

# FABLES

PIRATES OF THE AETHERIAL EXPANSE



TREASURE OF SHIPGRAVE REEF  
EPISODE 1 OF 6

 **GHOSTFIRE**  
GAMING

**5E**  
COMPATIBLE









# FABLES

PIRATES OF THE AETHERIAL EXPANSE

EPISODE 1

TREASURE OF  
SHIPGRAVE REEF



GHOSTFIRE  
GAMING



# CREDITS

## ***Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide***

**Written by:** James J. Haeck

**Mechanical Design:** Sam Mannell

**Additional World Building:** Gabe Hicks

## ***Episode 1: Treasure of Shipgrave Reef***

**Written by:** James J. Haeck

**Additional Adventure Design:** H.H. Carlan

**Head of Fables:** James J. Haeck, Joe Raso

**Story Design:** James J. Haeck

**Art Directors:** Marius Bota, Zoë Robinson

**Pirates of the Aetherial Expanse Writers:** H.H. Carlan, Anne Gregersen, James J. Haeck, Gabe Hicks, Alison Huang, Anthony Joyce, Kat Kruger, Sadie Lowry, Sarah Madsen, Sam Mannell, Joe Raso, Jess Ross, Jen Vaughn

**Managing Editor:** James J. Haeck

**Editors:** Michele Carter, Matt Click, Ashley Lawson, Joe Raso

**Graphic Design:** Martin Hughes, Scott Fraser

**Cover Design:** Christine Fozler

**End Page Design:** Abby Zweifel

**Interior Illustrators:** Kristian Agerkvist, Ridell Apellanes, Carol Azevedo, Luke Beaber, George Bennett, Bethany Berg, Allie Briggs, Josiah Cameron, Stephanie Cost, Kent Davis, Nikki Dawes, Alex Drummond, Christine Foltzer, Tony Foti, Quintin Gleim, Doruk Golcu, Ashley Hankins, Matt Hubel, Andrei Iacob, Maggie Ivy, Josh Ketchen, Diana Khomutina, Kate Laird, Tatii Lange, Carson Lowmiller, Damien Mammoliti, Jake Murray, Brian Patterson, Karina Pavlova, Pixeloid Studios, Mihai Radu, Caio Santos, Elisa Serio, Janna Sophia, Katariina Sofia, Kai Stevens, Kelly Toki, Philipp Ulrich, Brian Valenzuela, Jacob Walker, Sam White, Abby Zweifel

**Cartographers:** Luke Beaber, Damien Mammoliti, Brian Patterson

**VTT Asset Design:** Joshua Orchard

## **GHOSTFIRE GAMING TEAM**

**CEO:** Jordon Gibson

**General Manager, TTRPG:** Phil Beckwith

**General Manager, Operations:** Nick Ingamells

**Communications and Marketing:** Hannah Peart, Kathryn Griggs, Rex Gibson

**Products Design:** Simon Sherry

**Game Designers:** Shawn Merwin, James J. Haeck, Joe Raso

**Art Direction:** Suzanne Helmigh, Marius Bota, Ona Kristensen, Kerstin Evans

**Lead Graphic Designer:** Martin Hughes

**Ghostfire Gaming Discord Community Managers:** Ian "Butters" Gratton, Nelson "Deathven" Di Carlo, Tom "A Viking Walrus" Garland, Caleb "Connendarf" Englehart, Cameron "C4Burgers" Brechin

Special thanks to the creative wizards at Wizards of the Coast for being the caring stewards of this game we love.

Special thanks to our playtesters and every one of the passionate roleplayers of the Ghostfire Gaming community. Your feedback and your love of storytelling and monster-slaying is what drives us to create games.

This product is compliant with the Open Game Licence and is suitable for use with the 5th Edition rules system.

**Product Identity:** The following items are hereby identified as Product Identity, as defined in the Open Game License version 1.0a, Section 1(e), and are not Open Content: All trademarks, registered trademarks, proper names (characters, deities, etc.), dialogue, plots, storylines, locations, characters, illustrations, and trade dress. (Elements that have previously been designated as Open Game Content or are in the public domain are not included in this declaration.)

**Open Content:** Except for material designated as Product Identity (see above), the game mechanics of this game product are Open Game Content, as defined in the Open Game License version 1.0a Section 1(d). No portion of this work other than the material designated as Open Game Content may be reproduced in any form without written permission.

© 2021, **Ghostfire Gaming Pty Ltd.** All rights reserved. Reference to copyright material in no way constitutes a challenge to the respective copyright holder of that material. Ghostfire Gaming, the Ghostfire Gaming logo, Grim Hollow, the Grim Hollow logo, Fables, the Fables logo and all associated Fables episode titles are trademarks of Ghostfire Gaming Pty Ltd.



# CONTENTS

<b>Setting guide</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Episode 1:</b>	
A Sea of Magic	6	<b>Treasure of Shipgrave reef!</b>	<b>94</b>
Factions and Fleets	6		
Creating your Character	10	<b>Welcome to Fables!</b>	<b>96</b>
Aether and Aetherium	16	You Are a Game Master	96
Aether and Magic	19	Running this Fable	96
Aether Poisoning	20	This Fable's Story	98
The Origin of Aether	21	Introduction	102
Pronunciation Guide	21	Session Zero	102
<b>Aetherial Expanse</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>Chapter 1:</b>	
Constellations and Navigation	28	<b>Washed Ashore</b>	<b>106</b>
Flora, Fauna and Folk	29	Fellow Castaways	106
Astral Food	31	Aether Poisoning	106
<b>Realms of the Sea</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>Chapter 2:</b>	
Port Majeure	34	<b>Exploring Shipgrave reef</b>	<b>108</b>
Windcrown	36	Searching an Island	108
Isles of Drakes	38	Traveling Between Islands	108
Gods of the Expanse	46	Areas of Shipgrave Reef	110
New Magic Items	49	<b>Chapter 3:</b>	
<b>New Mechanics</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>The Legends lost treasure</b>	<b>116</b>
Ships	52	Areas of the Vault	116
Crew	56	Onward to Piracy	117
Supplies and Resources	62	<b>Appendix A: New Monsters</b>	<b>118</b>
Ship Upgrades	64	Aetherwolf	118
Reputation	66	Astral Merrow	119
Navigation	68	Captain Skerrick	120
Travel	72	Sailor	121
Pursuit	72	<b>Open Game License</b>	<b>122</b>
Ship Combat	72		
Creature versus Ship	84		
Combat without a Grid	84		
Sample Ships	86		
Flotilla	93		



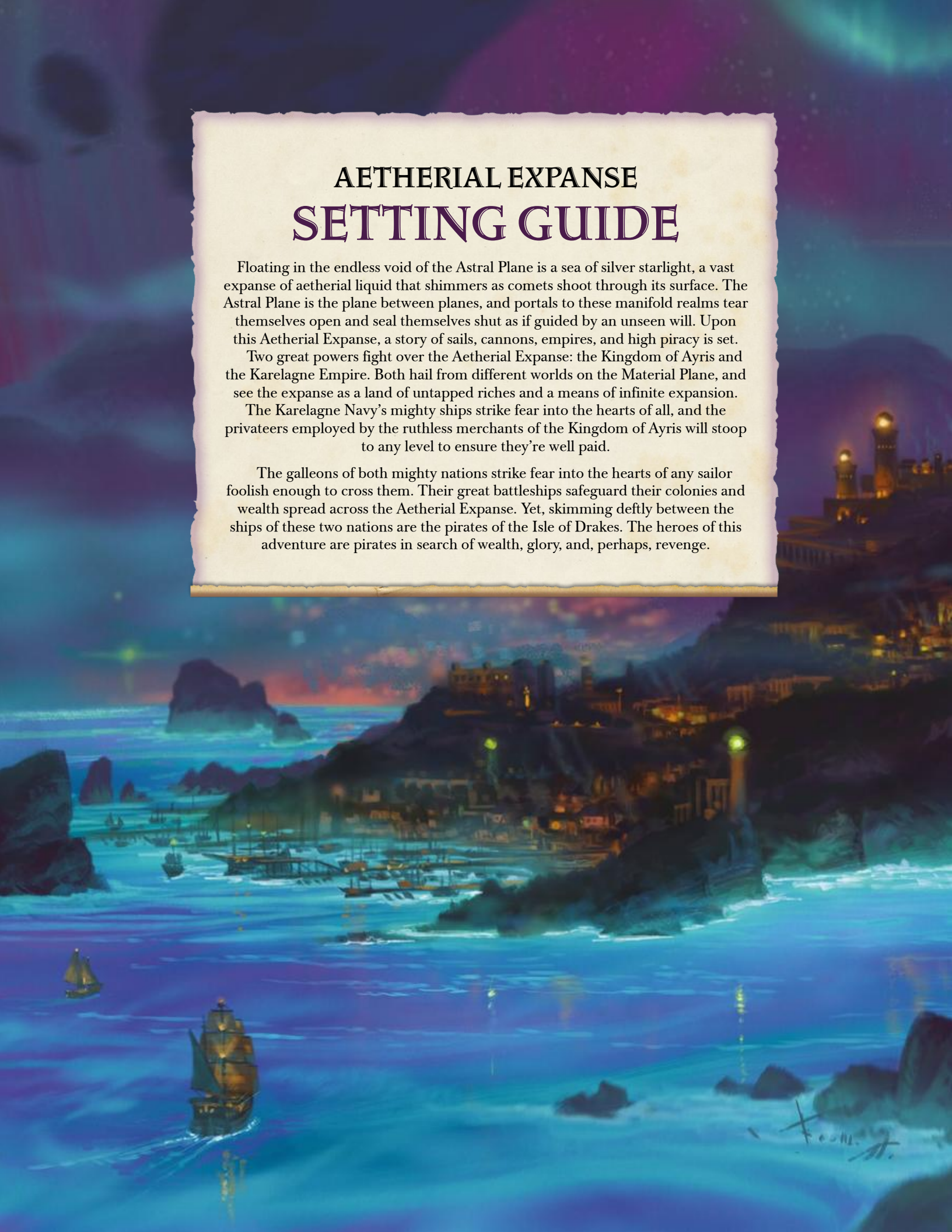
# AETHERIAL EXPANSE SETTING GUIDE

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.

Two great powers fight over the Aetherial Expanse: the Kingdom of Ayris and the Karelagne Empire. Both hail from different worlds on the Material Plane, and see the expanse as a land of untapped riches and a means of infinite expansion.

The Karelagne Navy's mighty ships strike fear into the hearts of all, and the privateers employed by the ruthless merchants of the Kingdom of Ayris will stoop to any level to ensure they're well paid.

The galleons of both mighty nations strike fear into the hearts of any sailor foolish enough to cross them. Their great battleships safeguard their colonies and wealth spread across the Aetherial Expanse. Yet, skimming deftly between the ships of these two nations are the pirates of the Isle of Drakes. The heroes of this adventure are pirates in search of wealth, glory, and, perhaps, revenge.









## A SEA OF MAGIC

The Aetherial Expanse is a realm of high fantasy, 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 nebulae and glimmering light, as well as creatures and plants made of starstuff. It beckons with the beautiful, the unsettling, and the promise of adventure.

Each episode in this Fable ranges in level as follows:

**Episode 1:** 1st through 3rd

**Episode 2:** 3rd through 5th

**Episode 3:** 5th through 7th

**Episode 4:** 7th through 9th

**Episode 5:** 9th through 11th

**Episode 6:** 11th through 13th

## THE EXPANSE AT A GLANCE

It is said one thousand islands float upon this sea. Some are smaller than a ship, barely large enough for a single person to call home. Other islands surge across the expanse like shooting stars, uncontrollable and uncontrolled. Aetherstorms tear across the expanse, spurred into motion by chaotic confluences between the Elemental Planes, striking fear into the hearts of island-dwelling civilian and aether sailor alike.

### The Maelstrom

At the heart of the Aetherial Expanse lies the Maelstrom, an aetherstorm like no other. Its tremendous size and unending fury have given rise to countless legends about its origin. Regardless of whether it's a curse from the gods or the font from which all aether springs, the Maelstrom is something all sailors must respect. Its tremendous power creates a deasil current that moves all islands of the expanse, some slower, some faster, like an immense orrery.

### Orbiting Islands

The larger islands and those farthest from the Maelstrom at the expanse's heart turn slower. The islands of Port Majeure and Windcrown, the bases of operations for the conquering Karelagne Empire and the opportunistic Kingdom of Ayris respectively, move slowly, for they are large, heavy, and far from the Maelstrom. The only exception to this orbit is the Isle of Drakes, a pirate haven which rests unmoving in the Aetherial Expanse's earthward (southern) reaches.

## A Closer Look at the Expanse

Countless other tiny islands and locations are found throughout the Aetherial Expanse. For more information on points of interest in this extraplanar sea, see "The Aetherial Expanse" section.

