped with the mark of the Karelagne Empire. This mine detonates when a ship passes within 30 feet of it, dealing 2d6 bludgeoning damage to any ship in a 30-foot radius.
Supernova	This navy-blue mine bobs right at the surface of the aetherial sea. If a ship with a Stardrive moves within 30 feet of the mine, it explodes in a blast of aether fire, dealing 3d10 fire damage to each ship in a 60-foot radius.
Trebushatter	This pair of mines is connected by a 60-foot-long weighted cord. When one mine detonates, the other whips from the aether toward the ship. The ship takes 5d10 bludgeoning damage, and the projectile creates a 5-foot-diameter hole in the hull.

SHIP AMMO

AMMUNITION	EFFECTS	COST PER SHOT/SHELL
Canister Shot	Canister shot can only be fired from short-range cannons. Hits deal no ship damage but produce 2d4 casualties.	100 gp
Carcass	Hits deal no ship damage but deal 2d4 casualties. Additionally, 1d4 fires start on the target ship.	25 gp
Chainshot	Chainshot can only be fired from short range cannons. On a hit, chainshot reduces the target vessel's speed to 1 until the end of the next round.	100 gp
Grapeshot	Grapeshot can only be fired from short-range cannons. Hits produce 2d4 casualties.	150 gp
Hullbusters (Aetherium Shells)	On a hit, the target ship takes an extra point of damage, and 1d4 unranked crew are instantly killed.	1,000 gp
Langridge	Langridge can be loaded into any cannon but only hits adjacent targets. Hits deal no ship damage but produce 2d4 casualties.	---
Salamanders (Molten Iron Shot)	Hits produce 2d4 casualties. Additionally, 1d4 + 1 fires start on the target ship.	500 gp



SUPPLIES & RESOURCES

Ships require a lot of cargo to function on a daily basis. Most cargo falls into two groups: supplies and resources. Supplies are essential items like food, water, alcohol, and ship components. These supplies are spent outside of combat or pursuit, usually during journeys, to keep your ship intact and your crew happy and healthy.

Resources are non-essential, and they are used during ship combat or pursuit. Things like bottled air *elemental motes** or unique ammunition are resources and grant bonuses to speed or attack. Fuel for ship engines also falls under this category.

SUPPLIES

Keeping your ship well stocked with supplies is vital for the well-being of both your vessel and its crew. There are three kinds of supplies, and each ship's carrying capacity is determined by its type—bigger ships can carry more supplies, as shown in the Ship Supply Caps table.

SHIP SUPPLY CAPS

SHIP TYPE	GRUB	GROG	GEAR
Sloop	10	6	10
Schooner	15	8	12
Brigantine	20	10	14
Frigate	25	12	16
Galleon	30	14	18
Man o' War	35	16	20

You can buy more supplies while docking in a port or trading with a merchant ship. A single point of grub and grog costs 5 gp, while a point of gear costs 25 gp. You can also claim supplies by capturing other ships.

Grub

Grub is a measure of food and water. A crew consumes a number of grub equal to the ship's base speed at the end of each travel leg during a journey. If the ship has a cook, this cost per leg is reduced by a number equal to their rank, and quartermasters can recover a portion of the consumed grub.

If you run out of food, you must roll 1d4 casualties (see "Casualties" on page 188) at the end of each travel leg. If you roll an officer, they become stricken. If you roll an officer who is already stricken, they die, either of starvation, or if your game has a particularly dark tone, because the rest of your crew has decided that they are drawing the short straw!

Grog

Grog is a measure of how much alcohol you have stocked on your ship. Your crew isn't drunk all the time, but getting them a little tipsy now and then is great for morale, and also crucial for boarding action—few sailors are actually brave enough to risk life and limb leaping onto an enemy ship without a bit of liquid courage.

Quartermasters can recover a portion of the consumed grog at the end of a travel leg during your journey, but if you run out of grog, you lose a mettle die from your mettle pool.

Gear

Gear is a measure of ship components—sails, rope, wood, and so on—used to repair your ship between battles. You normally needn't spend gear while traveling, as it's only used to restore your ship's hit points. If you have a shipwright on board, you can spend gear to repair your ship at sea. Otherwise, you must dock in a port to use gear to restore hit points, and quartermasters can recover a portion of gear used during a travel leg. See "Ship Repair" on page 191 for further information.

RESOURCES

Resources aren't essential—you don't need any to fulfill basic functions on the ship. You can think of them like scrolls or potions for player characters. Unlike supplies, there are no limits to how many resources a ship can carry, as they tend to be smaller and harder to come by than supplies.

Fuel

Fuel items give a ship a one-time boost to its speed. If you have an Ayrissian ship engine, you can spend aetherium crystals as fuel to generate extra movement in pursuit or combat. Bottled air *elemental motes** are also considered fuel.

You can find rules for how fuel items work in “Spending Resources” (see page 182) and “Alternative Propulsion” (see page 186). You use bottled *elemental motes** to increase movement, as described in chapter 11.

Ammunition

A ship always has enough normal ammunition to keep its cannons firing, but there are unique types of ammo that pack a special punch. When you fire a cannon, you can spend an ammunition item to impart additional effects on a hit.

Following are descriptions for each type of ammunition, as well as a Ship Ammo table that lists each ammunition's effects and average cost.

Canister Shot. This steel tube filled with tiny iron pellets doesn't do much damage to a ship's hull—but it tears crew members to shreds.

Carcass. Rudimentary incendiary bombs, carcass shells are hollowed-out cannonballs, drilled with holes, and filled with sulfur, turpentine, pitch, tallow, and saltpeter. When fired, the mixture ignites, and the holes become whirling jets of chemical flame.

Chainshot. This ammunition consists of two smaller cannonballs tethered to each other by a length of chain. Chainshot spins when fired, dealing severe damage to rigging and sails, sometimes even hurtling through masts.

Grapeshot. This canvas bag is packed with fist-sized balls of iron, which fly in a spread pattern. Grapeshot is devastatingly effective at close range against enemy crew members.

Hullbusters. Designed by the Karelagne Empire, these aetherium shells defy physics, accelerating when encountering resistance. Hullbusters, true to their name, punch clean through even the thickest hulls before dissolving back into the aether. The manufacturer of a hullbuster shell must have access to roughly 1 pound of aetherium crystal to create a single 10-pound shell.

Langridge. Sometimes called “poor man's canister shot,” langridge consists of iron filings, scrap metal, and even silverware—whatever sharp metal happens to be lying around! It functions in the same way that a canister shot does, but with an extremely reduced range. It's also free to make!

Salamanders. Also called molten iron shot, salamanders get their common name from the creatures of the Elemental Plane of Fire who craft and sell them. These shells have a core of burning liquid metal that erupts from the casing on impact.

SHIP UPGRADES

Some ports host shipwrights who offer to upgrade vessels for those with the coin to pay for them. It's up to the GM how long it takes to add an upgrade to a ship—hull upgrades might require drydocking, taking you off the aether for a week or more.

Each type of upgrade (except General) is mutually exclusive—you can't benefit from more than one sail upgrade at a time, for instance, but you can collect all the general upgrades.

OPTIONAL RULE:

STARDRIVE SPELL INFUSION

The Kingdom of Ayris has developed Stardrive Engines that speed its ships across the Silvery Seas with astounding velocity by draining aetherium crystals of their magic. In the absence of aetherium, you understand how to channel your innate magical energy into these arcane engines.

Any spellcaster can expend spell slots directly into a Stardrive Engine to move the ship. As an action, expend any number of spell slots. Every 10 combined spell levels expended in this way provides the same effect as if the engine had consumed one aetherium crystal, but doing so gives you one level of exhaustion.



Enchanted
Figurehead

Maggie Ivy

SHIP UPGRADES

NAVIGATION UPGRADES	EFFECTS	COST
Multiversal Orrery	Navigator gains an additional +3 to Intelligence (Navigation) checks.	700 gp
Wavetable Navigator	Wayfinders are automatically alerted to the presence of nearby ships and Gargantuan creatures in the aether within 1 mile.	4,500 gp
HULL UPGRADES	EFFECTS	COST
Astral-Oak Reinforcements	Your ship's hit point maximum increases by 2.	750 gp
Ironclad Plating	Your ship's hit point maximum increases by 3; its speed is reduced by 1.	1,000 gp
Fey-Touched Craftwood	Your ship's hit point maximum increases by 3.	3,000 gp
SAIL UPGRADES	EFFECTS	COST
Ayrissian Canvas Sails	Your ship's speed increases by 1.	4,000 gp
Mage-Silk Sails	Your ship's speed increases by 2.	6,000 gp
Drake's Wing Sails	Your ship's speed increases by 3.	8,000 gp
PROW UPGRADES	EFFECTS	COST
Imperial Ram	When you collide with another ship, it takes 2 points of damage instead of 1 (see "Collision" under "Ship Combat").	500 gp
Winged Victory Figurehead	When you roll your mettle pool during boarding action, you gain an extra mettle die.	2,500 gp
Jawhook Ram	When you collide with another ship, you steal a mettle die from their mettle pool, and they cannot reroll their mettle dice when repelling boarders until the end of the round.	2,750 gp
Bucket-Cutter	When you collide with another ship, it takes 2 points of damage instead of 1. If this collision reduces the ship to 0 hit points, it splits into pieces and is destroyed, instead of just losing all movement. The wreckage cannot be looted.	4,000 gp
Divine Lion Figurehead	When you roll your mettle pool during a boarding action, roll 1d4 and steal that many mettle dice from your opponent's mettle pool. You can roll them immediately as part of this boarding action.	7,500 gp
Silver Unicorn Figurehead	You can instantly magically teleport your ship a number of squares equal to your base speed. Once you use this ability, you cannot use it again until you dock in a port.	27,000 gp
Voroaxinar's Wrath	A dragon figurehead that, during the Status phase, allows you to extinguish all fires on your ship, starting an equal number of fires on any other ship you can see. Once you use this ability, you cannot use it again until you dock in a port.	30,000 gp
GENERAL UPGRADES	EFFECTS	COST
Mithral Carpentry Tools	Gear restores 2 hit points when spent instead of 1.	800 gp
Spellspun Rigging	The ship becomes immune to the effects of chainshot.	3,000 gp
Witchcotton Hammocks	When rolling your mettle pool during a boarding action, the first mate can reroll dice twice per rank instead of once.	4,500 gp
Refurbished Galley	When repelling boarders, you can choose to reroll 1s and 2s on your mettle dice.	7,000 gp
Stardrive Engine	You can now use aetherium crystal to gain free movement—one pound of crystal per square.	10,000 gp
Cannonward Shield Matrix	When hit by weapons during ship combat, you may roll 1d6 + 1 and cancel that many hits.	25,000 gp



NAVIGATION

Navigation in the Aetherial Expanse is unconventional. The Silvery Seas have no magnetic poles and no celestial bodies in the sky. How do ships make their way from island to island?

NAVIGATING BY THE STARS

The stars that appear to burn distantly in the perpetual astral twilight are not stars at all, but to a casual observer they appear as such. Truthfully, astral stars can be one of many phenomena: colliding dimensions, portals to other worlds, or the collapsing souls of lost and forgotten deities. This makes their movement much more erratic than the mundane stars of the Material Plane, so navigating by their light requires thorough knowledge of the concentric, intersecting, and often impossible geometry of the planes.

Four constellations in particular aid navigation: the Empress, Hierophant, Chariot, and Hermit (see “Constellations” on page 24). These constellations are actually far-flung clusters of connected portals to the Elemental Planes of Air, Fire, Earth, and Water, respectively, and they provide the four cardinal directions used on the Aetherial Expanse. They are named not just for how they appear but also for how they animate and move in the sky as the portals bend, combine, and split apart.

Navigation Skill. All characters in the Aetherial Expanse have the additional skill Intelligence (Navigation), which indicates how well they can read and track these constellations. Finding them is often easy—understanding how they move and relate to the positions of islands requires study.

NAVIGATION OR VEHICLE PROFICIENCY?

The Navigation skill refers to the ability to plot a course through the Aetherial Expanse. Navigation Tools, which are indispensable for navigation on Material Plane worlds, are less helpful with the ever-changing skies of the Expanse. In contrast, proficiency in Vehicles (Water) represents the skills a sailor needs to effectively operate their ship and typically doesn't relate planning a ship's voyage.

WAYFINDING

Over time, sailors on the Aetherial Expanse have also discovered that ripples in the aether have a sort of magical weight. Those with a disciplined and attuned mind can feel these ripples and trace them back to their source. Thus, ships on the Aetherial Expanse often have a wayfinder: a crew member able to detect objects in the aether around them. Doing so requires extreme concentration, so wayfinders often get the best results by lying down in their vessel to feel the waves moving beneath them through the hull.

By extending their consciousness through the aether, a skilled wayfinder can sense swells in the sea bouncing off islands or currents rushing between them. They can even detect disturbances caused by other ships or large creatures if close enough.

Anyone can attempt to navigate by the stars, but experienced wayfinders essentially amount to modern radar, making them extremely useful for moving between islands while avoiding danger.

Wayfinding Ability

A wayfinder is any navigator with magical abilities. Any character with a spellcasting ability score can use that ability score instead of Intelligence when making an Intelligence (Navigation) check. For example, a sorcerer could make a Charisma (Navigation) check, while a druid could make a Wisdom (Navigation) check.

PLAYING A NAVIGATOR

Charting a path between two nearby islands does not require a check, but a character navigating a ship sometimes needs to make an Intelligence (Navigation) check to stay on course during longer journeys. The higher the result, the more accurate the sense of their surroundings.

A navigator makes these checks at the start of each leg of a journey (see “Travel Legs” on page 178). Usually, the adventure supplies a DC for Intelligence (Navigation) checks to guide a ship from one place to another. You can find more details on creating Intelligence (Navigation) check DCs later in this section, under “Running Navigation as the GM.”

FAILURE

Instead of getting lost, when a navigator fails an Intelligence (Navigation) check, the ship runs into trouble while getting its bearings back. The GM can roll on the Travel Complications table or pick a result that best fits the situation.

Note that some results on the Travel Complications table include running across other ships. Appendix B includes sample ships you can use if you don't already have something in mind.

RUNNING NAVIGATION AS THE GAME MASTER

If a player asks to make an Intelligence (Navigation) check that you don't have a DC for, or if you want to create your own adventures, you can start with a base DC of 12 for characters navigating between two distant islands on the Aetherial Expanse.

Navigation is much easier if a ship can follow a coastline to its destination. If this is the case, the navigator makes their Intelligence (Navigation) check with advantage.

You might also impose disadvantage on an Intelligence (Navigation) check when the character wants to try

something more difficult than usual. One example of this would be a magical wayfinder using their navigation abilities to scan the waves and avoid other ships while using a busy trade route.

The Navigation Check Modifier table is intended to further assist you in creating your own DCs for Intelligence (Navigation) checks when creating adventures or as guidelines to use when improvising. Take the base DC of 12, then apply any modifiers you think appropriate.

NAVIGATION CHECK MODIFIER

CIRCUMSTANCE	NAVIGATION CHECK DC MODIFIER
Navigating a well-known route	-4
Avoiding other ships in open aether*	+2
Out of date maps	+2
Navigating through a storm	+4
Passing safely through large areas of dangerous aether (reefs, shallows, narrow straits)*	+4
Navigating uncharted aether	+6

*These examples apply only to wayfinders.

TRAVEL COMPLICATIONS

D20	COMPLICATION
1	Long Delay. The ship must consume twice the usual number of supplies on this travel leg.
2	Elemental Storm: Glass Rain. Dust from the Plane of Earth mixes with heat from the Plane of Fire, forming clouds of glass that shatter and fall from above. The ship takes 1d4 + 1 point of damage and 2d4 casualties, and the sails are torn to shreds. To repair the sails, you must spend gear equal to the ship's base speed.
3	Hidden Reef. The ship takes 2 points of damage.
4	Monster: Astral Merrow. The ship is attacked by a raiding party of 2d6 + 2 astral merrow *.
5–6	Merchant Vessel. A ship flying a merchant flag appears on the horizon. Merchant ships can be traded with and can replenish your supplies as if you had docked at a port.
7	Ice Comet. A comet of ice streaks out of an elemental portal and lands nearby, giving you access to fresh water. Gain 1d4 + 1 points of grub.
8	Karelagne Vessel. A ship flying an imperial flag appears on the horizon.
9	Monster: Dreadnought Ray. This gentle giant glides deep beneath your ship. (This creature uses roc statistics but has a swimming speed instead of a flying speed, can breathe in aether, and is immune to aether poisoning.)
10	Ayrissian Vessel. A ship flying a kingdom flag appears on the horizon.
11	Elemental Storm: Firespout. Portals to the Elemental Planes of Air and Fire create a whirling tower of flame. Your ship takes 1d4 + 1 points of damage, and you must roll a d20 and add the boatswain's rank. On a result of 16 or lower, 1d4 members of your unranked crew are instantly killed by the fire.
12–15	Pirate Vessel. A ship flying a pirate flag appears on the horizon.
16	Elemental Storm: Sludge Patch. Portals to the Elemental Planes of Water and Earth create pools of mud that float atop the aether, miring your ship. You become stuck for 1d3 + 1 days and must spend supplies for each day that passes as if it were a travel leg.
17	Derelict Vessel. An abandoned ship appears on the horizon. What happened to the crew? What riches remain onboard, unclaimed?
18	Crystal Reef. The ship takes 4 damage. Brave characters can dive under the aether to retrieve 1 pound of aetherium crystal by succeeding on a DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check. On a failure, they still retrieve the crystal but begin suffering from aether poisoning (see "Aether Poisoning" on page 20).
19	Elemental Storm: Aetherstorm. Portals to all the elemental planes open nearby at once. The ship suffers the effects of all elemental storms on this table.
20	Aetherium Deposit. You encounter a small natural aetherium formation. You gain 5 pounds of aetherium crystal.



TRAVEL

Every ship on the Silvery Seas has a speed in knots. A slow ship travels at about 3–4 knots, an average ship at about 4–6 knots, and a very fast ship might travel around 8–9 knots. A knot is one nautical mile per hour. Also, note that these speeds aren't likely to come up during play. These speeds are more useful as references for creating your own adventures.

There are no disadvantages to moving quicker or slower—all ships generally sail as fast as they can to cut down travel time. Travel at sea is also much more consistent than travel over land, so you'll note that the distance covered in a day of sailing is much greater than any distance that could be walked in a day.

TRAVEL SPEED

SHIP SPEED	KNOTS (NAUTICAL MILES PER HOUR)	NAUTICAL MILES PER DAY
Slow	3–4 miles	72–96 miles
Moderate	5–6 miles	120–144 miles
Fast	8–9 miles	192–216 miles

WIND ROUTES

Weather in the Aetherial Expanse is caused by portals opening to the elemental planes, and this includes the wind. Over time, sailors have learned the patterns in which these portals tend to open. They have done their best to map the prevailing winds on the Aetherial Expanse, which form relatively reliable routes providing wind in predictable directions for predictable amounts of time.

Straying outside a wind route is a dangerous business. If a ship sails into an area with no wind portals at all, often called a dead zone, it's liable to remain stuck there unless it happens to have another form of propulsion available.

Permanent wind portals are rare and still being discovered. Knowledge of secret wind patterns is often jealously guarded, as hidden portals can allow ships to sneak between islands by avoiding the main wind routes.

TRAVEL LEGS

Wind routes are vital to travel because they dictate the necessity of travel legs. To get from place to place, a ship must follow the wind routes. One of the big, busier wind routes might take you directly to your destination, while three smaller, quieter wind routes might provide a different approach.

One travel leg is roughly equal to a week's travel time, but shorter times can also comprise a leg if they travel through hard-to-navigate territory. Rather than strictly measuring time spent sailing, a travel leg represents how many supplies need to be spent to complete a portion of a journey; more difficult areas take more effort from the crew, which consumes more grog and grub than easy sailing.

Long journeys, or journeys through treacherous aether, might be made up of multiple legs. The navigator must make an Intelligence (Navigation) check at the start of each leg of the journey. A ship might have the chance to dock between legs, but traveling through uncharted territory can make resupplying impossible.

Wind Routes

When traversing common wind routes on the Aetherial Expanse, start a new travel leg each time the ship enters a new wind route. Major, permanent wind routes are represented on the map of the Aetherial Expanse by white arrows. If the characters need to find a temporary wind route off a permanent route, the journey between permanent routes is one travel leg. Particularly arduous sailing between major wind routes could comprise two or more travel legs, at the GM's discretion.

Spending Supplies

Journeys with more legs take longer simply because they are more complicated, and longer journeys require more supplies. There are three kinds of supplies your ship can carry (covered earlier in "Supplies & Resources" on page 173), but during travel, you normally only need to worry about two of them: grub and grog.

At the end of each travel leg during a journey, you must burn the following supplies:

- 1 grog
- Grub equal to your ship's base speed

Not Enough Grog. If you can't spend a point of grog, your mettle pool loses one mettle die.

Not Enough Grub. If you can't spend enough grub, roll for 1d4 casualties as if you've taken a hit in battle (see "Casualties" on page 188). Having a ship's cook allows you to prepare food more efficiently, reducing the high cost of grub per travel leg.

Plotting a Course

To plot a course from one location to another, the players must consider the number of legs for each possible course, weighing the costs of a longer journey against the risks of a shorter one. Usually, the shortest route is best, but the GM is encouraged to always give the players at least two options. Perhaps the shortest route is known to be dangerous, or maybe it takes them too close to an enemy port!

Tracking Other Ships

Ships don't leave trails in the Aetherial Expanse, so they can't be tracked in the traditional sense. Instead, the best you can do is guess where they will be next. This requires gathering intel—to find a ship at sea, you need to know

where it's heading and where it's likely to make port along the way to intercept it.

Characters can make an Intelligence (Navigation) check to use their knowledge of travel on the aether to guess a target ship's course and try to track it down. On a success, they know where the ship will most likely be. On a failure, they can only guess where the ship might be, and can't make another check to track the target ship until it docks at a port again, which the character may hear about through spies or rumors.

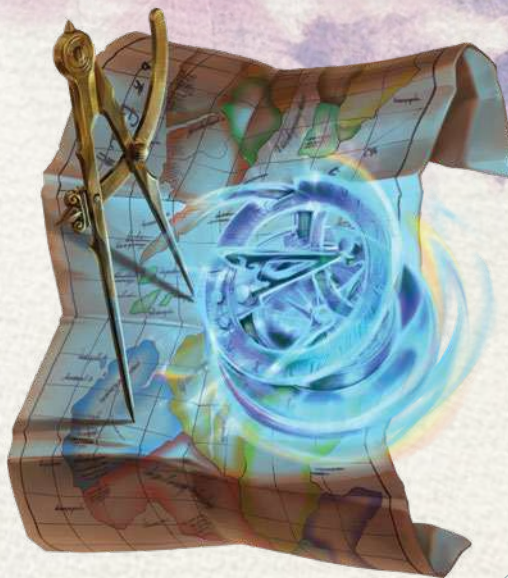
The DC for this tracking check is 12, but if the target ship is actively trying to plot a course that is hard to follow, the Intelligence (Navigation) modifier of the target ship's navigator (or their spellcasting modifier if they are a wayfinder) is added to the DC.

Uncertain Destinations

Some voyages have unclear destinations. Tales tell of lost islands, and some speak in hushed tones of ghostly ships that sail forever, never dropping anchor or making port. Finding something that's not on any map is difficult, often forcing a crew to rely on a mixture of rumor or luck. Without the help of hidden lore, seeking an uncertain target requires plenty of resources to burn, and a wayfinder who can help you scan the waves.

QUEST HOOK: THE REGATTA

Some of the inhabited islands of the Aetherial Expanse take part in an annual regatta, a ship race around a set of the islands. This year, the prize for the winning team is an old relic of the seas that is secretly a powerful magical item. The easiest way to obtain the item is to win the regatta. The characters must procure a racing vessel, convince one of the island communities to let them represent the community in the race, and then win the race. Saboteurs hired by one of the other teams, staunch enemies of the characters, do their best to make sure the characters lose—and possibly die during the race.





PURSUIT

Power dynamics on the open sea are not balanced or fair, and nowhere is this more apparent than during naval pursuit. Bigger ships tend to be faster thanks to their larger sails, and a bigger ship will always catch a smaller one. But how quickly can one ship catch another, and what happens if the ships are equally matched?

Ship chases don't happen every time two vessels encounter each other—you might want to fight, parley, or simply be on your way instead. Warships intending to attack each other often skip pursuit and move straight into combat, and this means pursuits are most relevant to pirate and merchant vessels.

Pursuit begins when one ship decides it doesn't want to wait around and find out what the other vessel's plans are. The other ship consequently gives chase.

FLYING COLORS

You can usually tell whether a ship is friend or foe by the flag it flies. Faction-aligned ships fly the colors of their faction, and merchant ships often fly faction flags indicating under which nation-state they are registered.

Pirates typically hoist their jolly roger as an intimidation tactic, making their intention to capture a ship clear and giving them a mettle advantage (see “Stealing Mettle” on page 199), which they can use to force a surrender or tip the odds of boarding action in their favor (see “Boarding Action” on page 188).

False Flags

But if a pirate ship flies their flag from a distance, its prey will see it coming and might manage to escape. One of the most common ways pirates can close in on a ship without their quarry running away is by flying a false flag from the mast. If the player characters are pirates and

recognize a ship's allegiance, they can fly a friendly flag in an attempt to get closer without the chase.

All this is relevant to pursuit because closing in on another ship is risky at the best of times, and a clever crew will try to avoid the chase entirely if they can.

However, a flag alone isn't always enough of a disguise. Particularly savvy captains might see through a false flag if they succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check. Some factors make this easier. If a ship is severely damaged by cannon fire, people are more likely to assume it's a pirate vessel. Captains have advantage on checks made to discern the truth of a false flag if the pursuing ship has fewer than half its hit points.

Other Deceptions

If a ship doesn't have any false flags handy, there are other deceptions that may work. Using signal flags or lights, a ship might try to avoid pursuit by pretending to request help, luring their prey to them. The same basic rules apply—an insightful captain can attempt to see through a trick like this by making a Wisdom (Insight) check opposed by the Charisma (Deception) check of the other ship's captain.

THE POINT OF PURSUIT

Pursuit is usually a game of “not if, but when.” Faster ships win eventually, so pursuit is best deployed by the GM if there is some sort of condition that the fleeing ship can achieve to escape before their time runs out—fleeing to shallower water that a Large ship can't enter, escaping into a dangerous reef, or making it through a rapidly-closing portal.

It is possible for the pursuit to end with the fleeing ship simply managing to get away through sheer speed, but the most interesting and exciting pursuits have an objective for the quarry, represented by the escape timer.

THE ESCAPE TIMER

When the fleeing ship has a clear goal—whether it’s a safe port nearby or a bank of fog to disappear into—the escape timer helps track that goal. The victory condition for the pursuing ship is easy to understand: catch up! But the fleeing ship can escape by simply keeping its distance from the enemy until the clock runs out.

If the pursuing ship doesn’t win pursuit before the escape timer runs out, the fleeing ship escapes.

The escape timer measures how many rounds remain in the pursuit, represented by a die, usually a d6. At the start of pursuit, it shows its maximum value—a 6. At the end of each pursuit round, it ticks down one number. When it reaches 0 (that is, the end of the round in which the die shows 1), the chase is over.

Six rounds is a reasonable number of rounds for a pursuit, but the GM might decide that the fleeing ship is close to their goal already and make the escape timer a d4 instead. Inversely, a ship far from its safe haven might use a d8.

THE GAP

For the chasing ship, pursuit is all about closing the gap. When a chase begins, the gap is represented by a line of counters—these might be dice, coins, or other tokens. The more counters in the line, the wider the gulf between the two ships. The exact distance is left abstract, but we assume it’s out of range of all ranged attacks and cannon fire, even with only one counter left in the gap.

The gap line usually starts with six counters. Ships act on their turn to alter the gap in their favor—chasing ships want to take counters out of the gap and make it shorter, and fleeing ships want to add tokens and make it longer. As with the escape timer, the GM might decide to start a pursuit with a shorter or longer gap.

Closing the Gap

At the start of each pursuit round, the pursuing ship takes a number of counters out of the gap equal to its speed, and the fleeing ship adds a number of tokens to the gap equal to its speed. This is the core of the system—a tug of war between ship speeds.

These adjustments happen simultaneously at the start of each round. Let’s imagine the player’s ship has a speed of 3 knots, and the enemy pursuing ship has a speed of 4

knots. When the gap changes at the start of the round, it goes down by the difference—1—changing from 6 to 5, as the faster ship closes in on the players. This might seem like it makes the pursuit a simple contest of who has the faster ship, but “Ship Actions” and “Hazards,” covered later in this section, can sometimes swing the odds for a slower ship.

If the gap ever disappears completely (that is, the number of tokens is 0), the pursuing ship wins.

TURN ORDER IN PURSUIT

Ships act in order of ship speed, from highest to lowest. Initiative ties are broken by comparing the rank of each ship’s helmsperson. If these are also identical, roll d6s until one ship scores higher.

On a ship’s turn, it can make one ship action. Unlike regular combat, turns in pursuit are abstract and roughly represent about 10 minutes.

SHIP ACTIONS

Ship actions can increase speed beyond normal limits before the gap changes at the start of the next round. On the players’ turn, they must decide what to do as a team rather than taking individual actions. Ship actions are intended to reward imagination, so they can be anything within reason.

Magic

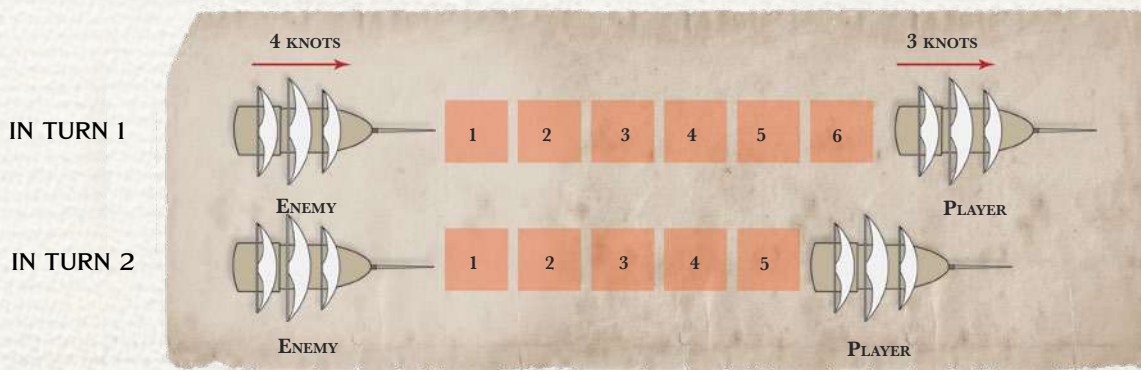
All ships in pursuit are assumed to be sailing as fast as they possibly can, but magic isn’t known for respecting the typical limits of physics.

If a character casts a spell to help their ship or somehow hinder an enemy ship, it affects the target’s speed by the level of the spell slot expended.

For example, using the flood feature of the *control water* spell to speed up your ship would increase your speed by 4 points during the next round (unless you capsize!). On the other hand, casting the *gust of wind* spell into your own sails would increase your speed by 2 points for the next round (see also “Spending Resources” below).

As a final note on magic, GMs are encouraged to reward creative spell use without requiring a roll—after all, the player is spending a valuable spell slot now instead of saving it for battle later.

CLOSING THE GAP



Spending Resources

As noted, *gust of wind* is a useful spell to have on-hand during pursuit, but it costs a spell slot. For this reason, many ships on the Silvery Seas collect bottled air *elemental motes** (see chapter 11) to give them a burst of speed when needed.

Use the following guidelines for using air motes during a pursuit. A Tiny or Small air mote works for a single round, just like the spell *gust of wind*. Medium air motes last up to five rounds in pursuit, and Large air motes last up to eight. Bigger motes last for the duration of the whole pursuit and beyond—you can find specific times for each under “Elemental Motes” on page 160. Note that all air motes increase speed by 2, regardless of size, but they can stack if you open multiple larger bottles in a row.

There are other resources that provide a burst of speed—some ships have propulsion systems, such as the Ayrissian Stardrive Engine, but using them for a boost during pursuit is costly, as it burns aetherium crystals (see page 18).

Mines

The fleeing ship also has the option to deploy mines as a ship action if they have any in their cargo. Mines have different effects as detailed on page 171. In general, they function like hazards, which will be detailed later in this section.

Improvised Actions

The players are bound to surprise you during pursuit, as they tend to get extra inventive when desperate. If the players want to try something not covered by the rules, the GM can request a relevant ability check to see if the action is successful. When the GM is unsure what benefit the action will give the players, they can roll a d4 and add it to the ship's speed for one round.

HAZARDS

You can further complicate a pursuit by introducing hazards both ships want to avoid. These could be jagged rocks, howling whirlpools, or dangerous monsters! It's up to the GM where the hazards actually are—a ship sailing through a large reef might need to deal with the same hazard every round, but a ship sailing past one solitary whirlpool might only need to deal with it once.

When faced with a hazard, a ship can simply choose to avoid it by taking an avoidance penalty to speed for one round. If a ship just plows through a hazard, the vessel takes a hit penalty for hitting it—this is usually hull damage, but might be something else, like taking casualties (see “Casualties” on page 188).

The ship's helmsperson can attempt to dodge a hazard by making an Intelligence (Navigation) check and adding their rank to the result. If they beat the hazard's dodge DC, the ship takes no penalties at all. But, if they fail, the ship takes both penalties!

Here are some example hazards so you can see how their statistics are laid out—a low-level threat and a high-level threat.

Sharktooth Reef

Named for the serrated shapes that lurk below the aether, this rocky reef isn't too hard for an experienced helmsperson to weave through, but the smartest sailors know that it's always a gamble.

Dodge DC: 12

Avoidance Penalty: -2 Speed

Hit Penalty: 2 damage

Comet Eel Swarm

Comet eels are among the most feared hazards in the aether. They tend not to take on a ship alone, but a swarm of them is bold enough to leap from the waves and punch through a ship's hull with their fiery bodies. They're attracted to movement, so they're more likely to attack ships moving quickly.

Dodge DC: 19

Avoidance Penalty: -6 speed

Hit Penalty: 8 damage



Comet Eel Swarm

“You know, when you first come out here you expect the biggest pain to be some big shark. Maybe something terrifying and beautiful, something they write songs about. Something meaningful. Nah. It's the eels.”

—Carlisle Vista, retired helmsperson

Allie Briggs

BE PREPARED FOR THE PARTY TO WIN

Never deploy a chase if you're not prepared for both of the key outcomes—the quarry escapes, or the quarry is caught. Is the enemy ship supposed to escape the party? Then it simply does—don't trick yourself into thinking you can pretend like the party has a chance if they don't. Your players are smarter than that, and everyone will find that a pursuit rings hollow if the outcome was already decided.

ALTERNATIVE ESCAPES

Running out the escape timer isn't the only way for fleeing ships to get away. If they're lucky, they might also have a few more options to consider.

Speed

If the fleeing ship is fast enough, it can increase the gap faster than its pursuer can close it. If the gap line reaches 10 or more counters, the fleeing ship escapes.

Stealth

The perpetual twilight of the Aetherial Expanse means that night never truly falls, but the constant gloom makes it hard to spot ships running dark (with lights extinguished).

To conceal themselves, a crew must extinguish all lights and put away their sails as a ship action during their turn. A hiding ship's speed is reduced to 0. Large, Huge, and Gargantuan ships cannot attempt to hide.

A ship running dark is considered lightly obscured. A ship hiding inside a bank of fog, a storm, or under cover of night on a material plane world, is heavily obscured.

If a fleeing ship hides during pursuit, on the pursuer's next turn, the crew member with the best vision can make a Wisdom (Perception) check to try to spot the stealthy ship, using a DC from the Ship Stealth DC table.

SHIP STEALTH DC

SHIP SIZE	SHIP STEALTH DC
Tiny	20
Small	16
Medium	12

Ships larger than Medium can't approach another ship stealthily.

If a ship is spotted while hiding but decides to keep trying to hide as its next ship action, the pursuers must roll to spot it again. Stealth is a high-risk, high-reward tactic—if the pursuer loses track of the quarry, they can't continue the chase. But if they manage to keep sight of their target for just a few more rounds, they'll catch up quickly.

Submerging

Some creatures and ships can dive below the aether. Submerging is a great way to escape a pursuer, but only if they can't dive too!

Diving takes two ship actions to complete. The first ship action begins the process, giving the pursuer one turn to react. The ship or creature completes the dive and escapes on their next ship action.