## FACTIONS AND FLEETS

The Material Plane is home to countless worlds, only a few of which have discovered the magic required to travel beyond their own plane—at least, there are few worlds in which this knowledge has spread beyond the minds of strange and reclusive wizards. On some worlds, great nations have harnessed planar magic to create empires that span beyond the boundaries of their reality. Two of these nations battle for control of the Aetherial Expanse: the Kingdom of Ayris, a small realm on its own world that maintains its social power through trade, and the Karelagne Empire, which dominates much of its home world and now seeks to spread its influence onto other planes.

Honest ships fly the flags of the two great nations, depending on whose charter they sail under. Likewise, privateers hoist the colors of their patron. Pirates often carry the colors of both nations—and their own black-and-red flags.

## THE KINGDOM OF AYRIS

Ayris is a small kingdom on one of the Material Plane's many worlds. It has gained tremendous power through alliances with its neighboring, landlocked city-states. It largely relies on privateers to fight its battles and to help it claim island footholds in its quest for dominance of the Aetherial Expanse. Once at war with the Karelagne Empire, the two nations are now rivals. Peaceful rivals for now, but their privateers constantly harass the other nation's merchant vessels.

### Merchant Fleet Flagship *Stratagem*

The flagship of the Ayrisian Merchant Fleet is the mighty AMS *Stratagem*. This galleon is the best armed and best armored of the merchant fleet, though its armaments are only slightly superior to Karelagne Navy ships of the line. The *Stratagem*'s most remarkable trait is its Stardrive, a remarkable engine that can propel the *Stratagem* across the aether at such incredible speeds that it seems only a silver blur. Ships tethered to the *Stratagem* by custom aetherium mooring lines can benefit from the Stardrive's terrific power without being torn asunder. This engine makes the *Stratagem* swift enough to run any Karelagne blockade and maneuverable enough to bring privateer warships behind enemy lines for unprecedented naval ambush tactics.

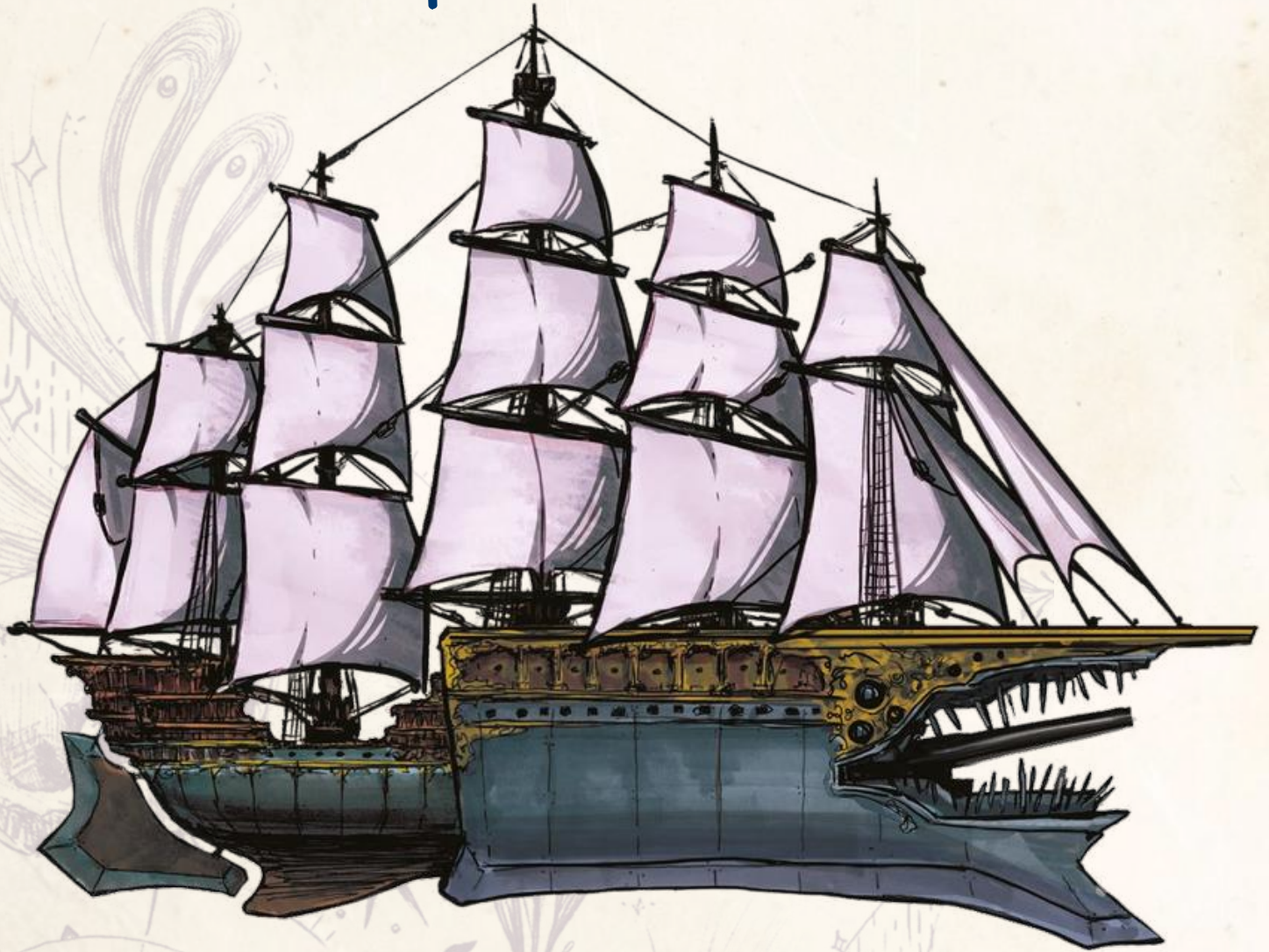
The Stardrive is the result of decades of Ayrisian research into the incredible power stored within aetherium crystals. It consumes aetherium in remarkable quantities, fueling the kingdom's insatiable hunger for the substance.













## THE KARELAGNE EMPIRE

The Karelagne Empire is a fearsome empire from another of the Material Plane's many worlds. It has sought to expand its vast empire from its home world to other worlds, that it may colonize them and seize their resources. The Karelagne Navy has bases on islets and atolls across the Aetherial Expanse.

The discovery of aetherium has allowed the Karelagne Empire's experimental technology to rocket centuries ahead in advancement. Though the vast majority of vessels from Karel are still made of wood, sail, and rope, they can be produced faster and in far greater quantities than the vessels of the empire's Ayrissian rivals.

### Imperial Navy Flagship *Thunderchild*

The draconic visage that decorates the INS *Thunderchild*'s prow rightly marks it as the most fearsome vessel to prowl the Aetherial Expanse. The apotheosis of Karelagne experimental magi-technology, the *Thunderchild* is a four-masted, iron-hulled behemoth that belches smoke from wide chimneys as it roars across the aether. Instead of a traditional figurehead, this vessel's prow was wrought into the shape of a snarling dragon, one which crackles with lightning as storms roll across the sea. The *Thunderchild* is commanded by the most trusted servant of the Imperial Navy, Admiral Abrexta Kathinel (see the "Port Majeure" section).

Rumors swirl around the Isle of Drakes that the *Thunderchild*'s true wicked power is the lightning breath of a blue dragon bound to its figurehead, and that this crackling power can lay low ships as if the *Thunderchild* itself were the herald of the god of storms. Atop its masts, above the royal sails, are strange, forking branches of iron that hum and vibrate. This huge scrying array is an aetherium-infused arcane focus that permits diviners aboard the *Thunderchild* 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, Aetherbeasts, and phenomena in that radius. A diviner attuned to the scrying array is incapacitated, but aware of all things within 50 miles of the ship, and is vaguely aware of things within 100 miles. It must make a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to pick out the specifics of any shadow forms it sees while using the array.

The *Thunderchild*'s arms and armor have made it the terror of the Aetherial Expanse. Its iron hull is all but impenetrable and its broadside Wrath Cannons report not with cannonballs and the flash of gunpowder and flame, but with bright blue eruptions of aetherium and blasts of arcing blue energy that slice through hulls like a honed blade through flesh. Perhaps more terrifying than an unstoppable broadside from the *Thunderchild*'s experimental aetherium-powered Wrath Cannons is the crackling lightning it was named for: the lightning breath which blasts from its draconic figurehead in a line a half mile long.

The *Thunderchild* prowls the Aetherial Expanse as the empire runs tests on its efficiency, maximum payload, and other vital details. Pirates who lair upon the Isle of Drakes fear the day the *Thunderchild* will set its baleful sights upon their haven, for it will surely be the harbinger of their doom—and no one can convince the squabbling crews to unite against it.

## MERCHANT VESSELS

If pirates are the predators of the expanse, the merchant vessels affiliated with Karel and Ayris are the prey. Lightly armed and laden with material wealth, these ships run harrowing relays between their home port and the islands of the Monstera Cluster or the Imperial Archipelago, hoping against hope that no well-armed rover spots them and decides to make them a prize.

Particularly well-off merchants often hire a privateer crew to serve as escort ships on the high seas.

## PIRATES

The pirates of the Aetherial Expanse have no unifying code of ethics or honor, nor do they have a unifying charter or creed. Each pirate ship is unique, with its own articles of agreement determining the ship's roles, responsibilities, and, most importantly, shares of any booty plundered from its prizes.

Pirates can be found in small coves and settlements across the Aetherial Expanse, but the legendary pirate haven, the Isle of Drakes, has a mythic allure known across the expanse. No pirate worth their salt ends their career without making port at the Isle of Drakes at least once.

### Privateers

Akin to pirates, but more respectable, privateers are free agents upon the sea who hold a letter of marque. This contract, issued by either the Ayrissian or the Karelagne government, permits them to freely prey upon merchant vessels and towns without fear of reprisal from the government which issued the letter. The only stipulation is that privateers don't attack ships and settlements flying that nation's flag.

Despite this, many privateers slowly and greedily slip into true piracy over time, often by slyly accepting letters of marque from both Ayris and Karel to maximize their targets. Privateers who operate like this are usually caught, and rightly hanged as pirates.





## CREATING YOUR CHARACTER

The first thing a player needs to do before playing this Fable is to create their character. This section will help you settle on the broad strokes of your character, and you should do it before meeting with your group for the first time. These elements include:

- Your character's race
- Your character's class
- Your character's background
- Your character's goals
- Your character's origin

The first episode of this Fable begins with you dragging yourself from the aether onto a barren island after barely surviving a battle between six warships. Before starting play, you and your group will gather for a Session Zero to establish a few details about that fateful day together. But before you do, you'll need to establish the five baseline details listed above.

### YOUR CHARACTER'S RACE

Adventurers in this Fable can be members of any race and subrace found in the fifth edition core rules:

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| • Dwarf      | • Gnome    |
| • Elf        | • Half-Elf |
| • Halfling   | • Half-Orc |
| • Human      | • Tiefling |
| • Dragonborn |            |

Races from other fifth edition supplements are available for use with your GM's approval. Since the Astral Plane is a plane between planes, it's entirely possible a magical mishap could have tumbled creatures from a race unique to one world, such as the laneshi or ogresh of Etharis (described in *Grim Hollow: The Player's Guide*) onto the Aetherial Expanse.

Additionally, this Fable includes two new races designed for use in the Aetherial Expanse: the astral emergent and the astral merfolk.





## 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 which walked on two legs and had senses of sight, smell, taste, touch, and sound that 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 unconscious of the cosmos.

### Astral Emergent Traits

**Ability Score Increase.** Your Constitution score increases by 1, and two other ability scores of your choice also increase by 1.

**Age.** Astral emergents age at the same rate as members of their vessel's race. 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.

**Languages.** You can speak Common and Aetherian, the language of Aetherbeasts.

**Size.** You are Medium or Small. You choose the size when you select this race.

**Speeds.** Your walking speed is 30 feet and you have a swimming speed equal to your walking speed. If your body had other movement options, such as a flying speed, the necessary limbs no longer function properly.

**Aetheric Adaptation.** You are immune to the effects of aether poisoning (see the "Aether Poisoning" section).

**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, you can make a DC 13 Charisma check to fight against the aether and reverse the process, drawing its power into your body instead.

On a success, you gain 1d8 temporary hit points.

**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 that had 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 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.

The astral merfolk have built a society in the Constellation Isles on the isle of Larmeath (described in episode 4 of this Fable) and 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 Traits

**Ability Score Increase.** Your Dexterity score increases by 1, and two other ability scores of your choice also increase by 1.

**Age.** The lifespan of an astral merfolk is about the same as a human's.

**Languages.** You can speak Common and Aetherian, the language of aetherbeasts.

**Size.** You are Medium.

**Speeds.** Your walking speed is 0 feet and you have a swimming speed of 30 feet. As an action, you can transform your tailfin 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 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 the "Aether Poisoning" section).

**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, 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.



## YOUR CHARACTER'S CLASS

---

Adventurers in this Fable can be any class presented in the fifth edition core rules. The first episode is designed for 1st-level characters and guidance for leveling up is provided with each episode.

## FIGHTING STYLE OPTIONS

---

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.