Scuttling

When out of options, a ship might choose to scuttle itself. This means choosing to sink rather than be captured. For obvious reasons, this is a last resort. Ships might scuttle themselves if they don't want the enemy to gain a powerful ship, to create a blockage in a critical waterway, or if carrying some secret information or hidden item that can't be allowed to fall into enemy hands.

If you scuttle your ship, it immediately drops to 0 hit points and can no longer move. Ships are generally also set on fire to avoid the enemy taking the wreck.

COMPLEX PURSUITS

What if a third ship shows up? Pursuit involving more than two ships is rare but possible. When this happens, the GM adds another gap line between the third ship and its quarry. This might mean there are two gap lines alongside each other, as two allied ships bear down on their shared quarry. It might also mean there are two gap lines forming a long chain, as the ship in the middle seeks to catch its prey while also escaping from the vessel bearing down behind it!



A Starscourge Pirate



SHIP COMBAT

Orders shouted over the clamor of the crew, the low booming of cannon fire, the whistling of a near miss. Aether sprays across the deck, shining brightly beneath burning sails.

Ship combat is exceedingly dangerous and chaotic, which is why every sailor worth their salt aims to avoid it as much as possible. During a naval battle, there is no place to hide—every member of the crew is constantly at risk.

Ship combat generally takes about as long as a typical combat encounter. There are also options at the end of this chapter for playing using theater of the mind instead of a gridded map.

THE ORDER OF BATTLE

The order of battle is intended as a quick reference to help you keep track of ship combat during play.

Movement Phase

- Check Initiative
- Move

Attack Phase

- Pass Weather Gage Token
- Fire Cannons
- Assign Hits and Resolve Damage
- Boarding Action

Status Phase

- Firefighting
- Check for Ships Exploding
- Surrender and Victory

PLAYER ACTIONS

The basic rule is that characters should be allowed to take cool, cinematic actions at any point during ship combat, as long as it doesn't grind ship combat to a halt.

Each phase shown in the order of battle (Movement, Attack, and Status) roughly corresponds to about a minute, making a full round of ship combat about three minutes. The characters are likely required to be attending to the operation of the ship, so they only have up to a minute.

To make things simple, the GM can allow player characters to:

- Take actions that help the ship move during the Movement Phase (see “Alternative Propulsion” on page 186).
- Make attacks during the Attack Phase (see “Creatures Attacking Ships” on page 170).
- Take actions that heal crew or put out fires during the Status Phase (see “Firefighting” and “Healing” under “Status Phase” starting on page 189).

THE WEATHER GAGE

Before battle begins, the GM draws an arrow on the battlefield that depicts the general wind direction. Wind direction is always cardinal (never diagonal) and remains unchanged during the battle. Knowing the general direction of the wind is important because it determines who has the weather gage.

The weather gage is the most important factor of ship combat (other than the statistics and supplies of the ships themselves). You can think of it as similar to having the high ground in hand-to-hand combat—the ship farther upwind has the weather gage.

Holding the upwind position over another ship is a huge advantage for many reasons. In this system, the weather gage makes your cannons more accurate (see “Heeling” on page 187) and gives you better options for movement.

Who Starts Where?

Just as with normal combat in the core rules, who starts depends on the situation, but it pays to make sure everyone agrees that the starting positions make sense because the weather gage is so vital.

Common sense prevails; if one ship has just caught another through pursuit, then the chasing ship is upwind. If the characters have just managed to ambush another ship by appearing behind them on an established wind route, then they are upwind.

The Weather Gage Token

To track who holds the weather gage, each ship has a pile of tokens to give out to other ships. If another ship pulls farther upwind than you, give one weather gage token to them at the start of the Attack Phase (see “Passing the Weather Gage Token” on page 187).

In most ship battles, there are only two ships, so both ships have one token each. More complex battles might have more ships, and in these cases, each ship has a number of weather gage tokens equal to the number of other ships in the engagement.

Movement Phase

Movement on the grid is relatively simple. A ship can move a number of squares equal to its speed.

Initiative

Ships don’t roll initiative. Instead, the order they take their turn in the Movement Phase is based on positioning—ships farther upwind move first. This means initiative order can change from round to round.

If a ship is upwind and takes its turn first, moving farther downwind and passing another ship, it doesn’t take another turn. The initiative order is locked in for that round after the first ship in initiative order moves. Check the initiative order again at the start of the next Movement Phase.

Initiative is only used to decide the order in which ships move during the Movement Phase—it doesn’t affect the other phases in the order of battle. For example, during the Attack Phase, all attacking ships fire their cannons simultaneously.

Scale

All ships take up 1 square on the board because the scale is “zoomed out” to the point that ship size doesn’t make a meaningful difference to how much space you take up on the aether. The only exception to this rule are Gargantuan ships, which take up a 2x2 square space. No normal ship is Gargantuan-size—the only ship most folks know of at that extreme size is the magical, imperial flagship *INS Thunderchild*.

Each square is an abstract measure of distance too. When ships are right next to each other on the grid, they

might be alongside each other for boarding, or they might still be several hundred feet apart. In any case, always assume that the weapons and abilities of player characters can’t reach farther than into an adjacent square.

Ship Scale Distances. Sometimes, it’s extremely important to know how much distance there is between two ships, such as if you’re trying to calculate the range of an attack or spell made from the deck of one ship, targeting a creature on another ship. In this case, assume that each square is 100 feet on each side.

Facing

The direction your ship is pointing matters, and not just because you want to avoid sailing in irons. Most ships have no forward-facing weapons, so the direction your ship is facing also affects which guns it can bring to bear. If you’re using minis to represent your ships, many will have a front face you can use. If using tokens on a virtual tabletop, you can simply decide which edge of the image is the front face. If using dice to represent your ships, make the top of the currently facing number the front of the ship.

In Irons

A key reason to hold the weather gage is to avoid being put “in irons,” or sailing directly into the wind, that is, in the opposite direction to the arrow the GM drew at the start of battle.

Your sails aren’t generating any power while in irons. Your momentum carries you while the sails are empty, but not for long, so it’s important to try to avoid being put in irons.

After you move 1 square directly into the wind, your speed becomes 0 until the start of the next Movement Phase. If you have other tools at your disposal that can increase your ship’s speed, such as spells, magic items, or fuel, those bonuses to your movement still apply while in irons.

QUEST HOOK: AETHERSPOUT

During a routine trip across the waters of the Expanse, the ship carrying the characters runs into terrible weather. As the characters (or the crew piloting the ship) attempt to keep the boat on course and above the waves, a magical wind blows, forming an aetherspout. Not only does the twisting tower of aether pose a threat, but all navigation tools and magic begin to behave strangely. This causes two problems: the ship must still be piloted safely, but navigational aids and magic need to be reinterpreted based on the waterspouts transforming effects. Malfunctioning magic could be just as devastating to the ship and crew as the weather. The waterspout is a marker for a large aetherium deposit on the ocean floor.

Turning and Mobility

You always need a bit of forward motion to turn your ship, but how quickly you can turn depends on your Mobility—smaller ships are more mobile than larger ships, even if they are slower (see “Mobility” under “Ship Statistics”).

HIGH MOBILITY

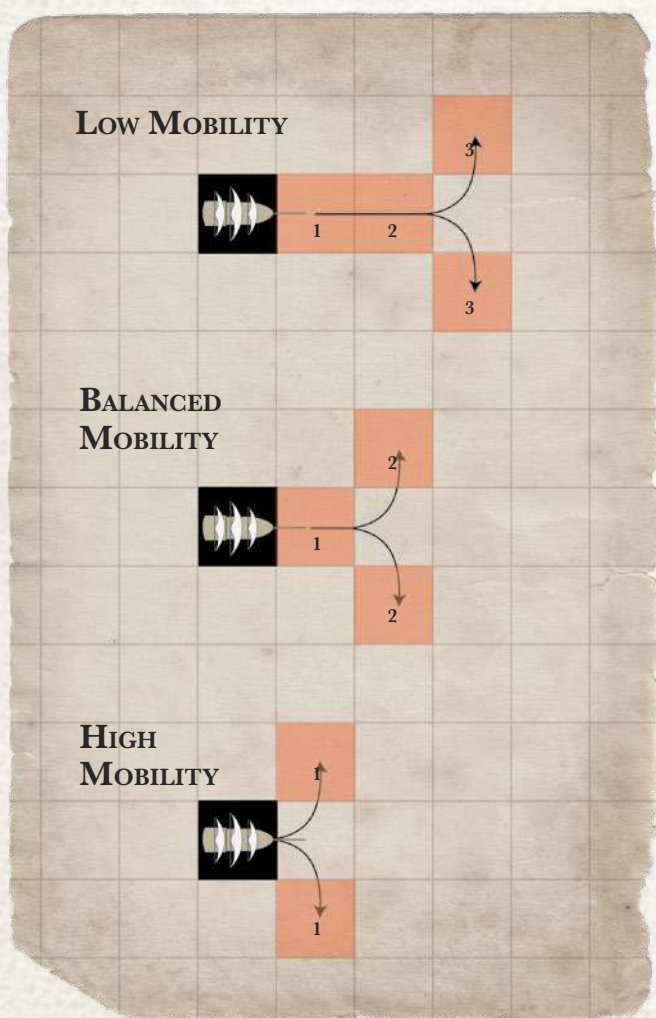
Ships with high Mobility can move into any of the 3 squares directly in front of them. When they move into a diagonal square, they also turn 90 degrees to face either left or right.

BALANCED MOBILITY

Ships with balanced Mobility must move one space directly forward before they can turn like a highly mobile ship can.

LOW MOBILITY

The biggest ships have low Mobility, and they must move forward two spaces before they can turn. This means a low Mobility ship must use up at least 3 squares of movement to change its facing.



Collision

If a ship moves through another ship, both ships take 1 point of damage. Some ship upgrades—like rams and figureheads—can alter this damage. A ship cannot end its movement in the same space as another ship.

Alternative Propulsion

Some ships have access to methods of propulsion other than the wind. All alternative move options can be used to move into the wind even with a speed of 0.

Magic. Spells like *gust of wind* can also be used for movement. Just as in the rules for pursuit, the amount of speed you gain is directly influenced by the level of the spell slot used—if cast into the sails during the Movement Phase, *gust of wind* immediately moves your ship 2 squares in the direction it is facing for free.

This also applies to items like the bottled air *elemental motes** prevalent on the Silvery Seas, which also move a ship 2 squares forward (unless a character opens more than one).

Resetting the Grid

The wind incentivizes movement in a particular direction, so you’ll sometimes find that you run out of grid as the wind pushes ships “off the map.”

If this happens, quickly recenter the action by moving the ship about to sail off the edge of the world back toward the middle of the grid, counting each square you move it one at a time. Then, move the other ships and any terrain features a number of equal squares, in the same directions.

AIR MOTES IN SHIP COMBAT

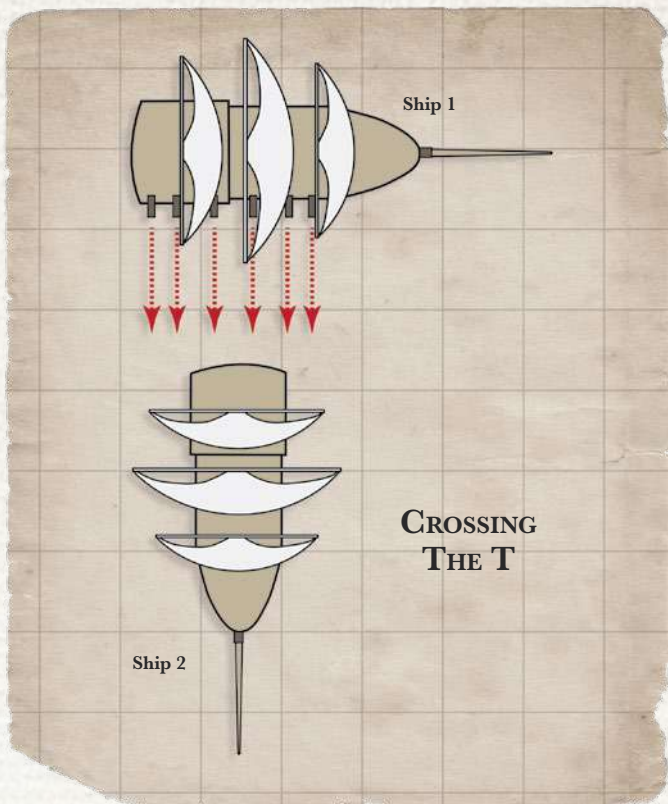
Air motes last much longer than spells do, providing sustained speed. This makes them very valuable, but they do come with drawbacks.

As in pursuit, a Tiny or Small air mote works immediately, just like the spell *gust of wind*. Medium air motes last up to five rounds. Large air motes last up to eight. Bigger motes last for the duration of ship combat and beyond—you can find specific times for each under *elemental mote** on page 161.

When using an air mote that lasts longer than one round, it moves the ship 2 squares forward for free at the start of its Movement Phase, but the ship cannot be turned until the effect ends.

“It’s time to pop the cork’s and let loose the air motes. Our quarry’s in sight, and there’s gold in that hold that will soon be ours!”

—Captain Fawlene Brick



ATTACK PHASE

Once all ships have moved, play enters the Attack Phase.

Passing the Weather Gage Token

First, check to see if anyone managed to steal the weather gage during the Movement Phase. All ships must give their weather gage tokens to any ships upwind of them and must return tokens to any ships of which they are now downwind.

In a simple battle with two ships fighting over the weather gage in close quarters, this probably means they swap tokens.

Firing Cannons

In the Attack Phase, all ships with weapons can choose to fire them, and all ships fire their weapons at the same time.

To fire a cannon, roll its target die. If you roll a 6 or higher, the cannon hits a target within its range. If you miss, you can reroll a number of misses equal to the rank of your master gunner. You can also reroll misses if you have the weather gage (see “Heeling” below).

Cannon Range

You can fire as many cannons as you like, but it’s best to roll them in groups based on type (for example, all carronades, followed by all long guns). Count all the hits you’ve produced and group them based on the type of cannon, primarily because cannons have different ranges.

Cannon ranges are represented by cones, just like many magical spells or attacks in the core rules, and these cones represent the possible area into which a cannon can be

brought to bear. When assigning hits, you can only assign them to targets that fall inside the relevant cone of range.

Short range cannons can hit targets within a 3-square cone.

Standard range cannons can hit targets within a 7-square cone.

Long range cannons use a unique cone shape, which extends 10 squares out from the ship, and expands out to 3 squares wide at the halfway point.

Close Action

If your target is within cannon range and you are in an adjacent square to your target, your cannons hit on a 3 or higher instead of a 6 or higher.

Crossing the T

As mentioned earlier, unloading all the cannons down one side of your ship at a single target is commonly called broadsiding. The most destructive use of broadsiding is called “crossing the T.”

As the name suggests, the attacking ship sails perpendicular to the target, typically past the stern, before firing all the cannons on their broadside up the length of the target ship, doing as much damage as possible with every cannonball and avoiding a broadside in retaliation from the target. Crossing the T from the bow is possible, but risks collision if the victim of the broadside moves next turn (which it won’t if the broadside reduces it to 0 hit points).

To do this, your target must be in an adjacent square, either port or starboard of your ship, and you must be facing them perpendicularly. Any hits from this position deal double damage.

Heeling

If you have the weather gage, you can reroll misses on your target dice once each round. This stacks with the master gunner ability—if you reroll a miss and you miss again, you can reroll a second time using your master gunner’s rank.

This is due to “heeling.” The wind leans ships over, providing a better firing angle to the upwind ship. Heeling also makes downwind targets a bit bigger, as the wind pushing them over reveals more of the hull.

Assigning Hits

Once you’ve rolled for all the cannons you want to fire and grouped them based on type, you assign the hits they produced to targets. Choose a target within range for each hit—that target marks off one hit point. When a ship falls to 0 hit points, its speed drops to 0, and it can’t move. With each hit your cannons produce, you gain one mettle die to add to your mettle pool.

Some cannons have special effects that apply when you assign their hits. For example, hits produced by wrath cannons produce extra casualties, and flamethrower hits start fires instead of dealing damage.

While assigning hits, you can also choose to spend unique ammunition to change the effects of your attacks (see “Ammunition” on page 174).

Casualties

When a ship takes a hit, crew members are inevitably hurt in the chaos—wounded by flying splinters, crushed under collapsing cargo, or cut to pieces by the shot itself. Each hit assigned to a ship produces 1d4 casualties unless a weapon or ammo effect says otherwise. On a roll of 4, an officer is injured, instead of any of the unranked crew.

Unranked Crew Casualties. When unranked crew take casualties, remove them from the left side of the Current Crew fraction on your ship's manifest. For example, a frigate might have 50/50 unranked crew members, and after taking two hits, rolling 2d4 casualties results in 6, bringing the Current Crew down to 44/50. You can refresh some casualties to regain unranked crew during combat, but some weapons or abilities might state that they "instantly kill" unranked crew instead of producing casualties. This means you reduce them from both sides of the fraction. So, if you had a Current Crew of 44/50, and 4 of your unranked crew were vaporized by a hull-buster (see "Ammunition" page 174), the Current Crew becomes 40/46.

Skeleton Crew. When the left side of the Current Crew fraction is equal to or lower than the skeleton crew number on your ship's manifest, you are running a skeleton crew. The ship can only take part in one phase during each round of ship combat—either Movement, Attack, or Status (see "Unranked Crew" on page 198)!

Ranked Officer Hits. If you roll a 4 on a casualty die, and a ranked officer takes a casualty, roll 1d12 on the manifest to find out which officer (or specialist) has been hit. If this roll lands on an empty station, one of your unranked crew is injured instead! Otherwise, the hit officer becomes stricken, and you mark their status on the manifest with a slash. Stricken officers are out of action—you gain no benefit from their rank or boons, and their station is treated as empty, except when you roll a d12 to see if they get hit again.

If the same officer takes a second casualty, they die, and you mark their status with another slash, turning it into an X.

MITIGATING CASUALTIES WITH A SURGEON

Your surgeon can cancel a number of casualties per round equal to their rank. They can choose which casualties to cancel after the total has been rolled—that is, they can decide to save an officer over an unranked crew member.

"A surgeon must make every effort to save her patients, no matter the circumstances. I know that...I know that...but usually, a surgeon's patients aren't holding a knife to her throat. I try to remember that the person I should be saving is myself"

— Aria Montevista, captive of the Teary Trove

PLAYER CHARACTER CASUALTIES

If a player character is an officer and they become stricken by rolling 1d12 on the manifest, they immediately lose a number of hit points equal to half their hit point maximum. If a player character is reduced to 0 hit points by cannon fire, they are knocked unconscious and are dying. They roll death saves at the start of each Status Phase, and they can be healed during the Status Phase by allies.

If a player character is serving as unranked crew, they are unharmed by casualties until they are the last remaining unranked crew on the ship.

Losing Mettle

Each unranked casualty or stricken officer you suffer reduces your mettle pool by one die. If an officer is killed, you lose two dice from your mettle pool instead.

Sparking Fires

When crew members are injured, they may drop lit fuses or knock over lanterns, so hits sometimes start fires on your ship, too.

When you roll to see how many casualties an attack has caused, each pair of matching casualty dice indicates that a fire has started on the ship. When a fire starts to burn on your ship, count how many there are on the fire tally on your ship sheet.

BOARDING ACTION

After ships have fired their cannons, assigned hits, and resolved the effects of damage (casualties, losing mettle, and sparking fires), ships can attempt a boarding action. Ships must be adjacent in order to board each other. If a boarding action is announced, both ships drop to 0 speed until the boarding action is resolved, as one ship throws grappling hooks over to the other.

During a boarding action, both ships roll their entire mettle pool. If the attacker has a higher result, the defender surrenders their ship (see "Victory" below). The attacker is allowed to reroll a number of their mettle dice equal to the rank of their first mate.

If the defender has a higher result, the attacker takes casualties according to the results of the defender's mettle pool, treating them like casualty dice (but ignoring pairs for sparking fires).

Repelling Boarders

It's much easier to defend a ship than attack one, as the defenders can lay traps and use their familiarity with their ship's layout to set up ambushes. Defenders also greatly benefit from cover. Because of this, the defenders reroll any 1s on their mettle dice and must use the new result.

When two ships try to grapple and board each other at the same time, neither one gets to reroll 1s for defending as described above, but both sides take casualties based on their opponents' mettle pools, as they both risk life and limb to take the other vessel! Both sides also get to reroll a number of their mettle dice equal to the rank of their first mate.

Melee Combat

After a successful boarding action, the GM might decide it's a good idea to "zoom in" and begin conventional combat. The boarding action rules above assume that a ship which has been boarded will surrender (often the case, especially with merchant ships), but this may not suit the story.

If the enemy has boarded the player characters, they probably want a chance to use class features and abilities to defend themselves. Inversely, the player characters might board an enemy ship led by a key villain, or crewed by the undead, making it natural to end ship combat and begin melee combat. You may want to end your session on a cliff-hanger here rather than run two encounters back-to-back.

Commandeering

If you have successfully captured an enemy ship through a boarding action, ship combat is likely over, unless other enemy ships are still out on the aether nearby. If this is the case, you might want to commandeer the enemy ship to continue the ship combat encounter with more firepower on your side.

Commandeering an enemy ship requires assigning crew to the vital officer stations, so this may also be a good place to end your session. If you have time, and the players want to press on, you can award them the ship and its loot, as detailed under "Victory." It's then up to them to decide who will captain the new ship and whether or not they want to hoist a new flag before ship combat continues.

SWINGING INTO BATTLE

Once ships have grappled each other and combat has broken out on the deck, the characters might want to swing from the rigging to get right into the heat of battle straight away. This uses up their action and their movement but allows them to place themselves wherever they want on the enemy ship.

Swinging from the rigging does make a character a target; enemies that can see a swinging character can use their reaction to make a ranged weapon attack with disadvantage against them.

A swinging character can make an attack of their own during this special movement—they can either make a ranged attack while swinging or a melee attack when they land against any target within range. If an attack made this way hits, it is a critical hit.

STATUS PHASE

After all ships have fired their cannons, assigned hits, resolved damage, and resolved boarding actions, ships enter the Status Phase. The Status Phase is a chance to catch your breath, heal your crew, make repairs, and put out fires.

Firefighting

Fire aboard a ship is a death sentence. Ships don't actually sink very often, but they will explode if a fire reaches the powder stores!

At the start of the Status Phase, all fires on your ship spread. Each fire creates one more fire, so the fire tally on your ship sheet doubles.

After this, you have a chance to avert disaster by putting fires out. The boatswain can automatically put out a number of fires equal to their rank. You can put out three more fires if you have the maximum possible crew, two fires if you have below the maximum crew, and one fire if you have a skeleton crew.

Using Spells. Magic spells put out a number of fires equal to the level of the spell slot used to cast the spell. The GM is free to rule that other relevant actions or cantrips can put out one fire each.

Explosion!

Once firefighting is complete, check to see if the fire has reached the powder stores. Each ship has an explosion DC based on size—smaller ships explode faster than bigger ships. Roll 1d6 and add your fire tally after firefighting. If this result exceeds your explosion DC, your ship explodes.

EXPLOSION DCS

SHIP SIZE	EXPLOSION DC	SHIP SIZE	EXPLOSION DC
Tiny	12	Large	18
Small	14	Huge	20
Medium	16	Gargantuan	22

When a ship explodes, all unranked crew on the ship are incinerated, all supplies are destroyed, all prize money is scattered into the aether, and any player characters on the ship take 52 (15d6) fire damage. Additionally, 2d4 fires start on each other ship within 2 squares of the exploding ship.

Healing

During the Status Phase, the surgeon can treat a number of casualties equal to their rank.

They decide whether to restore unranked crew (increasing the left side of the Current Crew fraction) or heal a stricken officer when they treat a casualty. If the player characters are stricken and treated by the surgeon, they regain hit points equal to 1d8 plus the surgeon's rank.

During this phase, characters with healing magic can also cast spells to treat casualties. Each healing spell restores one casualty per creature that the spell can target when cast.



Elizabeth Peiró

Surrender

Sinking a ship is hard to do—after all, wood floats! Even reducing a ship to 0 hit points only means it cannot move. While you can secure victory by completely destroying the enemy ship or killing the enemy crew to the very last, chances are they surrender first. During the end of the Status Phase, just before a new round begins, all captains must decide whether to surrender or continue fighting. If a ship runs out of mettle dice during ship combat, the crew on board stop obeying orders and surrender automatically. This can happen at any time in the Order of Battle. A ship that has surrendered will wait to be boarded so the victors can capture it.

Victory

There are four ways to claim victory over another ship:

- Capture the enemy ship through boarding action.
- Deplete the enemy ship's mettle pool to 0, forcing them to surrender.
- Survive until the enemy ship explodes.
- Accept the surrender of the enemy captain.

When you capture or destroy an enemy, you gain their entire mettle pool. When you capture an enemy, you can loot their ship.

After ship combat has ended, all stricken officers and unranked crew automatically recover from injuries unless a ship doesn't have a surgeon, in which case they remain casualties.

LEAVING SHIP COMBAT

Usually, ship combat happens after one ship has caught another through pursuit, so trying to escape from ship combat won't work, as it's likely the ship wanting to flee has already tried this and failed.

However, it is possible to leave ship combat if the other ship can't follow you anymore. This might happen for a lot of in-game reasons, but the only reliable way in these rules to achieve this is to bring the enemy ship down to 0 hit points so that it can no longer move.

At that stage, you are free to leave! But will you? A ship with 0 hit points is a sitting duck—there's a strong chance you'll be able to easily sail up behind it and demand they surrender the loot, or else you'll keep firing until there's no one left to stop you coming aboard and taking it for yourself! But perhaps you are the merciful type.

Loot

When you capture an enemy ship—either after they have surrendered or by force through boarding action—you gain its loot, and this covers a wide range of items and resources.

Prize Money

Piracy is a lucrative business! When you empty the coffers of a captured ship, the GM can feel free to use the table below for prize money, and they are encouraged to err on the side of more money rather than less!

SHIP PRIZE MONEY

SHIP TYPE	PRIZE MONEY (GP)
Sloop	3d6 × 100 (1,050)
Schooner	6d6 × 100 (2,100)
Brigantine	12d6 × 100 (4,200)
Frigate	2d8 × 1,000 (9,000)
Galleon	4d8 × 1,000 (18,000)
Man o' War	6d8 × 1,000 (27,000)

Merchant ships carry twice the usual prize money of their type. Generally speaking, all ships flying the flag of the Kingdom of Ayris are merchant ships, unless they are a privateer ship in Ayrisian service.

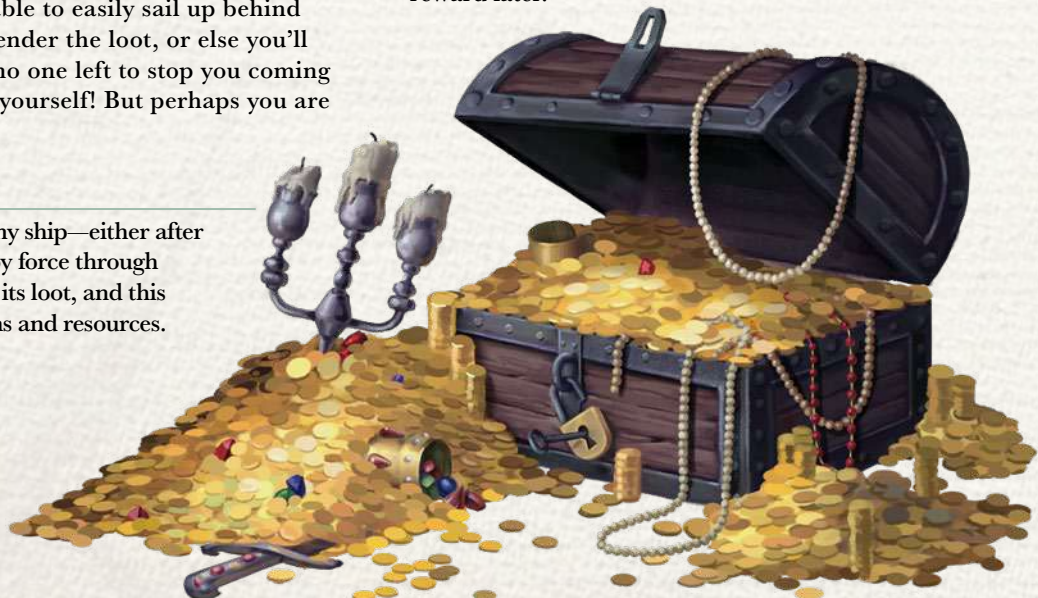
Supplies. Captured ships also have grub, grog, and gear that can be recovered by the victor. The GM decides how much of each makes sense but can default to half of the captured ship's maximum number (see "Supplies" on page 173).

Resources. Capturing ships is a great way for the GM to award unique resource items, like ammo or fuel.

Upgrades. The GM might even decide it's possible to remove upgrades from a captured ship and award them to the players. Upgrades can only be installed (or sold to an interested buyer) while docked in a port.

Crew. You also gain the surviving crew of a captured ship. You can take any amount of unranked crew from a captured vessel, and captured officers or specialists may also opt to work for you, so long as they like your reputation. Whether or not they agree to be pressed into service against their wishes is a narrative concern and is up to the GM.

Sometimes, captured ships might have non-crew passengers aboard, and these can be worth a ransom—pirate crews generally take prisoners just in case they fetch a reward later.



SHIP REPAIR

The sailing ships that traverse the Aetherial Expanse are typically large wooden vessels that are costly to make and challenging to repair. They require skilled craftsfolk, exceptional tools, and quality materials to make good repairs. Because of this, repairs are slow and costly, making most ship captains avoid dangerous situations that might threaten the well-being of their precious ships.

REPAIRS IN PORT

Typically, ships are repaired when docked in port by talented shipwrights. Most ports have some form of repair service, though costs and capacity will vary by location. Busy ports with large shipyards can boast powerful hoists and drydocks, allowing for repairs to even the largest ships. In contrast, small coastal hamlets could lack the facilities needed to fully repair anything larger than a schooner.

Repair Services

Costs to affect repairs will vary by location to account for the equipment, skill, and capacity of each location. If a repair site is busy, they might charge significantly higher prices with slower turnaround times.

As a general guideline, in-port repair services can repair 1 hit point for 50 gp per day. Repairs can sometimes be rushed, for a price. 2 hit points can be purchased for 150 gp, and 3 hit points could cost 300 gp or more per day.

These rates presume shipwrights are ready and available to work. If the repair site already has a queue of ships waiting, captains should expect to pay significantly more.

OPTIONAL RULE: DRYDOCK REPAIR

When a ship sustains extreme damage, the integrity of its frame and hull may require pulling the vessel into a drydock to provide full access to all parts of the ship.

In such cases, a ship can only be repaired to 75 percent of its maximum hit point total until it is repaired in drydock.

This could pose a problem for large ships because the number of sites capable of hauling Galleon-sized vessels from the sea is limited. Some pirate captains may prefer finding a new ship rather than paying the high costs needed to fix their damaged one.

Crew Repairs

Given the costs to pay for ship repairs, captains eagerly look to include shipwrights among their crew.

Arriving in Port. When you dock in port with an assigned shipwright officer, your ship immediately regains a number of hit points equal to your shipwright's rank without spending any gear.

This shipwright feature can't be used again until seven days have passed, or you've completed at least one travel leg with the ship.

Daily Repairs. While in port, the ship's crew can attend to repairing the ship. The time and cost of repairs may vary but improve if you have a trained shipwright overseeing the work.

To determine the rate of repair, roll a d20 and add the overseeing officer's shipwright rank to the roll. Only one officer may oversee repairs per day. If the officer has at least 1 shipwright rank, the d20 roll is made with advantage.

Consult the Docked Crew Repairs table to determine the docked rate of repair. This rate stays in effect until the ship leaves port or a new shipwright with a higher shipwright rank is assigned to oversee repairs.

DOCKED CREW REPAIRS

REPAIR ROLL	DOCKED RATE OF REPAIR
20+	3 hp per day
16 - 19	2 hp per day
11 - 15	1 hp per day
1 - 10	1 hp every 2 days

Repair Cost. Each day the crew spends repairing the ship uses 1 gear regardless of how many hit points are repaired.

REPAIRS AT SEA

Unless a ship's crew includes a shipwright, affecting repairs while at sea is impossible. For this reason, captains of military ships seek out talented shipwrights to include with their crew. Even if a shipwright is on board, repairing a vessel is a slow and difficult process.

At Sea Rate of Repair. For each full day at sea without ship combat, a shipwright officer with at least 1 shipwright rank can oversee repairs on the ship, spending 1 gear to repair 1 ship hit point.

MAGICAL REPAIR

Even with the help of magic, ship repair remains a slow and arduous process.

If a spellcaster can cast *mending* to assist crews making ship repairs, they can repair one additional hit point to the ship each day.

MAGICAL REPAIR

Some players may argue that the *mending* spell should quickly repair a ship. However, the text of the *mending* spell reads: "This spell repairs a single break or tear in an object you touch, such as a broken chain link, two halves of a broken key, a torn cloak, or a leaking wineskin."

The damage caused by cannon fire is never a single break or tear but a chaotic splintering of wood into hundreds of pieces.

Presuming all the individual wood shards could be recovered, it would take many castings to repair even a small piece of wood. Since *mending* requires 1 minute to cast, repairing a single piece of wood splintered into hundreds of pieces could take hundreds of minutes to repair. Repairing an entire ship would likely require an astoundingly long time.



Ship Mimic

CREATURES VERSUS SHIPS

The fantastical world of the Aetherial Expanse is home to monstrous creatures large enough to attack a ship, like krakens, dragons, or even the expanse's legendary cosmic turtles. This ship combat system is designed foremost for ships fighting other ships, and it's expected that the typical fifth edition combat rules apply when monsters appear. The characters will fight those monsters!

However, if you need to improvise a creature versus ship combat, these rules of thumb can help you.

CREATURES ATTACKING A SHIP

A ship is a large target. Any creature attacking a ship with a melee attack automatically hits, and a creature attacking a ship with a ranged attack must make an attack roll as normal. The ship's AC is based on its size and speed:

SHIP AC AGAINST RANGED ATTACKS

SHIP TYPE	AC	SHIP TYPE	AC
Sloop	16	Frigate	13
Schooner	15	Galleon	12
Brigantine	14	Man o' War	11

Converting Creature Damage

A good rule of thumb is to divide the damage a creature does to a ship's hull by 10 (rounding down). A creature with the Siege Monster trait doubles the damage it does to a ship's hull.

Insignificant Damage

Weapon attacks from Medium or smaller creatures can't deal damage to a ship's hull unless the attack is magical.

SHIPS ATTACKING A CREATURE

Ships use the same attacking rules as in normal ship combat when attacking a creature large enough to pose a threat to them. Roll the cannon dice; the cannons hit on a roll of 6 or higher.

When attacking creatures too small to pose a threat to the ship, like Medium humanoids, the cannon only strikes a target on a roll of 10 or higher. If a cannon's die is too small to ever roll a 10, it's ineffectual against non-ship-sized targets.

Converting Cannon Damage

Normally, a hit with a cannon only deals a single point of damage to a ship. After hitting a creature with a ship's cannon, roll that cannon's cannon die again, and multiply that die's result by 10. The creature takes that much damage.

As a reminder, these are only guidelines, and as the GM, you are encouraged to adjust the rules to fit the unique aspects of your story.

COMBAT WITHOUT A GRID

Not everyone wants to play on the grid! If you want to try ship combat using theater of the mind, you can do so with a few changes to the Movement Phase—the Attack and Status Phases still work as is.

The gridless system assumes there are only two ships. It's possible to run gridless ship combat with three or more ships in the battle, but it can be difficult to track multiple vessels without a grid.

INITIATIVE

Initiative order in the Movement Phase is no longer needed. In the gridless system, ships instead announce their movement at the same time.

THE WEATHER GAGE

At the beginning of gridless ship combat, the GM decides who has the weather gage by imagining which ships are windward (upwind) and which ships are leeward (downwind).

Ships still need to give a weather gage token to any ships that are upwind from them.

POSITIONS AND MOVEMENT

Because there is no grid, assume ships are always trying to get the best possible angle and position relative to an enemy. You don't need to worry about facing it.

Instead, there are four positions that you can be in relative to another ship: long range, standard range, short range, and close action. These positions are parallel relationships—if you are in the short range position relative to your enemy, they are in that position relative to you! To move from one position to another, you must choose whether you want to advance or retreat.

Advancing. Advancing means moving toward a target, such as from short range to close action.