### 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.

## YOUR CHARACTER'S GOALS

---

Adventurers seek their fortunes in this cauldron of chaos. Players are encouraged to create a distinctive personal motivation for their characters that goads them toward further adventure, rather than following an overarching plotline. The story of this Fable could occur in the background while the characters pursue their own goals in the Aetherial Expanse.

The player characters are pirates, freebooters, and smugglers on the Aetherial Expanse. Some may have begun their seafaring careers as officers of the Karelagne Imperial Navy or as privateers in the service of the Kingdom of Ayris, but in time, it's expected that their hunger for gold, glory, vengeance, or revolution will make the siren song of piracy irresistible.

### Gold

Enormous fortunes in gold, silver, and aetherium (see the "Aetherium" section) can be won on the sea. If you wish for riches to spend your days in comfort, then your greatest motivator is the promise of fabulous wealth.







## Glory

For some, there's no greater reward than the thrill of daring deeds, the hint of grand discoveries, and the camaraderie of your chosen family. For such a character, the promise of great danger is all you need to drive you forward.

You want to become the greatest, most renowned pirate upon the Aetherial Expanse. Countless famous pirates frequent the Seven Stars Tavern on the Isle of Drakes, spinning tall tales of their swashbuckling exploits for crowds of rapt pirates who hunger for the fame these pirate legends possess. For you to grow your reputation as the greatest pirate on the seas, you may wish to join another great captain's service, or set sail onto the great aetherial waves on a ship of your own to create your legend.

## Vengeance

Someone wronged you, doing terrible things to you or someone you loved. The dark corners of your mind are haunted by the shadows of their evil deeds. For that, you will destroy them. You may not yet possess the means to enact your revenge, but you are called to adventure by the need to amass the wealth, power, and allies to do so. Work with your GM to decide who you seek to vengeance upon. It might be one of the faction leaders, their lackeys, or even a whole host of people, perhaps an entire crew!

Potential targets for vengeance that appear in this Fable include:

**Viceroy Caturix the Silver-Handed.** The cruel and power-hungry man who commands the Karelagne Navy from Port Majeure (see the "Port Majeure" section).

**Zheng Yang Shi.** A kind but stern pirate legend who now runs the Sparrow's Flight gambling den on the Isle of Drakes' Calderé Island (described in episode 2 of this Fable). She's likely to be an ally to the characters, but a character who seeks vengeance against her for a wrong done in her days of piracy may tinge that alliance with darkness.

**Lady Death Herself.** As a child, you saw a black-clad reaper claim a family member. No one else saw her grim, sorrowful visage as she claimed this soul, but she looked directly into your eyes. Years of frantic study later, you have heard the legends of Desdemona, Lady Death, and her galleon of the dead, the *Adumbral End* (described in episode 5 of this Fable).

## Revolution

The superpowers of the expanse are oppressive institutions that kill without mercy to dominate the islands. Pirates are no better; plundering and killing from callous greed. Something must change, and change can only start if people like you work for it. You wish to rally allies to the cause of establishing an independent, unified power in the islands to resist the superpowers and bring order to the lawless sea, or to at least create a safe haven for you and yours.

## CHARACTER ORIGIN

Few creatures are born on the Astral Plane, for it is a place between places. Even the astral merfolk and the astral emergents (both described in the "Your Character's Race" section), who are well adapted to the magical environment of this region, first came from a long-forgotten elsewhere.

As a Humanoid, you likely came from the Material Plane, or were born to colonists who traveled from there to settle one of the remote islands of the Aetherial Expanse.

## Hailing from Karel

If you were a citizen of the Karelagne Empire before you traveled to the Aetherial Expanse, you were likely a sailor trained in Karelagne waters. You have strong memories of the glimmering towers of the capital city Karel where you trained. This grand city is a beacon of magic and technology on your world, and is stratified into haves and have-nots. Nevertheless, the crime in Karel's impoverished underbelly isn't half as vile as the corruption festering within its ivory towers.

You have (or had) a home on a Karelagne-controlled island in the Aetherial Expanse. You might even have family there. If you're a wealthy officer, home is likely Port Majeure, the center of imperial naval operations on the expanse. Otherwise, you probably call the Imperial Archipelago home. (See "The Aetherial Expanse" section for more information on points of interest in the expanse.)

## Hailing from Ayris

Those who hail from the Kingdom of Ayris typically travel to the Aetherial Expanse for one reason: profit. Ayrisian civilians make their homes on the islands of the Monstera Cluster, using its fertile, magic-infused soil to harvest all manner of rare crops that sell for huge profits in Ayris and beyond. Ayrisian merchant sailors make profit both ways by selling vital goods and materials to their nation's colonists, and by then buying their crops to sell with markup back home.

You have (or had) a home on an Ayrisian-controlled island in the Aetherial Expanse, perhaps even with a family. Merchants with a store to mind reside on Windcrown, as do performers, sex workers, and those with more stationary professions. Farmers and other types of colonists typically make a homestead on the islands of the Monstera Cluster. (See "The Aetherial Expanse" section for more information on points of interest in the expanse.)

## Hail from Elsewhere

The fabric of the Astral Plane is a porous thing, prone to tearing and healing itself, much like the tissue of a living being. Portals to the Elemental Planes frequently open and shut themselves, but on rare occasions, portals to the Material Plane and even the Outer Planes are rent open



for brief, startling instants, sending creatures from those planes tumbling through, disoriented and lost.

Those fortunate enough to land on an inhabited island in the Aetherial Expanse might find shelter among the other inhabitants there, such as the pirates of the Isle of Drakes. Those unlucky enough to land on a desert island, however, must struggle to survive in hopes of a passing vessel finding their remote encampment.

## 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, and 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, in words that, over the course of their lives, they begin to understand.

### 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 it 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.

## SLEEP AND RESTS

The act of sleeping and resting on the Astral Plane is 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 activity 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.







## AETHER AND AETHERIUM

The Aetherial Expanse is named 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. See “The Aetherial Expanse” section.

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 the “Aether and Magic” section). 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 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 the “Imbibing Aether” section), or religious fanatics who wish to imbibe the ancient god of the sea's power would take such a risk (see the “Gods of the Expanse” section). 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 overlemoned.

### 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, dizzily 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 is identical to a traditional ocean's.

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

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.

## Rules Tip: Holding Your Breath

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 the "Aether Poisoning" section).





## AETHERIUM CRYSTAL

Aetherium crystal is the rarest and most valuable form of aether in the 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 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 of aetherium. A standard bar weighs 18 ounces and measures 6 inches long, 3 inches wide, and 1 inch thick.

**Aetherium Strips.** Those who trade frequently in aetherium use cases filled with thin, 5-ounce 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 most people see.

### Mining Aetherium

Aetherium's durability increases the more aetherium it's in contact with. Karelagne mages can engrave their national crest on a bar of aetherium using magic with relative ease. 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 it is.

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

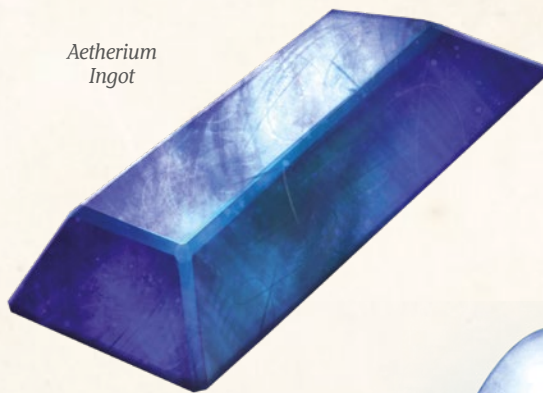
**Stormy Consequences.** Regardless of whether the crystal is removed safely or blasted apart, the aether reacts furiously to the act, like an organism writhing in pain. An aetherstorm (see the "Aetherstorms" section) 1d6 miles in radius forms around the mining site and lasts for 1d12 hours. At the GM's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

### Aetherium as a Power Source

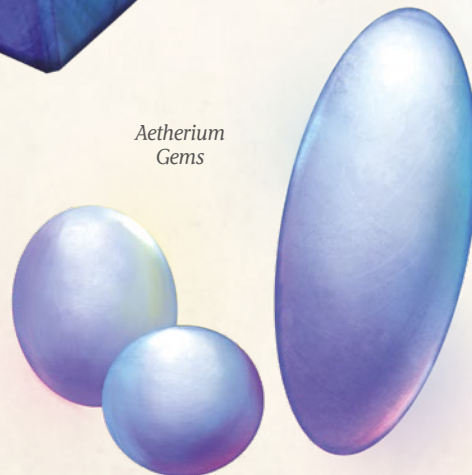
Aetherium is valuable because of its rarity, but also because of its use as an energy source—or as a weapon. As any aetherium miner knows, blasting aetherium causes it to react explosively. Specially trained mages in Karel and Ayris can transmute aetherium crystal into heavy aether, a highly unstable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







Aetherium  
Crystals



Aetherium  
Ore

## 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. 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 the spell, the aether turns into vapor, which rolls along the ground until it returns to the sea, leaving the creature dry or causing the puddle to vanish. Any large body 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 the “Aether Poisoning” section).

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 openings of 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.

## 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 a battle.

**Effects.** A creature afflicted by aether fever sleeps restlessly and experiences physical discomfort, and 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 (see below).

**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 it is 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 a sailor faces in the Aetherial Expanse. Powerful magic can heal the damage it wreaks upon the body, but the services of those who can work such magic are rare and expensive. As such, apothecaries 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.** 100 gp (but prone to price gouging)

## THE ORIGIN OF AETHER

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 the "Gods of the Expanse" section) 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.

## THE TRUTH OF AETHER

The truth of aether is explained in further detail for the GM in the introduction of each episode of this Fable.



# PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

This guide suggests pronunciations for many of the non-English names found in this Fable, along with a reference to the first episode it was referenced.

NAME	PRONUNCIATION	DESCRIPTION	REF
Abrexta Kathinel	ah-BRECKS-tuh KATH-in-el	Tiefling Karelagne admiral commanding the INS <i>Thunderchild</i>	E6
Adumbral End	AH-dum-brawl	Desdemona's spectral galleon	E5
Aesphodel	AS-foh-dell	Pirate crew based on Maladell Island	E2
Aether	EE-ther (or AY-ther)	The magical substance making up the seas of the Aetherial Expanse.	E1
Aetherium	ee-THEER-ee-um (or ay-THEER-ee-um)	The rare crystalline form of aether	E1
Ailing Grog	Ay-LING	Retired astral emergent pirate owning a tavern of the same name	E6
Akaste	ah-KAHS-tay	An ancient storm giant sea-witch who acts in secret	E5
Akora	ay-KOR-uh	A gynosphinx librarian in the Sunken Palace	E4
Alaric Concord	al-uh-RICK	Infamous half-orc Karelagne privateer captain	E6
Alfonce Arvide	AL-fahns ahr-VID	Starblade crewmember on the <i>Adumbral End</i>	E5
Algol	AL-gohl	An eldritch beast from the deep aether	E5
Amil Markhoff	ah-MEEL MARK-ov	Once a renowned merfolk captain, now transformed into a merrow haunting Shipgrave Reef	E1
Anka	ANK-uh	Dragonborn shipwright on Velstarrón Island	E2
Areyca	uh-RAY-kuh	Wood elf wizard leader of Fosfior Town	E2
Ariadne	AWR-ee-ad-nay	Astral merfolk scavenger	E4
Asteth, the Empress	AS-teth	Fiery goddess from the Aetherial Expanse	SG
Astrium	AS-tri-um	Mythical civilization of planefaring giants	E1
Atakora	a-ta-KOR-uh	An island named after the sharp bladed grass that covers it	E4
Ayris	EY-riss	A powerful material plane kingdom vying for control of the Aetherial Expanse	E1
Bathyal Chariot	BATH-yawl	Akaste's grotto lair	E5
Beliene Delaney	bel-EEN del-a-NAY	True captain of the Fanged Stallion pretending to belong to the Sistren of the Isle	E3
Belnoraë	bel-NOR-ay	Dragonborn child of Karelagne officer Zrafarn Sheccac	E5
Brighid	BRIG-id	Captain of the INS <i>Loyalty</i>	E6
Bulwark Island	BULL-wark	Jungle covered island in Shipgrave Reef	E1
Calderé Island	cawl-duh-RAY	A volcanic island in the Isle of Drakes	E2
Calladin Thorn	KAL-a-din	Half-elf captain of the <i>Knight's Corsair</i>	E5
Centaris	Sen-TAWR-is	An island with powerful aether geysers in the Constellation Isles	E4

(SG = Setting Guide)