Retreating. Retreating means moving away from a target, such as from standard range to long range.

Simultaneous Moves

If both ships advance, they draw closer together by one position. If both ships retreat, they draw farther away by one position.

However, if one ship advances and the other retreats, then it's a contest. Both ships roll a d20 and add their speed. The higher result wins, and the positions change according to the victor's action.

Ships can also add any additional free movement to which they have access, gaining +1 to the roll per square of free movement. This includes using fuel items, spells, and the helmsperson's rank.

Bringing Guns to Bear

Because there's no turning without the grid, Mobility does something different. Each combat position (other than close action) is named after the three cannon ranges. This means that during the Attack Phase, you can use cannons of those ranges (or greater) to attack your target. When bringing guns to bear, you can only select one side of your ship and use the weapon slots located there.

During the Attack Phase in the gridless system, less mobile ships can't always turn fast enough to bring their guns to bear on time.

- High Mobility ships always bring their guns to bear and fire them.
- Balanced Mobility ships must roll 5 or higher on a d20 at the start of the Attack Phase or fail to bring their guns to bear.
- Low Mobility ships must roll 10 or higher on a d20 at the start of the Attack Phase or fail to bring their guns to bear.

CLOSE ACTION

A lot can happen in close action when using the gridless system. As in gridded ship combat, cannons hit on a 3 or greater instead of 6 or greater, making this position analogous to being adjacent on the grid.

Bringing Guns to Bear. All ships can automatically bring guns to bear in the close action position.

Grappling and Boarding. Boarding action works the same as usual when two ships are side by side.

Ramming. While in this position, you can use your movement action to ram the enemy ship instead of advancing or retreating, and the enemy ship can only avoid this if they try to retreat and win the speed contest.

Crossing the T. While in this position, you can attempt to cross the T in the Attack Phase instead of firing weapons, but only if you have the weather gage. Each ship rolls a d20 and adds a modifier based on their Mobility:

- Low Mobility ships add +1
- Balanced Mobility ships add +2
- High Mobility ships add +3

If the ship with the weather gage rolls higher, they successfully cross the T and can deliver a devastating broadside, rolling all weapons on one side of their ship, hitting on a 3 or above, and dealing double damage on every hit.

If the ship with the weather gage rolls lower, they have squandered the wind advantage, and the other ship takes the weather gage from them!

"It is through maritime combat that a sailor shows their true mettle. There's the person in front of you, there's the people around you, there's cannon fire, and the ship underneath you. And, through all this, there's still the sea. That's where most of us will end up in the end."

— Iris Van der Burg, former captain of the Kipo



Chapter 13 CREWS

“Teruko and her whole-blasted crew should be flogged and hung from Gate of the Fatherland, their bloodied bodies dangling as a warning to any who dare question Karel’s might.”

- Admiral Caturix during the War of the Invaders

The most important part of any ship isn’t the sails or cannons—it’s the crew. Finding and hiring a good crew is paramount to success on the Aetherial Expanse, and it’s always worth scoping out the local drinking holes when dropping anchor in a port to see what sort of bodies you can find.

There are two types of crew members: officers and unranked crew. Officers are unique, named characters, each assigned a particular station on the ship. Unranked crew are laborers that operate and maintain the ship itself, and

while they needn’t be nameless (see “Crew Names” in appendix D), their specific roles and actions aren’t specified. Unranked crew are a combination of sailors, topmen, deckhands, gunners, and so forth.

FINDING PERSONNEL

Pirates and smugglers can be found incognito at any port on the expanse—and they can be found reveling out in the open on the pirate haven known as the Isle of Drakes. Pirates have a dark joke of using their wanted posters, issued by the Karelagne Empire and the Kingdom of Ayris for crimes against humanity, as “business cards” of sorts, proclaiming their vile and oft-exaggerated deeds for all the world to behold.

ACQUIRING A WANTED POSTER

Whenever a character enters a tavern, the GM can provide them with 1d4 wanted posters for pirates they can recruit as officers for their crew, chosen randomly from the Wanted Posters table found in Appendix C. While on the Isle of Drakes, the characters can find 1d6 wanted posters instead.

FINDING THE SCALLYWAG

Once the characters have a wanted poster in hand, finding the whereabouts of this pirate takes some time. A character must succeed on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discover where this pirate is. A character can gain advantage on this check by paying 25 gp in bribes and expenses to hunt the pirate down. Rarer and more powerful pirates might require more money to gain advantage on the check to find them at the GM's discretion. If this check fails, the characters spend the day searching in vain and must try again on another day.

HIRING A PIRATE

All a character needs to do to bring a new pirate onto their ship's crew is to present their wanted poster and haggle with the pirate for a good price to hire them onto your crew.

Haggling

The price required to hire a pirate is the same as the reward on their wanted poster. However, a good haggle can bring this price down. First, a character makes a Charisma (Deception, Intimidation, or Persuasion) check to convince that pirate that their crew is worth joining. Add the rank of your ship's captain to the result of this check. Based on the outcome of that check, the pirate reduces their hiring cost. See the Haggling Price table below.

HAGGLING PRICE

CHARISMA CHECK RESULT	HIRING PRICE REDUCTION
0-10	0 percent
11-15	20 percent
16-20	40 percent
21-25	50 percent
26+	60 percent

Unranked Crew

In contrast to officers, unranked crew can be hired in most ports. GMs should use their judgement for determining how many sailors are available and at what price. In the dangerous waters of the Expanse, unranked crew are typically willing to join a crew for 25 gp plus per individual before haggling.

SEAFARER ADVANCEMENT

Chapter 7: Seafarer Advancement provides additional details regarding each officer station, including optional features for officer ranks higher than 1.

OFFICERS

Officers are generally senior crew members with specific expertise allowing them to fill stations on a sailing vessel.

Officers should be listed by their station on the ship's manifest, along with their ranks and any boons.

Given their important roles, an officer's status becomes necessary to track as they may become casualties during a battle. Next to each officer's name, you should track their status to show if they are stricken or dead.

An officer of your crew can become stricken if injured (see "Casualties" on page 188) or underfed (see "Grub" on page 173). A stricken officer is effectively out of action—their bonuses are ignored and their station is treated as empty (except when rolling to assign casualties).

A dead officer is permanently out of action.

OFFICER STATIONS

There are ten officer stations aboard every ship. Officer stations allow for one crew member at a time, much like how a weapon slot can only hold one cannon at a time.

These stations are grouped into five key and five secondary officer stations. Key officers are vital—no ship can operate effectively without them. Secondary officers are optional, but sailing without a full crew of officers is going to make it much harder to win ship battles, make repairs, and keep morale high.

Ranks

Anyone can be assigned to an officer station, but you should aim to assign crew members with the correct training to each position.

This training is represented by officer ranks, which indicate how competent a crew member is in that position. These ranks generally range from 1 to 3, while an extremely talented officer might be rank 4, and the very best officers in the Aetherial Expanse have a rank of 5.

Crew members can have multiple ranks, allowing them fill various stations. For example, imagine you need a quartermaster, and you meet Sara 'Cat-Eye' Ghaffari. She's got the skills you're looking for with a quartermaster rank of 3, but she also has a captain rank of 1 and a boatswain rank of 2. This makes her versatile—in a pinch, she can cover other stations if one is suddenly empty.

Promotion

NPCs can earn ranks by serving on ships. After each journey longer than three legs, and after each victorious ship combat, choose one member of your crew to promote. No matter their station, they gain one rank in a station of your choice. The captain has the final say when deciding who gains a promotion. Unranked crew can also be given promotions, turning them into officers. These officer ranks directly benefit your ship, as detailed under "Station Descriptions" below.

STATION DESCRIPTIONS

Following are descriptions of the ten officer stations found on every ship. The first five stations (captain, first mate, quartermaster, navigator, and helmsperson) are key roles required aboard every vessel. A ship without individuals assigned to these key roles function poorly, and sailing becomes difficult and dangerous.

Key Officer Roles

The following stations represent the five key roles needed to operate a sailing ship effectively.

Captain. Captains are the guiding voice on the ship and, ultimately, the person to whom everyone looks for direction.

When the ship's mettle pool resets, it gains a number of additional dice equal to your captain's officer rank (see "Mettle" on page 199).

First Mate. The first mate ensures the chain of command functions properly throughout the ship.

When you roll your mettle pool during boarding action, you can reroll a number of mettle dice equal to the first mate's rank (see "Boarding Action" on page 188).

Quartermaster. The quartermaster is responsible for ensuring a ship's supplies are sufficient for the planned voyage.

At the end of a travel leg, choose 1 type of ship supply (grub, grog, or gear) expended during that leg (see "Spending Supplies" on page 179). You regain 1 unit of the selected supply. You can use this ability a number of times equal to your quartermaster rank. You refresh all uses of this ability when you dock in a port.

Navigators. Navigators chart a ship's route through the Aetherial Expanse. Navigators with magical abilities are called Wayfinders (see page 176).

You can reroll a failed Intelligence (Navigation) check. You can do this a number of times equal to your Navigator rank, but no more than once per travel leg (see page 176). You regain all uses of this feature when the ship docks at a port.

Helmsperson. Whenever the ship is under sail, the helmsperson is responsible for steering the ship.

Once per round during ship combat, you can move your ship 1 square for free during the Movement Phase. You can do this a number of times equal to your helmsperson rank. You refresh all uses of this ability at the end of ship combat.

MISSING KEY OFFICERS

During play, it is possible for one of the five key officer stations to go empty. When this occurs, the crew will demand these positions be filled before continuing their journey. How this plays out is left for the GM to adjudicate. Unranked characters can always be assigned to officer stations, though the ship won't benefit from the abilities that a ranked officer brings to that role.

"Well, captain, I'm the perfect choice for a new navigator. See those stars over there...they look a bit like a bottle, right? That means there's booze on the way! And those stars look a bit like coins, which means coins are in our future. Right captain?"

– Tio Abernathy, unranked crew member

Secondary Roles

The following stations are not needed for basic ship operations but provide additional capabilities of great value to the crew and their ship.

Boatswain. The boatswain oversees the quality of the ship's equipment and the crew who use it.

If the boatswain station is empty, your ship loses a point of speed.

When firefighting, you automatically put out a number of fires equal to the boatswain's rank (see "Firefighting" on page 189).

Cook. Cooks ensure the crew has enough to eat during voyages at sea.

If you don't have a cook, you must apply -1 to each mettle die whenever you roll them.

When you complete a travel leg during a journey, reduce the number of grub you need to consume by the cook's rank (see "Spending Supplies" on page 179).

Master Gunner. The master gunner oversees the ship's weapons and their use during battle.

If the master gunner station is empty, you cannot use unique ammunition.

When you fire weapons during the Attack Phase, you can reroll a number of misses equal to the rank of the master gunner, whether you have the weather gage token of a target or not. If you have the weather gage, this ability stacks with its effects. In other words, you can reroll a miss (because you have the weather gage), and if that reroll is also a miss, you can reroll a second time (because you have a master gunner aboard).

Shipwright. Shipwrights oversee the repair and maintenance of the ship.

If the shipwright station is empty, you can't make repairs at sea and must dock at a port to use gear to restore hit points to your ship (see "Ship Repairs" on page 191).

When you dock in a port, your ship immediately regains a number of hit points equal to your shipwright's rank without spending any gear. You can't use this feature again until seven days have passed, or you've completed at least one travel leg.

Surgeon. Surgeons ensure injured crew return to duty as quickly as possible.

If the surgeon station is empty, stricken officers and unranked casualties do not automatically recover after ship combat.

During the Status Phase of ship combat, you can cancel a number of casualties caused by enemy cannon fire equal to your surgeon's rank each round.

APPOINTING OFFICERS

Officers are appointed when the ship is docked in port before heading out to sea. Assigned officers remain in that position until the ship again arrives in port and the crew's manifest can be updated.

Replacing Officers

It's entirely possible to lose one (or all) of your vital crew members—captain, first mate, quartermaster, navigator, or helmsperson—while out on the Aetherial Expanse. How do you replace them without making new hires?

Captain's Station. If the captain's station is empty due to mutiny, then any other character with a rank in captain can take the post if they win a majority vote among the crew. If no one else on the ship has any ranks in captain when a mutiny occurs, either the first mate or quartermaster automatically gains 1 rank in captain and is elected to the position.

Other Stations. In all other cases, an empty station can be filled by any player character—you simply don't gain the benefit of rank from that station.

When appointing crew to empty stations, the captain has the final say over who is appointed where. If there is no captain, one must first be elected.

Assigning Unranked Crew. If an unranked crew member is assigned to an officer station, you must reduce your total unranked crew by one—unranked crew in officer stations can be sent back to your pool of unranked crew later if they didn't gain any ranks while assigned to a station.

Feature Uses. If a new officer is assigned to a station while the ship is at sea, any of that station's features with limited uses are not reset by the change in personnel. As an example, if a new quartermaster is assigned at sea, the number of times they can use their feature to ignore supply costs must include the number of times the previous quartermaster used that same feature.

BOONS

Some officers have boons. Some boons are always active and continually grant your ship a bonus, while others must be activated. If an NPC officer has a boon that must be activated, the ship's captain chooses when to use it. If the ship's captain isn't a player character, then the GM decides when it would benefit the ship to use this boon.

As a general rule of thumb, officers only have one boon, but some exceptionally rare officers might have two.

Boons are detailed in chapter 7 (see page 197).

"They're brutes, the lot of them. They smell of booze, sing crude songs, and steal food right from my plate.

It's insufferable. But...they always manage to say something nice about my paintings."

—March Finch, landscape artist

SPECIALISTS

Some characters have important roles but perform functions that the ship doesn't necessarily need, so they don't need to be assigned to a station—we call these characters "specialists." Specialists don't have ranks like other officers do; they only have boons.

Space is always a premium on aether-faring vessels, and specialists generally need a room of their own (to house equipment, conduct experiments, and so on) to offer a ship their services. This means you can carry any number of specialists on your ship as passengers, but only two can be "active" at a given time. You can swap out which specialists are assigned to these slots when you dock in a port.

Below are some examples of specialists, but the GM can create more to suit their game.

Artist. Life on the aether can get tedious, making artists a popular addition to any crew, whether a musician, poet, or painter. Painters, in particular, are often taken on long ship journeys to sketch and record scenes from the voyage.

Arcanist. Any mage with sufficient skill is welcome on the expanse—the ability to summon wind and conjure waves is always in demand, not to mention the possibilities of a mage on board who can handle and refine aetherium.

Spymaster. No matter how far out one sails, one can't outrun politics. This is especially the case amidst the conflict between Ayris and Karelagne. Still, even if you're not looking to dig up the weaknesses of your political rivals, a spymaster can help uncover secret wind routes or intercept correspondence, which is often critical to tracking down ships.





UNRANKED CREW

All crew members who aren't officers are unranked crew. The number of unranked crew required to get the most out of a vessel depends on the ship's type—bigger ships need more crew.

The Ship Crew Size table lists both the maximum crew and skeleton crew numbers for each ship type. A ship can't sustain more unranked crew than its maximum crew number, but it's a good idea to always have the biggest crew possible.

Maximum Crew. While a ship carries its maximum crew, it gains one extra point of speed.

Skeleton Crew. The skeleton crew number is the threshold under which you no longer have enough labor to sail the ship effectively.

Short Staffed. While a ship has a number of unranked crew equal to or fewer than its skeleton crew, it can only take part in one phase during each round of ship combat—either Movement, Attack, or Status.

SHIP CREW SIZE

SHIP TYPE	SKELETON CREW	MAXIMUM CREW
Sloop	12	24
Schooner	16	32
Brigantine	20	40
Frigate	26	52
Galleon	32	64
Man o' War	49	99

If you want to create new recruitable crewmates or determine the name of an unranked crewmate on the fly, refer to the Crew Names table found in Appendix D.

OPTIONAL RULE: PIRATE PRIZE SHARES

Pirate vessels don't pay wages at the end of a journey like other vessels. Instead, they adhere to "no prey, no pay," as in, no one gets paid until a successful ship capture—a great way to encourage the crew to risk their lives in boarding action!

But how much does everyone get? Pirate ships use prize shares to split the booty according to station. When you capture a ship and win its prize money, follow the following steps to divvy it out:

- Count up your total number of shares (using the Prize Shares by Station table).
- Divide the prize money by the total number of shares.
- The result equals the prize for one share—pay these out according to the Prize Shares by Station table.

PRIZE SHARES BY STATION

STATION	PRIZE SHARES
Captain, First Mate, Quartermaster	Three shares
Wayfinder, Boatswain, Master Gunner	Two Shares
Other ranked officers	One and one-half shares
Unranked crew	One share

METTLE

Mettle measures your crew's morale, represented as a pool of d4s. The more dice you have in your mettle pool, the higher the crew's spirits.

Beginning Mettle. When you first crew a ship, you begin with four d4s in your mettle pool, plus a number equal to your captain's rank.

Sometimes, the GM must rule that the mettle pool resets back to 4d4 plus the captain's rank. This might happen if a large majority of your crew are replaced when you dock at port—the new sailors boarding your ship don't know how good (or bad) it was before they got there! The GM decides when it is appropriate for the mettle pool to reset, within reason.

GAINING METTLE

There are two ways to gain mettle. The first is by gaining reputation (detailed later in this chapter). For each point of total reputation you've earned for your flag, you gain one more d4 in your mettle pool.

The second is by damaging enemy ships during ship combat. Each successful hit when firing cannons also adds one d4 to your mettle pool.

LOSING METTLE

There are also two main ways to lose mettle. The first is by taking casualties—whenever a member of your unranked crew is wounded, or a ranked officer becomes stricken (see “Casualties” on page 188), you lose a die from your mettle pool. If a ranked officer dies in ship combat, you lose two d4s instead of one. Having a surgeon is the best way to mitigate the dangers of injury during ship combat.

You can also lose mettle during journeys. For each travel leg you complete without burning a point of grog, you must remove one die from your mettle pool.

STEALING METTLE

Sometimes, you can steal mettle dice directly from an enemy ship's pool.

If you fly a black or red flag during pursuit (see page 200) and your total reputation is higher than the total reputation of the enemy ship, you can steal dice from their mettle pool and add them to your own. The number of dice you steal depends on how much more reputation you have than your target—for every 2 points of total reputation you have higher than your enemy, you can steal one mettle die.

If you capture or destroy an enemy ship, you steal the enemy ship's entire remaining mettle pool.

Enemy Reputation

If an enemy ship's reputation is not defined, GMs should assign one that is consistent with their story's needs. Merchant ships often have no reputation, while other vessels have a total reputation that is at least equal to the number of dice in its mettle pool plus its captain's rank.

Final Stand

According to the rules above, it's possible (and often likely) that a ship with a foreboding reputation can use fame alone to disarm its prey. Merchant ships frequently have no reputation, so pirates with a high total reputation are encouraged to fly the Jolly Roger, steal all of their target's mettle, and force a surrender before they even board.

Underdog Fight. Sometimes, it's narratively appropriate for a ship's crew to stand firm and fight even against overwhelming odds. At the GM's discretion, an underdog that has lost all their mettle dice can still make a final stand.

Have the underdog roll 1d20. On a roll of 10 or above, the underdog gains half their mettle dice back; on a roll of 9 or below, they gain only one mettle die back.

ROLLING METTLE

It's best to have as many mettle dice in your pool at all times as you possibly can to avoid running low and risking a mutiny, but there's another reason to collect them as you sail the aether: boarding action. When one ship tries to capture another, both ships roll their mettle pools and compare to see who has the highest total. You can find more details on this in “Boarding Action” in chapter 12 (see page 188).

MUTINY

Running out of mettle dice means the crew of your ship has lost faith in the captain. When this happens, a new captain must be elected, and the mettle pool resets to 4d4 plus the new captain's rank.

A mutiny may not always be bloody—the crew will often be happy to shuffle the officers around without marooning anyone or forcing them to walk the plank. This can lead to hard feelings, as a dethroned captain might begin plotting their return to power. And, if the captain refuses to abdicate power, things get bloody quick.

Mutinies can be narratively significant, meaning the GM should feel free to make executive decisions when they happen. For example, who is leading the mutiny? You can always roll a d10 to randomly select an officer, but if there is a character on board the ship who seems like a good pick, feel free to decide that they are responsible.

This also means that a GM should feel free to remove dice from the mettle pool if the captain takes actions that make them unpopular with the crew. Even if the ship performs well in ship combat and is fully stocked with grog, no one likes a captain with a penchant for meaningless floggings.

If a ship mutinies during combat or pursuit, this is instead a surrender (see “Surrender” on page 190). If no one else on the ship has any captain ranks when a mutiny occurs, either the first mate or quartermaster automatically gains 1 rank in captain and is elected to the position.

REPUTATION

Word travels fast on the Silvery Sea. Depending on the actions you and your crew take, your reputation will inevitably grow—and change. Renown is just as important as gold on the aether, perhaps even more so, and whether you want to be respected or feared, you'll find that having more reputation is always better than having less.

If you're creating your own adventures, the characters should gain at least 1 point of reputation per game session. Small events should grant only 1 point, and a single event should rarely grant more than 5 points at once.

FLAGS

Each ship flies a unique flag, and a ship's reputation at sea is directly tied to its flag.

When you first commandeer a ship, you must create a flag for your vessel. Your reputation points are tied to this flag. You'll need to track the reputation points earned while flying that flag. Note that you can have multiple flags, each with separate reputation tallies.

Black and Red Flags

Pirate vessels typically have two versions of their flag: the black and the red. The black flag is commonly associated with the classic skull and crossbones, flying most often to build reputation and strike fear into the hearts of enemies (see "Mettle" on page 199).

The red flag, also called the bloody flag, is a crimson version of a typical jolly roger, and it signals "no quarter." A ship only hoists this flag to signal that they will give no mercy and expect none in return. For the purposes of reputation, these two versions of a flag are considered the same.

REPUTATION TYPES

There are four types of reputation on the Aetherial Expanse, corresponding to the axes of alignment: law against chaos, and good against evil. When you take a public action that corresponds to one of law, chaos, good, or evil, you gain points in that type of reputation, and these are tracked separately. Following are some examples of actions that might award different types of reputation.

- Accepting/ignoring surrender (good/evil)
- Evading the law (chaos)
- Responding to signals for help (good)
- Attacking civilians (evil)
- Honoring a deal (lawful)
- Looting the rich to feed the poor (good)
- Attacking under a false flag (chaos)
- Obeying a chain of command (lawful)

When running your own adventures or if the characters take an action that you think should affect their reputation, you can use the guidelines below to determine how much of an effect an action will have. Ultimately, these are just guidelines to help the GMs determine the size of their reputation rewards.

VARIANT RULE: CURRENT REPUTATION

You can make the characters' good and evil (as well as lawful or chaotic) deeds cancel each other out in terms of reputation. Each point of reputation you gain also changes your current reputation. Unlike total reputation, which counts up forever, your current reputation moves around constantly, adjusting based on your most recent action. Your current reputation consists of two values – a good/evil value and a lawful/chaotic value.

You can think of it as a first impression that people get of you and your ship, and it's tracked as you earn reputation. Current reputation is also attached to your flag—if you're not flying a flag when you gain a point of reputation, your current reputation is unaffected. When you first commandeer a ship and create your flag, your current reputation is neutral, neither good, evil, lawful, or chaotic. This indicates that people lack strong feelings about you or have mixed feelings about you. In either case, they're not sure what to expect from you next.

When you gain a point of reputation, you adjust the relevant value. Gaining "good" reputation adjusts your good/evil value to be more good. Similarly, gaining "evil" reputation adjusts your good/evil value to be more evil. 1 point of good reputation and 1 point of evil reputation cancel each other out—but remember, all points gained go into their own tallies (and into total reputation) permanently. Some NPCs won't appreciate that you've "canceled out" your evil deeds if they have their own rules about how much evil reputation they'll tolerate. Your lawful/chaotic value is adjusted in the same way.

Your current reputation affects how NPCs react to you. The adventure you are playing might explicitly explain when this is the case, but the GM is free to create their own interpretations of this outside the adventure. For example, when speaking with a particularly chaotic pirate, a player character might have advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks while speaking with them, but only if the player character has a current reputation of chaotic 3 or higher.

Affecting a Single Person

Actions that only affect a single person rarely increase your reputation significantly, but sometimes helping the right person (or crossing the wrong one) can make an enormous difference:

- Taking action that affects one person with no social standing, like a disgraced aristocrat or a friendless deckhand (no reputation change).
- Taking action that affects one person with moderate social standing, such as a port customs officer or a well-liked bartender (+1 reputation).
- Taking action that affects one person with significant social standing, like a popular musician, an influential aristocrat, or a renowned pirate captain (+5 reputation).

Affecting a Community

Most sailors only gain reputation when their actions impact another ship or a community in a significant way:

- Taking action that significantly affects a far-flung community or a crew with a total reputation of 10 or less (+1 reputation).
- Taking action that affects a community on a major trade lane or a well-known crew with a total reputation of 11 to 30 (+3 reputation).
- Taking action that significantly affects a significant hub of civilization or a legendary crew with a total reputation of 31 or higher (+5 reputation).

Affecting the Whole Sea

Few sailors ever do something that causes a stir across the entire Aetherial Expanse, but legends of these pirates echo down through the annals of history.

Any action that bards would sing songs about in taverns for years to come—discovering the lost civilization of Astrium, sinking the feared Karelagne ship-of-the-line *INS Thunderchild*, or finding a fabled treasure hoard—adds +10 to the reputation.

TOTAL REPUTATION

The sum of all reputation points you gained under your flag is your total reputation. This represents how far your ship's name and deeds have spread, for good or ill.

In many ways, total reputation is more valuable than any individual type of reputation, as the more total reputation you have, the more social and political power you can wield (not to mention, it increases the amount of mettle dice you can access in ship battles). It doesn't matter whether people like you—everyone on the Silvery Seas respects a well-traveled name.

The GM might even decide that a higher total reputation gives the characters discounts on ship upgrades, or grants advantage on Charisma checks to bend the ear of powerful figures.

FALSE FLAGS

Because a ship's reputation is tied to its flag, crews might want to identify as a different ship. Ships under Ayrissian or Karelagne command aren't as likely to do this, but pirates enthusiastically collect flags they can fly to confuse their enemies. These are called false flags.

When you fly a flag other than your own, any reputation you gain affects that flag instead. Ships usually only do this when they must, or they risk missing valuable reputation for their own flag!

Faction Flags

Flags that belong to factions (such as the flags of the Ayrissian Kingdom and the Karelagne Empire) don't gain reputation because the actions of one ship do not affect the reputation of a large faction.

While flying one of these flags, other ships in that faction automatically assume you are friendly, and ships from enemy factions automatically consider you a foe.

SHIP REPUTATION

Flags are used for identification because most ships look relatively similar, especially at a distance. However, in some rare cases, a ship will be so recognizable that its reputation is tied to itself—the actual hull and masts—instead of its flag. This is only the case with unique ships, such as the Ayrissian flagship *AMS Stratagem* or the Karelagne flagship *INS Thunderchild*.

Extremely unique or recognizable ships cannot fly false flags, as there is no way to disguise the ship's allegiances or reputation. Actions taken by unique ships always accrue reputation. If a crew of another ship successfully captures a unique ship, the GM decides which reputation to apply to that ship, depending on who sees it. If someone knows that the ship has been captured and who did the capturing, they'll use the reputation of the ship's captors. If they are unaware that the ship was captured, they'll use the unique ship's old reputation until they realize what's happened.

Admiral Abrexta Kathinel







Part 5

FRIENDS AND FOES

Congratulations on your admission to the D'Ayre Center for the Study of Aetherial Beasts! Understanding the creatures that live within the Starlight Seas is both a noble calling and an exciting field of research, though not always a safe one. Please remember to note where you want your remains delivered if you perish during your studies. We can't wait to see where your research takes you!

The Center is a recent addition to the Imperial Archipelago, funded to honor Pelle D'Ayre, who died last year at the hands of a beast known only as The Mauler. Pelle's relatives, including Prince-Captain Tammon D'Ayre, created the Center to help future adventurers understand what they may face while on the Starlight Seas. Pelle, for example, was convinced he could communicate with the creature, which is now believed to be an ancient aether dragon based on a review of the sketches made by those in the vicinity. Sadly, he and the flotilla of research vessels brought to the beast's last-known location were lost while attempting to "say hello." This is no longer a practice that we at the Center recommend for future expeditions.

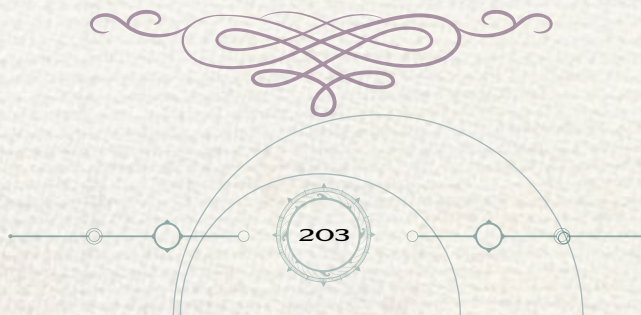
The D'Ayre Center's work includes documenting aetherbeasts and the many other creatures of the Starlight Seas. We catalog the creature's relative friendliness, attack methods, and any identified weaknesses. While some have accused us of "wanting to drench the Starlight Sea in the blood of beasts as vengeance on behalf of some idiot D'Ayre cousin," we see our work as more educational than confrontational. Recent successes include chronicling the mating habits of the comet eels (which we hope will help us find their spawning grounds), a first-ever detailed rendering of cosmic turtle shell scutes (believed to be among the oldest creatures in the Expanse), and a guide to the care and feeding of ship cats.

Whatever brought you to the Center, we're happy to support the field of study you find most intriguing. Interested in watching the world burn? Feel free to learn more about lava serpents or do a stint in the service of Levvra the Ember as she sets the world on fire in the name of the goddess Asteth. However, we must note that Levvra's current affiliation with the Center is unclear, given the recent receipt of warm ashes delivered to the Center bearing the name of a previous researcher. More of a life-after-death type? We are intrigued to uncover information about the fabled Starscourge Pirates, though attempting to leave their employment is rumored to lead to undeath – an unparalleled opportunity to bring a new perspective to your studies!

Finally, there is an opportunity for additional funding for your work if you can find and kill the Mauler that eviscerated the young Pelle D'Ayre. While I cannot recommend entering the lair of an Aether Dragon, ancient or otherwise, anyone who successfully brings us the skull of that hideous creature will receive extra funding and/or a commemorative plaque. Possibly both!

Welcome again, and happy hunting!

*—A transcription of questionable authenticity
capturing the welcome address to researchers joining
the D'Ayre Center for the Study of Aetherial Beasts*





Chapter 14

THREATS OF THE STARLIGHT SEAS

This chapter presents creatures found in the Aetherial Expanse, presented in alphabetical order.

USING STAT BLOCKS

The stat blocks presented in this chapter represent “average” versions of each creature. GMs are encouraged to adjust aspects of the stat block to fit the specifics of their games, with a few suggestions described below.

SHIPMATES

Creatures serving aboard ships sailing the Aetherial Expanse may optionally have a detailed understanding of sailing vessels and their operations. Consider adding the following abilities to these individuals.

Navigator. The individual is proficient with the Navigation skill (see page 176).

Officer Roles. The individual may have one or more ranks in officer stations (see page 195). The number of

ranks possessed by these individuals correlates to their sailing experience.

As a general guideline, new recruits might have a rank of 1 in a single role, while a wily veteran of the seas could know up to 3 roles with a maximum of 5 ranks in their preferred role.

AFFECTED BY AETHER

This chapter includes numerous examples of creatures transformed by contact with the aetherial seas. GMs are encouraged to create their own wondrous designs for NPCs and monsters affected by this magical plane. Any mundane creature or individual who endured a traumatic event within aether or with long-term exposure to the aether or aetherium could exhibit alterations and unusual magical effects.

STAT BLOCKS BY CHALLENGE RATING

CR	STAT BLOCK	CREATURE TYPE
0	Buucab, Individual	Fiend (Devil)
0	Ship Cat	Monstrosity
1/8	Automaton	Construct
1/8	Sailor	Humanoid
1/4	Astral Merfolk Fisher	Humanoid (Merfolk, Shapechanger)
1/4	Hardened Islander	Humanoid
1/2	Aether Mephit (page 150)	Elemental
1/2	Aetherwolf	Beast (Aetherbeast)
1/2	Militia Member	Humanoid
1/2	Novice Agent	Humanoid
1/2	Tinderbloom	Plant
1	Aether Crocodile	Beast (Aetherbeast)
1	Aether Dragon Wyrmling	Dragon
1	Astral Merfolk Warrior	Humanoid (Merfolk, Shapechanger)
1	Buucab, Harrier	Fiend (Devil)
1	Comet Eel	Beast (Aetherbeast)
1	Giant Aether Horse	Beast (Aetherbeast)
1	Island Archer	Humanoid
1	Strangling Creeper	Plant
2	Astral Merrow	Monstrosity
2	Blazing Carcajou	Elemental
2	Buccaneer	Humanoid
2	Lava Serpent	Elemental
2	Swarm of Buucab	Swarm of Fiends
3	Aether Naiad	Fey
3	Buucab, Drone	Fiend (Devil)
3	Cloudshrike	Elemental
3	Draining Creeper	Plant
3	Giant Aetherwolf	Beast (Aetherbeast)
3	Hunter Aethershark	Beast (Aetherbeast)
3	Veteran Agent	Humanoid
4	Starblade	Undead

CR	STAT BLOCK	CREATURE TYPE
5	Aetherdactyl	Beast (Aetherbeast)
5	Aether Elemental	Elemental
5	Ashen Air Elemental	Elemental
5	Astral Merfolk Tidespeaker	Humanoid (Merfolk, Shapechanger)
5	Fierce Buccaneer	Humanoid
5	Jungle Siren	Plant
5	Master Agent	Humanoid
5	Molten Earth Elemental	Elemental
5	Starspeaker	Undead (Warlock)
5	Starrydew	Plant
6	Aetherlion	Beast (Aetherbeast)
6	Giant Aether Crocodile	Beast (Aetherbeast)
6	Giant Aethershark	Beast (Aetherbeast)
6	Ship Mimic	Monstrosity
6	Technomage	Humanoid (Wizard)
7	Squall Caller	Humanoid (Wizard)
7	Young Aether Dragon	Dragon
8	Alacrity Scholar	Humanoid (Wizard)
8	Swarm of Comet Eels	Swarm of Beasts (Aetherbeast)
8	Commander	Humanoid
8	Contingent of Soldiers	Contingent of Humanoids
8	Knife Master	Humanoid
9	Coral Guardian	Construct
9	Grizzled Buccaneer	Humanoid
10	Young Feathered Star	Celestial
11	Algol	Monstrosity
15	Adult Aether Dragon	Dragon
16	Astral Titan	Giant
20	Feathered Star	Celestial
21	Cosmic Turtle	Monstrosity
22	Ancient Aether Dragon	Dragon



AETHERBEASTS

Aetherbeasts are creatures that swim within the aether seas of the Expanse. Beautiful, nightmarish sea creatures, countless theories abound as to their origin. Some scholars believe Aetherbeasts are creatures native to the Astral Plane that have adapted to the oceanic environment of the Aetherial Expanse. Others believe they were beasts brought to the Expanse from the Material Plane and have mutated over centuries of exposure to aether.

Regardless of their origin, aetherbeasts were given names by people from the Material Plane who were familiar with the animals of their homelands. An aetherwolf, for example, wasn't named that because it especially resembles a wolf (it more closely resembles a voracious, wildly colored sea serpent) but because it behaves similarly to a wolf: it's a carnivorous pack hunter that uses vicious claws and fangs to tear its prey apart, while manipulating the aether to dazzle attackers with bursts of magical power.

Myriad types of aetherbeast exist, and their classification is hazy at best. Some scholars believe aetherwolves, for instance, are simply the juvenile form of aethersharks, a larger carnivore drawn to blood spilled in the aether. Though the truth of these creatures might never be fully understood, all a sailor needs to know is that aetherbeasts spell trouble and should never be underestimated.

CREATING AN AETHERBEAST

Aetherbeasts can use the stat block of any Beast, with the changes below, which increase its challenge rating to 1 (if it's CR 1/2 or lower), by 1 (if it's CR 1 to CR 5), or by 2 (if it's CR 6 or higher).

Creatures can use spells like *polymorph* and features such as the Druid's Wild Shape to transform into an aetherbeast (using the creature's altered CR) as normal. Spells like *conjure beasts* can also summon aetherbeasts in this manner. Aetherbeasts alter the base creature's stat block in the following ways:

Creature Type. Its type is Beast (Aetherbeast).

Speeds. Its walking speed is 10 feet and it has a swimming speed equal to the base creature's walking speed (or 20 feet, whichever is higher).

Damage Immunity. If its challenge rating is 3 or higher, it gains immunity to one damage type of your choice, typically acid, cold, psychic, or radiant damage.

Language. It can understand Aetherian. If its Intelligence score is 6 or higher, it can also read and speak Aetherian.

Aetheric Adaptation. The aetherbeast can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

New Action. The aetherbeast knows one spell from the Aethercasting Spell by Challenge Rating table and gains the Aethercasting action. It uses Constitution as its spellcasting ability.

Aethercasting (1/Day). The aetherbeast casts <<spell name>>, requiring no material components and using Constitution as its spellcasting ability (spell save DC XX).



AETHERCASTING SPELLS BY CHALLENGE RATING

CR	SPELL NAME
<= 1	<i>bane, hideous laughter, inflict wounds, magic missile, sleep, thunderwave</i>
2	<i>blindness/deafness, blur, enlarge/reduce (self only), hold person, invisibility, moonbeam, spider climb</i>
3	<i>blink, dispel magic, fireball, fly, lightning bolt, tongues</i>
4	<i>banishment, confusion, dimension door</i>
5	<i>cone of cold, conjure elemental, dominate person, hold monster, telekinesis</i>
6	<i>chain lightning, create undead, disintegrate, flesh to stone, globe of invulnerability, move earth</i>
7	<i>etherealness, fire storm, mirage arcane, regenerate, teleport</i>
8	<i>control weather, feeblemind, incendiary cloud</i>
9+	<i>foresight, time stop, true resurrection, storm of vengeance</i>

A creature that transforms into an aetherbeast can only use an Aethercasting trait once and must complete a long rest before it can do so again, even if it transforms into a different creature with an Aethercasting trait before then.

AETHERDACTYL

The aetherdactyl possesses an uncommon ability among aetherbeasts—the ability to fly. Ships that trawl the Aetherial Expanse keep a careful eye out for aetherdactyls when sailing outside the typical trade lanes, for these soaring predators tend to roost atop rock spires far from inhabited islands.

Pack Hunters. Aetherdactyls are cunning hunters that often seek prey in packs of three. One of the creatures harries its prey, intimidating it with its massive 25-foot wingspan while its wingmates swoop down and maul the distracted prey.

Aether-Infused. All aetherbeasts are magical, and many of their magical abilities are similar to spells. The aetherdactyl, however, possesses the unusual ability to transform its body into aether vapor and tear like a knife-sharp psychic wind through its prey. These creatures typically reserve this uncanny magic for hunting other aetherbeasts.

AETHER CROCODILE

These fearsome beasts infest the still bog-like aether pools found on many unpopulated islands across the Aetherial Expanse. Their tough hides carry a muted prismatic sheen, allowing them to hide effectively in their native habitat. Often appearing in lethargic floats, groups of these creatures can burst into a frenzy when prey comes near.

AETHER HORSE

Resembling the common sea horse, aether horses roam the shallower depths of the Aetherial Expanse. Their colorations vary greatly from herd to herd, though invariably, colors are vibrant, and their elongated tails glow with

a pale shimmering light. Astral merfolk frequently tame giant aether horses, using them to patrol the aethereal depths of their territory.

AETHERLION

These creatures descended from Material Plane sea lions and grew into larger, enchanted forms. Their dark grey hides shimmer with prismatic color. The rocky shores they congregate on are littered with broken pieces of their petrified prey.

AETHERSHARKS

Though aethersharks are among the aetherbeasts that most resemble their common cousins, they are still wholly alien in comparison.

Most common shark hide comes in shades of gray and brown. Aethersharks have fins and backs in colors that shift through prismatic waves, not unlike how an oil slick would appear, with bellies a golden, sandy color. This way, they are camouflaged from below against the light above the surface and camouflaged from above to mingle with the varied coral forest of the aether sea. Green, bioluminescent secretion flows from its orifices, including its gills, leaving a trail of light wherever it goes.

Territorial Hunters. Aethersharks are more aggressive than common sharks and have established territories from which they rarely stray. The current territory of an aethershark is recognizable by the color of its hide, as it alters to better match the fauna of its home. For instance, an aethershark living in a kelp bed would be shades of fluorescent green, whereas a reef-dwelling aethershark would be rainbow-colored.

AETHERWOLF

Due to the adaptations their bodies have undergone to survive near the surface of the aether, aetherwolves bear little resemblance to terrestrial wolves. They swim in deadly packs through shallow aether, preying upon small ships and other aetherbeasts.

AETHERDACTYL

Large Beast (Aetherbeast), Unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 90 (12d10 + 24)

Speed 5 ft., fly 90 ft., swim 90 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	4 (-3)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Str +7, Wis +5

Damage Immunity psychic

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages understands Aetherian but can't speak

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Flyby. The aetherdactyl doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

Magic Weapons. The aetherdactyl's weapon attacks are magical.

Pack Tactics. The aetherdactyl has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the aetherdactyl's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

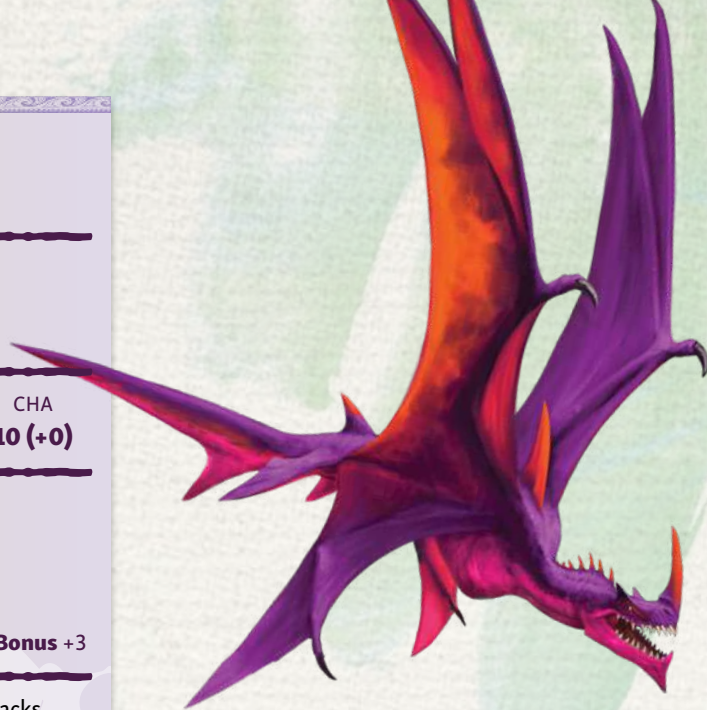
Multiattack. The aetherdactyl makes two Bite attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 19 (3d12) poison damage.

Aether Rush (Recharge 4–6). The aetherdactyl becomes incorporeal aether vapor until the end of its turn and flies up to its flying speed. While incorporeal, the aetherdactyl can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. Each creature it moves through must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or take 26 (4d12) psychic damage and be poisoned until the end of its next turn; no creature can take this damage more than once per turn. The aetherdactyl takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object and is shunted into the nearest unoccupied space.

VARIANT: AETHERCASTING

As aetherbeasts draw their power directly from the aether, they can cast unexpected spells. You can replace the spell listed in this creature's stat block with another spell that would be suitable for its challenge rating as shown in the **Aethercasting Spells by Challenge Rating** table on page 207.



AETHER CROCODILE

Large Beast (Aetherbeast), Unaligned

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 30 (4d10 + 8)

Speed 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Stealth +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages understands Aetherian but can't speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Aetheric Adaptation. The aether crocodile can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 13). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the crocodile can't bite another target.

Aethercasting (1/Day). The aether crocodile casts *bane*, requiring no material components and using Constitution as its spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12).

AETHERLION

Large Beast (Aetherbeast), Unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 105 (14d10 + 28)

Speed 10 ft., swim 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +5

Damage Immunity cold

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages understands Aetherian but can't speak

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Aetheric Adaptation. The aetherlion can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Keen Smell. The aetherlion has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Pack Tactics. The aetherlion has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the aetherlion's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Swimming Leap. With a 10-foot swimming start, the aetherlion can long jump out of the liquids in which it swims up to a distance of 25 feet.

ACTIONS

Multiaction. The aetherlion makes one Bite attack and two Claw attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Aethercasting (1/Day). The aetherlion casts *flesh to stone*, requiring no material components and using Constitution as its spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13).

REACTIONS

Crushing Assault. When the aetherlion hits a restrained or petrified target with a melee attack, the target takes an additional 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage.

AETHERWOLF

Medium Beast (Aetherbeast), Unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 10 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages understands Aetherian but can't speak

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Aetheric Adaptation. The aetherwolf can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Keen Hearing and Smell. The aetherwolf has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

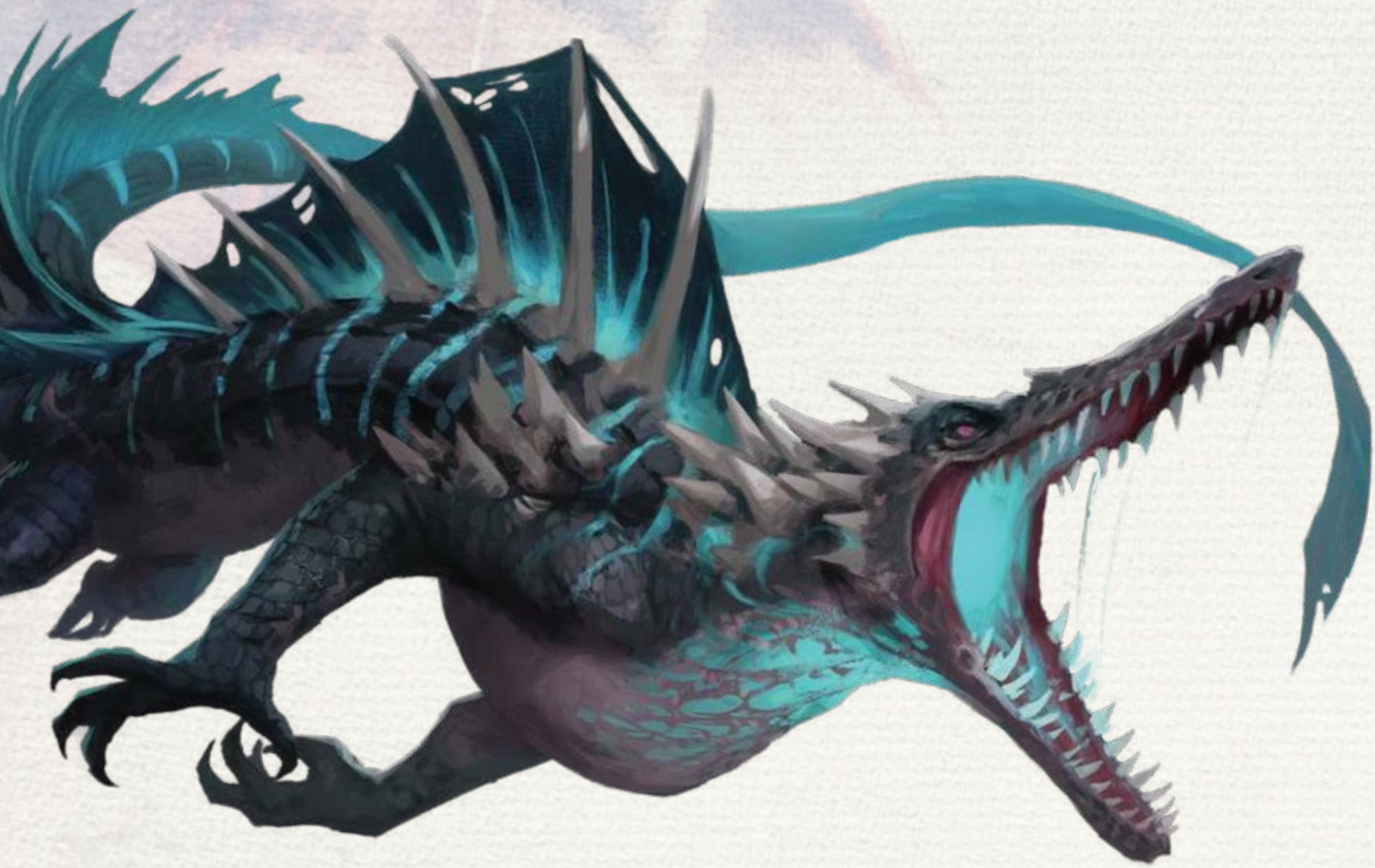
Pack Tactics. The aetherwolf has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the aetherwolf's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Aethercasting (1/Day). The aetherwolf casts *magic missile*, requiring no material components and using Constitution as its spellcasting ability (spell save DC 11).





GIANT AETHER CROCODILE

Huge Beast (Aetherbeast), Unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 105 (10d12 + 40)

Speed 30 ft., swim 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	9 (-1)	18 (+4)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Skills Stealth +5

Damage Immunities acid

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Aetherian but can't speak

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Aetheric Adaptation. The aether crocodile can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The crocodile makes one Bite attack and one Tail attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d10 + 5) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 16). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the crocodile can't bite another target.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target not grappled by the crocodile. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Aethercasting (1/Day). The giant aether crocodile casts *chain lightning*, requiring no material components and using Constitution as its spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15).

GIANT AETHER HORSE

Large Beast (Aetherbeast), Unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 26 (4d10 + 4)

Speed swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages understands Aetherian but can't speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Aetheric Adaptation. The aetherhorse can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Charge. If the aether horse moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a ram attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 11 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

ACTIONS

Ram. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

Aethercasting (1/Day). The aether horse casts *thunderwave*, requiring no material components and using Constitution as its spellcasting ability (spell save DC 11).

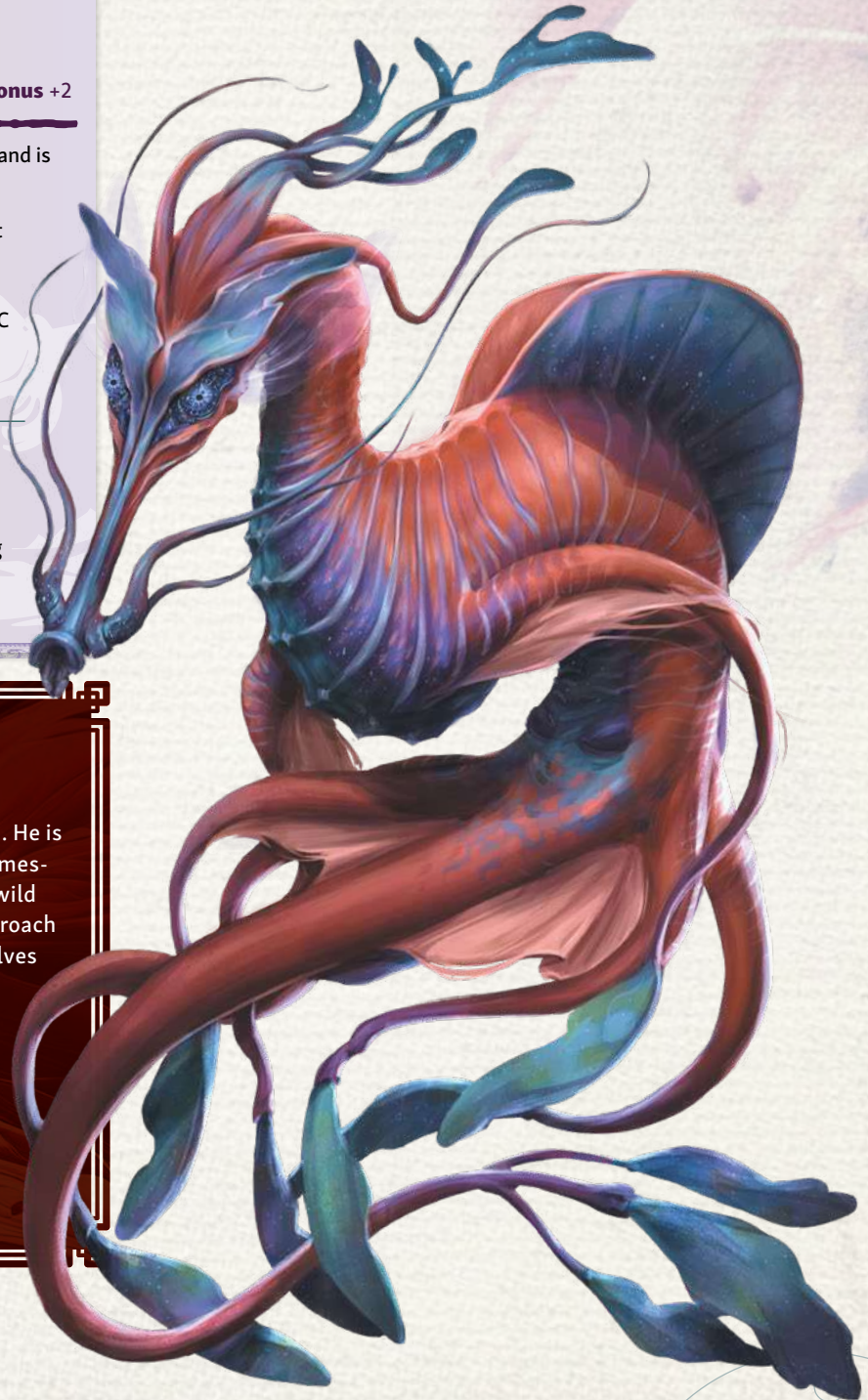
"They're glorious creatures, their fins flowing in the aether like angel's dresses, shimmering in the twilight. Bewarened though, Don't every make them angry."

—Almond, Captain of the Aesphodel

QUEST HOOK: IN SEARCH OF A STEED

Corie Cline lives on a small, sparsely inhabited island. He is a ranch hand who is fascinated with thoughts of domesticating a giant aether horse. Corie knows where a wild aether horse roams nearby, but he's unwilling to approach because he's heard rumours that a pack of aetherwolves has been spotted as well. Corie approaches the characters with a request, bring him to the giant aetherhorse while ensuring the beast's safety, and he'll richly reward them.

If the characters do this, Corie is successful in gaining the wild aether horse's trust. On returning to Corie's seaside ranch, Corie offers another giant aether horse Corie previously domesticated.



GIANT AETHERSHARK

Huge Beast (Aetherbeast), Unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 126 (11d12 + 55)

Speed swim 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	11 (+0)	21 (+5)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +3

Damage Immunities cold

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages understands Aetherian but can't speak

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Aetheric Adaptation. The aethershark can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Blood Frenzy. The aethershark has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (3d10 + 6) piercing damage.

Aethercasting (1/Day). The aethershark casts *chain lightning*, requiring no material components and using Constitution as its spellcasting ability (spell save DC 16).



Andrei Iacob

GIANT AETHERWOLF

Large Beast (Aetherbeast), Unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 32 (5d10 + 5)

Speed 10 ft., swim 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)	13 (+1)	3 (-4)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4

Damage Immunities cold

Senses blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Aetherian

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Aetheric Adaptation. The aetherwolf can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Keen Hearing and Smell. The aetherwolf has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Pack Tactics. The aetherwolf has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the aetherwolf's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be grappled (escape DC 14).

Aethercasting (1/Day). The aetherwolf casts *magic missile* (at 3rd level) requiring no material components.

Prismatic Breath (Recharge 5–6). The aetherwolf exhales a blast of dazzling radiation in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

HUNTER AETHERSHARK

Large Beast (Aetherbeast), Unaligned

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 45 (6d10 + 12)

Speed swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

Skills Perception +2

Damage Immunities acid

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages understands Aetherian but can't speak

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Aetheric Adaptation. The aethershark can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Blood Frenzy. The aethershark has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Aethercasting (1/Day). The aethershark casts *blink*, requiring no material components and using Constitution as its spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12).





AETHER DRAGON

Sailors of the Aetherial Expanse know to quickly adjust course if they see long, iridescent spines rising from the waves, though it is often too late. Aether dragons are some of the deadliest and most intelligent predators in the oceans of aether. While each has a personality of its own, many share a drive to hoard aetherium crystals that they routinely consume, causing crystalline growths to rupture between their scales.

"There is a saying on the Expanse: 'The most beautiful sights are often your last.' Do not seek beauty. Beauty is a warning. But...but I'm happy. I saw its glittering scales, its starry sheen, its gaping maw. Truly, the greatest thing I've ever seen."

—The last thoughts Yerrick Still, *author and adventurer*

Unknown Origins. Scholars disagree about the true origins of the aether dragons. Some suppose that the creatures are born of pure aether in the Maelstrom at the center of the Expanse and merely take on the image of dragons. Others theorize that aether dragons are created when dragons from the worlds of the Material Plane become immersed in the aether ocean. Whatever the case, it's clear that these dragons have an innate connection to aether that makes them immune to its deleterious effects, much like lesser aetherbeasts.

Toni Munteanu

ANCIENT AETHER DRAGON

Gargantuan Dragon, Typically Neutral

Armor Class 22 (natural armor)

Hit Points 385 (22d20 + 154)

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+8)	14 (+2)	25 (+7)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	21 (+5)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Con +14, Wis +10, Cha +12

Skills Arcana +19, Perception +17, Stealth +9

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 27

Languages Aetherian, Common, Draconic

Challenge 22 (41,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +7

Aetheric Adaptation. The dragon can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Water Susceptibility. For every 5 feet the dragon moves in water, or for every gallon of water splashed on it, it takes 5 cold damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes one Bite attack and two Claw attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d10 + 8) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d6 + 8) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Aether Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales aether in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 23 Constitution saving throw, taking 36 (8d8) force damage and 31 (7d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature that fails the saving throw is afflicted by aether poisoning. If a creature that fails the saving throw is already afflicted by aether poisoning, the poisoning progresses to the next stage.

Aethercasting (1/Day). The dragon casts *foresight*, requiring no material components and using Charisma as its spellcasting ability (spell save DC 20).

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a Tail attack.

Explosive Crystal (Costs 3 Actions). The dragon spits an aetherium crystal that explodes at a point it can see within 60 feet of it. Each creature within a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on that point must succeed on a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw or take 10 (3d6) force damage and 10 (3d6) poison damage.

Aquatic Aversion. Though aether dragons haunt the vast aether ocean, they despise water. Just as water and aether react in a volatile fashion, so do water and the flesh of an aether dragon. Only a few have learned of this weakness of the aether dragons, but those that do are sure to keep a few extra barrels filled with fresh water in the holds of their ships marked 'Strictly Not For Drinking.' When water comes into contact with an aether dragon, it causes a searing ice burn.

Aether Sculptors. Aether dragons love to collect aetherium crystals both for their aesthetic qualities and for sustenance. When an aether dragon slays a particularly powerful foe or destroys an eminent vessel, it might take a trophy from the kill back to its lair. Here, the trophy is adorned with crystalline growths such that it takes on a kaleidoscopic coloration and geometric appearance, and floats weightlessly in the aether sea, balanced by the buoyancy of the crystals.

AN AETHER DRAGON'S LAIR

From the surface of the aether seas, an aether dragon's lair is rather difficult to spot. The best signs that one might be nearby are small chunks of aetherium crystal floating atop the waves, or items encrusted with the gems rising to the top. This could mean that deep down at the bottom of the aether ocean is a submerged cave, shipwreck, kelp forest, or other sheltered location where an aether dragon lairs. Sometimes, aetherstorms rage over the lairs of ancient dragons, making them easy to spot but even harder to reach. Aether dragons prefer lairs with many escape routes and places to display their crystal-covered trophies.

The challenge rating of a legendary aether dragon increases by 1 when it's encountered in its lair.

ADULT AETHER DRAGON

Huge Dragon, Typically Neutral

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 207 (18d12 + 90)

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	14 (+2)	21 (+5)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	19 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +10, Wis +7, Cha +9

Skills Arcana +14, Perception +12, Stealth +7

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 22

Languages Aetherian, Common, Draconic

Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +5

Aetheric Adaptation. The dragon can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Water Susceptibility. For every 5 feet the dragon moves in water, or for every gallon of water splashed on it, it takes 10 cold damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes one Bite attack and two Claw attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Aether Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales aether in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw, taking 27 (6d8) force damage and 27 (6d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature that fails the saving throw is afflicted by aether poisoning. If a creature that fails the saving throw is already afflicted by aether poisoning, the poisoning progresses to the next stage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a Tail attack.

Explosive Crystal (Costs 3 Actions). The dragon spits an aetherium crystal that explodes at a point it can see within 60 feet of it. Each creature within a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on that point must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or take 7 (2d6) force damage and 7 (2d6) poison damage.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the dragon can take one of the following lair actions; the dragon can't take the same lair action two rounds in a row:

- **Astral Hypnosis.** Dazzling comet trails and glittering stars swirl in a 30-foot-radius sphere centered on a point the dragon can see within 120 feet of it. The scintillations appear for a moment and vanish. Each creature in the area who sees the pattern must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature becomes charmed for the duration. While charmed in this way, the creature is incapacitated and has a speed of 0.
- **Astral Projection.** The dragon casts the *astral projection* spell. The spell ends early if the dragon uses this lair action again or dies.
- **Dousing Aether.** Each creature the dragon can see within 120 feet of it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or become aetherlogged, giving them disadvantage on their next saving throw against spells and other magical effects.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region surrounding a legendary aether dragon's lair is altered by the dragon's magic, creating one or more of the following effects:

- **Aetherstorms.** Once per day, the dragon focuses its psychic power to emotionally stir the aether around it, causing anguish in the element and creating an aetherstorm 1d6 miles in radius that lasts for 1d12 hours.
- **Potent Poisoning.** The Constitution score of creatures suffering from aether poisoning is counted as 1 in any reference to the development of their affliction while within 1 mile of the dragon's lair.
- **Crystalline Growth.** Aetherium crystals form on solid surfaces such as the hulls of sunken ships or the walls of submerged caves within 6 miles of the dragon's lair. If the dragon dies, the aetherium crystals remain, but new crystals form at a normal rate. The other effects fade immediately.

YOUNG AETHER DRAGON

Large Dragon, Typically Neutral

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 119 (14d10 + 42)

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Con +6, Wis +4, Cha +6

Skills Arcana +9, Perception +7, Stealth +5

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Aetherian, Common, Draconic

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP) Proficiency Bonus +3

Aetheric Adaptation. The dragon can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Water Susceptibility. For every 5 feet the dragon moves in water, or for every gallon of water splashed on it, it takes 10 cold damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes one Bite attack and two Claw attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Aether Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales aether in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (5d8) force damage and 18 (4d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature that fails the saving throw is afflicted by aether poisoning. If a creature that fails the saving throw is already afflicted by aether poisoning, the poisoning progresses to the next stage.

AETHER DRAGON WYRMLING

Medium Dragon, Typically Neutral

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft., swim 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +3, Con +3, Wis +2, Cha +3

Skills Arcana +6, Perception +4, Stealth +3

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Aetherian, Common, Draconic

Challenge 1 (200 XP) Proficiency Bonus +2

Aetheric Adaptation. The dragon can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Water Susceptibility. For every 5 feet the dragon moves in water, or for every gallon of water splashed on it, it takes 10 cold damage.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage.

Aether Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales aether in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) force damage and 9 (2d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature that fails the saving throw is afflicted by aether poisoning. If a creature that fails the saving throw is already afflicted by aether poisoning, the poisoning progresses to the next stage.



AETHER ELEMENTAL

Aether elementals are pure aether given form, often through a spell or other arcane ritual. They are often found in service to powerful spellcasters, either as assistants or bodyguards. Sometimes, mages conjure aether elementals to defend specific areas or items. This is not uncommon, as the elemental requires no nourishment or rest and can watch over their charge for centuries.



AETHER ELEMENTAL

Large Elemental, Neutral

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 102 (12d10 + 36)

Speed 30 ft., swim 90 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Aetherian

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Magic Weapons. The elemental's weapon attacks are magical.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The elemental makes two Slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Aether Spray (Recharge 4–6). The elemental creates a 40-foot-diameter sphere of aether spray within 60 feet of it (the fog spreads around corners). When a creature enters the spray for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there, it must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 13 (2d8 + 4) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

The spray moves 10 feet away from the elemental at the start of each of its turns, rolling along the ground and through openings. The spray lasts for 10 minutes or until the elemental's concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell).

"I see you've met Scrunkle...now, what were you trying to find that would upset him so? You can tell me, or I caask Scrunkle to get you to talk."

—Clara Alder, Karelagne Mage



AETHER NAIAD

Aether naiads are reclusive fey creatures who live within the aether, along shorelines, in shallow coves, or the deepest depths of the aetherial seas. Individuals often grow attached to a specific location, viewing their chosen locale as something precious and deserving of their protection and care, regardless of how unsettling or mundane the area may appear to mortal eyes.

Keeper of Secrets. Their affinity for unusual locations often provides aether naiads with an uncanny understanding of the area, its history, and the treasures hidden within. Most selfishly guard these secrets, becoming angered if ignorant outsiders disturb sites they've chosen to safeguard.

Expert Wayfinders. Because of their ties to the magical seas, aether naiads are experts at interpreting the undulation of the aetherial waters. Many sailors believe that aether naiads know of secretive wind routes not found on any map. Most crews would be lucky to count an aether naiad among their crew, but coaxing these fey from their watery homes is no easy task.

AETHER NAIAD

Medium Fey, Typically Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	19 (+4)

Skills Deception +6, Navigation +6, Persuasion +6, Stealth +5

Damage Resistance psychic

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Aetherian, Common, Sylvan

Challenge 3 (450 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Aetheric Adaptation. The aether naiad can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Innate Wayfinder. The aether naiad has advantage on Charisma (Navigation) checks.

Invisible in Aether. The aether naiad is invisible while fully immersed in liquid aether.

Magic Resistance. The aether naiad has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The aether naiad makes two Aether Lash attacks.

Aether Lash. *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) psychic damage.

Spellcasting. The aether naiad casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14):

At will: *minor illusion*

2/day each: *alter self*, *major image*, *sleep*

1/day each: *hypnotic pattern*, *dream*

QUEST HOOK: REEF MADNESS

The characters are aboard a ship that needs to pass through an area of dangerous magical reefs. The reefs are unmapable as they move with no perceivable rhyme or reason. An aether naiad lives in the area, and she has the means to guide the ship safely through the reef—or run directly into the reef if so inclined. In payment for acting as a guide, the aether naiad demands that the characters drive away a colony of aethersharks. Little do the characters know, but the sharks are servant of a merfolk druid who the naiad stole a magical conch shell from.

AETHER PLANTS

Many of the trees and vegetation that have gained a foothold in the Expanse consumed aether from the surrounding sea and gained varying levels of sentience as a result. This led to an ecosystem of plants all hungry for aether, not only in liquid form but directly from spellcasters. Their aether diet also means they have strange powers and abilities that help them sate their appetites.

DRAINING CREEPER

Appearing as clusters of vines, draining creepers gain sustenance from spells and magical effects. These plants creep toward their targets, lashing out with remarkable speed when spellcasters come near.

JUNGLE SIREN

Sailors whisper haunting tales of these plants, which can manifest illusions of those they've killed to entice new victims to come near.

STARRYDEW

These exceptionally dangerous enchanted plants use spells and magical effects to assault targets while their whip-like tendrils grapple those within reach.

STRANGLING CREEPER

When these dangerous vines strike, their targets are swiftly entwined and unable to call for help as the tough tendrils constrict.

TINDERBLOOM

These beautiful blue flowering plants grow in clusters, often embedded amongst other mundane plants with similar appearance. Thin tendrils hidden along the ground sense when prey comes near, causing the blooms to blast fiery bursts.



DRAINING CREEPER

Large Plant, Unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 66 (7d10 + 28)

Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Stealth +4

Damage Resistances poison

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone

Senses blindsight 120 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Aether Detection. The creeper knows when a spell of 1st level or higher is cast within 300 feet of it, and knows the direction of the caster.

False Appearance. While the creeper remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a large cluster of vines.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The creeper can use both its Strangle and Aether Drain if a creature is strangled by it.

Strangle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 16). Until this grapple ends, the creature is restrained and can't cast spells that require a verbal component, and the creeper can't strangle another target.

Aether Drain. The creeper drains a creature strangled by it that has spell slots. It expends one of the target's spell slots and heals 1d10 hit points plus an extra 1d10 for each slot level above 1st.

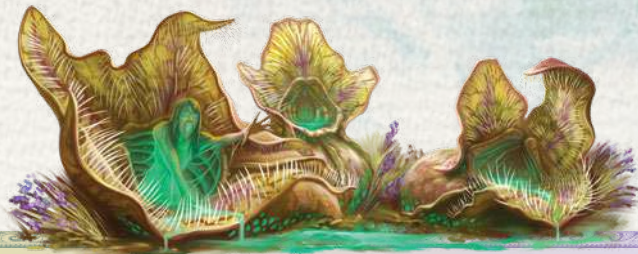
REACTIONS

Sudden Sprint. When a creature that the creeper can see moves, the creeper immediately moves up to 60 feet toward it.

MOVING THROUGH A CREATURE'S SPACE

Characters can move through a hostile creature's space if it is two sizes larger than them, but the hostile creature counts as difficult terrain.

The **starrydew** is Huge, two sizes larger than Medium. In addition, the starrydew's Living Terrain feature means that characters can end their turn occupying the same space as it.



JUNGLE SIREN

Large Plant, Unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 75 (10d10 + 20)

Speed 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)

Damage Resistances poison

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone

Senses blindsight 120 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages The languages of the humanoids it killed

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Mouthless Mimicry. The jungle siren can mimic the voices of Humanoids it has killed. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The jungle siren makes two Bite attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Illusory Lure. The jungle siren projects a magical illusion of a humanoid it has previously killed. This illusion moves and appears real. This effect ends if the jungle siren takes a bonus action to remove it or the jungle siren dies.

This illusion does not hold up to physical inspection as things pass through it. Otherwise, a creature must take an action to visually inspect the illusion and succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discern that it is an illusion.



STARRYDEW

Huge Plant, Unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 114 (12d12 + 36)

Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned, prone

Senses blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Jungle Magic. Due to the starry dew's high concentration of aether, it randomly causes one of the effects from the list below whenever a spell is cast within 10 feet of it or one of its tendrils is destroyed.

D8	EFFECT
1	The starry dew casts <i>barkskin</i> on itself.
2	For the next minute, all creatures and objects that are not somehow anchored to the ground within 20 feet of the starry dew float 10 feet into the air.
3	The starry dew casts <i>sleet storm</i> (spell save DC 15) centered on itself.
4	All creatures within 20 feet of the starry dew regain 1d6 hit points.
5	The starry dew casts <i>fireball</i> as a third-level spell (spell save DC 15) centered on itself.
6	It begins raining within 10 feet of the starry dew for 1 minute.
7	The starry dew casts <i>stinking cloud</i> (spell save DC 15) centered on itself.
8	For the next minute, harmless petals burst out of any wound the starry dew inflicts.

Living Terrain. A creature can end its turn in the starry dew's space.

Leaf Tendrils. The starry dew can have up to six tendrils at a time. Each tendril can be attacked (AC 13, 20 hit points, immunity to poison and psychic damage). Destroying a tendril deals 20 damage to the starry dew. A tendril can also be broken if a creature takes an action and succeeds on a DC 15 Strength check against it. In either case, the tendril releases a dying burst of aether, randomly causing one of its Jungle Magic effects. If all its tendrils die, the starry dew dies.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The starry dew makes one attack with each of its Tendrils (it has up to six).

Tendril. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 15). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the starry dew can't use the same tendril on another target.

STRANGLING CREEPER

Medium Plant, Unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 37 (5d8 + 15)

Speed 5 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Resistances poison

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

False Appearance. While the creeper remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a cluster of vines.

ACTIONS

Strangle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 15). Until this grapple ends, the creature is restrained and can't cast spells that require a verbal component, and the creeper can't strangle another target.

REACTIONS

Sudden Sprint. When a creature that the creeper can see moves, the creeper immediately moves up to 30 feet toward it.

TINDERBLOOM

Small Plant, Unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 16 (3d6 + 6)

Speed 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Immunities fire, poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned, prone

Senses tremorsense 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

False Appearance. While the tinderbloom remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a cluster of blue flowers and purple leaves.

ACTIONS

Ignited Aether. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) fire damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

REACTIONS

Tripwire Roots. When a creature moves within 30 feet of the tinderbloom, it makes an Ignited Aether attack against it.