NAME	PRONUNCIATION	DESCRIPTION	REF
Cindra	SIN-druh	Elf starspeaker crewmember on the <i>Adumbral End</i>	E5
Cozmara	coz-MAW-ruh	Drow Aesphodel pirate	E2
Cyrill the Hierophant	SEER-ill	God of the Aetherial expanse and legendary creator of the aether.	SG
Dagodurne Gad	DAG-o-dern GAD	The dwarven Lord High Admiral commanding Karelagne's military defense of Port Majeure	SG
Dameria Jules	da-MAIR-ee-uh	Dwarf cook on Nth Degree Island	E3
Darissa	da-RIS-uh	Powerful Ayris merchant guildmaster secretly working with the Karelagne Empire. Mother of Ori.	E5
Desdemona	DES-duh-mow-nuh	The immortal storm giant captain of <i>Adumbral End</i> .	E5
Diego Madrix	dee-AY-go MAD-ricks	Inexperienced gnome Karelagne officer	E6
Diyan	dee-YAN	An island named after the tar-like moss growing there.	E4
Eldari	el-DAW-ri	Half-merfolk Sistren leader on Kesforth island	E4
Eolicos Island	ee-OH-lick-ohs	A desolate wind-swept island in the Isle of Drakes	SG
Equino Duo	eh-KWEE-no	A pair of islands in the Constellation Isles	E4
Erinaronda	AIR-rin-a-RON-duh	Astral emergent leader of the Keepers on the Blinking Island	E3
Estamuel Chemelthary	es-TAM-yoo-el KEM-el-there-ee	Ayrissian Governor of Windcrown	E6
Eydis Pearlsheen	AY-dis	Youngest member of the astral merfolk Trident leadership	E4
Fearghal	FEER-gull	Elf garrison commander of Fort Bantor	E6
Ferryn Jassan	FAIR-in ja-SAHN	Imprisoned Karelagne rogue on the <i>Adumbral End</i>	E5
Floe Island	FLOW	A small island in Shipgrave Reef	E1
Forge of Arganok	AR-gan-ok	A magical forge in Astrium	E6
Fosfior Island	FAHS-fee-or	A jungle-covered island in the Isle of Drakes	E2
Gemma	JEM-muh	The <i>Fanged Stallion's</i> gnome quartermaster pretending to be the first-mate	E3
Gruup Meistercut	GROOP	Dwarf astral emergent butcher at Bester's Ring in Windcrown	SG
Hamelyn Ferralon	HAM-el-in FER-ral-on	Gunnery Chief Hamelyn. Half-elf proprietor of Steel for a Steal weapon shop	SG
Hikaru Davies	hee-KAW-roo	Human mage smuggler in Windcrown.	SG
Imayn	IM-ayn	Human wife of Aryssian officer Phryne Soulette	
Inzeh Ahime	in-ZEH aw-HEEM-eh	Dragonborn navigator of <i>Adumbral End</i>	E5
Ithas	EE-thas	Last king of Astrium	E6
Jarobe	JAW-row-bae	Human chef on the <i>Fanged Stallion</i>	E3
Jem Aediobra	JEM ee-di-OH-bra	Astral emergent lightkeeper on the Blinking Island	E3
Johilde Blackbone	joe-HILL-duh	Dwarf master gunner on the <i>Adumbral End</i>	E5

(SG = Setting Guide)



NAME	PRONUNCIATION	DESCRIPTION	REF
Karabell	KAIR-uh-bel	Half-elf owner of the Treehouse Inn	E2
Karel	kuh-REL	The capital city of the Karelagne Empire on its homeworld in the Material Plane.	E1
Karelagne Empire	KAIR-el-ayn	A powerful material plane empire vying for control of the Aetherial Expanse	E1
Kellis	KEL-lis	Half-orc gunsmith and owner of The Steel Barrel	E2
Kesforth	KES-forth	Island home of the Sistren of the Constellation Isles	E4
Kinsey Silt	KIN-see	An astral emergent citizen of the Blinking Isle	E3
Larmeath	LAR-meeth	An island in the Constellation Isles home to astral merfolk	E4
Leuca Albiones	LOO-kah AL-bee-onz	A human astral emergent citizen of the Blinking Isle	E3
Liloyassa	LEE-loh-yas-sa	Dragonborn child of Karelagne officer Zrafarn Sheccac	E5
Madam Sebria	SEB-ree-uh	Astral emergent mage owner of an upscale hostelry in Port Kaylo	E6
Madame Isabeau's	iz-uh-BOH	A bar and gambling establishment in Port Kaylo	E3
Makagul	MAK-uh-gawl	Half-orc quartermaster on the <i>Adumbral End</i>	E5
Maladell Island	MAL-uh-dell	An island in the Isle of Drakes home to the Aesphodel pirate crew.	E2
Maledonna Ackles	mal-eh-DON-na AK-les	Leader of the Children of Asteth and pirate captain of the <i>Avenging Angel</i>	E6
Manta "Seabear" Gunthorpe	MAN-ta	Karelagne governor overseeing Port Kaylo	E6
Master Archifelt Spitz	ARCH-ih-felt	Human apothecary owner of Spitz's Remedies in the Isle of Drakes	SG
Merhild van Dien	MUR-hild VAN DEY-en	Reckless human gunner on the <i>Knight's Corsair's</i>	E5
Monstera Cluster	Mon-STAIR-ah	Set of islands many Ayrissians call home	SG
Nethiri	neh-THEE-ri	Tiefling mage first-mate on <i>Adumbral End</i>	E5
Nyxalthil Eshwyn ("Nyx")	NIKS-al-thil ESH-win	Dragonborn prisoner in Bathyal Chariot	E5
Oceane the Bard	oh-SEEN	A human astral emergent and double agent selling information to Ayris and Karel	E6
Olyran Bogbagin	oh-LEE-ran BOG-bagin	A halfling astral emergent citizen of the Blinking Isle	E3
Oona Lyresmyth	OO-nuh	A half-elf astral emergent citizen of the Blinking Isle	E3
Orabella Hylde	or-uh-BELL-uh HILD	Half-elf quartermaster on the <i>Knight's Corsair's</i>	E5
Orglix	OR-gliks	Ancient kraken lurking in Astrium	E6
Orivari ("Ori")	OR-ee-VAHR-ee	Tiefling stowaway and daughter of guildmaster Darissa of Ayris	E5
Parnetty	PAR-net-ee	Doctor Parnetty, gnome mage experimenting on astral emergents.	E3
Phryne Soulette	FRIN SOO-let	Elf Ayrissian officer	E5
Port Kaylo	KAY-low	Ayrissian merchant port under Karelagne control.	E3
Port Majeure	mawj-OOR	Karelagne Empires main base in the Etherial Expanse	SG
Qoz, the Hermit	KOHZ	The destructive feather star god of the Aetherial Expanse said to sleep at the bottom of the aether	SG

(SG = Setting Guide)



NAME	PRONUNCIATION	DESCRIPTION	REF
Quoiya	KOI-uh	Dryad Aesphodel pirate	E2
Reiz	RAYS	Dragonborn foreman overseeing Fire Crystal Mining's operations	E2
Ronen	ROW-nin	Astral merrow leader on Scathiss.	E4
Sartreus, Master of Knowledge	sar-TREE-us	Ghostly astral titan within Astrium	E6
Scamallath	SKA-mal-lath	An island in the Constellation Isles home of the astral merrow	E4
Scathiss	SKA-this	An smaller islands south of Scamallath, home to an astral merrow splinter faction	E4
Shaenah	SHAY-naw	Dragonborn in charge of Fosfior Island docks	E2
Tektite Island	TEK-tight	Jungle covered island in Shipgrave Reef covered by black glass objects of the same name	E1
Terrol	TER-rol	Astral emergent tiefling, hired by Ayrissia to spy on Beliene.	E3
Teruko	TEH-roo-koh	Pirate captain Teruko the Drake, deceased founder of the Isle of Drakes	E1
Threx Starmine	th-WRECKS	Dwarven astral emergent leader of Starmine Key	E6
Tortugon	TOR-too-gon	A legendary slumbering cosmic turtle said to watch over pirates in the Isle of Drakes.	E6
Ugkin	UCK-in	Doctor Ugkin, a half-orc mage experimenting on astral emergent.	E3
Unammon, the Chariot	oo-NAM-awn	God of wind in the Aetherial Expanse	SG
Vea Plumeria	VAY-uh ploo-MAIR-ee-a	The material plane capital of the Kingdom of Ayris	SG
Velstarrón Island	vel-stuh-ROHN	The bustling central island of the Isle of Drakes.	E2
Viceroy Caturix	CAT-yoor-icks	Cruel half-elf commander of the Karelagne Navy from Port Majeure.	SG
Vicktir Hartlein	VICK-teer HART-line	Zilro Rikter's forgotten identity.	E5
Vitates, Vinan, and Vianti	vi-TAY-tes, vi-NAHN, vi-an-TI	An inhospitable line of islands in the Constellation Isles	E4
Xivaine "the Sorrow" Sax	zi-VAYN	Wood-elf captain of the <i>Dolor</i>	E5
Yaskara Dumik	yas-KAW-ruh DOO-mik	Half-orc first mate of the <i>Knight's Corsair's</i>	E5
Zheng Yang Shi	CHEN YAWNG SHIH	Retired human pirate captain owner of the Sparrow's Flight gambling den	E1
Zilro Rikter	ZIL-roh	Ship surgeon on <i>Adumbral End</i>	E5
Zrafarn Sheccac	zra-FARN she-KAK	Karelagne officer	E5

(SG = Setting Guide)









# THE AETHERIAL 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 beautiful 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.





Aether  
Morrow

## CONSTELLATIONS AND NAVIGATION

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 plane-farers 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 the "Gods of the Expanse" section).

## 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.

Open aether, frequently blessed by strong winds from the Elemental Plane of Air, and rarely disturbed by firestorms or tumbling boulders from other planes, is frequently traveled by merchant vessels and their escort ships. These wind-blessed seas are trade lanes, and 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.

### *The Forked Passage*

The expanse's largest trade lane is the Forked Passage, which winds between all major ports on the Twilight Sea. In the Waterward Fork lies the Monstera Cluster, home to many rural island settlements, the majority of which speak with an Ayrissian drawl and pay their taxes to the crown of Ayris. Their astral-grown harvests are highly desirable in Karel and Ayris alike. The Flameward Fork contains numerous Karelagne civilian settlements on the Imperial Archipelago. Its people speak with rural Karelagne accents and fly their empire's flag on every homestead.



## FLORA, FAUNA, AND FOLK

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. The Aetherial Expanse is constantly shrouded in glowing, sourceless dim light.

Plants love these stars. No plant life is native to the Astral Plane, but countless green, leafy plants have been transplanted from worlds on the Material Plane, some intentionally, some accidentally. The plants that rooted in the desolate islands floating through the Aetherial Expanse 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 itself and grow beyond unnaturally vibrancy and take on a truly supernatural appearance. Their leaves grow long, curling, and tendrilous, and sway 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).

## 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 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 dazzling 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:

**Aethercasting (1/Day).** The aetherbeast casts the spell chosen when it gained this action.

## 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.



## ASTRAL TITANS

Though none are known to have survived, legends tell of an ancient civilization of plane-faring 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

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.

## 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.

## 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 plane-farers. 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, however, 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.

### Example Air Beast: 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.

### AIR ELEMENTAL BEAST

*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 "New Magic Items").

**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

**Multiattack.** 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.



## 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.

## 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 Ayriessian spirit, thanks to a long history of master chefs and gastronomic artists “perfecting” Ayriessian 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 Ayriessian table worth dining at.

## AETHERIAL FARE

Fish caught from the Aetherial Expanse are strange beasts. Tiny Aetherbeasts (see the “Aetherbeasts” section) 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 the “Aether Poisoning” section).

## SHIP'S RATIONS

Fine cuisine, even fresh cuisine, is a foreign concept aboard a sailing ship. Journeys between major ports on the expanse take weeks, sometimes even months if conditions are foul, so most sailors subsist on a diet of salted, preserved meat and ship's biscuits, a simple 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, a naval, or a 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.











## REALMS OF THE SEA

The Aetherial Expanse is vast, but still only a small island of aether in the boundless infinity of the Astral Plane. Its boundaries have been 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 breathing creature.

This stretch of sea is home to countless islands, some of which are stable, others which hurtle through the sea like comets. Below are the Aetherial Expanse's largest and most significant ports. All these ports are places where characters can recruit new mates for their crews (see the "Recruiting Crewmates" section).

The Aetherial Expanse contains the following major ports and locations. Some of these are described in detail in the episodes of this Fable, while others are included so the DM make their own adventures on the expanse.





## 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 (LE, male, half-elf **mage**), 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 Ayris 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 that 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.

## PLACES OF INTEREST

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.

Vital locations for any sailor to visit in Port Majeure include:

## 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 of greatness.

## 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 (lawful evil, 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 which 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 while a new portal structure was constructed.