AGENTS

On Tholus, the Karelagne Empire's home world, secret imperial operatives discretely work to eliminate threats to the Empire. Occasionally, imperial leadership will recognize a threat in the Aetherial Expanse that cannot be dealt with by pure military force, sending one of their skilled agents to deal with the issue.

The powerful merchant princes of Ayris boast their own agents. These are sent on covert missions to thwart their competition or boost their mercantile might.

Regardless of their patron, agents are skilled individuals adept at espionage and have a knack for succeeding, even when the odds are against them.

NOVICE AGENT

Medium or Small Humanoid, Any Alignment

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

Skills Athletics +3, Deception +3, Sleight of Hand +4

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Any two languages

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The agent makes two Dagger attacks.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Aether Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Cunning Action. The agent takes the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

REACTIONS

Fortune Favors the Bold (1/day). The agent can choose to have advantage on an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, and adds 1d6 to the result.



"The agents from those other worlds—Karelagne and Ayris—think they are the cleverest people to walk the worlds or sail the seas. They aren't that clever, but that doesn't mean they're not dangerous. They end up killing more civilians than each other."

—Jyssika, merfolk tavern owner

VETERAN AGENT

Medium or Small Humanoid, Any Alignment

Armor Class 15 (studded leather armor)

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Wis +3

Skills Athletics +4, Deception +5, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +5

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Any three languages

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The agent makes three Attacks.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Aether Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Cunning Action. The agent takes the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Smoke Bomb (1/day). A burst of opaque smoke explodes outward, centered on a point within 30 feet, creating the effect of the *fog cloud* spell.

REACTIONS

Fortune Favors the Bold (2/day). The agent can choose to have advantage on an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, and adds 1d6 to the result.

MASTER AGENT

Medium or Small Humanoid, Any Alignment

Armor Class 16 (studded leather)

Hit Points 84 (13d8 + 26)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Wis +4

Skills Athletics +5, Deception +7, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +7

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Any three languages

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The agent makes three Attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) poison damage.

Tainted Aether Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 30/90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage and the target's speed is reduced by 10 feet until the end of its next turn.

Escape Boots (1/day). The agent gains a flying speed of 60 feet for 1 minute. If the agent is still aloft after a minute, they fall unless they can stop the fall.

BONUS ACTIONS

Cunning Action. The agent takes the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Goo-Patch (1/day). A patch of sticky, black goo covers a 10-foot square that the agent can see within 60 feet. The goo is difficult terrain and dissipates after 1 minute. When the goo appears, each creature standing in its area must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or become restrained by the goo. A creature that enters the area or ends its turn there must also succeed on the Strength saving throw or become restrained. Restrained creatures can use an action to make a DC 13 Strength check, breaking free on a success.

Smoke Bomb (1/day). A burst of opaque smoke explodes outward, centered on a point within 30 feet, creating the effect of the *fog cloud* spell.

REACTIONS

Fortune Favors the Bold (3/day). The agent can choose to have advantage on an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, and adds 1d6 to the result.

QUEST HOOK: SEEK AND HIDE

A master agent of the Karelagne Empire infiltrated a privateer vessel working to keep both Karelagne and Ayrissian vessels out of the Expanse. The characters are hired to join the crew, make themselves seem like privateers, and carefully root out the agent without being discovered.

When they finally learn the agent's identity, they discover the agent is trying to stop a catastrophic event from being perpetrated by a pirate ship's captain seeking to make all the aetherium in a 5-mile proximity explode. This could accidentally ignite the Aetherial Seas, killing everyone.

ALGOL

Jagged spines with runic markings line the long, muscular body of the algol, an ancient aquatic beast with a gaping maw. With a few flowing tendrils around its face that trail starlight, thin fins, and hungry, beady eyes, this predator was a hunter with few equals, dominating the food chain and terrorizing mortal kind with the magic that let it hover over dry land. Now extinct, it is talked about only in legends—until this legendary hunter appears to feed again. When it opens its gaping jaw, its innards emanate an eerie, beautiful, colorful glow, revealing this hunter to be far more than it appears.

Arcane Predator. The shimmering body of the algol shivers with colors and eerie reflections of its surroundings, providing camouflage as it navigates to hunt.

In addition, the runic markings connect these creatures to Desdemona, the Lady of Death, allowing her limited ability to sense through them. When Desdemona connects to a group of algols, she gains their sight and



their hunter's sense of how many humanoid creatures are nearby, plus an inkling of their thoughts, though their thoughts are impressions and images more than words.

From Ancient Graves. An algol doesn't require water, air, or sleep. It feeds—though some wonder if it is feasting on flesh or feasting on whatever it can find that burns bright in its core. Magic. Souls. Aether. Whatever it can take.

ALGOL

Huge Monstrosity, Unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 178 (17d12 + 68)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	4 (-3)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +7

Damage Immunities radiant

Senses darkvision 90 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages —

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

Aetheric Adaptation. The algol can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Aura of Withering. Any creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of the algol has its speed reduced by 20 feet until the start of that creature's next turn. In addition, the creature must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) radiant damage on a failed save.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 40 (6d10 + 7) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) radiant damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 17). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the algol can't bite another target.

Swallow. The algol makes one bite attack against a Medium or smaller creature it is grappling. If the attack hits, that creature takes the bite's damage and is swallowed, and the grapple ends. While swallowed, the creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the algol, and it takes 21 (6d6) acid damage at the start of each of the algol's turns.

If the algol takes 30 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, the algol must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10 feet of the algol. If the algol dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse using 15 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Desiccate (Recharge 6). The algol spews putrid light from itself in a 60-foot cone, infusing the area of effect with rotting aether. Each creature in that cone must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 66 (12d10) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature that fails the save becomes afflicted with the astral delirium stage of aether poisoning. A creature that fails the save by 5 or more becomes afflicted with the aether decay stage of aether poisoning.



ASTRAL MERFOLK

The merfolk of the Aetherial Expanse make their home in the Constellation Isles, where they're locked in eternal enmity with their age-old foes, the astral merrow. The merfolk of the Constellation Isles tell tales of tumbling into this world of eternal, starlit twilight long ago. And though many of their kind died—or worse, mutated into merrow—over time, they became at home in the aether.

The magic of the Expanse has made their skin bright with shining colors, and given them the uncommon ability to shapechange their long tailfins into legs with webbed feet, which allow them to walk comfortably on land. Though astral merfolk are most at home in the aether and try to steer clear of the greed of land dwellers, the allure of those who walk on land and sail on wooden ships often proves too great to resist.

ASTRAL MERFOLK FISHER

Medium Humanoid (Merfolk, Shapechanger), Any Alignment

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)

Speed 0 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

Skills Nature +2, Perception +3

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Aetherian, Common

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Aetheric Adaptation. The merfolk can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Camouflage. The merfolk has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide from creatures above the surface of the aether while the merfolk is lightly obscured within the aether.

Shapechanger. The merfolk can use its action to polymorph into a humanoid with legs, or back into its true form with a tail. It gains a walking speed of 30 feet in this form, and its swim speed is reduced to 0 feet. Other than this, its game statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed.

ACTIONS

Coral Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage or 6 (1d8 + 2) if used with two-hands to make a melee attack.

Tail Whip (True Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) slashing damage.

Net. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 5/15 ft., one Large or smaller creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained. A creature can use its action to make a DC 10 Strength check to free itself or another creature in a net, ending the effect on a success. Dealing 5 slashing damage to the net (AC 10) frees the target without harming the target and destroys the net.

ASTRAL MERFOLK FISHER

Most astral merfolk are fishers and are exceptionally skilled at using nets and spears to catch fish or defend themselves when threats arise.

ASTRAL MERFOLK TIDESPEAKER

Among the astral merfolk, skilled spellcasters can use the magic of the aetherial seas to summon tides of aether, pulling their enemies as they see fit.

ASTRAL MERFOLK WARRIOR

Astral merfolk warriors defend their islands, equally skilled at combat above and below the aether.

ASTRAL MERFOLK TIDESPEAKER

Medium Humanoid (Merfolk, Shapechanger, Wizard), Any Alignment

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 0 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Wis +7, Cha +6

Skills Nature +4, Perception +7

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Aetherian, Common

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Aetheric Adaptation. The tidespeaker can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Camouflage. The tidespeaker has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide from creatures above the surface of the aether while the merfolk is lightly obscured within the aether.

Shapechanger. The tidespeaker can use its action to polymorph into a humanoid with legs, or back into its true form with a tail. It gains a walking speed of 30 feet in this form, and its swim speed is reduced to 0 feet. Other than this, its game statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The tidespeaker makes three Aether Burst attacks.

Aether Burst. *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (3d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Tail Whip (True Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) slashing damage.

Spellcasting. The tidespeaker casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15):

At will: *Speak with animals*

1/day each: *Conjure wall of aether**, *Gust of wind*, *Wind wall*

BONUS ACTIONS

Tidal Pull (Recharge 4-6). The tidespeaker momentarily summons a wave of aether, disrupting nearby creatures. The tidespeaker targets creatures of its choice within a 30-foot radius. Each target must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, the target is moved 15 feet in a direction chosen by the tidespeaker. Creatures standing in aether at least 1 foot deep have disadvantage on this saving throw, and those fully immersed in aether automatically fail the saving throw.

ASTRAL MERFOLK WARRIOR

Medium Humanoid (Merfolk, Shapechanger), Any Alignment

Armor Class 16 (breastplate)

Hit Points 38 (7d8 + 7)

Speed 0 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +5

Skills Nature +2, Perception +4, Stealth +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Aetherian, Common

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Aetheric Adaptation. The merfolk can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Aether Combat Expertise. Ranged attacks made with a Coral Spear or Sea Star while submerged in aether are unaffected by the aether and made as if the attack was not underwater.

Camouflage. The merfolk has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide from creatures above the surface of the aether while the merfolk is lightly obscured within the aether.

Shapechanger. The merfolk can use its action to polymorph into a humanoid with legs, or back into its true form with a tail. It gains a walking speed of 30 feet in this form, and its swim speed is reduced to 0 feet. Other than this, its game statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The merfolk makes two Coral Spear attacks.

Coral Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage or 7 (1d8+3) if used with two-hands to make a melee attack.

Tail Whip (True Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) slashing damage.

Sea Star. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

"And the rift opened, and the bright and savage silver seas blinded them. Fear and longing and a sense of destiny swelled within their breasts, and the pull of magic brought them to their new home."

—from "Epic of the First Merfolk"



Astral Merrow

Medium Monstrosity, Typically Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 26 (4d8 + 8)

Speed 30 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Str +5, Con +4

Skills Intimidation +3, Perception +2, Stealth +3

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Aetherian, Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Aetheric Adaptation. The astral merrow can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Blood Frenzy. The merrow has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

Limited Aether Amphibiousness. The merrow must be submerged in aether at least once every 4 hours to avoid suffocating as it cannot breathe air.

Pack Tactics. The merrow has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the merrow's allies is within 5 ft. of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The merrow makes one Bite attack and one Bone Mace attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Bone Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Venomous Spines. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned. While poisoned in this way, the target is also paralyzed. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

ASTRAL MERROW

Leadership among the merrow of the Aetherial Expanse is hard-won through animalistic dominance and is shared between mates in a monogamous or polygamous relationship.

A shiver is a group of merrow, and a shiver's social structure changes year to year as individuals move up and down in the hierarchy. A merrow lower down in the ladder may challenge an alpha merrow for leadership. If the alpha merrow loses, they leave the shiver to find another mate and start a new shiver. Merrow very low in the pecking order (that are constantly harassed by the other members), may also leave the shiver. These merrow become forsaken until they either form their own shiver or, on rare occasions, join an existing shiver.

THE MERFOLK AND THE MERROW

Merfolk adhere to an ancient tradition when it comes to punishment. Those found guilty of jeopardizing the community's safety are magically banished far beneath the ancient palace on which their home city is based, where it is believed a monstrosity lives. They are never seen nor heard from again, eventually reincarnated as merrow.

This transformation occurs because of the Mermaid's Tears and its wrathful influence, changing the physiology of the merfolk and transforming them completely. Some cleverer merrow are astral merfolk who were charged with betraying their people in some way and then forcibly transformed into monsters.

Undoing the Transformation. Though the transformation of the merrow is permanent, the cause of it could be removed to ensure no other merrow can be created this way in the future. By undoing the magic of the Mermaid's Tears, the aether around the Constellation Isles would be purified, and the merrow would cease their aggressive behavior (see page 163).



ASTRAL TITAN

The astral titans were forged within a fiery furnace of suns by a nameless god obsessed with crafting the perfect creature. The astral titans spread throughout the Aetherial Expanse during their height of power and established great kingdoms. They have a natural connection with aetherium, and can summon powerful warhammers made of pure aetherium using naturally-acquired magic.

After witnessing the gods idly stand by and watch mortals suffer and perish without the aid of those who created them, the astral titans dedicated themselves to finding a way to help mortals. Ultimately, this angered the gods who watched as the astral titans, in their arrogance, attempted to harness the power of aetherium through powerful relics such as the Singularity. The astral titans met a swift end when their ambitious plans led to infighting, calamities, and their near extinction. Astral titans still roam the Aetherial Expanse, but they are rare and remain hidden, paranoid that the gods seek them out to complete their extinction.

ASTRAL TITAN

Huge Giant, Typically Chaotic Good

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 270 (20d12 + 140)

Speed 50 ft., swim 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	18 (+4)	24 (+7)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +10, Con +12, Wis +8, Cha +9

Skills Arcana +10, History +10, Insight +8, Perception +8

Senses passive Perception 18

Languages Common, Aetherian, Giant

Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +5

Aetheric Adaptation. The astral titan can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The astral titan makes three attacks with its Aetherium Warhammer.

Aetherium Warhammer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d12 + 5) bludgeoning damage and 13 (2d12) lightning damage.

Boulder. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, range 60/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 37 (5d12 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Summon Aetherium Warhammer. The astral titan can magically summon an aetherium warhammer. This weapon counts as magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage.

This weapon disappears if it is more than 5 feet away from the astral titan for 1 minute or more. It also disappears if the astral titan uses this feature again, if it dismisses the weapon (no action required), or if it dies.

*“Hark, ye saviors of starlight and fire,
Who came to our aid when life was most dire,
Hear now our calls beseeching your aid,
Bring us your help against those who invade.”*

—from “Hymn to the Astral Titans”

AUTOMATON

On the Karelagne Empire's home world, magitech advancements have created aetherium-powered automatons, with varying degrees of sentience. In recent years, a gradual influx of these constructs joined Karel's workforce, particularly in labor-intensive positions such as construction and farming.

Newly constructed automatons have limited intelligence and can only perform simple assigned tasks. However, automatons can develop a more nuanced intellect and personality with continuous social interaction. Remarkably, several individuals have gained a social and intellectual capability indistinguishable from other humanoids. A limited number have learned to repair themselves, and there are even rumors that some have learned how to replicate—though most technomages scoff at the suggestion.



AUTOMATON

Medium Construct, Any Alignment

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities exhaustion, petrified, poisoned

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Constructed Nature. An automaton doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Death Burst. When the automaton dies, there is a chance its aetherium battery explodes. Roll a d6; on a 1, each creature within 10 feet of it must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Reparable. As long as it has at least 1 hit point remaining, the automaton regains 1 hit point when a *mending* spell is cast on it.

ACTIONS

Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 bludgeoning damage.

Integration into Society. This cognitive growth has both helped and hindered integration into Karelagne society. Some view them as an unwanted presence replacing “real people,” while others welcome their assistance.

Personal Designations. Automatons rarely take traditional humanoid names, with most keeping their manufacturing number as a moniker. Standard imperial identification always begins with AU (for aetherium unit), followed by a hyphen and another abbreviation for their profession (e.g. M for mechanic, L for laborer, etc.), and a unique three-digit identification number.

Appearance. Most automatons have metallic frames that are not dissimilar to humanoid skeletons, with cogs and pulleys at the joints to facilitate movement. In the central frame of each automaton is an aetherium battery, which must be recharged to ensure the automaton continues to function. Their heads are spherical chambers filled with a complicated difference engine, but they bear no recognizable facial features other than lenses for sight and a tiny harpsichord-inspired instrument embedded in their neck enabling speech.

Automatons can be upgraded, adding specialized parts to assist with specific jobs, such as adding a chainsaw when working in the lumber industry.

Astral Emergent
Buccaneer



BUCCANEER

Sailors who survive several voyages across the Expanse are likely to come across buccaneers. These pirates and privateers prowl busy wind routes, looking for poorly defended ships to pillage. Buccaneers expertly push through the crowded battles that invariably occur when boarding enemy ships.

BUCCANEER

Small or Medium Humanoid, Any Alignment

Armor Class 15 (breastplate)

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +5, Con +3

Skills Athletics +5, Intimidation +4, Navigation +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Any two languages

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Sea Legs. The buccaneer has advantage on ability checks and saving throws to resist being knocked prone.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The buccaneer makes two attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Sidestep. The buccaneer takes the Disengage action.

FIERCE BUCCANEER

Small or Medium Humanoid, Any Alignment

Armor Class 16 (breastplate)

Hit Points 104 (16d8 + 32)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +6, Con +5

Skills Athletics +6, Intimidation +5, Navigation +3

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Any two languages

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Evasion. If the buccaneer is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, the buccaneer instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Sea Legs. The buccaneer has advantage on ability checks and saving throws to resist being knocked prone.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The buccaneer makes two attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage.

Aether Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Shove. The buccaneer targets a creature it hit with a melee attack this turn, forcing it to make a DC 14 Strength saving throw. On a failure, the target is pushed up to 10 feet away and knocked prone.

Sidestep. The buccaneer takes the Disengage action.

GRIZZLED BUCCANEER

Small or Medium Humanoid, Any Alignment

Armor Class 16 (breastplate)

Hit Points 165 (22d8 + 66)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Str +8, Con +7, Cha +7

Skills Athletics +8, Intimidation +7, Navigation +5

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Any two languages

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

Evasion. If the buccaneer is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, the buccaneer instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Indomitable (2/Day). The buccaneer can reroll a saving throw it fails. It must use the new roll.

Sea Legs. The buccaneer has advantage on ability checks and saving throws to resist being knocked prone.

ACTIONS

Multiaction. The buccaneer makes three attacks with its Longsword or two attacks with its Thunder Pistol.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage.

Thunder Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage plus 11 (2d10) thunder damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become deafened until the end of its next turn, and if the target is Large or smaller, it is pushed up to 10 feet.

BONUS ACTIONS

Sidestep. The buccaneer takes the Disengage action.

Assault. The buccaneer targets a creature it damaged with a melee attack this turn, choosing from one of the following effects:

Rattle. The target makes a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature is frightened of the buccaneer for 1 minute. If the frightened target ends its turn more than 30 feet from the buccaneer, the target can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Shove. The target makes a DC 16 Strength saving throw. On a failure, the target is pushed up to 10 feet away and knocked prone.

REACTION

Parry. The buccaneer adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack roll that would hit it. To do so, the buccaneer must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.



Nadia Feem
Sistren Wayfinder

BUUCAHB

The buucahb are fiendish arthropods sometimes referred to as “the swarm,” native to a nearly inaccessible pocket dimension hidden deep within the Elemental Plane of Fire. The swarm’s name for their home plane is a string of hisses and clicks indecipherable to most other beings. These fiends are naturally communal—when one is discovered, more are almost certain to be found nearby.

INCREASED SIGHTINGS?

Ayrissian spies note the disappearance of several reputable Karelagne zoologists in recent months. Many of these researchers were said to be investigating an uptick in encounters with unusual extraplanar arthropods on Tholus, the Karelagne Empire’s home world. These creature sightings were concentrated around the province of Folly, though rumors persist they have been found throughout the empire, including on imperial naval vessels sailing the Aetherial Expanse. Imperial bureaucrats reject these rumors as Ayrissian propaganda.

BUUCAHB, INDIVIDUAL

Tiny Fiend (Devil), Typically Lawful Evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 3 (1d4 + 1)

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Damage Resistances cold

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Telepathy 30 ft.

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Inscrutable Mind. The buucahb is immune to any effect that would sense its emotions or read its thoughts, as well as to all divination spells.

ACTIONS

Ravenous Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage. If the target is a creature, the buucahb burrows into its body, and the creature takes 1 piercing damage at the start of each of its turns. Any creature can use an action to kill or remove the buucahb with a weapon that deals piercing damage, but the target takes 1 piercing damage in the process. A creature reduced to 0 hit points by the buucahb piercing damage dies.

BUUCAHB, INDIVIDUAL

Singular buucahb are typically encountered as palm-sized fiends resembling cockroaches with eyes that glow red like embers. They are voracious eaters burrowing into the flesh of their victims.

BUUCAHB, DRONE

Drones are the largest individual buucahb, resembling a cockroach the size of a small pony. The antennae of these blood-thirsty fiends quiver with excitement on sensing freshly spilled blood.

BUUCAHB, HARRIER

These flying, fiendish cockroaches relentlessly pursue their prey, ferociously clinging to their victims with hooklike claws.





SWARM OF BUUCAHB

Medium Swarm of Tiny Fiends (Devil), Typically Lawful Evil

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Telepathy 30 ft.

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Inscrutable Mind. The swarm is immune to any effect that would sense its emotions or read its thoughts, as well as to all divination spells.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny creature. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

ACTIONS

Ravenous Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 10 (4d4) piercing damage, or 5 (2d4) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer. If the target is a creature, a **buucahb, individual** burrows into its body, and takes 5 (2d4) piercing damage at the start of each of its turns. Any creature can use an action to kill and remove the burrowing **buucahb, individual** with a weapon that deals piercing damage. Doing so deals 2 (1d4) piercing damage to both the target and the swarm. A creature reduced to 0 hit points by a burrowing **buucahb, individual's** piercing damage dies.

BUUCAHB, DRONE

Medium Fiend (Devil), Typically Lawful Evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (7d8 + 21)

Speed 30 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Skills Athletics +5, Perception +2

Damage Resistances cold

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages understands Infernal but cannot speak

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Blood Frenzy. The drone has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

Inscrutable Mind. The drone is immune to any effect that would sense its emotions or read its thoughts, as well as to all divination spells.

Sense Blood. The drone has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to detect injured creatures.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The drone makes a Bite and two Claw attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

BUUCAHB, HARRIER

Small Fiend (Devil), Typically Lawful Evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 36 (8d6 + 8)

Speed 30 ft, fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Damage Resistances cold

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Infernal but cannot speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Fiendish Hold. The harrier has advantage on melee attacks targeting creatures to which it is attached.

Inscrutable Mind. The harrier is immune to any effect that would sense its emotions or read its thoughts, as well as to all divination spells.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage and the harrier attaches to the target. A creature within 5 feet of the harrier, including the target, can use its action to make a DC 13 Strength check, detaching the harrier on a success.





COMET EEL

There are few creatures ship captains on the Aetherial Expanse fear more than the beautifully vibrant comet eel. These fast-swimming eels get their name from their resemblance to comets flashing through the aether.

The eel's skull contains layers of aetherium crystal, making it as hard as iron. When swimming at top speed, these eels can punch through a ship's hull, much like a cannonball. These ordinarily docile fish are particularly dangerous when gathered in large schools, posing a navigation hazard that most captains try to avoid.

SWARM OF COMET EELS

Gargantuan Swarm of Medium Beasts (Aetherbeasts), Unaligned

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 126 (11d20 + 11)

Speed swim 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Resistances piercing, slashing

Damage Immunities cold, bludgeoning

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses blindsight 20 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Aetherian but can't speak

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Aetheric Adaptation. The comet eel can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Blurred Movement. Attack rolls against the swarm have disadvantage unless it is incapacitated or its speed is 0.

Siege Monster. The swarm deals double damage to objects and structures.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Medium comet eel. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

ACTIONS

Bashing. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 44 (6d12 + 5) bludgeoning damage, or 24 (3d12 + 5) bludgeoning damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

COMET EEL

Medium Beast (Aetherbeast), Unaligned

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)

Speed swim 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

Damage Resistance bludgeoning

Damage Immunities cold

Senses blindsight 20 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Aetherian but can't speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Aetheric Adaptation. The comet eel can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Blurred Movement. Attack rolls against the comet eel have disadvantage unless it is incapacitated or its speed is 0.

Charge. If the comet eel moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a bash attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage.

Siege Monster. The comet eel deals double damage to objects and structures.

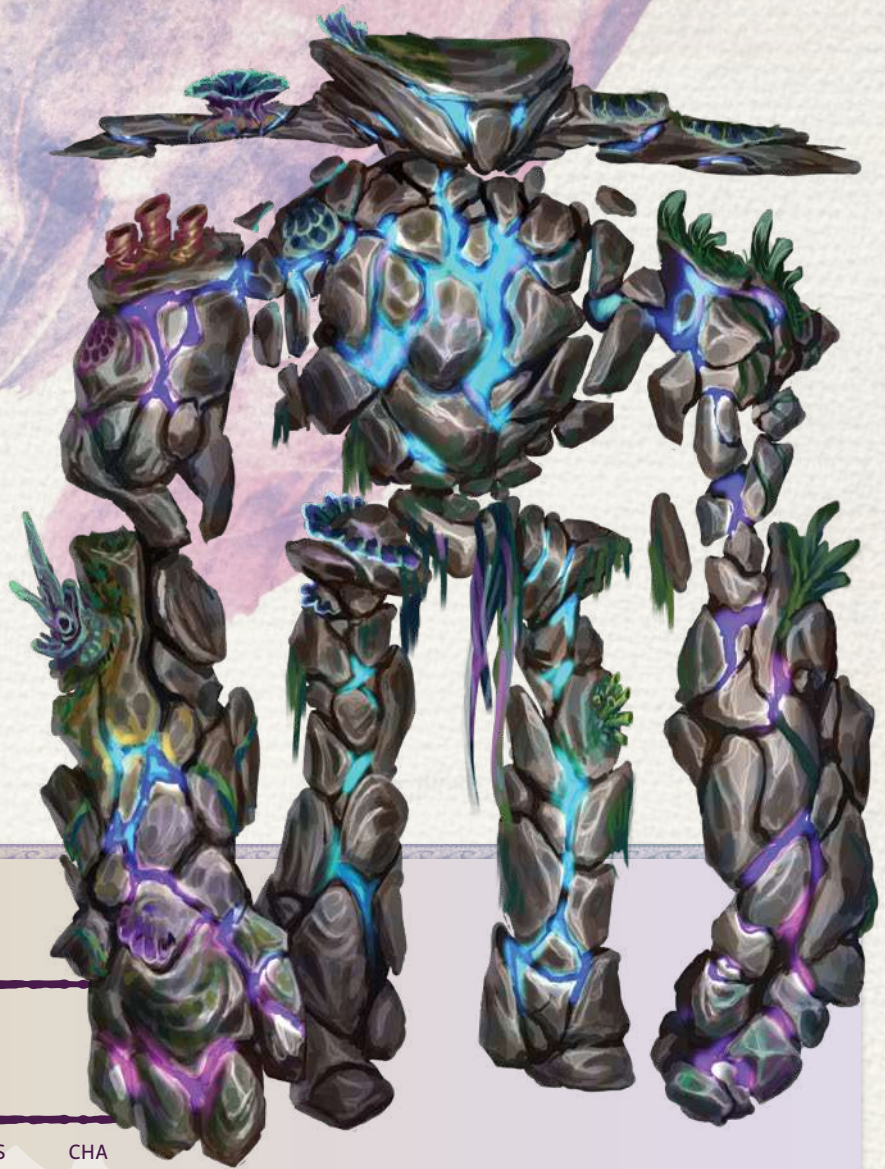
ACTIONS

Bash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

CORAL GUARDIAN

A sign of merfolk ingenuity is the coral guardian. Granted sentience through an elemental aether spirit, the coral guardian is made from the reefs and flora surrounding the astral merfolk's Constellation Isles home. They are peaceful guardians unless faced with an outsider to their community.



CORAL GUARDIAN

Large Construct, Unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 119 (14d10 + 42)

Speed 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands the languages of its creator but can't speak

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

Berserk. Whenever the coral guardian starts its turn with 60 hit points or fewer, roll a d6. On a 6, the guardian goes berserk. On each of its turns while berserk, the guardian attacks the nearest creature it can see. If no creature is near enough to move to and attack, the guardian attacks an object, with preference for an object smaller than itself. Once the guardian goes berserk, it continues to do so until it is destroyed or regains all its hit points.

False Appearance. While the guardian remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from coral.

Immutable Form. The guardian is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The guardian has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The guardian's weapon attacks are magical.

Regeneration. The guardian regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The guardian makes one Bite and two Tendril attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage.

Tendril. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage plus 10 (1d10 + 5) poison damage.

Polyp Spawn (Recharge 5–6). The coral guardian emits a 60-foot cone of polyps. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 35 (10d6) poison damage and be restrained as it begins to turn to coral. The restrained target must repeat the saving throw at the end of its next turn. On a successful save, the effect ends on the target. On a failed save, the target is petrified.

COSMIC TURTLE

Few creatures in the Aetherial Expanse predate cosmic turtles. These ancient turtles are born of star stuff fragments and share an unbreakable bond with cosmic life and creation. Their bodies appear crystal-like, infused with swirling stars, exploding supernovas, and reflections of the deepest voids in space.

Cosmic turtles are immortal; instead of “death” as mortal creatures experience, cosmic turtles enter a slumber that can last from hundreds to thousands of years, depending on the circumstance. Disciplined cosmic turtles can temporarily break out of their slumber if they sense imminent danger. A cosmic turtle can only be killed using a *wish* spell while hibernating using its Slumber trait.

A fully grown cosmic turtle can be as large as five miles long; when it enters hibernation, entire islands can form on its shell and body.



Guardians of the Aetherial Expanse. Cosmic turtles act as stewards of the Aetherial Expanse, awakening from their slumbers in times of grave turmoil to rebalance the shifting tides. Many civilizations upset the natural order of the Aetherial Expanse, only to be wiped out by an attack from a cosmic turtle. Woe be to those who summon the ire of the cosmic turtles.

COSMIC TURTLE

Gargantuan Monstrosity, Any Alignment

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 350 (20d20 + 140)

Speed 20 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	25 (+7)	22 (+6)	24 (+7)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +12, Con +14, Wis +14, Cha +11

Skills Insight +14, Perception +14

Damage Resistances acid, necrotic, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 24

Languages all, telepathy 1,000 ft.

Challenge 21 (33,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +7

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the cosmic turtle fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Slumber. When the cosmic turtle is reduced to 0 hit points, it drops to 1 hit point instead, becomes unconscious, and is immune to all damage for 1d10 x 100 years.

Subconscious Discourse. The cosmic turtle can use its telepathy to communicate with up to ten creatures of its choice, allowing those creatures to hear each other’s responses. This communication taps into a creature’s subconscious, allowing for extremely rapid conversations, where only 1 second of real-time passes for every 10 minutes of telepathic dialog.

ACTIONS

Multiaction. The cosmic turtle makes one Shooting Star attack and two Claw attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 24 (3d12 + 5) slashing damage.

Shooting Star. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, range 120/360 ft., one target. *Hit:* 28 (4d12 + 2) radiant damage.

Star Stuff Manipulation (1/day). Using the power of star stuff fragments embedded in its shell, the cosmic turtle can manipulate the size of up to ten willing creatures it sees within 1,000 feet of it. The star stuff fragments increase a creature’s size, causing it to grow until its size is Gargantuan. If there isn’t enough room for a creature to grow, it can step into a space adjacent to them where it can fit.

This effect lasts for 10 minutes and until it ends, the creature also has advantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws. The creature’s equipment also grows to match its new size. While transformed in this way, the creature’s attacks and spells deal full damage to ships’ hit points. However, ship cannons automatically hit creatures transformed in this way, and deal damage equal to the result of that cannon’s target die.

For the duration of this feature, the cosmic turtle is incapacitated, can’t move or speak, and is immune to damage.

Super Nova (Recharge 5–6). The explosive energy of a dying star erupts outward from the cosmic turtle. Each creature within 20 feet of the cosmic turtle must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking 67 (15d8) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

ELEMENTAL BEASTS

Occasionally, aetherial sailors find an elemental portal their craft can travel through, bringing them into the mysterious worlds of the Elemental Planes. These planar gates are typically guarded by bestial elemental spirits that jealously guard the entrance to their worlds. Sailors know to keep a distance from these portals unless they're prepared to fight past these elemental beasts.

BLAZING CARCAJOU

These small but fierce fire elemental creatures ferociously protect their homes. They burn with a white-hot intensity, resembling fiery wolverines in both appearance and temperament.

CLOUDSHRIKE

Air elemental beasts are invisible, for they're made of swirling gusts of wind. When their movements kick up sand or debris, or they're perceived by creatures with truesight, it's revealed they possess a bestial form in the vague shape of a large, carnivorous bird.



BLAZING CARCAJOU

Small Elemental, Unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 33 (6d6 + 12)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical damage

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities frightened, poisoned

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages understands Ignan but can't speak

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Elemental Demise. When reduced to 0 hit points, the elemental beast becomes a *fire elemental mote** (see page 161).

Fire Form. The elemental beast can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing. A creature that touches the elemental beast or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 4 (1d8) fire damage. In addition, the elemental beast can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. The first time it enters a creature's space on a turn, the creature takes 4 (1d8) fire damage and catches fire; until someone takes an action to douse the fire, the creature takes 4 (1d8) fire damage at the start of each of its turns.

Illumination. The elemental beast sheds bright light in a 20-foot radius and dim light for an additional 20 feet.

Relentless (1/day). If the elemental beast takes 10 damage or less that would reduce it to 0 hit points, it is reduced to 1 hit point instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The elemental beast makes two Fiery Claw attacks.

Fiery Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) fire damage.



CLOUDSHRIKE

Large Elemental, Unaligned

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 52 (8d10 + 8)

Speed 10 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +4

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages understands Auran but can't speak

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Elemental Demise. When reduced to 0 hit points, the elemental beast becomes an *air elemental mote** (see page 161).

Flyby. The elemental beast doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

Invisibility. The elemental beast is invisible.

Keen Sight. The elemental beast has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Multiaction. The elemental beast makes one Beak attack and one Talons attack.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

FEATHERED STARS

Once powerful guardians and servants of a sea god, feathered stars are Celestials that are as powerful as they are rare. The few that have been encountered are either young or dormant, unable to summon the power they once possessed without the aid of magic.

YOUNG FEATHERED STAR

Gargantuan Celestial, Typically Neutral

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 108 (7d20 + 35)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	11 (+0)	20 (+5)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Str +9, Con +9, Wis +7

Skills Athletics +9, Insight +7, Perception +7

Damage Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, prone

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages all, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

Aetheric Adaptation. The feathered star can breathe aether, and is immune to the effects of aether poisoning.

Magic Resistance. The feathered star has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The feathered star's weapon attacks are magical.

Siege Monster. The feathered star deals double damage to objects and structures.

ACTIONS

Multiaction. The feathered star makes three Radiant Feather attacks.

Radiant Feather. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) radiant damage.

Spellcasting. The feathered star casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability and requiring no material components:

At will: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *greater restoration*
3/day: *freedom of movement*



FEATHERED STAR

Gargantuan Celestial, Unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 186 (12d20 + 60)

Speed 45 ft., swim 45 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +12, Con +11, Wis +9

Skills Athletics +12, Insight +9, Perception +9

Damage Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities frightened, exhaustion, paralyzed, poisoned, prone

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages all, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 20 (25,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +6

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the feathered star fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. The feathered star has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The feathered star's weapon attacks are magical.

Siege Monster. The feathered star deals double damage to objects and structures.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The feathered star makes three Radiant Feather attacks.

Radiant Feather. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) radiant damage.

Spellcasting. The feathered star casts one of the following spells, requiring no material components and using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 17):

At will: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *greater restoration*

3/day each: *freedom of movement*, *move earth*

1/day: *earthquake*

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The feathered star can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The feathered star regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Radiant Feather. The feathered star makes one Radiant Feather attack.

Spellcasting. The feathered star uses Spellcasting.

Star Swarm (Costs 3 Actions). The feathered star summons six tiny stars, each of which can strike a target the feathered star can see within 120 feet of it. A target must make a DC 19 Charisma saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

ISLAND RESIDENTS

Those who live in the Aetherial Expanse are survivors who've learned to endure within this beautiful but dangerous place. Many have basic combat training, making them tougher than the average commoner.

HARDENED ISLANDER

Threats abound on the Expanse, and many islanders know how to fight together to bring down those who threaten their homes.

ISLAND ARCHER

Islanders with a steady aim are well-regarded members of island militias.

MILITIA MEMBER

Some larger island settlements organize militias to keep the peace and defend against raiders.