## PERSONS OF INTEREST

Some of the most important personages in Port Majeure include:

### 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 this 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.

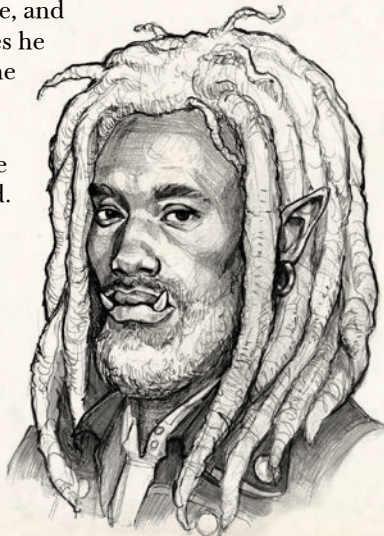
Though Kathinel is an efficient taskmaster, rumor has it her draconian methods have driven many soldiers assigned to the *Thunderchild* to defect and take up a life of piracy, rather than serve aboard her ship. Kathinel cares little for defecting conscripts; her only goal is to prove herself the strongest 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.

### 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.

### 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* spell 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 astral titans that ruled it in ancient times. 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. Recently, Caturix has allocated huge sums of Karelagne funds to develop subaetherial vessels to scour the depths of the expanse for this device.



## 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 cow in the pasture.

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.

### PLACES OF INTEREST

Vital locations for any sailor to visit in Windcrown include:

#### 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 "Flotilla" in the "New Mechanics" section).

Golden  
Mermaid





## Bester's Ring

### *Underground Fighting Ring*

The Windcrown constabulary is aware of Rex Bester's (chaotic neutral, 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. The butcher, Gruup Meistercut (chaotic neutral, 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.

## Slick's Getaway Shop

### *Spell Component Shop*

Nettle Slick (chaotic neutral, 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 transmogrifier. 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 often requests payment in favors when it's clear their client can't afford to pay.

In the past, Nettle has lent their aid to the constabulary when the law has needed to go undercover to catch dangerous criminals, but Nettle refuses to aid Windcrown's copper-helms 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.

## PERSONS OF INTEREST

Some of the most important personages in Windcrown include:

### 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 acumen, and 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 eyes 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





## 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 Drake's motto is *Hostis humani generis*: “Enemies of all mankind,” an ironic and mocking nod to the words read aloud before the hanging of pirates at Port Majeure during the height of the war.

The most infamous crews of the Isle are listed below; see the “Persons of Interest” section for more information about their captains.

### 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 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 on what would, in a few decades, become the Isle of Drakes. These druids, called the Blood Lilies by the Karelagne Navy, rarely prey upon civilian ships, but despise the empire that enslaved their forebears.

Currently led by Captain Almond (N, nonbinary gnome, with game statistics presented in episode 2 of this Fable), captain of the Blood Lilies' current ship, the *Aesphodel*, these pirates protect their island from imperial incursion from Fort Aesphodel, a mighty tree-fortress which they shaped into being with their magic.





## The Thorned Knights

Calladin Thorn, a cocksure captain who escaped execution as a pirate's child in Ayris ten years ago, ventured to the Isle of Drakes with a chip on his shoulder. Using the Ayrisian myth of the Thorned Knight, a killer of unjust kings who wears armor decorated with thorny roses.

Thorn's ship, the *Knight's Corsair*, is a frigate bristling with guns, and he uses the legend of the Thorned Knight as an intimidation tactic when facing Ayrisian prey. The crew of the *Knight's Corsair* comprises Yaskara Dumik (lawful neutral, female half-orc **berserker**), the studious and determined first mate; Merhild van Dien (chaotic neutral, nonbinary human **spy**) the reckless and overeager gunner; Orabella Hylde (neutral, female half-elf **druid**) the beleaguered and tired quartermaster; and a half dozen other crew and deckhands.

## The Children of Asteth

Captained by Maledonna Ackles, the *Avenging Angel* is a crimson brigantine feared across the seas. The *Angel* is crewed by sailors fervently devoted to the goddess Asteth, the Empress (see the "Gods of the Expanse" section).

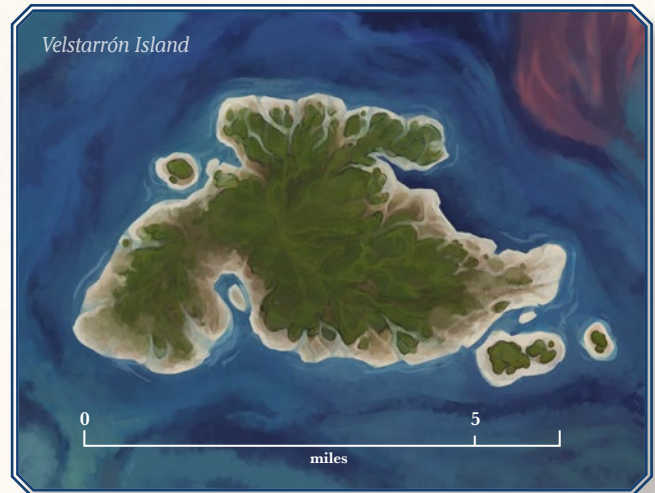
The Empress's edicts vary throughout the realms of the sea. Among pirates, she's a symbol of burning vengeance. The Children of Asteth believe that their goddess's tenets have been twisted by the empire, and a false doctrine has been spread across the seas. They view their goddess as a symbol of defiance against tyranny; Asteth's word is to defy the unjust, the Children of Asteth strive to kill all who impose order—except, of course, their captain. 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 from the Isle a thorny prospect.

## The Shipwreckers

Led by renowned daredevil Charleston Kriegler (see the "Persons of Interest" section), the Shipwreckers take their name from their preferred dirty trick—using the speed and maneuverability of their ship, the *Apocalypse*, to pressure other vessels into dangerous, reef-laden waters, to wreck them without firing a single shot. Once their prey has been safely disabled, the Shipwreckers approach their target and demand surrender, "or prepare to be boarded!"

The Shipwreckers' low ammunition costs and low crew turnover leaves them with plenty of funds to spend on (and protect within) their keep on Fort Roost Island.



## FROM MANY ISLES, ONE

The Isle of Drakes' naming process was a chaotic and ramshackle thing, with residents of each island in the cluster 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 cluster's name is 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 that affect the isles. 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, and also the most frequented by merchants, pirates, smugglers, sex workers, gamblers, and adventurers.

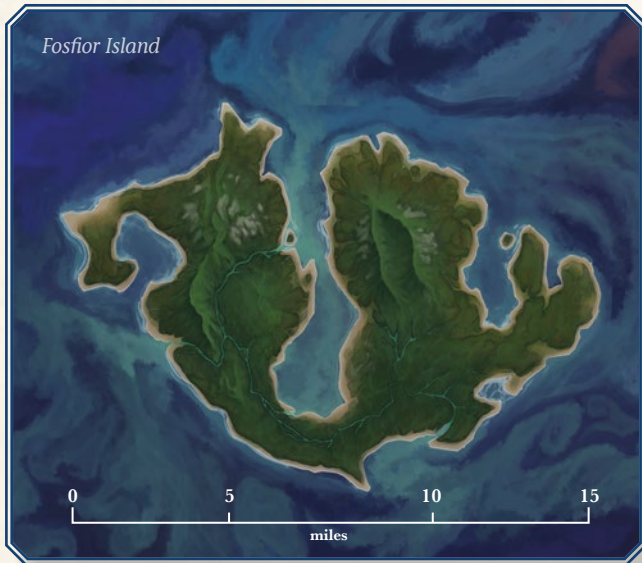
The many locations of Velstarrón Island are described later in this section.

## 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. It's largely uninhabited except for Fosfior Town, which protects its most valuable resource: fresh water from the Wellspring, a permanent portal to the Elemental Plane of Water.

Fosfior Town and the jungles of Fosfior Island are described in episode 2 of this Fable.





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

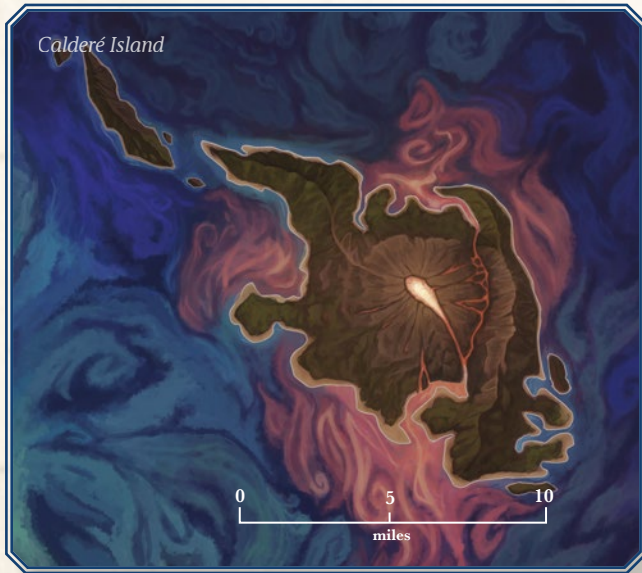
Protecting Velstarrón Island from attack are three small islands home to fortresses commanded by one of the powerful pirate crews descended from the crew of the *Drake*. These fortresses have staved off invasion with only the threat of raining down cannon fire upon any ship that approaches flying a hostile 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 that aren't sailing with them.

**Fort Angelos Island.** Held by the *Avenging Angel's* crew, Fort Angelos is an imposing gothic citadel that glowers down at any would-be invader.

**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. It's manned by the *Apocalypse's* crew.

**Maladell Island.** 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 *Aesphodel's* crew.



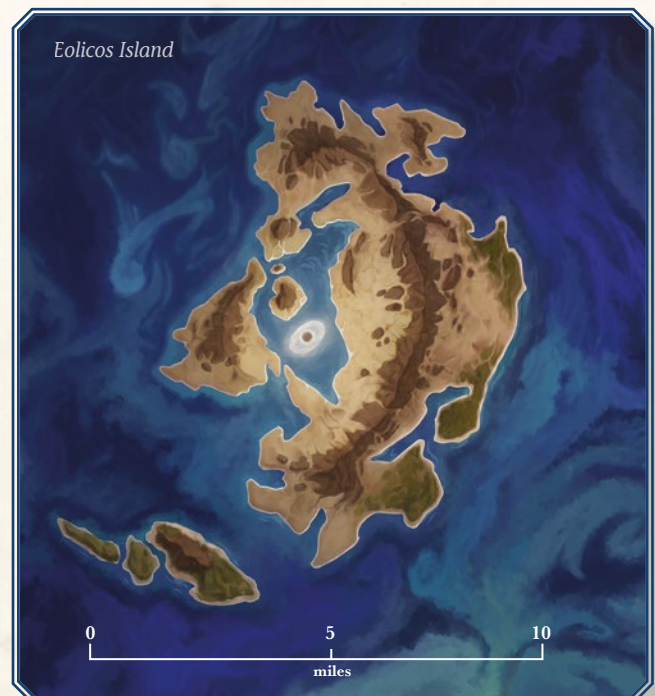
## Calderé Island

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 then hangs above the islands, giving the Isle of Drakes' sky a golden, sunset glow.

The crags of Calderé Island are described in episode 2 of this Fable.

## 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





## PERSONS OF INTEREST

The Isle of Drakes is bursting with pirates and scoundrels, ranging from comic to swashbuckling to genuinely unsettling. In addition to the pirates listed here, the isle is a perfect place for NPCs from the characters' adventures to congregate to create a sense of ongoing story.

### Captain Calladin Thorn

*Chaotic neutral, male, human* **veteran**

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 Ayrissian 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 Ayriss, Thorn's career brought them to the Isle of Drakes.

Thorn has adopted the persona of the Thorned Knight, a mythical avenger from Ayrissian folklore, to scare his prey, and dresses the part in custom black *mariner's armor* (plate) 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.

### 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 which 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 it, 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. Prideful 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, for 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.

### Captain Maledonna Ackles

*Lawful evil, female, tiefling* **knight**

The captain of the feared *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 it, and when worn, their consciousness is 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.

### 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 Ayriss, 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 Ayriss.

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 Ayrissian government to approach and hire as privateers with letters of marque—commission orders that grant pirates immunity from prosecution in Ayriss, so long as they don't attack Ayrissian 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)

## Zheng Yang Shi

*Neutral, female, human retired pirate captain*

Zheng Yang Shi’s stat block is included in episode 2 of this Fable.

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.



## PLACES OF INTEREST

Pirates on the Isle of Drakes would do well to familiarize themselves with the following locations:

### Arcane Acquisitions

*Magic Item Shop*

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

*Minimize your weaknesses, maximize your strengths! Browse the wondrous and arcane tools that will make your crew undefeatable upon the high seas at Arcane Acquisitions!*

Arcane Acquisitions is run by Min and Max, a youthful pair of neutral good, elf **acolytes**. These identical twins of ambiguous gender are distinguished by unique nebula-pattern scarring all over their bodies as 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 will buy any magic item brought their way, no questions asked. When selling, they prefer to deal in aetherium (see the “Aetherium” section) rather than gold.