HARDENED ISLANDER

Small or Medium Humanoid, Any Alignment

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any two languages

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Pack Tactics. The islander has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the islander's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80 ft./320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

"These are no normal farmers. On Karelagne, farmers'll drop their pitchforks and run at the sight of a soldier. These folks'll disembowel you and have your guts for supper."

—Karelagne soldier preparing to attack

ISLAND ARCHER

Small or Medium Humanoid, Any Alignment

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

Skills Insight +4, Nature +3, Perception +4, Stealth +4, Survival +4

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages any two languages

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The archer makes three Dagger attacks or three Shortbow attacks.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80 ft./320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

MILITIA MEMBER

Small or Medium Humanoid, Any Alignment

Armor Class 15 (studded leather armor)

Hit Points 19 (3d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +3, Acrobatics +5, Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages any two languages

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The militia member makes two Shortsword attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Militia Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30 ft./90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage.





"Bah! She's just a wee lass, and those little toothpicks she wields ain't nothin'. Any noble with a bodyguard that tiny and holdin' those weapons is just askin' to have his throat slit. I can do this myself; I don't even know why I hired a bunch of low-life cutthroats for this job."

—a would-be assassin moments before his death

KNIFE MASTER

Knife masters are commonly employed as bodyguards by wealthy Ayrissian merchants. Many carry hidden blades, appearing as innocuous assistants until danger presents itself.

KNIFE MASTER

Small or Medium Humanoid, Any Alignment

Armor Class 16 (leather armor)

Hit Points 117 (18d8 + 36)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +8

Skills Acrobatics +8, Perception +5, Stealth +8

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages any two languages

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Knife Fighter. The knife master's Dagger attacks deal one extra die of damage when it hits (included in the attacks below).

Sneak Attack. Once per turn, the knife master deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the assassin that isn't incapacitated and the knife master doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The knife master makes three Dagger attacks.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft, one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d4 + 5) piercing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Deadeye (3/Day). Immediately after making an attack roll or damage roll with a thrown weapon attack, the knife master can roll 2d10 and add the result to the attack roll or damage roll.

Lightfooted. The knife master takes the Dash or Disengage action.



MILITARY FORCES

The Karelagne Empire is feared throughout the Aetherial Expanse for its military might and power. The Ayrssian Kingdom hires mercenary groups to achieve their own objectives. Each relies on commanders and contingents of soldiers to maintain control of their territory in the Aetherial Expanse.

COMMANDER

A commander wields authority over a garrison or army of one or more contingents of soldiers.

A Commander's Lair

Commanders typically operate out of the forts in which their military garrison is quartered. Forts are purpose-built to safeguard major ports, capitals, and islands along sea trade routes. While within one mile of a friendly fort, garrison commanders can call upon the fort's powerful weapons to defend against enemies.

USING CONTINGENTS AND COMMANDERS

A contingent of soldiers is designed to represent groups of around fifty soldiers. This design is intended to provide the narrative feel of cinematic combat of high-powered characters plowing their way through many enemies without bogging down combat. The contingent functions mechanically as a single creature in combat, but narratively when they act, they act as an organized group of soldiers attacking the characters.

Additionally, a commander augments contingents of soldiers to provide additional mass combat effects without needlessly bogging down combat. Their lair actions create the narrative illusion of a fort's cannon battery joining in the battle, while the mechanics remain streamlined for ease of use for GMs. The synergy between a garrison commander and a contingent of soldiers is powerful, so make sure to see how you can best use them together at your table.

Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the commander can take one of the following lair actions; the commander can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

Cannonfire. The fort fires cannons at a point on the ground the commander can see within 120 feet of it, bombarding a 20-foot-radius area. Each creature in the bombardment area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 44 (8d10) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Ballistae. The fort fires ballistae at up to four creatures the commander can see within 120 feet of it. Each creature must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 16 (3d10) piercing damage on a failed save.

Powdered Aetherium. The fort fires canisters of powdered aetherium at a point on the ground the commander can see within 120 feet of it, creating a 20-foot cube of pulsating, blue aetherium dust centered on that point. A creature in the cube must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, they are covered with the aetherium dust for 1 minute. Any attack roll made against an affected creature has advantage if the attacker can see it, and the affected creature can't benefit from being invisible.

CONTINGENT OF SOLDIERS

Karelagne soldiers and Ayrissian mercenaries are often deployed in large numbers, fighting together as a military unit. This contingent typically clashes with deadly monsters or against heroes too powerful to be defeated in a one-on-one battle.



COMMANDER

Small or Medium Humanoid, Any Alignment

Armor Class 16 (breastplate)

Hit Points 82 (15d8 + 15)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +5, Wis +5, Cha +6

Skills Perception +5

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common and one other language

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Indomitable (2/day). The garrison commander can reroll a saving throw it fails. They must use the new roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The commander makes three Rapier attacks or two Fire Crystal Pistol attacks.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Fire Crystal Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 30/90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage plus 11 (2d10) fire damage.

Superior Leadership. For 1 minute, the commander can utter a special command or warning whenever an ally that they can see within 60 feet of them makes an attack roll or a saving throw. The ally can add a d6 to its roll provided it can hear and understand the garrison commander. An ally can benefit from only one Superior Leadership die at a time. This effect ends if the garrison commander is incapacitated.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The commander can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The garrison commander regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Attack (2 Actions). The commander makes one Rapier or one Fire Crystal Pistol attack.

Command Subordinate. The commander targets one ally they can see within 60 feet of it. If the target can see or hear the commander, the target can make one attack using its reaction and has advantage on the attack roll, or it can move up to its movement speed.

Tactical Movement. The commander moves up to half their speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

CONTINGENT OF SOLDIERS

Gargantuan Contingent of Medium Humanoids, Any Alignment

Armor Class 16 (breastplate)

Hit Points 115 (10d20 + 10)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +3

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Common

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Contingent. Contingents can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and can move through a space large enough for a Medium creature. When a hostile creature occupies the same space as the contingent, the ground in that area is difficult terrain for that creature. The contingent can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Relentless March. If an effect or attack that targets a single creature would reduce a contingent's speed to 0, the contingent's speed drops to half instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The contingent can use its Coordinated Attack. Then it makes two Spears attacks.

Spears. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 25 (6d6 + 4) piercing damage, or half as much damage if the contingent has half of its hit points or fewer remaining.

Coordinated Attack. The contingent attacks all nearby enemies. Each creature within 5 feet of the contingent must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.



SAILOR

An experienced sailor is familiar with all facets of working on a functioning ship. They have the knowledge and the physical strength to competently work across the vessel, from serving as a lookout in the crow's nest, to swabbing the poop deck, or to firing the artillery.

A ship can't run without sailors; they secure payloads, clean the ship, and follow the quartermaster's and the first mate's orders.



SAILOR

Medium or Small Humanoid, Any Alignment

Armor Class 13 (heavy leather coat)

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

Skills Acrobatics +3, Athletics +3

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Sea Legs. The sailor has advantage on ability checks and saving throws to resist being knocked prone.

ACTIONS

Belaying Pin. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

“...nor lust nor gold nor winter's cold,
nor hearth nor rage nor one's old age...”
—a line from the shanty, “A Lost Sailor's True Love”

SHIP CAT

Every Sistren ship (or ship a Sistren sails on) has at least one ship cat, used as an extra set of eyes for the crew. It can be sent, surreptitiously or otherwise, onto other ships to gather information. Ship cats can communicate what they see in a series of psychic images to whoever sent them on their mission.

Ship cats can't die or be seriously hurt, though they temporarily disincorporate if they sustain enough damage. No ship has more than five ship cats at a time: jaunty tales tell of ship cats overpowering the crew and taking the ship for themselves, but the limit may have more to do with the incessant yowling and territorial spitting that comes with too many ship cats in close quarters.

Espionage. The life of a feline spy is a tricky one. If a character sends out a ship cat to gather information, they must roll on the Ship Cat Complications table.

SHIP CAT COMPLICATIONS

D12	COMPLICATION
1	Another ship cat convinced your cat to stay on its ship, and it has left your service.
2	Your cat convinced another ship cat to move aboard your ship.
3	Your ship cat doesn't send images of what it saw, or it sends useless images.
4	Your ship cat saw something distressing and refuses to go out again for 3 days.
5-12	No complication.

SHIP CAT

Tiny Monstrosity, Unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 10 (4d4)

Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Dex +4

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4

Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning

Damage Immunities cold, poison, radiant

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages understands Common but can't speak

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Disincorporate. If the cat is reduced to 0 hit points, it remains conscious and becomes incorporeal until it finishes a long rest. While incorporeal, the cat can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain.

Investigate. When sent to investigate another vessel, the cat can transmit six images via limited telepathy to the creature that sent it on the mission.

Keen Smell. The cat has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Locate. If asked to locate something aboard a ship, the cat will find it and either bring it back or sit next to it and meow incessantly.

ACTIONS

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 slashing damage.



George Bennett



SHIP MIMIC

This overgrown shapeshifter was little more than a typical treasure-chest-shaped mimic when it tumbled through a portal into the Astral Plane. It has grown uncommonly strong by being infused with aetherial energy and now trawls the aetherial waves in search of prey.

SHIP MIMIC

Gargantuan Monstrosity (Shapechanger), Neutral

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 112 (9d20 + 18)

Speed 5 ft., swim 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	5 (-3)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Stealth +4

Damage Immunities acid

Condition Immunities prone

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Adhesive (Object Form Only). The mimic adheres to anything that touches it. A Huge or smaller creature adhered to the mimic is also grappled by it (escape DC 14). Ability checks made to escape this grapple have disadvantage.

False Appearance (Object Form Only). While the mimic remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary object.

Grappler. The mimic has advantage on attack rolls against any creature grappled by it.

Shapechanger. The mimic can use its action to polymorph into an object or back into its true, amorphous form. Its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The ship mimic makes two Pseudopod attacks.

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the mimic is in object form, the target is subjected to its Adhesive trait.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) acid damage.



STARSCOURGE PIRATES

Akaste raised undead pirates to serve Desdemona in her reapings in past millennia, and most are deeply loyal to the pair. Typically recruited from necromancers, warlocks, worshippers of the devourer-god Qoz, or people seeking immortality in any form, these undead are stronger than they were in life, strengthened by Akaste's magic. Her enchantments shield them from some of the typical weaknesses of the undead, ensuring Desdemona is never without a loyal crew.

Blessings of the Sea-Witch. The bodies of Akaste's pirates are well preserved through magic; instead of rotting, they manifest features echoing Akaste's form. Varying

coral extensions, typically pale blue, crimson, ivory, and brown, grow from their bones, extending their faces, crowning their heads, and jutting from their shoulder blades and arms. Barnacles sprout in small areas of their skin, expunging puffs of tainted glittering light.

Lost Identities. Time is cruel to the memory; most pirates have forgotten themselves and serve Akaste and Desdemona with unfailing loyalty. However, on occasion, some pirates may stubbornly cling to their identities and may recall the person they were before, and who may have requests related to their old life.

STARSPAKER

Akaste blessed those most ambitious and eager for power with access to her cruel magic so they could sap the strength of mortals and prepare them for Desdemona's reaping. Starspeakers accompany their martial allies, staying back in combat to weaken and harass.

STARBLADE

Those dread swashbucklers who serve as Akaste's main force are bolstered for battle, wielding weapons that carve vicious gouges across her enemies. Rarely traveling without starspeakers and other starblades, they work together to corner and devastate enemies, a loyal crew even in death.

STARSPAKER

Medium Undead (Warlock), Typically Neutral Evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 71 (11d8 + 22)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)

Skills Arcana +5, Deception +8, Perception +6

Damage Immunities radiant

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common plus any two languages

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Magic Resistance. The starspeaker has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The starspeaker makes three Eldritch Blast attacks or three attacks with its Shortsword.

Eldritch Blast. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +8 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) force damage.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage or radiant damage (starspeaker's choice).

Spellcasting. The starspeaker casts one of the following spells, requiring no spell components and using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 16); its non-cantrip spells are all cast at 5th level:

At will: *chill touch*, *eldritch blast* (see above), *mage hand*
1/day each: *fear*, *hold person*, *inflict wounds*, *ray of enfeeblement*

STARBLADE

Medium Undead, Typically Neutral Evil

Armor Class 18 (scale mail, shield)

Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

Skills Athletics +7, Intimidation +4, Perception +3

Damage Immunities radiant

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common plus any two languages

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Turn Resistance. The starblade has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The starblade makes two melee attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic or radiant damage (starblade's choice). If the target is a creature, the starblade can choose to deal no damage with the attack to disarm the target. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or drop one item it is holding on the ground.

Sweep the Leg. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone.

QUEST HOOK:

AN EXAMINED LIFE AND DEATH

While seeking a person, object, or piece of important information, the characters learn what they're searching for is aboard a merchant vessel that was recently stolen from its berth at a nearby port. The crew was with the ship, but the captain was left behind. The captain says that the crew seemed to be under the sway of a skeletal figure matching the description of a starspeaker.

In reality, the starspeaker regained the memories of its life as a merchant and seeks a sunken ship containing many valuables and the body of its beloved partner. The crew, promised the riches of the sunken ship and moved by the love story, travel with the starspeaker of their own accord.



ASHEN AIR ELEMENTAL

Large Elemental, Neutral

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 90 (12d10 + 24)

Speed 0 ft., fly 90 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Damage Resistances lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Auran, Ignan

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Smoke Form. The elemental can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. It can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Each creature that starts its turn within 5 feet of the elemental must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw against poison. On a failed save, the creature spends its action that turn coughing and sputtering. Creatures that don't need to breathe or are immune to poison automatically succeed on this saving throw.

Heated Body. A creature that touches the elemental or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 5 (1d10) fire damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The elemental makes two Slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.



VOLCANIC ELEMENTALS

Portals to the Elemental Plane of Fire occasionally open within the larger islands of the Expanse. When these portals remain stable for long periods, such as on Mount Spitfire, at the heart of Calderé Island, volcanic activity often follows. Various elementals make their home on the other side of these portals and are frequently spewed forth from them.

ASHEN AIR ELEMENTAL

These great billowing elementals blaze through the air, leaving trails of sooty smoke in their wake.

MOLTEN EARTH ELEMENTAL

Combining the earth's strength and fire's blazing power, molten earth elementals pulverize their enemies with burning fists.

LAVA SERPENT

Lava serpents entwine their enemies amidst their powerful coils, simultaneously burning and crushing them to death.

MOLTEN EARTH ELEMENTAL

Large Elemental, Neutral

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 114 (12d10 + 48)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	8 (-1)	18 (+4)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities cold

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Ignan, Terran

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Earth Glide. The elemental can burrow through nonmagical, unworked earth and stone. While doing so, the elemental doesn't disturb the material it moves through.

Heated Body. A creature that touches the elemental or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 5 (1d10) fire damage.

Illumination. The elemental sheds bright light in a 10-foot radius and dim light for an additional 10 feet.

Siege Monster. The elemental deals double damage to objects and structures.

Water Susceptibility. For every 5 feet the elemental moves in water, or for every gallon of water splashed on it, it takes 1 cold damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The elemental makes two Slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.

LAVA SERPENT

Medium Elemental, Neutral

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft., swim 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Vulnerabilities cold

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, poisoned, prone, unconscious

Senses blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Ignan but doesn't speak

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Illumination. The lava serpent sheds bright light in a 30-foot radius and dim light in an additional 30 feet.

Invisible in Lava. While the lava serpent remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a puddle of lava.

Lava Body. A creature that touches the lava serpent or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 7 (2d6) fire damage. A creature grappled by the lava serpent instead takes 10 (3d6) fire damage at the start of each of its turns.

Water Susceptibility. For every 5 feet the lava serpent moves in water, or for every gallon of water splashed on it, it takes 1 cold damage.

ACTIONS

Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (3d6 + 3) fire damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 13) and pulled 5 feet toward the lava serpent. Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the lava serpent can't constrict another target.



WIZARDS

The discovery of the Aetherial Expanse, its magical seas, and crystalline aetherium has led to an explosion of magical advances and new ways to harness magic.

ALACRITY SCHOLAR

The pervasive nature of mercantilism in the Kingdom of Ayris led many of their arcane scholars to bargain with dark powers to unlock magical secrets. Chief among these was the ability to manipulate speed and time. Alacrity scholars have learned to manipulate the passage of time to deadly effect.

SQUALL CALLER

Ship captains are always on the lookout for squall callers to add to their crews. They can intuitively use their magic to summon winds, to both drive ships and topple those foolish enough to threaten them.

TECHNOMAGE

The immense arcane power condensed in aetherium crystal and heavy aether has made possible astonishing contraptions fashioned of wood and metal, crystal and fluid. The technomages continue to find innovative ways to use aetherium to power increasingly wondrous devices.



ALACRITY SCHOLAR

Medium or Small Humanoid (Wizard), Any Alignment

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 90 (20d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +7, Wis +4

Skills Arcana +7, History +7

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Any four languages

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Quick Recovery. If the alacrity scholar suffers from a condition that ends with a successful saving throw, it has advantage on the saving throw, otherwise it can choose to halve the duration of the condition.

Rapid Response. If the alacrity scholar is surprised, it can still use its reaction.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The alacrity scholar makes four Arcane Burst attacks.

Arcane Burst. Melee or Ranged Spell Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 120 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (3d6+4) force damage.

Spellcasting. The alacrity scholar casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15):

At will: *light*, *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*

2/day each: *blur*, *dispel magic*, *expeditious retreat*, *feather fall*, *mage armor*, *slow*

1/day: *chronovoyance**, *haste*

REACTION

Quick Teleport (3/Day). When the alacrity scholar is targeted by a weapon attack, it can teleport along with any equipment it is wearing or carrying up to 10 feet to an unoccupied space that it can see. If the alacrity scholar is out of range or reach of the triggering attack, the attack automatically misses, otherwise the triggering attack is made with disadvantage.

SQUALL CALLER

Medium or Small Humanoid (Wizard), Any Alignment

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 77 (14d8 + 14)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +7, Wis +4

Skills Arcana +7, Navigation +7

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Any four languages

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Sea Legs. The squall caller has advantage on ability checks and saving throws to resist being knocked prone.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The squall caller makes three Arcane Burst attacks.

Arcane Burst. *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (3d10 + 4) force damage.

Frigid Blast (1/Day). The squall caller unleashes a blast of frigid air in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in the cone must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 35 (10d6) cold damage and is pushed 10 feet. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and is not pushed.

Spellcasting. The squall caller casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15):

At will: *light, mage hand, prestidigitation*

2/day each: *fog cloud, gust of wind, mage armor, unseen servant*

1/day: *aetheric adaptation**, *fly, sleet storm*

REACTIONS

Windswept Blast. When the squall caller hits a Large size or smaller target with its Arcane Burst attack, it can choose to unleash a strong blast of wind. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be pushed 15 feet away from the squall caller.

"Magic ain't to be trusted. Nor should ye trust gears and widgets and such. If all that rubbish ain't fit to be in this world, the most despicable of all creatures is them technomages. They'll blow ye up in all manner of ways."

—Finh Starmarch, drunken but wise sailor

TECHNOMAGE

Medium or Small Humanoid (Wizard), Any Alignment

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 71 (13d8+13)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +6, Wis +4

Skills Arcana +9, Navigation +6

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Any four languages

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Empowered Magitech. A magitech weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the technomage hits with it (included in the attack).

Magic Resistance. The technomage has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Special Equipment. The technomage is armed with an *aetherburst wand*.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The technomage makes three Aetherburst Wand attacks.

Aetherburst Wand. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Electrical Burst. The technomage unleashes a burst of lightning from its *aetherburst wand*. Each creature in a 15-foot cone must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. Creatures wearing metal armor have disadvantage on the saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 35 (10d6) lightning damage and can't take reactions until the start of its next turn. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and can take reactions as normal.

Spellcasting. The technomage casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14):

At will: *light, mage hand, prestidigitation*

2/day each: *detect magic, lightning bolt, mage armor, magic weapon, unseen servant*

1/day: *wall of force*

REACTIONS

Aerial Withdrawal. When a creature moves to within 5 feet of the technomage, the technomage can magically jump up to 15 feet high and up to 30 feet away, landing in an unoccupied space that it can see. Opportunity attacks against the technomage are at disadvantage until the start of its next turn.

Aethershield (3/Day). When the technomage takes damage from an attack, they can engage a protective arcane shield, reducing the damage by 10 (3d6).



Chapter 15

PERSONALITIES

“Though I set foot on many islands, though I saw extraordinary celestial lightning and terrifying abominations, what I remember most fondly were those faces I saw on passing ships: the sight of other adventurers, the warmth of smiling lips, the waving of bright flags in the wind. As long as they weren’t firing on us, you know.”

—*Enoch, former buccaneer of the Silent Tide*

This chapter presents stat blocks in alphabetical order for a sampling of unique individuals of varied backgrounds that GMs may wish to add to their Aetherial Expanse campaigns.

The Expanse is vast and home to adventurers, swash-bucklers, and many other souls. There are always fated encounters to be had, and players’ paths may cross with any number of colorful characters. The potential for confrontation, but also companionship are ever present.

Within this chapter, you may find allies that provide support, rivals to challenge your players, or antagonists to violently uproot your journey. There’s kindness, cruelty, strange magic, political ambition, and revolutions hidden within.

Each character contains questions. Will they be friend or foe? How might they impact the world of the players? After all, these characters contain their own narratives, ambitions, and goals. Here, you can find new adventures, deadly conflicts, and perhaps even the final piece need to finish your own story.

PERSONALITIES BY CHALLENGE RATING

CR	PERSONALITY	CREATURE TYPE
3	Glumpkee	Elemental (Mephit)
3	Luckless Lugh	Humanoid (Halfling)
4	Yven’cha the Shocked	Humanoid (Dwarf)
5	Angus McGraw	Monstrosity
5	Vik	Humanoid (Halfling)
6	Almond	Humanoid (Gnome)
8	Areyca	Humanoid (Elf)
9	Levyra the Ember	Humanoid (Human)
10	Zeik, the Charioteer	Humanoid (Elf)
10	Zheng Yang Shi	Humanoid (Human)
11	Desdemona	Giant (Storm Giant)
11	Gelhma Ganderfacet	Humanoid (Gnome)
11	Tammon d’Ayre	Humanoid (Human)
14	Plak the Annihilator	Humanoid (Human)



ALMOND

“What can the Blood Lilies, crew of the Aesphodel, do for you, strangers?”

Almond is an expert woodshaper and the current captain of the *Aesphodel*, a pirate crew solely comprised of druids who make their home on Maladell Island. Fearless and caring, their position is due to their leadership skills and command over natural magic.

Almond wears a prosthetic leg personally shaped from island wood, and is cheerful and welcoming to everyone they meet. They have no problem with people unless others have a problem with them and their crew.

Almond is not ignorant of the dangers posed by other pirates; they simply prefer to give those they meet a chance to prove themselves.

Officer Roles. Almond is an officer with 3 ranks in captain, 3 ranks in first mate, and 2 ranks in shipwright.

ALMOND

Small Humanoid (Gnome), Neutral

Armor Class 13 (16 with barkskin)

Hit Points 130 (20d6 + 60)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Int +6, Wis +9

Skills Insight +8, Nature +6, Navigation +6, Perception +8, Persuasion +7, Survival +8

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Common, Druidic, Gnomish

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Gnome Cunning. Almond has advantage on all Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saves against magic.

Wood Whisperer. Plants instinctively understand Almond as if they share a language, though Almond cannot understand them

in return. Almond can spend 1 minute gently coaxing Large or smaller plants within 10 feet of them to magically move their branches, tendrils, and roots, potentially creating a 5-foot square of difficult terrain, or removing a 5-foot square of difficult terrain.

ACTIONS

Multiaction. Almond makes two Quarterstaff or Primal Blast attacks. They can replace one attack with Spellcasting.

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit (+8 to hit with shillelagh), reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage, 5 (1d8 + 1) bludgeoning damage if wielded with two hands, or 9 (1d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage with shillelagh.

Primal Blast. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +8 to hit, range 90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) damage of a type chosen by Almond: cold, fire, lightning, or thunder.

Spellcasting. Almond casts the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 16):

At will: *druidcraft*, *mending*, *shillelagh*

3/day each: *barkskin*, *create or destroy water*, *cure wounds*, *entangle*, *purify food and drink*

1/day each: *call lightning*, *commune with nature*, *locate creature*, *plant growth*, *speak with plants*



ANGUS MCGRAW

"I'm gonna live FOREVER!"

Travelers on the Aetherial Sea can claim to have seen many strange sights: creatures and phenomena that those living in less magical locations would assume are hallucinations. One of those sights is a minotaur sailing the untamed seas, looking out over the Expanse with a flaming battle axe in one hand and a soup ladle in the other. He is the ex-pirate Angus McGraw.

A Pirate's Life. How Angus came to the Aetherial Expanse is not known, but his mark on the place is legendary. Those who faced him in battle and lived to tell the tale describe his ferocity, which always began with the fearsome cry, "I'm gonna live forever!"

Angus joined the crew of the pirate vessel *Chimera*, acting as its main muscle, and its surprisingly skilled cook. Although Angus refused to prepare beef dishes for the crew, the other ingredients Angus gathered (or procured through piratical activities) were made into delicious, if unique, meals.

An Ex-Pirate's Life. Angus's pirating life ended once he entered a relationship with a fellow crewmate. Living forever, Angus came to learn, was impossible—so he decided to make the most of the time he had by spending it with those he loved.

Angus and his partner left the pirating life to set off on their own, sailing the Expanses of the magical seas, experimenting with new and wondrous recipes from ingredients plucked from the magical aether, and touching the lives of all he encounters.

Officer Roles. Angus is an officer with 4 ranks in cook.

"Some folks you meet barely make an impact on you for a second. Some people, if they are quite spirited, might help you change your mind. Then there are a few who change your life. Angus was one of the latter."

—a former crewmate

ANGUS MCGRAW

Large Monstrosity, Chaotic Good

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 119 (14d10 + 42)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)

Skills Perception +9

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Common, Aetherian

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Charge. If Angus moves at least 10 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a Gore attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 9 (2d8) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be pushed up to 10 feet away and knocked prone.

Reckless. At the start of his turn, Angus can gain advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls he makes during that turn, but attack rolls against him have advantage until the start of his next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Angus makes one Flaming Battleaxe attack and one Gore attack.

Flaming Battleaxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) slashing damage and 3 (1d6) fire damage.

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (3d8 + 4) piercing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Quick Snack (1/Day). Angus can feed himself or an allied creature within 5 feet a snack he's made. A creature eating the snack regains 8 (2d4 + 3) hit points.

"I seen many wonders on the silver seas, but ain't seen nothin' like Areyca. She tears holes in the air like someone might tear paper. She's one I don't never wanna cross. I don't know where I'd end up."

—Jabner Crabstitch, kobold sailor

AREYCA

Medium Humanoid (Wood Elf), Lawful Neutral

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 93 (17d8 + 17)

Speed 35 ft., climb 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +7, Cha +6

Skills Arcana +7, Insight +6, Nature +7, Navigation +7, Perception +6, Persuasion +6

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Draconic, Elvish, Primordial

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

All-Terrain Wheelchair. Moving through nonmagical difficult terrain costs Areyca no extra movement. She can pass through nonmagical plants without being slowed by them and without taking damage from them if they have thorns, spines, or a similar hazard. She also has advantage on saving throws against plants that are magically created or manipulated to impede movement, such those created by the *entangle* spell.

Additionally, she can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Fey Ancestry. Areyca has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put her to sleep.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Areyca makes three Dispersing Bolt attacks.

Dispersing Bolt. *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) force damage, and Areyca can choose to teleport the target to an unoccupied space she can see within 10 feet of the target. If the target is aloft after being teleported, it falls unless it can stop its fall.

Spellcasting. Areyca casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15):

At will: *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*

2/day each: *control water*, *hold person*, *lightning bolt*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *misty step*, *shield*

1/day each: *aetherial rift**, *dimension door*, *fly*, *hold monster*, *teleport*



AREYCA

"I've happily educated many who were foolish enough to underestimate me."

This wood elf woman is the leader of Fosfor Town. She is a skilled wizard known for her skill with rift-making magic. This ability allows her to strengthen the economic power of Fosfor Town by easing the transportation of goods from the docks directly into Fosfor Town itself.

Officer Roles. Areyca is an officer with 2 ranks in captain, and 1 rank in first mate.

DESDEMONA

“Before you face undeath, you must prove yourself against death’s sting!”

Time, practice, magic, and sheer will to survive have honed Desdemona into a formidable foe. Her two blades afford her speed and precision, and Akaste’s reaping magic lashes out at her command. At times, it is hard to tell where Desdemona’s power ends and Akaste’s power begins, but none believe that Desdemona would be help-

less without her connection to the sea-witch. She is too ancient, too skilled, too level-headed, and too stubborn to die. Desdemona fights with her two blades for speed, pulling out Carina (see page 160) only for reaping.

Officer Roles. Desdemona is an officer with 4 ranks in captain.

DESDEMONA

Huge Giant (Storm Giant), Neutral

Armor Class 17 (studded leather armor)

Hit Points 119 (14d8 + 56)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
29 (+9)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)

Skills Acrobatics +9, History +10, Intimidation +7, Perception +12, Religion +6, Survival +8

Damage Immunities radiant

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Celestial, Common

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Desdemona fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. Desdemona has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Startouched. Desdemona gains 10 temporary hit points at the start of each of her turns.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Desdemona makes two melee attacks.

Deathblade. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d8 + 9) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Starblade. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d8 + 9) radiant damage and the next attack roll made against the target before the end of Desdemona’s next turn has advantage.

Spectral Reach. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +8 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d8) necrotic damage and the target can’t regain hit points until the start of Desdemona’s next turn.

Reaping (Recharge 5–6). Desdemona unleashes a fraction of reaping magic in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 27 (6d8) necrotic damage and on the next attack roll or saving throw the creature makes, the creature must roll a d6 and subtract the number rolled from the attack roll or saving throw. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage with no additional effects.

Resize. Desdemona magically transforms between Medium and Huge size as she desires. Her equipment resizes to match her new form. When she is Medium sized, the reach of her weapon attacks becomes 5 feet. Other than her size and reach, her statistics are the same in each form. If Desdemona dies, she reverts to her true form, and her equipment reverts to its normal size.

Spellcasting. Desdemona casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 16). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:
At will: *bane, bless, unseen servant*

REACTIONS

Parry. Desdemona adds 4 to her AC against one melee attack that would hit her. To do so, Desdemona must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Desdemona can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature’s turn. Desdemona regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Starcast. Desdemona casts an at-will spell.

Starstep. Desdemona magically teleports, along with any equipment she is wearing and carrying, up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space she can see.

Weaken Soul (Costs 2 Actions). One creature Desdemona can see within 60 feet of her must make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 18 (4d8) necrotic damage and on the next attack roll or saving throw the creature makes, the creature must roll a d8 and subtract the number rolled from the attack roll or saving throw. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage with no additional effects.



GELHMA GANDERFACET

“Nice magic you got there. Be a shame if something happened to it.”

Gelhma Ganderfacet made a living as a gemologist on a far-flung Material Plane world. While exploring a deep cavern, she slipped through a portal, landing on a small island in the Aetherial Expanse. The influx of aether into her system imbued her with amazing powers that she is still trying to understand, and a dark side she doesn't know exists.

Aetherium Expert. After coming to terms with her new setting, Gelhma let her knowledge of gems and precious minerals be her solace and her occupation. She became fascinated by aetherium and discovered she could sense its presence. This made her a highly sought expert—particularly by Ayrissian and Karelagne forces. She humbly and demurely accepts these jobs, making a good living.

A Darkness Beneath. What Gelhma doesn't realize, is that in the presence of large amounts of aetherium, something inside her takes over. She violently attacks everyone in sight until they are dead before absorbing the aetherium into herself. She is unaware of this behavior, often awakening days later with no recollection of the events. Under her clothes, chunks of aetherium are grafted to her skin, feeding her power.



GELHMA GANDERFACET

Small Humanoid (Gnome), Neutral

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 150 (20d6 + 80)

Speed 25 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +8, Wis +5

Skills Arcana +7, Investigation +7, Nature +7

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage

Senses darkvision 120 ft., truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Deep Speech, Gnomish

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

Aetherial Immortality. When Gelhma is reduced to 0 hit points, she turns into a piece of solid aetherium and shatters. After 24 hours, Gelhma is reborn again from one of those aetherium pieces. Only a wish spell, cast within one minute of Gelhma shattering, can kill her permanently.

Magically Perceptive. Gelhma can replace Investigation with Perception when making ability checks.

One with the Aether. While in the Aetherial Expanse, Gelhma cannot be affected by spells, spell-like abilities, or magical powers unless she chooses to be.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Gelhma makes three Aetherium Slam attacks.

Aetherium Slam. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 60/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage and 14 (4d6) force damage.

REACTIONS

Magic Drain. When a spell is cast using a spell slot within 60 feet of Gelhma, she can use a reaction to steal the spell's power. First, she can roll 1d6 for each level of the spell slot used, and either heal that number of hit points or gain temporary hit points of that amount.

Additionally, the creature using the spell slot must make an ability check using their spellcasting ability. The DC is 20, and on a failed check the character cannot cast that spell using a spell slot until they finish a long rest.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Gelhma can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Gelhma regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Slam. Gelhma makes one Aetherial Slam attack.

Stunning Slam (Costs 2 Actions). Gelhma makes one Aetherial Slam attack with advantage. If the attack hits, the target must succeed on a DC 16 Charisma saving throw or be stunned until the end of its next turn.

Blinking Strike (Costs 2 Actions). Gelhma can teleport up to 60 feet and makes one Aetherial Slam attack. Until the start of Gelhma's next turn, attacks against her are made with disadvantage as she blinks in and out of existence.



GLUMPKEE

“Glumpkee strong with magic! Glumpkee make you even stronger!”

So many individuals and strange creatures slip through the portals from other realms into the Aetherial Expanse that they would be impossible to imagine, much less count. One of the more interesting is Glumpkee, a magma mephit who slipped through. What made Glumpkee different was the aether’s reaction to it.

Aetherium Magnet. Immediately upon Glumpkee’s appearance in the Expanse, the aether vapor began to cling and coalesce around the mephit, forming a thin, supple aetherium shell. This made Glumpkee not just stronger, but also gave it some strange powers.

Survival at All Cost. With Glumpkee’s altered form and powers, the elemental realized it could be of assistance to magic-using creatures. The mephit recognized this type of protection was necessary as it navigated the harsh and dangerous seascape of the Aetherial Expanse.

Glumpkee acts as a pearl of power, but can replace slots up to 5th level. This makes the creature a highly attractive companion to magic-slinging trekkers through the Expanse. Glumpkee has no allegiance to any but the most powerful, and it will turn on friends without hesitation if it suits its needs for survival.

“Our stupid wizard kept claiming Glumpkee was a good luck charm. The little devil helped us out of a few scrapes, sure. But when he clawed his ‘master’s’ eyes out, that weren’t so charming, were it?”

—Old Greymane, pirate

GLUMPKEE

Small Elemental (Mephit), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 54 (12d6 + 12)

Speed 20 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Ignan, Terran

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Death Burst. When Glumpkee dies, they explode in a burst of aetherium shards. Each creature within 5 feet of them must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

False Appearance. While Glumpkee remains motionless, they are indistinguishable from a lump of aetherium.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Glumpkee makes two Claw attacks.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 +4) slashing damage and 7 (2d6) psychic damage.

Aether Blast (Recharge 6). Glumpkee exhales a 20-foot cone of aether. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much on a success.

Spellcasting (3/Day). Glumpkee can innately cast *magic missile* and *shield* three times per day each, requiring no material components. Its innate spellcasting ability is Charisma.

REACTIONS

Aetherium Boost. As a reaction, when an ally within 30 feet casts a spell that targets or affects another creature within 30 feet of them, Glumpkee can impose disadvantage on the saving throw made against that spell.



LEVYRA THE EMBER

“I am Asteth’s wrath and retribution in the Expanse!”

Any unknown vessel on the horizon brings fear and trepidation to sailors on the aether-filled seas. But many sailors breathe a sigh of relief when they see that the foredeck of an approaching ship doesn’t hold a scarlet-robed, flame-haired woman. That means they don’t have to contend with Levyra the Ember that day.

Prophet of Asteth. Levyra was a sailor who crewed a ship called the *Blue Spark* that sailed too close to the portal between the Aetherial Expanse and the realm ruled by the fiery goddess of destruction, Asteth. Something from the other side came through the portal and inhabited Levyra. The rest of the crew instantly burst into flames and perished, leaving Levyra alone.

The woman who was Levyra no longer existed; her one ambition was clear: to burn down the world. Some who’ve encountered her since avow that there’s a force within Levyra that believes that if she can burn enough people, ships, and structures, she will become one with Asteth in the realm of pure and glorious fire.

Ship of Fire. Levyra quickly went about getting herself a crew to help in her mission. Most of her crew are made of creatures resistant or immune to fire damage—even they find themselves scalded if they get too close to their leader.

The *Blue Spark* has absorbed some of the magic inhabiting Levyra. Although the ship’s hull looks charred, it is still very seaworthy and immune to fire damage.

Officer Roles. Levyra is an officer with 3 ranks in captain and 2 ranks in boatswain.

LEVYRA THE EMBER

Medium Humanoid (Human), Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 16 (studded leather, shield)

Hit Points 117 (18d8 + 36)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Wis +6, Cha +8

Skills Arcana +6, Intimidation +8

Damage Immunities fire

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Aetherian

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

Engulfing Flame. Levyra’s attacks do double fire damage to objects.

Fire Walk. Areas that are filled with fire do not count against Levyra’s movement, to a limit of 300 feet traveled through flames.

Flaming Hair. A creature that touches Levyra or hits her with a melee attack while within 5 feet of her takes 10 (3d6) fire damage. This damage cannot be reduced through resistance or immunity to fire.

ACTIONS

Multiaction. Levyra makes two Flamespear attacks, and also uses Smoldering Glare.

Flamespear. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage and 10 (3d6) fire damage.

Smoldering Glare. Levyra targets one creature within 60 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or burst into flames, immediately taking 7 (2d6) fire damage on a failed save or no damage on a success. While aflame for 1 minute, the target who failed the save takes 7 (2d6) fire damage at the start of each of its turns. The target or an adjacent creature can use an action to put out the flames.

Spellcasting. Levyra casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 16):

1/day each: *fireball*, *wall of fire*

REACTIONS

Fire Sink. When a creature or object within 30 feet of Levyra takes fire damage, Levyra can use a reaction to reduce the damage dealt to a single creature or object to 0. As part of the same reaction, Levyra can shoot a bolt of fire at a creature or object within 120 ft. On a failed DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, that creature takes the amount of fire damage Levyra negated, or half as much on a success.



“Personally, I believe anyone who can live through all that is lucky. Then again, perhaps I was lucky I’ve never been blasted by Lugh.”

—Declan, Drake crewmember

LUCKLESS LUGH

“I just want to be left alone. I’ve seen enough death and pain for ten lifetimes of people twice my size!”

Of the many who served Teruko the Drake faithfully during the War of the Invaders, a few served with less bravery and resolve. At the top of the list was Luckless Lugh.

Arcane Conscript. Lugh was studying magic in a far-flung village in Tholus, the Karelagne Empire’s homeworld, when the portal to the Aetherial Expanse was found. Before he knew it, Lugh was conscripted into the Karelagne military to study the magical properties of aether and aetherium.

Hating the military life more than anything he’d ever experienced before, Lugh deserted when pirates attacked his ship. He fell into the “care” of the crew of the *Drake*, who took pity on him and kept him on as an arcane force and an expert on aetherium.

Aether-Cursed. What Lugh failed to tell anyone is that the aether-filled air of the Expanse wrought havoc with his magical control. Only after striking allies with misfired arcane missiles did he realize this himself. Others chalked it up to bad luck, giving Luckless Lugh his nickname.

Officer Roles. Lugh is an officer with 1 rank in each of navigator, master gunner, and shipwright.

LUCKLESS LUGH

Small Humanoid (Halfling), Chaotic Good

Armor Class 13 (16 with mage armor)

Hit Points 72 (16d6 + 16)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)	14 (+2)

Skills Arcana +5, Stealth +5

Senses passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Halfling

Challenge 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Unlucky. When Luckless Lugh casts a spell that targets a single creature and he rolls a 1 on an attack roll, the attack is a critical hit against the target. The damage also applies to a random ally of Luckless Lugh within range. If there is no such ally, Lugh takes the damage instead.

ACTIONS

Arcane Missile. *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d10 + 3) force damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Spellcasting. Luckless Lugh casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13):

At will: *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*

2/day each: *alarm*, *color spray*, *mage armor*, *thunderwave*

1/day each: *darkness*, *misty step*

Valuable Knowledge. Before Lugh left the *Drake* for a more peaceful existence, traveling from island to island in the Expanse, he saw a vessel with abundant amounts of aetherium sink in battle. He’s one of the few remaining who knows the location of this (and other) valuable treasure. It would take much convincing, however, to get Lugh to get back on a vessel to find the location of these treasures.



PLAK THE ANNIHILATOR

“Swim deep and feed my master. Free my master!”

Qoz the Hermit, the destroyer of worlds, is believed by some to be lurking at the bottom of the Aether Sea, waiting to be awakened to begin a final rampage that will end existence. Whether this is true remains to be seen, but one person believes it with all his heart: Plak the Annihilator.

Cruel Beginnings. Once a simple boatswain, Plak fell overboard in an aether storm and quickly sank to the bottom of the sea. However, rather than perishing, Plak saw an image of Qoz, its titanic form sleeping. A voice in his head told Plak that to awaken Qoz and gain an eternal reward, Plak must send as many souls as possible to the bottom of the sea. If he could send enough, Qoz would feed on them and wake.

Mind-Rending Magic. Plak woke on a deserted isle but quickly learned that he held new-found powers. Not only could he walk on the aether, but he could command the minds of mortal creatures. It wasn't long before Plak found a pirate ship, turned the minds of the crew against their captain, and started on a new mission to send as many people as possible to the bottom of the sea.

Plak knows of the group of nihilists known as The Sundering, and they know of him. Although they appear to have similar goals, Plak sees Sundering operatives as posers and weaklings, playing at destruction for their own gains rather than really trying to achieve it. Many members of The Sundering have died at Plak's hands—or joined his crew against their wills.

Plak has gone through crew after crew, using up charmed allies in his wake. Plak is never without at least ten magically charmed servants, as well as some lesser crew who don't need to be coerced into accepting his mad leadership.

Officer Roles. Plak is an officer with 2 ranks in boatswain.

PLAK THE ANNIHILATOR

Medium Humanoid (Human), Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 159 (20d8 + 60)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Con +8, Wis +9

Skills Insight +9, Nature +6, Perception +9, Persuasion +8

Damage Immunities poison

Conditions Immunities poisoned, stunned

Senses passive Perception 19

Languages Common, Aetherian

Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +5

Aether Walk. Plak can choose to walk on top of aether rather than sink in it.

Call of Qoz. A creature charmed by one of Plak's spells or abilities is charmed until Plak uses an action to remove the charm. Plak can have up to 10 creatures charmed in this way. If he chooses to maintain a charm on an extra creature, Plak can choose the creature to remove the charm from.

Legendary Resistances (3/Day). If Plak fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Plak makes three attacks using any combination of Aetherium Mace and Rotting Bolt attacks.

Aetherium Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage and 16 (3d10) force damage.

Rotting Bolt. *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 31 (5d10 + 4) necrotic damage.

Spellcasting. Plak casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 17):

At will: *enthrall*

3/day each: *charm person*, *counterspell*, *hold person*

1/day each: *dominate person*, *geas*, *mass suggestion*

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Plak can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Plak regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Rotting Bolt. Plak makes one Rotting Bolt attack.

Sacrifice to Qoz (Costs 2 Actions). Plak can do 50 necrotic damage to an allied creature within 30 ft. If the creature dies, Plak is healed 1 hit point for each hit point removed. If the creature does not die, Plak is healed 1 hit point for each 2 hit points removed.



PRINCE-CAPTAIN TAMMON D'AYRE

"Come on, mates! Follow me to our destiny!"

The convoluted monarchy of the Kingdom of Ayris leads to scheming nobles jostling for the slightest bit of power. But all the petty scheming of distant nobles pales in comparison to the plans—and the power of—Prince-Captain Tammon d'Ayre.

Chosen of Asteth. Tammon d'Ayre was never one to let good enough be enough. His noble heritage, a comfortable upbringing, a successful series of businesses, and a valiant military career were not enough. Tammon needed to be more and more. And now he plans to be the ruler of Ayris.

No one knows whether his ambition predates the visions sent to him by the fiery goddess—maybe not even Tammon. But he has undoubtedly been touched by the goddess in many ways. His physical gifts, good looks, charming personality, and magical powers work in tandem to drive his plans of domination over not just Ayris but also the Aetherial Expanse and all the worlds that touch it.

Officer Roles. Tammon is an officer with 4 ranks in captain and 2 ranks in both navigator and helmsperson.

"It ain't just in his weapons where the fire burns. That d'Ayre fella has a bonfire in his soul that's gonna burn everything to the ground unless someone stops him. Ain't gonna be me though."

—random Karelagne soldier

TAMMON D'AYRE

Medium Humanoid (Human), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 17 (breastplate, shield)

Hit Points 143 (22d8 + 44)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Con +6, Wis +6, Cha +8

Skills Athletics +7, Deception +8, Intimidation +8, Persuasion +8

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

Asteth's Sight. Magical darkness does not impede Tammon's vision.

Radiant Purge (5/Day). As a bonus action after hitting a target with a weapon attack, Tammon can do an additional 14 (4d6) radiant damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Tammon makes three Flaming Longsword attacks or two Flaming Longbow attacks.

Flaming Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) slashing damage and 14 (4d6) fire damage.

Flaming Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d8 + 1) piercing damage and 14 (4d6) fire damage.

Control of Fire. The most notable powers provided by Asteth are the ability to focus fire, and sometimes even divine radiance, through his weapons. His ship crew and those who've been on the wrong end of his fury have seen his enemies burned and scorched by his longsword and arrows.



VIK

“Taking matters into your own hands is often the only way to make sure that things get done.”

An ambitious male halfling residing in Calderé City, and the leader of its militia, Vik wants nothing but to see his home drive off the elementals that constantly attack it. Though this desire is genuine, his frustrations with the city’s mayor and belief he could do better means that his wants can be easily distorted into something more malicious.

“Vik? Yeah, he’s a good guy. Trying his best to change the world, and isn’t that...just grand. Sure, I admire the guy. I just wouldn’t shout it from the rooftops. I ain’t looking for trouble.”
—Old Waldorf, local drunk

VIK

Small Humanoid (Halfling), Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class 16 (studded leather armor)

Hit Points 78 (12d6 + 36)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Cha +8

Skills Acrobatics +7, Athletics +4, Insight +4, Perception +4, Persuasion +8

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Halfling

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Pack Tactics. Vik has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of Vik’s allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn’t incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Vik makes three Shortsword attacks or two Flameshot Aether Pistol attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Flameshot Aether Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 30 ft./120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Vik can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature’s turn. Vik regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Sword Swipe. Vik makes one Shortsword attack.

Rally the Troops. Vik commands one ally he can see within 30 feet to use its reaction to make one weapon attack as a reaction. This ally must also be able to see and hear Vik.

Pistol Blast (Costs 2 Actions). Vik makes one Flameshot Aether Pistol attack.



YVEN'CHA THE SHOCKED

"We're all victims of the greed of those who never taste the bitter consequences of their crimes."

Countless pirates served Teruko the Drake over the many years she captained her ship during the War of the Invaders. Many died, a few fled in fear during the struggles, some chose to leave the crew, and a tiny handful stayed on until Teruko herself retired. Yven'cha the Shocked was one of these last.

Muscle and Lightning. Yven'cha was a brawler and axe-wielding mercenary for years, a native of the Aetherial Expanse. She was the first to volunteer to fight off the invaders when Ayrissian and Karelagne forces came to her home. Before long, she found herself at the right hand of Teruko, happily flinging herself onto the ships of those enemies.

One day, she was knocked into the sea, swallowing copious amounts of aether. Surviving the experience, Yven'cha found that her body stored tremendous amounts of lightning energy. Through painful trial and error, she learned to pass that energy off through her crossbow bolts, or discharge it in a field that stung everyone around her.

Regret and Retribution. Yven'cha left the crew when Teruko retired, striking out on her own. Over the years,

YVEN'CHA THE SHOCKED

Medium Humanoid (Dwarf), Lawful Neutral

Armor Class 17 (splint mail)

Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Skills Athletics +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Damage Resistances poison

Damage Immunities lightning

Languages Common, Aetherian, Dwarvish

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Dwarven Resilience. Yven'cha has advantage on saving throws against poison.

Steady Sea Legs. Yven'cha cannot be knocked prone.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Yven'cha makes two Greataxe attacks.

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d12 + 4) slashing damage.

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage, and 14 (4d6) lightning damage.

Overcharge (Recharge 6). Yven'cha releases a burst of electrical static that targets all creatures within 10 feet of her. Creatures in the area must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or take 18 (4d8) lightning damage and fall prone. Those who succeed on the save take half damage and do not fall prone.

she had occasions to talk to and befriend troops from both invading nations. A realization slowly dawned on the dwarf: these soldiers were as much victims of the leaders of their respective nations as the residents of the Expanse.

Since then, Yven'cha has vowed to do everything in her power to fight against the powers that be in Ayris and Karel. Sometimes, this means traveling to those worlds, tracking down leads, or killing an evil agent of those unscrupulous leaders. But she only kills those whom she can prove deserve her wrath.

Officer Roles. Yven'cha is an officer with 2 ranks in each of quartermaster, helmsperson, and boatswain.



ZEIK, THE CHARIOTEER

“Stand not against the winds. They fell all in their path.”

The Winds of Change are an Ayrissian group dedicated to overthrowing the monarchy of Ayris. They call upon the god Unammon, Chariot of the Wind, as their patron and source of power.

The Charioteer. One of the boons supplied by Unammon to the Winds of Changes is the power to control the wind and the cold that it brings. Within the ranks of the Winds, one member is given the honor of being known as the Charioteer. This individual trains in the art of assassination and stealth, swordplay, and mobility.

In addition to the training, the Charioteer is gifted three items of power: studded leather armor that provides cold resistance and the ability to fly, a scimitar that does cold damage, and an ice dagger that returns to the wielder’s hand when thrown and that can temporarily paralyze a target.

Silent Killer. Between the training and the magical items, the Charioteer of the Winds is a formidable foe, highly skilled in getting close to a target, killing them in an instant, and getting away without a trace of evidence.

The current Charioteer, Zeik, trained for years in the shadow of the first. Recently, Zeik had to take over when the current Charioteer was lost in the Aetherial Expanse. Zeik is now duty-bound to take vengeance on their predecessor’s killer and assassinate those who assist the Ayrissian authorities in their dealings in the Expanse.

ZEIK, THE CHARIOTEER

Medium Humanoid (Elf), Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class 17 (studded leather)

Hit Points 110 (20d8 + 20)

Speed 40 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	20 (+5)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +9

Skills Acrobatics +9, Deception +9, Perception +7, Sleight of Hand +9, Stealth +13

Damage Resistances cold

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Aetherian, Auran, Elvish

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

Assassinate. During their first turn, Zeik has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit Zeik scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Zeik fails a saving throw, they can choose to succeed instead.

Sneak Attack. Once per turn, Zeik deals an extra 28 (8d6) damage when they hit a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Zeik that isn't incapacitated and Zeik doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Zephyr Strike. As a bonus action, Zeik can use the Dash action. While dashing, Zeik is invisible until the end of their turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Zeik makes two Frost Scimitar and one Dagger of Ice attacks.

Frost Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage and 3 (1d6) cold damage.

Dagger of Ice. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed until the start of its next turn.

REACTIONS

Sudden Gust. When targeted by a ranged weapon or spell attack, Zeik can use a reaction to put up a wall of wind. The attack is made with disadvantage.



ZHENG YANG SHI

Once a notorious member of the Drakes, Zheng is now the elderly owner of Sparrow's Flight, a gambling den in Calderé City. She is content to play cards for the remainder of her life and is uninterested in anything happening elsewhere. All she wants to do is gamble for the end of her days. However, her wealth of knowledge about the Isle of Drakes, its various islands and pirate crews, and her skill with guns means that she could be invaluable if convinced to do one last job.

Distrustful of all people, repeated gambling is the only way to gain Zheng's respect. She gains a grudging appreciation for anyone who can regularly beat her at games of flotilla.

Officer Roles. Zheng Yang Shi is an officer with 3 ranks in captain, 3 ranks in first mate, and 3 ranks in master gunner.

ZHENG YANG SHI

Medium Humanoid (Human), Neutral

Armor Class 16 (leather armor)

Hit Points 150 (20d8 + 60)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Wis +8, Cha +9

Skills History +8, Insight +8, Intimidation +9, Navigation +8, Perception +8, Persuasion +9

Senses passive Perception 18

Languages Common, Halfling

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Zheng fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

Leadership (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). For 1 minute, Zheng can utter a special command or warning whenever a nonhostile creature that she can see within 30 feet of her makes an attack roll or a saving throw. The creature can add a d4 to its roll provided it can hear and understand Zheng. A creature can benefit from only one Leadership die at a time. This effect ends if Zheng is incapacitated.

Unfazed. Zheng has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Zheng makes three Walking Stick attacks or two Shotgun attacks.

Walking Stick. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Shotgun. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) piercing damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Zheng can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Zheng regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Gunfire. Zheng makes one Shotgun attack.

Drake's Tactics. Zheng commands one ally she can see within 30 feet to use its reaction to move up to 30 feet without provoking opportunity attacks and make one weapon attack. This ally must also be able to hear and see her.

Drake's Guidance. Zheng gives one creature she can see within 30 feet of her some inspiring advice. That creature can reroll one attack roll or saving throw it makes before the start of Zheng's next turn, provided it can hear and understand Zheng. If a creature does so, it must use the new roll.



Appendix A

GAMES OF THE EXPANSE

This appendix details a few games that are popular pastimes for sailors in the Aetherial Expanse.

DIRTNAPS AND BONESACKS

A card game for 2-5 players

Dirtnaps and Bonesacks is a card game about graverobbers competing to strike it rich.

PIECES

You will need a standard pack of playing cards.

SETUP

Follow these steps to set up the game:

- Fill the Graves by dealing out six stacks of three cards face-down in the middle of the table.
- Put the remaining cards in a stack to draw from called the Dirt Pile.
- Leave a space to discard cards to: the Refuse Pile.

RULES

Use the following rules to guide play:

Turn Order. Choose or randomly select the starting player. After they've finished their turn, the next player on the left takes their turn, and so on.

Hand Size. A player can have a maximum of five cards in hand at any time and can't take an action that would give them more than five cards in hand (e.g. a player with four cards in hand couldn't empty a Grave containing two cards).

Death Rattle. On their turn, a player may discard two aces (the Death Rattle) to the Refuse Pile to take a random card from another player's hand. This doesn't take an action.

No Recycling. Only the top card of the Refuse Pile should be visible.

Actions

On their turn, a player may take one of the following actions:

- Look at the top card of a Grave.
- Move the top card of a Grave to another Grave.
- Empty a Grave (put all the cards from a Grave into their hand).
- Draw one card from the Dirt Pile.
- Discard one card from their hand to the Refuse Pile.

Ending the Game

The player who empties the last Grave triggers the end of the game. At the end of their turn, the game ends. A player successfully robbed a grave if they gather one of the following combinations, in descending order of richness:

- The Mother and the Father (A queen and a king of the same suit)
- The Lovers (Two queens of the same color)
- The Triplets (Three jacks)
- The Bluestocking (A queen and an 8 of the same suit)
- Death's Servant (A king, an ace, and a 7)

If more than one player successfully robbed a grave, the character with the richest grave wins.





FLOTILLA

A dice game for 2-10 players

All players roll 4d6 and keep the results hidden like a hand of cards. These dice represent ships. The object of the game is to collect ships until you have a “flotilla,” a winning hand, much like a hand of poker cards.

STARTING THE GAME

Players randomly select a person to start, referred to as the “bait.” Play passes to the left.

At the very start of the game, and at the start of each round when play returns to the bait, the bait rolls a d6 and adds it to a pot in the middle, called the coffer.

ON YOUR TURN

On a player's turn, they choose one:

- Reroll one hidden die
- Attack another player
- Attempt to take the coffer

ATTACKING

When attacking, a player must send a ship to attack, and the defender chooses a ship to defend. Each reveals the number on their chosen dice, and the higher number wins. The winner captures the opponent's ship and adds it to their hand.

If the players bid with a ship of the same value (two 5s, for example) both players must reroll the dice in the open and resolve the battle with the new values.

TAKING THE COFFER

When a player attempts to take the coffer, any other players at the table can choose to challenge them for it. If there are no other challengers, the player attempting to take the coffer collects all the dice.

When a player challenges for the coffer, they send a ship into battle just like when a player attacks another player. The only difference is that battles for the coffer may include more than two combatants. Again, the highest bid wins, and the winner takes the pot and captures the ships of all other challengers. Ties are resolved in the same way.

HAND SIZE

Whenever a player has more than six dice, they must choose a die from their hand to place into the coffer until they have six dice remaining.

If a player has no dice at the start of their turn, they can take up to four dice out of the coffer, re-rolling them and keeping the new values secret. If there are no dice in the coffer, they pass.

CHEATING

Players may cheat by keeping a hand of more than six dice, but if a player suspects another of cheating, they can accuse them publicly. When an accusation is made, both players reveal their hands to the table.

If the accusation was correct, the accuser takes all of the cheater's dice.

If the accusation was incorrect, the accused takes all of the accuser's dice.

WINNING THE GAME

When a player has gathered a flotilla and it is their turn, they may unveil their fleet. All players reveal their dice, and the winner is the player with the highest scoring flotilla. This means it is possible for a player to announce victory and unveil their fleet, but lose the game to another player who has secretly gathered a better flotilla.

If a player has more than six dice when all hands are revealed, they're “caught red-handed.” All their dice go into the coffer.

FLOTILLAS

The following is a list of winning hands in order of score—starting with the highest scores:

- Fathoms (six of a kind, all sixes)
- Shipshape (a six-die straight of 1 through 6)
- Sitting ducks (a straight of four consecutive dice)
- Four of a kind
- Half 'n half (two three-of-a-kinds)
- Three pairs

You can break ties by adding the values of the dice. A higher total in flotilla wins. If this does not resolve the tie, players hide their dice again, and play continues.

LIAR'S DICE

A dice game for 2 or more players

The rules below describe a version of Liar's Dice popular with pirates across the Aetherial Expanse. Each player has five six-sided dice, usually made of wood or aether-beast bone. High rollers are known to use aetherium dice. Players must also have a way to keep their rolls hidden, typically by using a dice cup, with wealthy gamblers often using elaborate metal and bone cups inlaid with aetherium crystal.

STARTING THE GAME

Before starting the game, players add an agreed-upon wager to join the game. All players roll their dice, keeping their rolls hidden from the other players. If one or more dice land atop another, that player must re-roll their dice. Players are not required to look at their roll immediately.

BIDDING

In the first round of the game, bidding starts with a randomly chosen player. Otherwise, bidding begins with the loser of the previous round.

A bid consists of declaring a face value (the number showing on a rolled die) and a number of dice. The number of dice bid represents the minimum number of dice showing the bid face value among all players' dice. Thus, "Four 3s" claims at least four dice showing "3" exist among all dice rolled.

Bidding continues clockwise, with the player either increasing the current bid or calling the player of the previous bid a "Liar."

RAISING THE BID

To increase the bid, a player can increase the face value, increase the number of dice, or both, with the following caveats:

- The number of dice bid can never decrease
- The face value can decrease but only if the number of dice bid increases

For example, if the current bid was "Four 3s," then all of the following are valid raises:

- Five 3s (the number of dice increased)
- Four 4s (the face value increased)
- Six 2s (the number of dice increased)

Whereas "Three 4s" would not be valid because the number of dice bid decreased.

"The secret to liar's dice is to never lie but to always look guilty. Also never drink. And no one looks guiltier than a sober dwarf."

—Brax "Knuckles" Goldstoke, dwarven gambler

CALLING "LIAR"

All rolled dice are revealed when a player's bid is challenged by calling the previous bidder a "Liar."

The Last Bid was True. If at least as many face value dice are revealed as the last bid, the challenger loses this round.

The Last Bid was False. If fewer face value dice are revealed than the last bid, the last bidder loses this round.

For example, if the last bid was "Four 3s" when "Liar" was called, and "Five 3s" are revealed among all dice rolled, then the challenger would lose. However, if only "Three 3s" were revealed, then the last bidder was a "Liar" and would lose this round.

The loser must remove one of their dice for the rest of the game, and the current round ends. Players with no dice remaining are removed from the game. The next round begins with players rolling their remaining dice and repeating the bidding process.

WINNING THE GAME

The last player with dice remaining wins the game and takes the total amount wagered by players.

VARIANT RULES

Several variants of Liar's Dice exist, including:

Wild "1s". One's are wild and count as the face of the current bid.

Passing. In addition to bidding or calling the previous bidder a "Liar," players may "Pass" once during the round. By "Passing," the player claims all of their dice have a different face value, which is unlikely until several dice have been lost. Although "Passing" does not raise the current bid, the next player can still call the Passing player a "Liar," forcing the end of the round.

Special Final Round. A final elimination round occurs if all remaining players have just one die. Each player rolls their die. The bidding round proceeds with players bidding on the sum of face values in play—the sum of all dice rolled. Bidding proceeds as usual until one player is called a Liar.

One Round Ultimate. Rather than playing multiple rounds and removing dice each round, players can agree to play a single round to determine the winner.

Ongoing Wagers. In addition to an initial wager, players may agree to further wagering at the start of each round. Players unable to match another player's wager must leave the game. If only one player remains, they win the game.

Buying Back Dice. At the start of each round, a player may repurchase lost dice by again adding the initial wager amount into the pot for each die purchased.

Appendix B

SAMPLE SHIPS

These sample ships provide a quick starting point for vessels the player characters might encounter on their travels.

MERCHANT SHIPS

BREATHLESS

A lightly-armed merchant schooner, the *Breathless*, has been blown off course on its way to trade in a nearby port and would appreciate help. The crew are wary of pirates but happy to trade with any ship that seems safe. When trading with a merchant ship on the open aether, you can replenish your supplies and your abilities as if you had docked at a port.

BREATHLESS

Merchant Schooner

Size Small

Base Speed 4 (+2)

Mobility High

Fuel Items 3x bottled air motes (Small)

Hit Points 12

Explosion DC 14

CREW MANIFEST

Unranked Crew 32/32

Maximum Crew 32 (+1 Speed)

Skeleton Crew 16

Relevant Crew Boons *Lucky Looter* (prize money from captured ships is increased by 50 percent)

Mettle Pool 7d4

UPGRADES

- Ayrissian Canvas Sails (+1 Speed)

PRIZE

5,000 gp, 15 Grub, 8 Grog, 12 Gear

ARMAMENTS

Port Weapons (5 slots)

3x Culverin (d8), 2x Falconet (d12)

Starboard Weapons (5 slots)

3x Culverin (d8), 2x Falconet (d12)

Ammo Items

2x Chainshot, 2x Grapeshot, 2x Canister Shot

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

This well-armed merchant brigantine is willing to trade but hasn't been blown off course. The *Like Father, Like Son* often travels unconventional routes because the crew make most of their money smuggling. They're willing to offer their business to just about anyone who seems like they might benefit from it. For a price, of course.

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

Merchant Brigantine

Size Medium

Base Speed 5

Mobility Balanced

Fuel Items 3x bottled air motes (Small), 1x bottled air mote (Medium)

Hit Points 15 (+2)

Explosion DC 16

CREW MANIFEST

Unranked Crew 38/38

Maximum Crew 40

Skeleton Crew 20

Relevant Crew Boons None

Mettle Pool 7d4

UPGRADES

- Astral-Oak Reinforcements (+2 HP)
- Winged Victory Figurehead (+1d4 mettle when boarding)

PRIZE

4,000 gp, 14 Grub, 9 Grog, 13 Gear

ARMAMENTS

Port Weapons (6 slots)

4x Culverin (d8), 2x Falconet (d12)

Starboard Weapons (6 slots)

4x Culverin (d8), 2x Falconet (d12)

Ammo Items

2x Chainshot, 2x Canister Shot, 1x Carcass

PIRATE SHIPS

NO CIGAR

A pirate sloop on the hunt for easy pickings, the crew of the *No Cigar* is hungry, but they're not stupid. They're looking for weak, slow merchant ships. If they run across anyone who doesn't fit that description, they're not going to pick a fight.

NO CIGAR

Pirate Sloop

Size Small

Base Speed 3

Mobility High

Fuel Items 2x bottled air motes (Small)

Hit Points 12

Explosion DC 14

CREW MANIFEST

Unranked Crew 20/20

Maximum Crew 24

Skeleton Crew 12

Relevant Crew Boons *Wind-kissed* (1/Day: this ship moves an extra square this turn in ship combat or pursuit.)

Mettle Pool 6d4

UPGRADES

- None

PRIZE

1,000 gp, 8 Grub, 5 Grog, 9 Gear

ARMAMENTS

Port Weapons (4 slots)

1x Saker (d6), 1x Culverin (d8), 2x Falconet (d12)

Starboard Weapons (4 slots)

1x Saker (d6), 1x Culverin (d8), 2x Falconet (d12)

Ammo Items

2x Chainshot

THE FLIRT

This pirate schooner has recently undergone a mutiny, and cooler heads have not prevailed—they're out for blood. While they won't take on a man o' war, they're willing to attack anything else.

THE FLIRT

Pirate Schooner

Size Small

Base Speed 4 (+2)

Mobility High

Fuel Items 2x bottled air motes (Small)

Hit Points 12

Explosion DC 14

CREW MANIFEST

Unranked Crew 30/30

Maximum Crew 32

Skeleton Crew 16

Relevant Crew Boons None

Mettle Pool 8d4

UPGRADES

- Mage-Silk Sails (+2 Speed)

PRIZE

2,500 gp, 12 Grub, 7 Grog, 10 Gear

ARMAMENTS

Port Weapons (5 slots)

3x Culverin (d8), 1x Falconet (d12), 1x Flamethrower (d12)

Starboard Weapons (5 slots)

3x Culverin (d8), 1x Falconet (d12), 1x Flamethrower (d12)

Ammo Items

2x Chainshot, 2x Grapeshot



THE AVENGING ANGEL

This mighty galleon is crewed by the Children of Asteth, a fearsome group of fervent pirates that believe in a particularly zealous interpretation of the gospel of the goddess Asteth. They spread fire and death across the Aetherial Expanse, for they believe only the strong deserve to survive, and the weak exist to be preyed upon by anyone stronger than them.

THE AVENGING ANGEL

Pirate Galleon

Size Large

Base Speed 8

Mobility Low

Fuel Items 3x bottled air motes (Medium), 1x bottled air mote (Large)

Hit Points 20 (+3)

Explosion DC 18

CREW MANIFEST

Unranked Crew 60/60

Maximum Crew 64

Skeleton Crew 32

Relevant Crew Boons *Wind-kissed* (1/Day: this ship moves an extra square this turn in ship combat or pursuit.)

Mettle Pool 8d4

UPGRADES

- Silver Unicorn Figurehead (1/Voyage: instantly magically teleport your ship a number of squares equal to its base speed)
- Fey-Touched Craftwood (+3 HP)

PRIZE

12,000 gp, 28 Grub, 12 Grog, 16 Gear

ARMAMENTS

Bow Weapons (2 slots)

2x Long Gun (d10)

Port Weapons (10 slots)

10x Long Gun (d10)

Starboard Weapons (10 slots)

10x Long Gun (d10)

Stern Weapons (2 slots)

2x Long Gun (d10)

Ammo Items

6x Salamanders

AYRISSIAN SHIPS

AMS HELLHOUND

A frigate of the Ayriessian Kingdom making its way to a port for repairs. The crew are under orders to stop and question every ship they meet, checking papers, and placing any pirates or Karelagne privateers under arrest. But, given that they've already taken damage, they won't follow these orders if they can tell it will mean certain death. The ship has taken damage and currently has only 10 hit points remaining.

AMS HELLHOUND

Ayriessian Frigate

Size Medium

Base Speed 6 (+1)

Mobility Balanced

Fuel Items 3x bottled air motes (Small), 1x bottled air mote (Medium), 3x aetherium crystals

Hit Points 15

Explosion DC 16

CREW MANIFEST

Unranked Crew 52/52

Maximum Crew 52 (+1 Speed)

Skeleton Crew 26

Relevant Crew Boons None

Mettle Pool 7d4

UPGRADES

- Cannonward Shield Matrix (cancel 1d6 + 1 hits per round)

PRIZE

8,000 gp, 22 Grub, 14 Grog, 13 Gear

ARMAMENTS

Port Weapons (8 slots)

4x Culverin (d8), 2x Long Gun (d10), 2x Carronade (d12)

Starboard Weapons (8 slots)

4x Culverin (d8), 2x Long Gun (d10), 2x Carronade (d12)

Ammo Items

2x Chainshot, 2x Canister Shot, 2x Salamanders

AMS EUPHORIA

An Ayrissian brigantine making a secret delivery. Only the ship's captain knows that it's carrying something of value. It avoids interacting with other ships if it can help it, but it responds to a request to parley to avoid any suspicion.

AMS EUPHORIA

Ayrissian Brigantine

Size Medium

Base Speed 5 (+3)

Mobility Balanced

Fuel Items 4x bottled air motes (Small), 2x bottled air motes (Medium)

Hit Points 15

Explosion DC 16

CREW MANIFEST

Unranked Crew 40/40

Maximum Crew 40 (+1 Speed)

Skeleton Crew 20

Relevant Crew Boons None

Mettle Pool 9d4

UPGRADES

- Mage-Silk Sails (+2 Speed)
- Spellsun Rigging (immune to Chainshot)

PRIZE

5,000 gp, 18 Grub, 8 Grog, 12 Gear

ARMAMENTS

Port Weapons (6 slots)

6x Culverin (d8)

Starboard Weapons (6 slots)

6x Culverin (d8)

Ammo Items

4x Carcass

KARELAGNE SHIPS

INS HAMMER OF GOD

A Karelagne frigate on patrol, the *Hammer of God* doesn't realize that it has strayed away from the route it's supposed to patrol, but it's got orders to turn away any ship it comes across and open fire if they refuse to sail back where they came from.

INS HAMMER OF GOD

Karelagne Frigate

Size Medium

Base Speed 6 (+1)

Mobility Balanced

Fuel Items 3x bottled air motes (Small), 4x bottled air motes (Medium)

Hit Points 15 (+2)

Explosion DC 16

CREW MANIFEST

Unranked Crew 52/52

Maximum Crew 52 (+1 speed)

Skeleton Crew 26

Relevant Crew Boons *Fire in the Hole!* (the first hit produced by its cannons during a ship combat encounter automatically starts a fire.)

Mettle Pool 7d4

UPGRADES

- Astral-Oak Reinforcements (+2 HP)
- Imperial Ram

PRIZE

8,500 gp, 23 Grub, 10 Grog, 12 Gear

ARMAMENTS

Port Weapons (8 slots)

4x Long Gun (d10), 4x Carronade (d12)

Starboard Weapons (8 slots)

4x Long Gun (d10), 4x Carronade (d12)

Stern Weapons (1 slot)

1x Long Gun (d10)

Ammo Items

8x Canister Shot, 4x Salamanders



INS BLEAK ASCENSION

This man o' war of the Karelagne Empire is attempting to intercept a pirate vessel that planted explosives and sabotaged their shipyards on Port Majeure. Other ships are a low priority, but anyone who gets in the way will be dealt with as quickly as possible. This imposing ship has taken damage but has no time to stop for repairs—or parley with anyone who wastes its time.

INS BLEAK ASCENSION

Karelagne Man o' War

Size Huge

Base Speed 9 (+2)

Mobility Low

Fuel Items 4x bottled air motes (Medium), 2x bottled air motes (Large)

Hit Points 25 (+3)

Explosion DC 20

CREW MANIFEST

Unranked Crew 80/80

Maximum Crew 99

Skeleton Crew 49

Relevant Crew Boons *Avast Me Hearties* (1/Day during a boarding action: three dice in your mettle pool become d6s when you roll them.), *Cannonward Shield Matrix* (cancel 1d6 + 1 hits per round)

Mettle Pool 12d4

UPGRADES

- Voroaxinar's Wrath, Ironclad Plating (+3 HP, -1 Speed),
- Drakewing Sails (+3 Speed)

PRIZE

18,000 gp, 30 Grub, 15 Grog, 15 Gear

ARMAMENTS

Bow Weapons (2 slots)

2x Long Gun (d10)

Port Weapons (12 slots)

6x Long Gun (d10), 2x Coil Gun (d10), 2x Carronade (d12), 2x Wrath Cannon (d12)

Starboard Weapons (12 slots)

6x Long Gun (d10), 2x Coil Gun (d10), 2x Carronade (d12), 2x Wrath Cannon (d12)

Stern Weapons (3 slots)

3x Long Gun (d10)

Ammo Items

5x Chainshot, 5x Grapeshot, 5x Canister Shot, 4x Hullbusters

DERELICT SHIPS

VAMPIRE

This abandoned man o' war appears to have been floating out under the twilight sky for a long time. It's fallen into complete disrepair, and it's easy to see why—it's flying a yellow jack, a quarantine flag signaling that it's a plague ship.