**Items in Stock.** Each week, the shop’s contents include 1d6 of the following magic items, chosen randomly, plus any other magic items of the GM’s choice:

### ARCANE ACQUISITIONS’ STOCK

d20	MAGIC ITEM
1	Adamantine Armor
2	Armor, +1
3	Armor, +2
4	Bag of Holding
5	Belt of Dwarvenkind
6	Bowl of Commanding Water Elementals
7	Bracers of Defense
8	Brazier of Commanding Fire Elementals
9	Censer of Controlling Air Elementals
10	Demon Armor
11	Elemental Mote (Tiny)*
12	Elemental Mote (Small)*
13	Elemental Mote (Medium)*
14	Flame Tongue (Scimitar)
15	Javelin of Lightning
16	Stone of Controlling Earth Elementals
17	Sun Blade
18	Vicious Weapon
19	Weapon, +1
20	Weapon, +2

\* Described in the “New Magic Items” section



## Cross-Sea Sendings

### *Messaging Station*

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

*Messages of twenty-five words or fewer sent instantly to any corner of the sea. Enquire at Cross-Sea Sendings. Rates are low, visit now.*

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 that lack 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 **gynosphix** statistics for the Egg-Heads.

The Egg-Heads, who appeared during the height of the war between Ayris and Karel, have since become trusted, if eerie, members of the community of Drakes. Their telepathic abilities make them highly sought after as senders of messages 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 not guaranteed. Caveat emptor.

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, ship repairs, or even the purchase of a new ship, 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 upgrades to a ship for a fee of 500 gp. It can also craft any ship upgrade found in the "Ship Upgrades" section of the New Mechanics part of this setting guide, at the GM's discretion. 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 100 gp per day to the Shipwright Union. Repairs can be rushed, but it costs 300 gp to repair 2 hit points per day.

## Remy's Doghouse

### *Magic Item Exchange*

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

*Lucky Remy says check out Remy's Doghouse! What do we got? Matey, what don't we got?*

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, and his bipedal, Humanoid frame is broad and muscular, with strange, squirming protrusions all over it 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.

Remy uses **minotaur** stats but their alignment is Neutral, their Intelligence and Charisma scores are 14 (+2), they have Persuasion +4, and once a day they 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 entire Aetherial Expanse. No other tavern in the Isle of Drakes, let alone Port Majeure or Windcrown, has quite the reputation for raucous debauchery this beloved piratical watering hole does. 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 (see the “Persons of Interest” section), 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. 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.

**Illusory Map.** A map infused with illusion magic pulses and radiates as it projects an illusory living map of the Aetherial Expanse on the ceiling over the bar area. 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 and donate a piece of their ship’s hull. The tavern keeper only accepts the hulls of pirates with a reputation score of 20 or higher (see “Reputation” in the New Mechanics section of this setting guide).

**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.

## Spitz’s Remedies

### *Apothecary*

The fliers 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 Ayrissian 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 the “Aether Poisoning” section): 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*

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

*Ammunition and ordinance for the discerning freebooter. Pistols, cannons, and cutlasses galore!*

Steel for a Steal is run by Gunnery Chief Hamelyn Ferralon (lawful evil, 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.

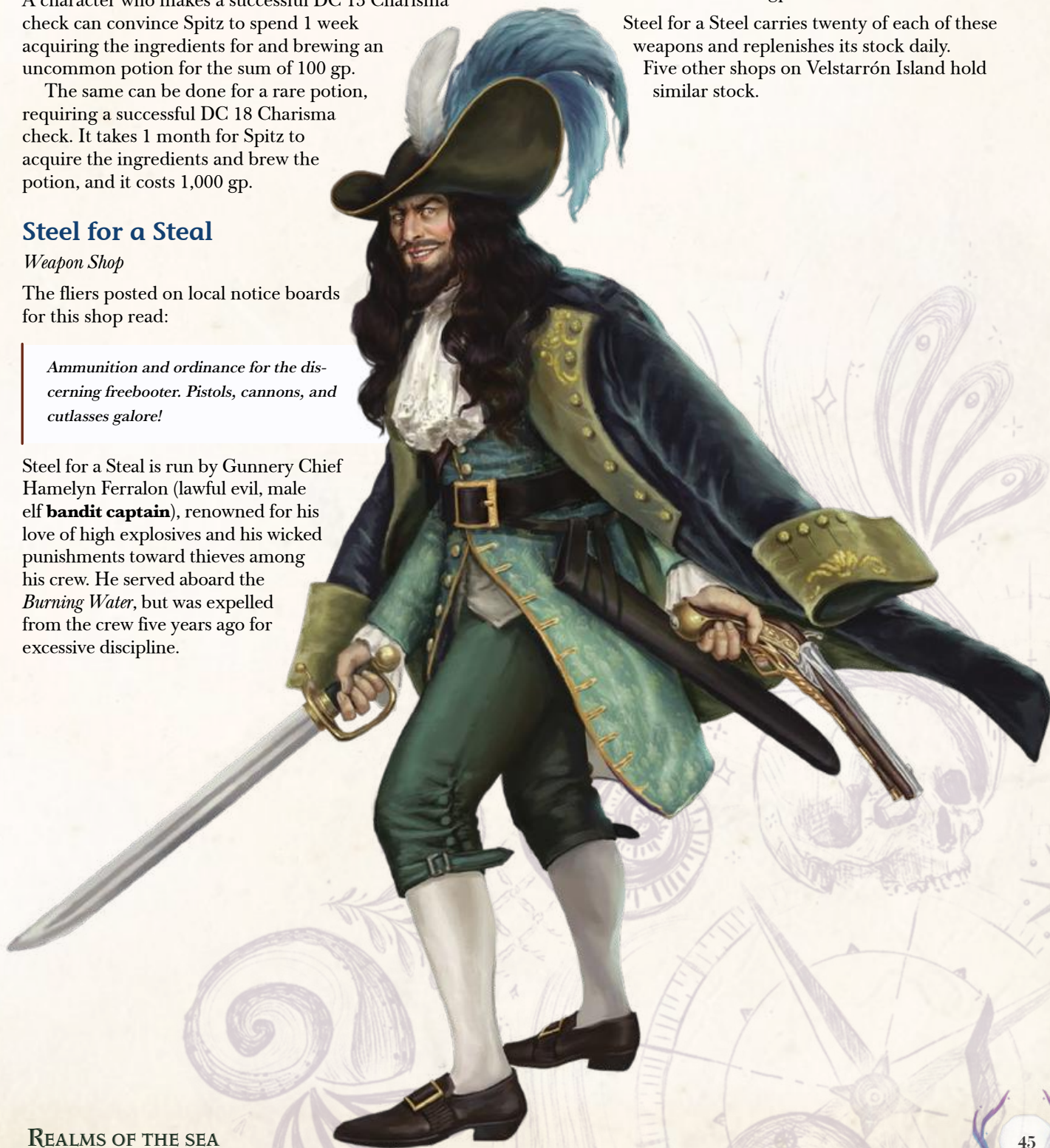
**Cannons in Stock.** This shop sells all common ship weapons, as described in the “New Mechanics” section.

**Weapons in Stock.** This shop sells the following weapons; these items are found in the fifth edition core rules:

- Cutlasses (scimitars): 25 gp
- Musket and powder: 500 gp
- Pistols and powder: 250 gp
- Bullets, set of 20: 5 gp

Steel for a Steel carries twenty of each of these weapons and replenishes its stock daily.

Five other shops on Velstarrón Island hold similar stock.





## GODS OF THE EXPANSE

Four gods are commonly worshiped upon the Aetherial Expanse, and have been since time immemorial, 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 their 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 Pirates

Goddess of cannon fire and burning ships, the burning visage of Asteth has a place on the figurehead of countless pirate ships across the expanse. The infamous ship *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 among the astral. 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, they 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 finger; 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 magi-scientists 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 Pirates

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 the "Races" section) 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 dozens of 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 Pirates

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.



## 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, 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 feather-like 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 dreaming cruel intentions into the minds of evildoers.

### Qoz in Ayris

The mythos 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 Pirates

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 say 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.

### Unammon, the Chariot



### Qoz, the Hermit





## NEW MAGIC ITEMS

The episodes of this Fable include many new magic items. In addition to those items, you can use these magic items as treasure in the adventures you create in the Aetherial Expanse.



### 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 it, the staff responds by tilting toward it. The closer the deposit, the deeper the staff tilts.

## 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 either 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).

## 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 certain 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 unleash into their sails (see "Sailing Speed," in the "New Mechanics" section).

**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.









## NEW MECHANICS

This part of the setting guide contains new mechanics for your ship, which is just as much a character as any member of the crew. The Game Master and players alike should understand these rules so that they can use them to conduct ship battles, pursue fleeing ships, and hire crew to help make their ship the terror of the Aetherial Expanse.



# SHIPS

Few things on the silver sea 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 on the lookout for a better ship, so vessels change hands frequently, sometimes through trade, and sometimes by force.

This section outlines the rules for sailing ships, the statistics of the ships in the Aetherial Expanse, and what these statistics offer for player characters.

## SHIP TYPES

The first key factor of a ship is its type. There are six main types of ship out on the Aetherial Expanse, and these types determine the 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 it from nimble pirate craft capable of outmaneuvering its bulk.

Each man o’ war is unique, but on average, a man o’ war is 200 feet long, four-masted, and 60 feet wide.

## 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
Longboat (or shoreboat)	Tiny
Sloop	Small
Schooner	Small
Brigantine	Medium
Frigate	Medium
Galleon	Large
Man o’ War	Huge
Unique	Gargantuan



## 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 (see “Turning and Mobility” under “Ship Combat”).

When a ship falls to 0 hit points, its speed drops to 0.

### SHIP HIT POINTS AND MOBILITY

SIZE	HP MAXIMUM	MOBILITY
Tiny	9	High
Small	12	High
Medium	15	Balanced
Large	20	Balanced
Huge	25	Low
Gargantuan	unique	Low

## SPEED

A ship's speed is given in knots. The distance a ship can cover on a voyage is provided in the Speed Travel table under “Travel.” 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.

### SHIP SPEED

SHIP TYPE	SPEED
Sloop	3 knots
Schooner	4 knots
Brigantine	5 knots
Frigate	6 knots
Galleon	8 knots
Man o' War	9 knots

## CREATURES ATTACKING SHIPS

Ships are so big that most attacks from creatures do no damage—but player characters often have access to highly destructive abilities!

During boarding action (see “Boarding Action” under “Ship Combat”) or during normal melee combat aboard a ship, player characters might decide to attack a ship directly with their own weapons or abilities. All ships have an AC of 15, but are immune to all damage dealt by creatures unless that damage exceeds a certain number:

- 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.





## WEAPON SLOTS

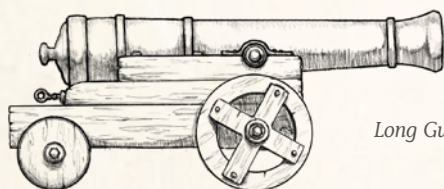
The rumble of ship cannons is unmistakable, and those who hear it never forget it.

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

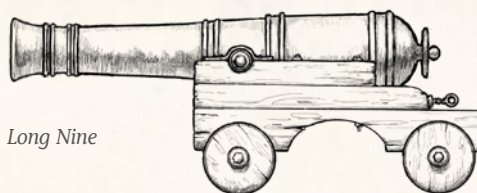


Long Gun

## SHIP WEAPONS

COMMON WEAPONS	TARGET DIE	RANGE	WEIGHT	COST PER GUN	ADDITIONAL EFFECTS
Long Gun	d10	Standard	Heavy	1000 gp	-
Long Nine	d10	Long	Heavy	1100 gp	Can't be mounted in port or starboard weapon slots.
Carronade	d12	Short	Heavy	950 gp	-
Culverin	d8	Standard	Light	600 gp	-
Saker	d6	Standard	Light	300 gp	-
Falconet	d12	Short	Light	500 gp	Hits do no ship damage but still produce casualties.
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	1500 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	2000 gp	Must fire aetherium shells. Deals 2 damage per hit.



Long Nine

## 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 "Firing Cannons" under "Ship Combat." 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.

### 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.

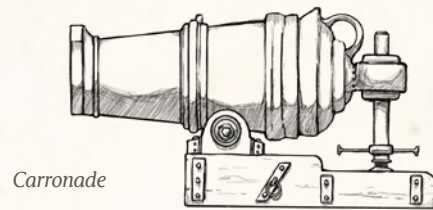
### Long Nine

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 was capable of firing; smaller than usual, at a weight of only nine pounds.



## Carronade

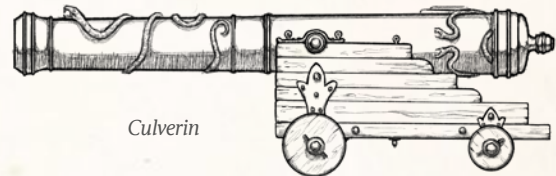
A shorter, stubby cannon capable of shooting rounds with immense power, at the cost of range.



Carronade

## Culverin

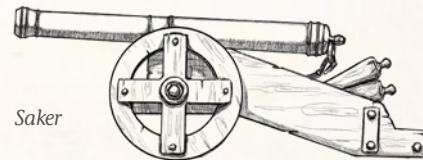
A small, slender cannon, the original culverins were hand cannons adapted to use on naval vessels. They lack the power of a long gun, but are lighter, cheaper, and easier to handle.