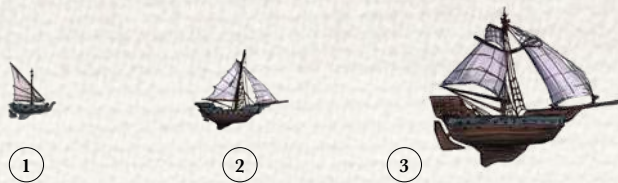
PIECE OF CAKE

This galleon seems as good as new. It's not flying any colors but appears empty and adrift. The sails have been taken down and packed away. Nothing seems amiss at first glance, except that the crew seems to have vanished. Half the lifeboats are gone.

If the player characters investigate, they find the crew that chose to stay behind dead below decks, apparently torn to shreds. In the belly of the ship lurks an invisible stalker, and now it's hunting the player characters, too.

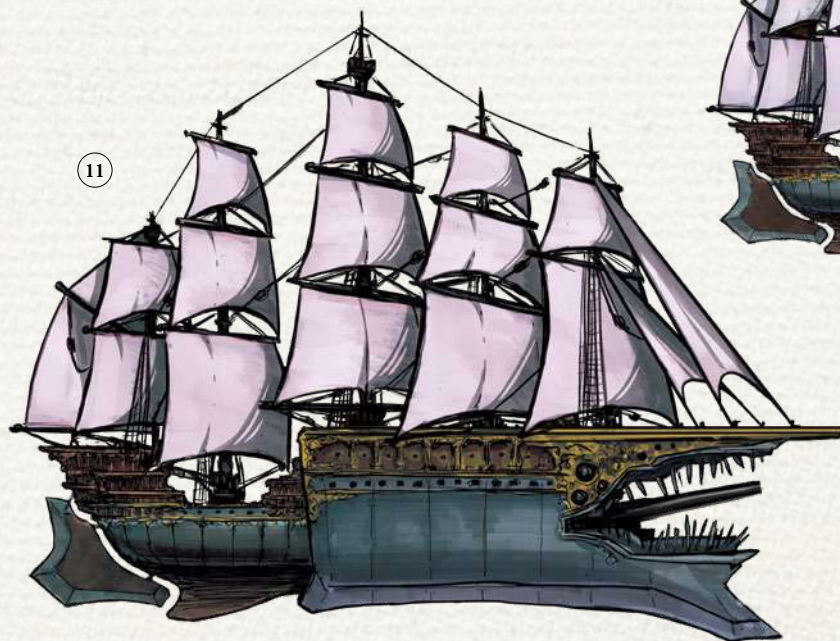
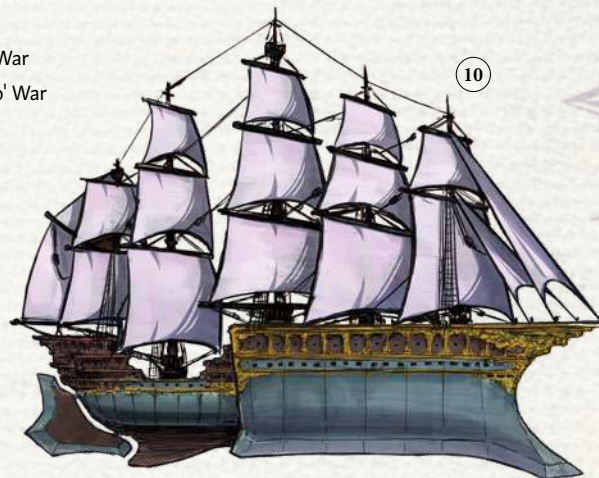
Janna Sophia





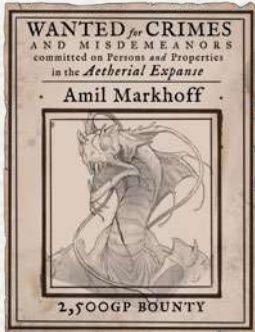
SHIP SIZE COMPARISON

- | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Shore Boat | 5. Pirate Galleon | 9. Aryissian Man o' War |
| 2. Pirate Sloop | 6. Pirate Man o' War | 10. Karelagne Man o' War |
| 3. Pirate Schooner | 7. Karelagne Frigate | 11. Thunderchild |
| 4. Pirate Brigantine | 8. Aryissian Galleon | |



Appendix C

NPC WANTED POSTERS



This appendix lists pirate and privateer NPCs with wanted posters that the characters may find during their travels. Each entry includes the following:

Name. The name appearing on the wanted poster. Some pirates may have assumed an alias to avoid being found by nations seeking their capture.

Bounty. The amount in gold pieces a nation has offered to capture the individual. This is also the base amount the NPC must be paid to join a crew, which is detailed in chapter 13. Player characters may be able to haggle with the NPC to reduce this price.

Nation. The nation seeking the NPC's capture.

Ranks. Identifies the Officer Stations and number of ranks in that role.

Boon. A seafarer feature that the NPCs can provide to crews when hired.

WANTED POSTERS

2D12	BOUNTY (GP)	NAME	NATION	RANKS	BOON
2	500	Aemelia Pauzer	Karel	Surgeon 1 Boatswain 1 Navigator 1	n/a
3	500	Ludley "Layabout" Rogers	Ayris	Quartermaster 3	Layabout. Whenever this crewmember would activate their role's trait, roll a d20. On a roll of 10 or lower, your ship gains no benefit, and a use of this trait is spent.
4	500	Punch Gobson	Karel	Cook 2 Quartermaster 1	n/a
5	500	Waylong Graves	Karel	Captain 1 Helmsperson 1	n/a
6	500	Zaunder Geld	Ayris	Master Gunner 1 Surgeon 1	n/a
7	1,000	Falco Gamwhich	Ayris	Shipwright 2 Boatswain 1	Wind-Kissed. Your ship can move an extra square this turn in ship combat or pursuit. Once you use this boon, you can't use it again until this officer has completed a long rest.
8	1,000	Adebeyo Chance	Karel	Captain 2	Merciful Demeanor. At the end of the status phase of ship combat, if the opposing ship has only 1 mettle die remaining, roll that die. On a roll of 1 or 2, the ship surrenders if narratively appropriate. Ships crewed by undead or crews who would never surrender are unaffected. Alternatively, the GM may trigger a surrender earlier when appropriate. This boon is ignored if your ship used any special ammunition other than Chainshot or Hullbusters during the battle.
9	1,000	Bhagya "The Harpoon"	Ayris	Master Gunner 2 Navigator 1	Avast Me Hearties! Once per day during a boarding action, three dice in your mettle pool become d6s when you roll them.
10	2,000	Bradley "The Gentleman" Gorlami	Ayris	First Mate 2 Captain 1	Lucky Looter. Prize money from captured ships is increased by 50 percent.
11	2,000	Ara Wavecrest	Karel	Boatswain 2 First Mate 1	Recruiter. When you make a Charisma check to Haggle while hiring a pirate, you can add 1d4 to that check. Additionally, at the GM's discretion, you may have advantage on social interactions with any members of the crew that you helped recruit (such as during a time of mutiny).
12	2,000	Miguel Bentara	Karel	Shipwright 3	Skilled Mentor. If you are downed or otherwise leave your station during Ship Combat, an unranked crewmember (so long as at least 1 is alive) maintains your station as if they had 1 rank in it. If another officer takes over the station and has fewer ranks than you, they gain a temporary +1 to their rank in that station until the end of combat. Once you use this boon, you must dock at a port before you can use it again.

2D12	BOUNTY (GP)	NAME	NATION	RANKS	BOON
13	3,000	Bethany "Kestrel" Adur	Ayris	First Mate 2 Shipwright 1	Cannonward Shield. When hit by cannon fire, roll 1d4 and cancel that many hits. Once you use this boon, you can't use it again until this officer has completed a long rest.
14	3,000	Corinna "The Kid"	Ayris	Helmsperson 2 Master Gunner 1	Quick Learner. Whenever this crewmember would gain a rank in a role, she gains two ranks instead.
15	3,000	Fawkes Picardo	Karel	Cook 3 Carpenter 1	Never Say Die. Once per day, when a crew member drops to 0 hit points, you can choose to have them drop to 1 hit point instead.
16	4,000	Darius "The Sage" Djawadi	Karel	Navigator 2 Cook 1	Tutor. Whenever this crewmember would gain a rank in a role, their ship's captain can choose to have another NPC or player character crewmember gain a rank in that role instead.
17	4,000	Abbas Anvilheart	Ayris	Captain 3 Helmsperson 2	Intimidating Demeanor. When initiative is rolled for traditional combat during a ship boarding action, opposing combatants must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or have disadvantage on their initiative check.
18	5,000	Z'Taan Windshadow	Karel	Navigator 3 Helmsperson 3	Blow the Man Down! Once per day during traditional combat of a ship boarding action, all allies who can see you can move up to half their speed and take one action.
19	5,000	Frida "Sharpeye" Stonebranch	Ayris	First Mate 3 Surgeon 3	Sharp Spotter. You have advantage when rolling to notice hidden hazards beneath the aether, and you always spot another ship on the horizon before they spot you. If characters on opposing ships possess this boon then they would simultaneously see each other.
20	6,000	Jia "Lightning Breath" Hui	Ayris	Master Gunner 3 Quartermaster 2 Helmsperson 1	Fire in the Hole! The first hit produced by your cannons during a ship combat encounter automatically starts a fire.
21	8,000	Mitts Mugsaloo	Karel	Quartermaster 4, Boatswain 2	Pack Rat. You keep your own supplies, "just in case." Anytime while at sea, you spontaneously produce 1 each of grub, grog, and gear. Once you use this boon, you must dock at a port before using it again.
22	10,000	Samorix "False Emperor" Oska	Karel	Captain 4 Surgeon 4	Unflappable. Your ship can't lose mettle dice due to the traits of another ship or its crew.
23	12,000	Thorkis "Aetherdance" Vance	Ayris	First Mate 5 Helmsperson 4 Captain 3	Butcher of the Seas. During one round of ship combat, when your ship deals damage that results in rolling casualties, reroll any number of 1s rolled on the casualty d4s and take the new result. Once you use this boon, you can't use it again until you dock at a port.
24	15,000	Ohneka'io "Storm Rider"	Karel, Ayris	Captain 5 First Mate 4, Boatswain 3	Do-or-Die. When your ship runs out of mettle dice, roll 1d4 and gain that many mettle dice. Once you use this boon, you can't use it again until this officer has completed a long rest. Tactical Genius. During ship combat, if 1 additional square of movement would allow your ship to "Cross the T," your ship can move 1 additional square into that position. Once you use this boon, you can't use it again until you dock at a port.

If game statistics are required for pirates hired from a wanted poster, consider using one of the following:

NPC SUGGESTED SEAFARER STAT BLOCKS

CR	STAT BLOCK
1/8	bandit, cultist, guard, noble, sailor*, tribal warrior
1/4	acolyte, hardened islander*
1/2	militia member*, novice agent*, scout, thug
1	island archer*, spy
2	bandit captain, berserker, buccaneer*, cult fanatic, druid, priest
3	knight, veteran, veteran agent*

CR	STAT BLOCK
5	fierce buccaneer*, gladiator, master agent*
6	mage, technomage*
7	squall caller*
8	assassin, commander*, knife master*
9	grizzled buccaneer*

If you use an NPC stat block, consider adding the following ability if they don't already possess it:

- **Sea Legs.** The sailor has advantage on ability checks and saving throws to resist being knocked prone.

Appendix D

RANDOM SHIP GENERATION

This appendix provides random tables to help generate ships and their crews sailing the Aetherial Expanse.

SHIPS

Use the following sections to design ships sailing the Expanse.

NAME

To create a ship's name, you must first determine if the ship is affiliated with an Aetherial Expanse faction, such as the Kingdom of Ayris or the Karelagne Empire.

Affiliation

Ships that belong to the Kingdom of Ayris or the Karelagne Empire typically include a prefix to indicate this association.

Vessels belonging to the Kingdom of Ayris are referred to as an Ayrissian Military Ship (AMS), while Karelagne ships are designated as Imperial Naval Ships (INS), such as the AMS *Crimson Shadow* or the INS *Astral Glory*.

SHIP AFFILIATION

D100	AFFILIATION
01-20	Ayrissian (AMS)
21-60	Independent
61-80	Karelagne (INS)
81-00	Pirate

Name Generation

The following table is a name generator that can create ship names one or two words in length. Roll twice on the Random Names table to obtain a "first word" and a "second word" for your ship's name.

If the first-word result is "—," which is any number between 1 and 25, then the ship's name comprises a single word as determined by the second roll.

For example, a roll of 11 and 62 would result in the name "*Meteor*," while a roll of 95 and 62 would be called the "*Surging Meteor*."

"Ayrissian, Karelagne, Drake, makes no difference. Them ships be almost the same. It's them captains as makes 'em different."

—Finh Starmarch, drunken but wise sailor

STATISTICS

This section determines the base statistics of a ship. Full details of these elements are found in chapter 12.

Ship Type

Roll or choose from the Ship Types table to determine the ship type (see page 168).

SHIP TYPES AND WEAPON SLOTS

D100	SHIP TYPE	BOW SLOTS	PORT SLOTS	STARBOARD SLOTS	STERN SLOTS
01-25	Sloop	—	4	4	—
26-50	Schooner	—	5	5	—
51-70	Brigantine	—	6	6	—
71-85	Frigate*	—	8	8	1
86-95	Galleon*	2	10	10	2
96-00	Man o' War*	2	12	12	3

*These vessels are considered warships and are capable of carrying Heavy weapons.

Armaments

Roll or choose from the Ship Armaments table to determine how well-armed it is.

SHIP ARMAMENTS

D100	AMOUNT OF ARMAMENTS
01-10	Unarmed. None of the ship's weapon slots are filled. The ship has no weapons, no ammunition, or only broken weapons.
11-20	Poorly Armed. 20 percent of the ship's weapon slots are filled. The ship might normally travel along safer routes, be running low on ammunition, or may have been damaged in a recent encounter.
21-70	Fairly Armed. 50 percent of the ship's weapon slots are filled. This represents a typical ship encountered on the Aetherial Expanse.
71-85	Well-Armed. 80 percent of the ship's weapon slots are filled. This ship has numerous weapons, a good stock of ammunition, and minimal damage.
86-00	Bristling. All of the ship's weapon slots are filled. The ship might be fresh out of port or specifically commissioned for battle.

RANDOM SHIP NAMES

D100	FIRST WORD	SECOND WORD
1	—	Aegis
2	—	Answer
3	—	Apostate
4	—	Banshee
5	—	Bargain
6	—	Blade
7	—	Bounty
8	—	Brig
9	—	Chaos
10	—	Chariot
11	—	Chimera
12	—	Comet
13	—	Constitution
14	—	Contract
15	—	Covenant
16	—	Crown
17	—	Crystal
18	—	Cutter
19	—	Dagger
20	—	Defeat
21	—	Demon
22	—	Destroyer
23	—	Devil
24	—	Discovery
25	Aetherial	Doom
26	Alabaster	Drake
27	Ashen	Dream
28	Asteth's	Eagle
29	Astral	Eel
30	Baneful	Endeavour
31	Blazing	Endurance
32	Blind	Explorer
33	Bloody	Falcon
34	Booming	Fancy
35	Bristling	Fin
36	Brutal	Flame

D100	FIRST WORD	SECOND WORD
37	Cerulean	Fortress
38	Copper	Fortune
39	Cosmic	Friend
40	Creeping	Frigate
41	Crimson	Galley
42	Cyrill's	Gift
43	Dawn	Glory
44	Deadly	Grace
45	Decorated	Greed
46	Dirty	Harpy
47	Divine	Harrier
48	Dreaded	Harvest
49	Emerald	Hauler
50	Emperor's	Hind
51	Fearful	Honor
52	Floating	Hulk
53	Flying	Interceptor
54	Frigid	Jewel
55	Frozen	Judge
56	Ghastly	Kraken
57	Golden	Legend
58	Grim	Lion
59	Grinding	Manticore
60	Howling	March
61	Imperial	Marriage
62	Incandescent	Meteor
63	Iridescent	Mutiny
64	Ironclad	Myth
65	Keen	Pact
66	King's	Pearl
67	Lady's	Pioneer
68	Liar's	Predator
69	Lord's	Prison
70	Nimble	Promise
71	Noble	Raider
72	Painted	Ram

D100	FIRST WORD	SECOND WORD
73	Pernicious	Raptor
74	Qoz's	Reason
75	Queen's	Remark
76	Racing	Renegade
77	Radiant	Revelation
78	Raging	Revenge
79	Rapid	Rover
80	Reaving	Sacrifice
81	Rotting	Schooner
82	Royal	Serpent
83	Sable	Shadow
84	Sapphire	Shrike
85	Scarlet	Siren
86	Scintillating	Sloop
87	Searing	Star
88	Shimmering	Storm
89	Silver	Temple
90	Singing	Titan
91	Slippery	Torture
92	Stalwart	Traitor
93	Starlight	Venture
94	Stellar	Victory
95	Surging	Wanderer
96	Swift	Warrant
97	Troubled	Wraith
98	Twilight	Wrath
99	Unammon's	Wreck
100	Vindictive	Wyrn

Note: Ayrissian ships should not include terms associated with imperial concepts, such as “Emperor’s” or “Imperial,” while Karelagne ships avoid royal associations such as “King’s,” “Queen’s,” “Prince’s,” etc.



Aether Shield
Bracers

“Now I know ye be lying ye picaroon. There ain’t be no Karelagne ship called Princely Might. Tis past time fer ya to meet Qoz.”

—Smiling Jim, Boatswain on the Flirt

Weapon Types. Because of the dangers on the Expanse, most ships sailing its aetherial seas are armed. However, only the largest warships can effectively use the heaviest weapons.

For each weapon slot, roll on the Standard Ship Weapons or Warship Weapons table as appropriate to identify a weapon type. Roll a d10 and multiply this by 10 to determine the percentage of a ship's remaining empty slots (round up) filled by the identified weapon. Typically, weapons of a given weapon type are equally distributed between the port and starboard sides of the ship. Repeat this process until all armed weapon slots are filled.

For example, if you have a well-armed brigantine, 80 percent of its 12 weapon slots, i.e. 10 slots, are filled. The brigantine is a standard vessel and is not considered a warship, so you should use the Standard Ship Weapons table to determine its weapons. You roll to fill a weapon slot and get a 59 – saker. Next, you roll a d10, resulting in a 7, meaning that 70 percent of the filled slots (7 slots) are occupied by sakers. Doing this again, you get a 25 – falconet and a 5 or 50 percent of the weapon slots. However, since only 30 percent remain unfilled, the final 3 slots are filled by falconets.

Alternatively, to quickly assign weapon slots, you can roll once to determine a single weapon type that fills all weapon slots.

STANDARD SHIP WEAPONS

D100	REGULAR SHIP WEAPONS
01-20	Culverin
21-35	Falconet
36-45	Flamethrower
46-85	Saker
86-00	Swivel Gun*

WARSHIP WEAPONS

D100	WARSHIP WEAPONS
01-12	Carronade
13-14	Coilgun
15-26	Culverin
27-33	Falconet
34-41	Flamethrower
42-59	Long Gun
60-71	Long Nine†
72-89	Saker
90-98	Swivel Gun*
99-00	Wrath Cannon‡

*Four swivel guns can be installed in a single weapon slot.

†Can't be mounted in port or starboard weapon slots.

‡Normally only found on Karelagne warships.

Weapon details are found on page 170.

Special Features

There is a chance the ship has special ammunition or upgrades that set it apart from most vessels. Roll on the Special Features table below to determine if the ship has special features, and the subsequent tables determine its special ammunition or upgrades. Ammunition is detailed on page 174, while upgrades can be found on page 175.

SPECIAL FEATURES

D100	SPECIAL FEATURES
01-75	None
76-85	Special Ammunition
86-95	Ship Upgrade
96-00	Special Ammunition and Upgrade

Roll on or choose from the Number of Features table to determine how many of the special features the ship has. Roll twice if the ship has both special ammunition and upgrades to determine how many of each it possesses.

NUMBER OF SPECIAL FEATURES

D100	NUMBER
01-75	1
76-85	1d4
86-95	1d6
96-00	2d4

SPECIAL AMMUNITION LISTING

D100	AMMUNITION	D100	AMMUNITION
01-15	Canister Shot	61-70	Hullbusters
16-30	Carcass	71-90	Langridge
31-45	Chainshot	91-00	Salamanders
46-60	Grapeshot		

SHIP UPGRADE LISTING

D100	UPGRADE	D100	UPGRADE
01-08	Astral-Oak Reinforcements	53-56	Mage-Silk Sails
09-13	Ayrissian Canvas Sails	57-61	Mithral Carpentry Tools
14-18	Bucket-Cutter	62-70	Multiversal Orrery
19-20	Cannonward Shield Matrix	71-74	Refurbished Galley
21-24	Divine Lion Figurehead	75	Silver Unicorn Figurehead
25-28	Drake's Wing Sails	76-80	Spellspun Rigging
29-33	Fey-Touched Craftwood	81-84	Stardrive Engine
34-42	Imperial Ram	85	Voroaxinar's Wrath
43-47	Ironclad Plating	86-90	Wavetable Navigator
48-52	Jawhook Ram	91-95	Winged Victory Figurehead
		96-00	Witchcotton Hammocks

CREWS

This section provides random tables to quickly define a ship's crew.

OFFICER STATIONS

To determine the number of officers serving on a ship, roll a d20 and add a Station Bonus Modifier based on the ship type, as shown in the Station Bonus table. Using this result, consult the Filled Officer Stations table to determine the number of filled officer stations on the ship.

For example, if you were determining the number of officers on a brigantine ship, you might roll an 11 on a d20, add +4 (from the Station Bonus table) yielding 15, which translates to 6 filled officer stations for the ship.

STATION BONUS

SHIP TYPE	STATION BONUS MODIFIER
Sloop	0
Schooner	+2
Brigantine	+4
Frigate	+6
Galleon	+8
Man o' War	+10

FILLED OFFICER STATIONS

RESULT (D20 + STATION BONUS MODIFIER)	NUMBER OF FILLED OFFICER STATIONS
1-4	4
5-14	5
15-20	6
21-24	7
25-27	8
28-29	9
30	10

Officer Types. Most ships have the five essential officer stations filled: Captain, First Mate, Quartermaster, Navigator, and Helmsperson. If the ship has only four officer stations, roll on the Missing Essential Stations table to determine which station is unfilled. Note that because ships without a captain function very poorly, few vessels are encountered without a captain in place.

If the ship has more than five filled officer stations, additional stations are chosen (or randomly determined) from: Boatswain, Cook, Master Gunner, Shipwright, and Surgeon, as shown on the Additional Stations table.

MISSING ESSENTIAL STATIONS

D20	STATION
1	Captain
2-5	First Mate
6-10	Quartermaster
11-15	Navigator
16-20	Helmsperson

ADDITIONAL STATIONS

D20	STATION
1-4	Boatswain
5-8	Cook
9-12	Master Gunner
13-16	Shipwright
17-20	Surgeon

Ranked Officers

Typically, individuals filling officer roles have at least one rank in the station to which they've been assigned. However, this is not always the case. Anyone can be assigned to an officer station (see page 195).

Number of Ranked Officers. To determine the number of ranked officers in the crew, roll a d20 and add the ship's Station Bonus Modifier, then consult the Ranked Officers table to find the Ranked Officer Adjustment. Add the resulting Ranked Officer Adjustment to the number of Filled Officer Stations determined previously to find the total number of Ranked Officers on board.

For example, assume your ship is a schooner with 5 filled Officer Stations. The Station Bonus Modifier for a schooner is +2. If you roll a d20 and get a 5, add the +2 to obtain a result of 7. Consulting the Ranked Officers table results in a Ranked Officer Adjustment of -2. This means the ship would have $5 - 2 = 3$ Ranked Officers. Choose or randomly select which officer stations have these Ranked Officers.

RANKED OFFICERS

RESULT (D20 + STATION BONUS MODIFIER)	RANKED OFFICER ADJUSTMENT
1	-4
2-5	-3
6-9	-2
10-14	-1
15-19	0
20+	+1

Officer Ranks. For each ranked officer, roll on the Officer Ranks table to determine how many ranks each has in their assigned station.

OFFICER RANKS

D20	RANKS	D20	RANKS
1-5	1	19	4
6-13	2	20	5
14-18	3		

Additionally, a ranked officer may have ranks in an additional officer station. Roll on the Additional Station table to determine if this occurs and the number of ranks they have in that station. Choose or randomly select the additional station for which they have ranks.



ADDITIONAL STATION

D6	ADDITIONAL OFFICER STATION	SECONDARY STATION'S RANKS
1-3	No	—
4-5	Yes	1/2 the number of ranks as in the assigned station. (rounded up)
6	Yes	The same number of ranks as the assigned station

Boons. Each ranked officer may have a boon. You may choose the percentage of ranked officers who have boons, though a good rule of thumb is that 25 percent of ranked officers have boons.

If an officer has a boon, select one or roll on the Boons table to determine the boon they possess.

BOONS

D100	BOON	D100	BOON
01-04	Aether Assassin	49-52	Lucky Looter
05-08	Aether-Immune	53-56	Merciful Demeanor
09-12	Avast Me Hearties!	57-60	Never Say Die
13-16	Beast Chaser	61-64	Pack Rat
17-20	Blow the Man Down!	65-68	Recruiter
21-24	Butcher of the Seas	69-72	Rigrunner
25-28	Cannonward Shield	73-76	Sharp Spotter
29-32	Champion of the Unknown	77-80	Skilled Mentor
33-36	Do-or-die	81-84	Tactical Genius
37-40	Fire in the Hole!	85-88	Wind-Kissed
41-44	Grog Waterer	89-99	Choose any boon
45-48	Intimidating Demeanor	00	Choose any two boons

Boon descriptions are on page 106.

CREW NUMBERS

Depending on the type of ship, determine the total number of unranked crew members serving onboard using the Crew Members table.

CREW MEMBERS

SHIP TYPE	CREW MEMBERS
Sloop	8 + 4d4
Schooner	13 + 3d6
Brigantine	16 + 4d6
Frigate	21 + 5d6
Galleon	26 + 6d6
Man o' War	42 + 7d8

CREW NAMES

Roll or select names from the Random Crew Names table to define the names of individuals in a ship's crew.

RANDOM CREW NAMES

D100	GIVEN NAME	NICKNAME	SURNAME
1	Aemelia	"Albatross"	Achenbach
2	Akira	"Big Guns"	Adur
3	Alberto	"Bilgewater"	Argento
4	Alexis	"Biscuits"	Asaju
5	Angelina	"Bishop"	Bahr
6	Antonio	"Black Blade"	Barbieri
7	Anzu	"Black Jack"	Barbossa
8	Asha	"Blessed"	Bashar
9	Asteth	"Blueblood"	Blanco
10	Aurelia	"Bombshell"	Bligh
11	Avery	"Broadside"	Bouchard
12	Aziza	"Calico"	Chafulumisa
13	Benecio	"Cannonball"	Chamberlain
14	Bethany	"Cat"	Collins
15	Blanca	"Chopper"	Cook
16	Botan	"Compass"	Costa
17	Bradley	"Crowseye"	Da Rocha
18	Cai	"Cups"	de Argo
19	Cassandra	"Cutlass"	de Armas
20	Cent	"Cutthroat"	de Graaf
21	Chapawee	"Deadeye"	de la Marck
22	Corinna	"Diabolito"	de Leon
23	Daisuke	"Doctor"	Djawadi
24	Darius	"Dread"	Fletcher
25	Davy	"Drowned"	Ford
26	Dawn	"Entrails"	Gamwhich
27	Dominique	"Executioner"	Geld
28	Dudley	"Fearsome"	Gibbs
29	Edward	"Fishguts"	Gilbert
30	Eleanor	"Five Fathoms"	Gorlami
31	Elizabeth	"Flogger"	Graves
32	Erica	"Four Fingers"	Hakim
33	Esteban	"Freebooter"	Hawkins
34	Eva	"Gibbet"	He
35	Fabrizio	"Gold-Tooth"	Hongshui
36	Falco	"Goldpiece"	Humboldt
37	Fawkes	"Grog"	Jie
38	Forrest	"Hangman"	Jones
39	Frederic	"Harpoon"	Kageyama
40	Garrett	"Hook"	King
41	Genevieve	"Hornswaggle"	Kotaro
42	Greta	"Howler"	Le Chien
43	Hector	"Jolly"	Le Grande
44	Hippolyte	"Keelhaul"	Levasseur
45	Hira	"King Killer"	Marchetti
46	Hudson	"Kraken"	Marin
47	Isabella	"Landlubber"	Marino
48	Ivelisse	"Massacre"	Masondo

D100	GIVEN NAME	NICKNAME	SURNAME
49	Jack	"Matey"	Matsumoto
50	Jade	"Maverick"	Melville
51	James	"Menace"	Mitford
52	Jan	"Meteorite"	Mitsurugi
53	Jim	"Miracle"	Mlambo
54	Jocelyn	"Old Briney"	Morgan
55	Johnny	"Old Red"	Nelson
56	Karla	"Old Salt"	Nemo
57	Kenji	"One-Ear"	Oceanrun
58	Kingsley	"Patches"	Odili
59	Kwasi	"Peg"	Oska
60	Largo	"Pinky"	Otundu
61	Leonardo	"Plank Walker"	Pauzer
62	Lin	"Poopdeck"	Pesci
63	Ludley	"Rascal"	Pesqueira
64	Lukas	"Reaper"	Picardo
65	Mabel	"Red Gills"	Preuss
66	Marco	"Redhands"	Qian
67	Mei Ling	"Roaring"	Quadros
68	Mika	"Rumrunner"	Rackham
69	Nadia	"Rusty"	Rana
70	Olivia	"Sawbones"	Rauschenberger
71	Omen	"Scallywag"	Rex
72	Othenio	"Scurvy"	Riva
73	Philip	"Scuttlebutt"	Rogers
74	Phoebe	"Seadog"	Sanches
75	Pierre	"Seagull"	Sargeant
76	Rei	"Shark Bait"	Sasaki
77	Ren	"Sharky"	Seward
78	Renato	"Silver"	Silver
79	Rin	"Slug Guts"	Smith
80	Rose	"Smokey"	Souza
81	Ruth	"Spice"	Sparrow
82	Samorix	"Spyglass"	Spinoza
83	Sara	"Storm"	Stanley
84	Seymour	"Swabs"	Swan
85	Skah	"Tadpole"	Thorn
86	Tashunka	"Tar"	Turner
87	Tatonga	"Temple"	Uberti
88	Timoteo	"The Anchor"	Verga
89	Tristan	"The Keg"	von Fleet
90	Ugo	"The Kid"	von Holtz
91	Valentin	"The Sage"	Waveborn
92	Veronica	"The Scourge"	Windshadow
93	Waylon	"Three Blades"	Xiong
94	Will	"Thunder"	Yamada
95	Yamileth	"Timbers"	Yamaguchi
96	Yanira	"Trove"	Yan
97	Yusuf	"Vengeance"	Zhanzheng
98	Z'Taan	"Whale"	Zhao
99	Zaunder	"Whitebeard"	Ziegler
100	Zonta	"Widow-maker"	Zollman

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• CREW •

CURRENT
CREW

MAXIMUM
CREW

SKELETON
CREW



METTLE

• SHIP NAME •


• SHIP TYPE & SIZE •

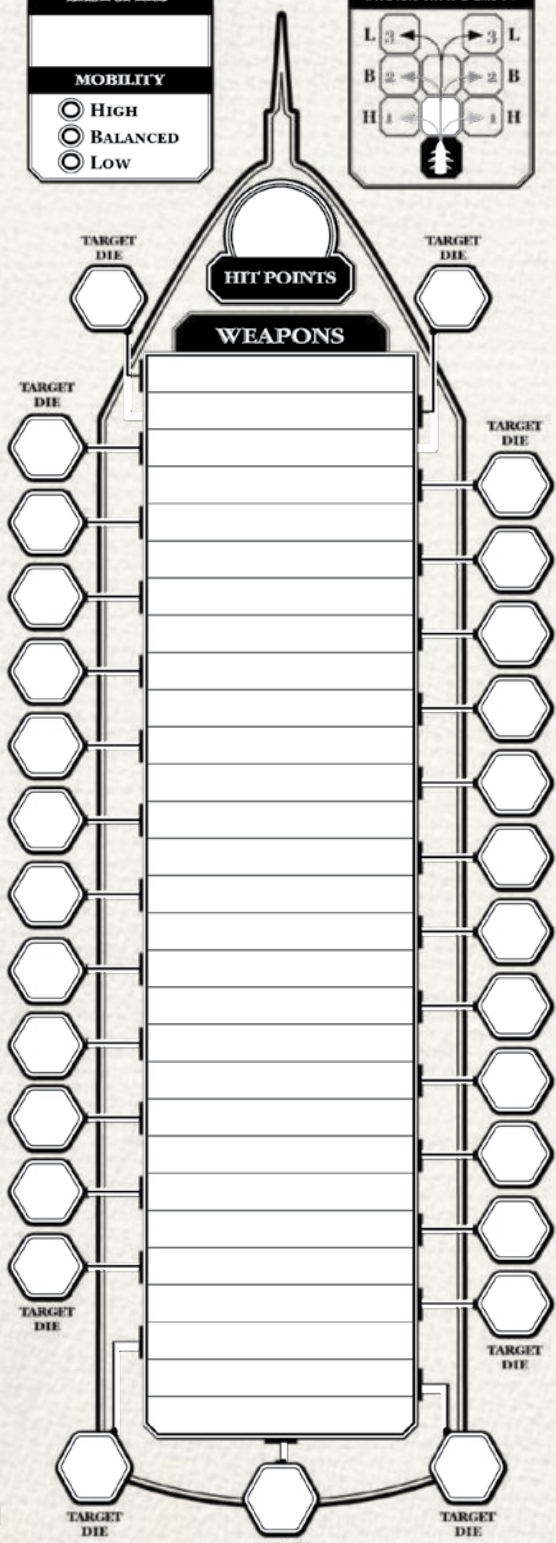
BASE SPEED

MOBILITY

☐ HIGH
 ☐ BALANCED
 ☐ LOW

MOBILITY SCALE





• SUPPLIES •

GRUB
CURRENT/CAP

GROG
CURRENT/CAP

GEAR
CURRENT/CAP

FUEL

AIR MOTES

TINY
SMALL
MEDIUM
HUGE
GARG.

AETHERIUM CRYSTALS (POUNDS)

AMMUNITION

AMMO TYPE	QTY
CHAINSHOT	
GRAPESHOT	
CANNISTER SHOT	
LANGRIDGE	
CARCASS	
SALAMANDER	
HULLBUSTERS	

CARGO

COMMAND OFFICERS

CAPTAIN

RANK

BOON:

FIRST MATE

RANK

BOON:

QUARTERMASTER

RANK

BOON:

NAVIGATOR

RANK

BOON:

HELMSPERSON

RANK

BOON:

OPERATIONS OFFICERS

SURGEON

RANK

BOON:

CARPENTER

RANK

BOON:

MASTER GUNNER

RANK

BOON:

BOATSWAIN

RANK

BOON:

COOK

RANK

BOON:

• UPGRADES •

NAV.

HULL

SAIL

PROW

GENERAL UPGRADES

☐ SPELLSPUN RIGGING
 ☐ WITCHCOTTON HAMMOCKS
 ☐ REFURBISHED GALLEY
 ☐ MITHRIL CARPENTRY TOOLS
 ☐ STARDRIVE ENGINE
 ☐ CANNONWARD SHIELD MATRIX





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Floating in the endless void of the Astral Plane is a sea of silver starlight, a vast expanse of aetherial liquid that shimmers as comets shoot through its surface. The Astral Plane is the plane between planes, and portals to these manifold realms tear themselves open and seal themselves shut as if guided by an unseen will. Upon this Aetherial Expanse, a story of sails, cannons, empires, and high piracy is set.

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