Culverin

## Saker

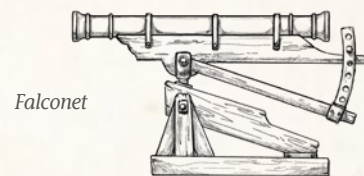
The lightest, cheapest gun fit for attacking hostile ships, the saker is a common sight aboard smaller pirate craft like sloops and aboard merchant vessels who just want to blow smoke to scare off pirates in search of easy prey.



Saker

## 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.



Falconet

## Swivel Gun

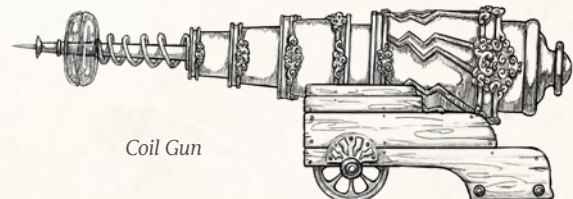
The smallest and lightest gun fit to be mounted on a ship, this hand cannon is fitted to a ship's railing on a swivel, allowing it to be easily aimed by a single gunner. Far too light to damage a ship's hull, it's used mainly to snipe crew.



Swivel Gun

## Coilgun

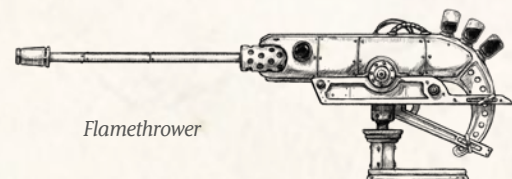
This arcane weapon is a result of Karelagne naval engineers' experimental merging of magic and technology. A metallic coil channels magically generated electricity until it leaps from the coil like a bolt of lightning, dealing heavy damage to distant targets.



Coil Gun

## Flamethrower

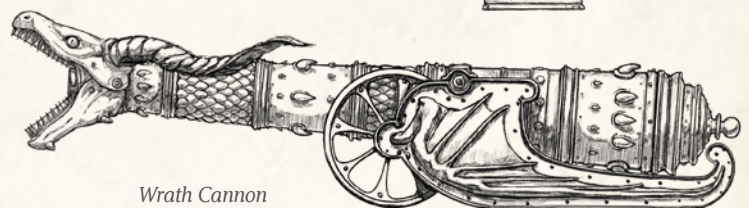
Another Karelagne fusion of magic and technology, this short-range gun draws directly upon the flames of the Elemental Plane of Fire to spread death across the deck of a ship.



Flamethrower

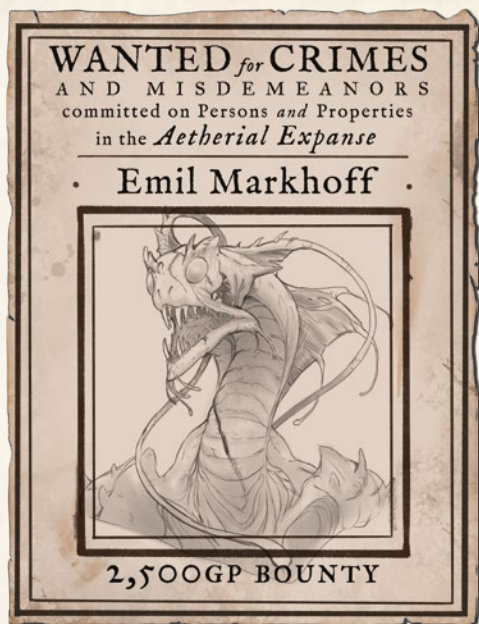
## Wrath Cannon

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.



Wrath Cannon





## CREW

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 or (see "Unranked Crew Names" under "Unranked Crew"), their specific roles and actions aren't specified. Unranked crew are a combination of sailors, topmen, deckhands, gunners, and so on.

## RECRUITING CREWMATES

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 Ayrís for crimes against humanity, as "business cards" of sort, 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 to their crew, chosen randomly from the Pirate Wanted Posters table or selected from the Wanted Poster handouts included in episode 1 of this Fable (and any future episodes, once they've begun later episodes).

While on the Isle of Drakes, the characters can find 1d6 wanted posters instead.

## Finding the Scalawag

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 find 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 price 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 result of that check, the pirate reduces their hiring cost. See the 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

## OFFICERS

Officers are listed by their station on the ship's manifest, along with their ranks and any boons.

Next to each officer's name you can also find the casualty checkbox—this shows whether or not an officer is *stricken* or *dead*, indicated by a slash or a cross respectively.

An officer of your crew can become *stricken* if injured (see "Casualties" under "Ship Combat") or underfed (see "Grub" under "Ship Supplies"). 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.

## 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.

The first five officer stations are vital—no ship can operate without them. The secondary stations are



## WANTED POSTERS

1D12	NAME	BOUNTY	NATION	RANKS	BOON
1	Falco Gamwhich	1,000 gp	Ayris	Carpenter 2 Boatswain 1	<b>Wind-Kissed.</b> 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.
2	Fawkes Picardo	3,000 gp	Karel	Cook 3 Carpenter 1	<b>Never Say Die.</b> Once per day, when a member of your crew drops to 0 hit points, you can choose to have them drop to 1 hit point instead.
3	Bradley "The Gentleman" Gorlami	2,000 gp	Ayris	First Mate 2 Captain 1	<b>Lucky Looter.</b> Prize money from captured ships is increased by 50 percent.
4	Darius "The Sage" Djawadi	4,000 gp	Karel	Navigator 2 Cook 1	<b>Tutor.</b> 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.
5	Zaunder Geld	500 gp	Ayris	Master Gunner 1 Surgeon 1	n/a
6	Waylon Graves	500 gp	Karel	Captain 1 Helmsman 1	n/a
7	Corinna "The Kid"	3,000 gp	Ayris	Helmsman 2 Master Gunner 1	<b>Quick Learner.</b> Whenever this crewmember would gain a rank in a role, she gains two ranks instead.
8	Aemelia Pauzer	500 gp	Karel	Surgeon 1 Boatswain 1 Navigator 1	n/a
9	Bethany "Kestrel" Adur	3,000 gp	Ayris	First Mate 2 Carpenter 1	<b>Cannonward Shield.</b> 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.
10	Z'Taan Windshadow	5,000 gp	Karel	Navigator 3 Helmsmen 3	<b>Blow the Man Down!</b> Once per day during combat, all allies can move up to half their speed and take one action.
11	Ludley "Layabout" Rogers	500 gp	Ayris	Quartermaster 3	<b>Layabout.</b> 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.
12	Samorix "False Emperor" Oska	10,000 gp	Karel	Captain 4 Surgeon 4	<b>Unflappable.</b> This crewmember's ship can't lose mettle dice due to the traits of another ship or its crew.

If statistics are required for pirates hired from a wanted poster, use **sailor** statistics (see appendix A) for pirates with bounties worth 1,000 gp or less. For pirates with bounties worth more than 1,000 gp, use any humanoid NPC statistic of your choice, such as a **spy**, **bandit captain**, or **assassin**, and give them the following ability:

- **Sea Legs.** The sailor has advantage on ability checks and saving throws to resist being knocked prone.

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.

A crew member might also have multiple different ranks, allowing them to fit more than one station. For example, let's imagine you're looking to hire a quartermaster, and

you meet Sara 'Cat-Eye' Ghaffari. She's got the skills you're looking for: her quartermaster rank is 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 shuffle around to 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 ship 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 promotion. Unranked crew can also be given promotions, turning them into officers.

These officer ranks directly benefit your ship, as detailed under "Station Descriptions."



## PLAYER CHARACTERS AS OFFICERS

Player characters are likely to assign themselves to officer stations, so player characters begin play with officer ranks equal to their proficiency bonus. For example, if a player character has a proficiency bonus of +2, they could choose to start the game with 2 ranks in first mate, or 1 rank in first mate and 1 rank in navigator. A character gains a new rank whenever their proficiency bonus increases.

These ranks can represent natural skill, or can be based in their class or background, or another backstory element. Ultimately, these ranks support the type of story the player wants to tell with their character. For instance, if they're of noble birth in the Ayrissian Kingdom they may have formal education as a ship captain already.

Player characters can also gain ranks in the same way 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.

## Station Descriptions

Following are descriptions of the ten officers stations found on every ship. Note that the first five stations (captain, first mate, quartermaster, navigator, and helmsman) are required aboard every vessel.

**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 in order to know when to fight, when to flee, and when to parley. Karelagne captains are appointed by the Office of the Admiralty, while Ayrissian captains are appointed by the Merchant Charter Board. Pirate captains, however, are elected by a vote of their ship's crew.

When the ship's mettle pool resets, it gains a number of additional dice equal to your captain's officer rank (see "Mettle," later in this chapter).

**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.

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" under "Ship Combat").

**Quartermaster.** The quartermaster keeps a watchful eye over the ship's supplies, ensuring the vessel has enough food and water for travel, and keeping track of 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.

You can choose to ignore the supply costs of one travel leg of a journey a number of times equal to the rank of your ship's quartermaster (see "Spending Supplies" under "Travel"). You refresh all uses of this ability when you dock in a port.

**Navigator/Wayfinder.** 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.

The navigator can turn a failed Intelligence (Navigation) check into a success a number of times equal to their rank (see "Playing a Navigator" under "Navigation and Travel"). They regain all uses of this ability when the ship docks at a port.

**Helmsman.** A ship is lost without a steady hand on the wheel. A good helmsman must be calm under pressure, able to guide their vessel through danger with little margin for error.

During ship combat, you can move your ship 1 square for free during the Movement Phase a number of times equal to the rank of the ship's helmsman. You refresh all uses of this ability at the end of ship combat.

**Boatswain.** The boatswain (or 'bosun') is generally a low-ranking sailor with a lot of experience who has climbed the ranks to oversee the general operation of the ship. This means they are in charge of quality and maintenance for 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.

When firefighting (see "Firefighting" under "Ship Combat"), you automatically put out a number of fires equal to the boatswain's rank.

**Cook.** Life out on the aether is hard enough at the best of times. A crew that's routinely eating nothing but hardtack won't stick their neck out for you.

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 food you need to consume by the cook's rank (see "Spending Supplies" under "Travel").

**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.

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.

**Carpenter.** A carpenter serving on a ship 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 carpenter station is empty, you can't make repairs



at sea, and must dock at a port in order to use gear to restore hit points to your ship.

When you dock in a port, your ship immediately regains a number of hit points equal to your carpenter's rank without spending any gear.

**Master Gunner.** The master gunner is usually a gunner that has risen through the ranks, 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 ensures ship weapons are kept in good condition.

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 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).

## Appointing Officers

It's entirely possible to lose one (or all) of your vital crew members—captain, first mate, quartermaster, navigator, or helmsman—while out on the Aetherial Expanse. How do you replace them without making new hires?

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.

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 final say over who is appointed where. If there is no captain, one must first be elected.

If an unranked crew member is assigned to an officer station with no rank, 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 on if they didn't gain any ranks while assigned to a station.

## Boons

Some officers have boons. Some boons grant your ship a bonus at all times, 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.

## Example Boons

The following boons are by no means an exhaustive list, but they should provide a good list of starting boons.

**Aether-Immune.** This character is immune to aether poisoning (see "Aether Poisoning" earlier in this setting guide).

**Avast Me Hearties!** Once per day during boarding action, three of the dice in your mettle pool become d6s when you roll them.

**Blow the Man Down!** Once per day during combat, all allies can move up to half their speed and take one action.

**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.

**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.

**Lucky Looter.** Prize money from captured ships is increased by 50 percent.

**Never Say Die.** Once per day, when a member of your crew drops to 0 hit points, you can choose to have them drop to 1 hit point instead.

**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.

**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.

## 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) in order to offer a ship their services. This means you can carry any number of specialists on your ship as passengers, but only two of them can be "active" at a given time, as shown by the two specialist slots on the crew sheet. You can swap out which of your 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, and this makes 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, but 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 have the biggest crew possible at all times. While a ship is carrying its maximum crew, it gains one extra point of speed.

The skeleton crew number is the threshold under which you no longer have enough labor to effectively sail the ship. 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	MAXIMUM CREW	SKELETON CREW
Sloop	24	12
Schooner	32	16
Brigantine	40	20
Frigate	52	26
Galleon	64	32
Man o' War	99	49

## Crew Names

If you want to create new recruitable crewmates, or you need to determine the name of an unranked crewmate on the fly, roll up to three times on the table below to determine their name, nickname, and last name.

## CREW NAMES

D20	GIVEN NAME	NICKNAME	SURNAME
1	Antonio	"Whitebeard"	Blanco
2	Johnny	"Bombshell"	Ford
3	Cai	"Temple"	Qian
4	Rei	"Gold-Tooth"	Kotaro
5	Hippolyte	"Thunder"	Levasseur
6	Kingsley	"Three Blades"	Mitsurugi
7	Lin	"Kraken"	Rackham
8	Edward	"One-Ear"	de la Marck
9	Mei Ling	"Redhands"	Zhao
10	Garrett	"Big Guns"	Kageyama
11	Pierre	"Maverick"	Bouchard
12	Dawn	"Calico"	Smith
13	Dominique	"Slug Guts"	Fletcher
14	Eleanor	"Deadeye"	de Armas
15	Seymour	"Howler"	Le Chien
16	Dudley	"Meteorite"	Collins
17	Asteth	"Miracle"	Chamberlain
18	Largo	"Pinky"	Le Grande
19	Jan	"The Cutlass"	de Graaf
20	Benecio	"Diabolito"	Gilbert

## OPTIONAL RULE: 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 is equal to 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
Navigator/wayfinder, boatswain, master gunner	Two shares
Other ranked officers	One and-a-half shares
Unranked crew	One share





## METTLE

Mettle is a measure of your crew's morale, represented as a pool of d4s. The more dice you have in your mettle pool, the higher the spirits of the crew.

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 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—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” in the “Ship Combat” section), 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 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 that 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.

**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.

But 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 make a final stand, and roll 1d20. On a roll of 10 or above, they gain 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 as you possibly can in your pool at all times 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 higher total. You can find more details on this in “Boarding Action” under “Ship combat.”

### 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 simply shuffle the officers around without marooning anyone or forcing them to walk the plank. This can lead to hard feelings of course, as a dethroned captain might begin to plot their return to power. And, if the captain refuses to abdicate power, things get bloody quick.

Mutinies can be narratively significant, and this means 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 is performing well in ship combat and 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” in the “Ship Combat” section).

If no one else on the ship has any captain ranks when a mutiny occurs, either the first mate or quartermaster automatically gain 1 rank in captain and are elected to the position.



# SUPPLIES AND 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 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, used during ship combat or pursuit. Things like bottled air 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 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 docked in a port or while trading with a merchant ship. A single point of grub, grog, or gear costs 5 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. You can also skip paying this cost using the quartermaster's ability.

If you run out of food, you must roll 1d4 casualties (see "Casualties" under "Ship Combat") 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.

If you run out of grog, you lose a mettle die from your mettle pool at the end of each travel leg during a journey. You can also skip paying this cost using the quartermaster's ability.

## Gear

Gear is a measure of ship components—sails, rope, wood, and so on—used to repair your ship between battles. You needn't spend gear while traveling, as it's only used to restore your ship's hit points. If you have a carpenter, you can spend gear to repair your ship at sea. Otherwise, you must dock in a port in order to use gear to restore hit points.





## 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 elemental air motes are also considered fuel.

You can find rules for how fuel items work in "Spending Resources" under "Pursuit," and "Alternative Propulsion" under "Ship Combat." You can also find details on bottled elemental motes under "Elemental Motes" in the "New Magic Items" section of the Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide.

## 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.

**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.

**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.

**Langridge.** Sometimes called "poor man's canister shot," langridge consists of iron filings, scrap metal, even silverware—whatever sharp metal happens to be lying around! It functions in the same way that canister shot does, but with extremely reduced range. It's also free to make!

**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.

**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.

**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.



## SHIP AMMO

AMMUNITION	EFFECTS	COST PER SHOT/SHELL
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
Canister Shot	Canister shot can only be fired from short range cannons. Hits deal no ship damage, but produce 2d4 casualties.	100 gp
Langridge	Langridge can be loaded into any cannon, but only hits adjacent targets. Hits deal no ship damage, but produce 2d4 casualties.	—
Carcass	Hits deal no ship damage, but count double on the casualty table. Additionally, 1d4 fires start on the target ship.	250 gp
Salamanders (Molten Iron Shot)	Hits count double on the casualty table. Additionally, 1d4 + 1 fires start on the target ship.	500 gp
Hullbusters (Aetherium Shells)	On a hit, the target ship takes an extra point of damage and 1d4 unranked crew are instantly killed.	1000 gp



# SHIP UPGRADES

Some ports host shipwrights who offer upgrades 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.

## 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

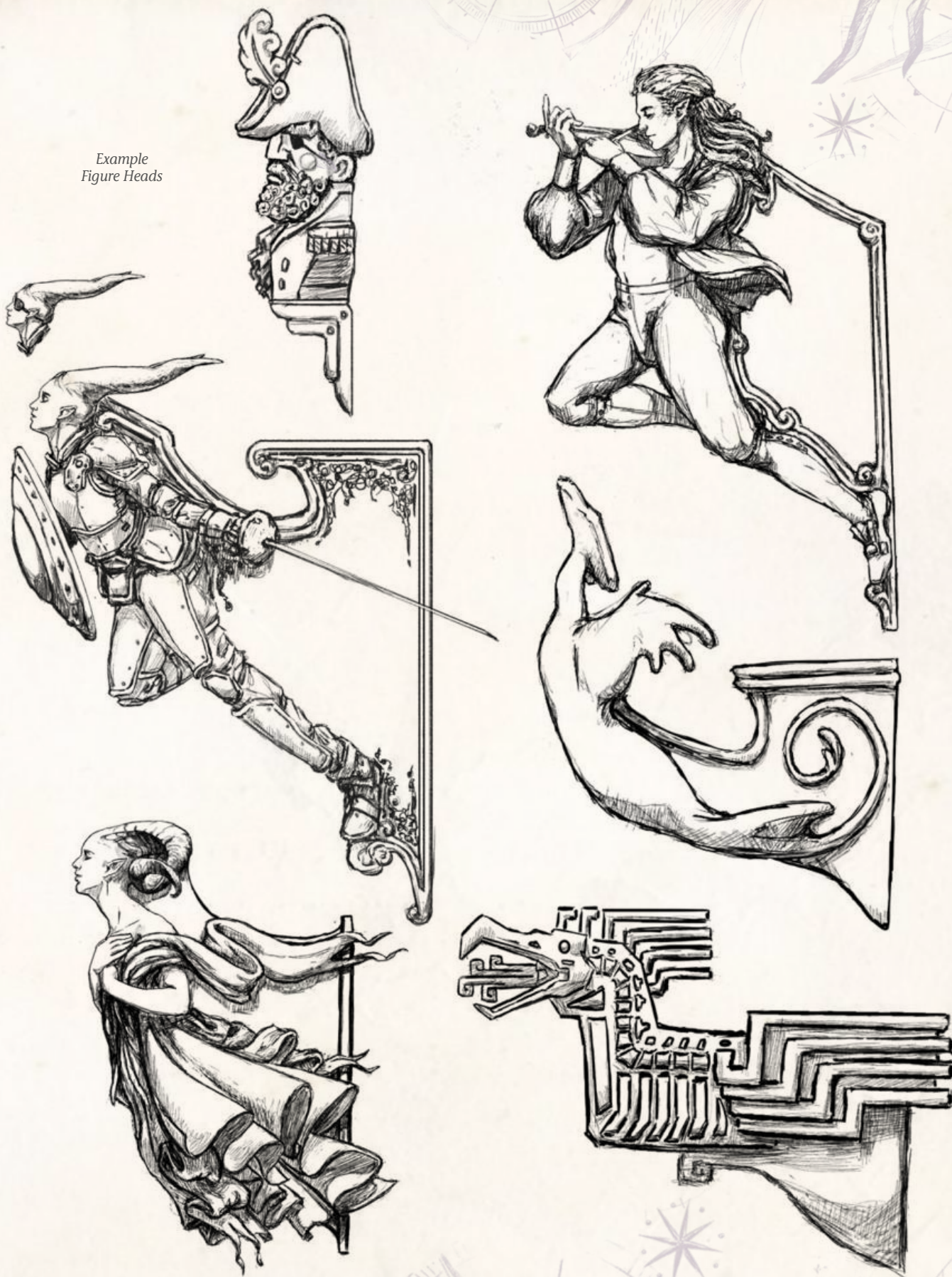
PROW UPGRADES	EFFECTS	COST
Imperial Ram	When you collide with another ship, it takes 2 points of damage instead of 1 (see "Collision" under "Ship Combat").	500 gp
Jawhook Ram	When you collide with another ship, you steal a mettle die from their mettle pool, and they cannot reroll their mettle dice when 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
Winged Victory Figurehead	When you roll your mettle pool during boarding action, you gain an extra mettle die.	2,500 gp
Divine Lion Figurehead	When you roll your mettle pool during 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
Spellspun Rigging	Ship becomes immune to the effects of chainshot.	3,000 gp
Witchcotton Hammocks	When rolling your mettle pool during 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 on your mettle dice.	7,000 gp
Mithril Carpentry Tools	Gear restores 2 hit points when spent instead of 1.	800 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





Example  
Figure Heads





# REPUTATION

Word travels fast on the silver 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.

Each adventure in this Fable contains choices that affect the reputation of the characters, but 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 no single event should ever 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 more than one flag, each having 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 in order to build reputation and strike fear into the hearts of enemies (see "Mettle" under "Ship Statistics").

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)

Each chapter in this Fable contains a section describing actions that could have altered the characters' reputation during that chapter, and in what ways their reputation could change. If you are running your own adventure using these rules, or if the characters have taken an action that you think should affect their reputation, you can use these guidelines to determine how much of an effect an action will have. Ultimately, these are just guidelines to help the Game Master determine the size of their reputation rewards.

## 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 major 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 the reputation points you have ever gained under your flag is your total reputation, and this represents how far your ship's name and its 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 have access to in ship battles.) It doesn't matter whether people like you or not—everyone on the silver sea 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.

## 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 just 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 specific 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.

## SHIP REPUTATION

Flags are used for identification because most ships look relatively similar, especially at a distance. However, in some rare cases, a ship itself 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 knows 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.

## 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 total 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.







## NAVIGATION

Navigation in the Aetherial Expanse is unconventional. The silver sea has 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 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 and Navigation” in the Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide). 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 how they animate and move in the sky as the portals bend, combine, and split apart.

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.

### 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 in order 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. 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” under “Travel”).

Usually, the adventure supplies a DC for Intelligence (Navigation) checks made 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 Complica-

tions table, or pick a result that best fits the situation.

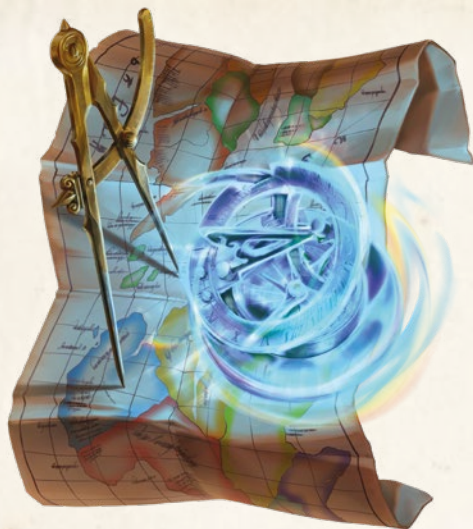
Note that some results on the Travel Complications table include running across other ships. Use the “Sample Ships” later in this section if you don’t have one in mind.

## TRAVEL COMPLICATIONS

D20	COMPLICATION
1	<b>Long Delay.</b> Ship must consume twice the usual number of supplies on this travel leg.
2	<b>Elemental Storm: Glass Rain.</b> Dust from the Plane of Earth mixes with heat from the Plane of Fire, forming clouds of glass that shatter and fall from above. Ship takes 1d4 + 1 points 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	<b>Hidden Reef.</b> Ship takes 2 points of damage.
4	<b>Monster: Astral Merrow.</b> Ship is attacked by a raiding party of 2d6 + 2 <b>astral merrow</b> (see appendix A of episode 1 of this Fable).
5–6	<b>Merchant Vessel.</b> 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	<b>Ice Comet.</b> 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	<b>Karelagne Vessel.</b> A ship flying an imperial flag appears on the horizon.
9	<b>Monster: Dreadnought Ray.</b> This gentle giant glides deep beneath your ship. (This creature uses <b>roc</b> statistics but has a swimming speed instead of a flying speed, and can breathe in aether and is immune to aether poisoning.)
10	<b>Ayrissian Vessel.</b> A ship flying a kingdom flag appears on the horizon.
11	<b>Elemental Storm: Firespout.</b> 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	<b>Pirate Vessel.</b> A ship flying a pirate flag appears on the horizon.
16	<b>Elemental Storm: Sludge Patch.</b> 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	<b>Derelict Vessel.</b> An abandoned ship appears on the horizon. What happened to the crew? What riches remain onboard, unclaimed?
18	<b>Crystal Reef.</b> 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 they begin suffering from aether poisoning (see “Aether Poisoning” in the Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide).
19	<b>Elemental Storm: Aetherstorm.</b> Portals to all the elemental planes open nearby at once. Ship suffers the effects of all elemental storms on this table.
20	<b>Aetherium Deposit.</b> You encounter a small natural aetherium formation. You gain 5 pounds of aetherium crystal.







## RUNNING NAVIGATION AS THE GAME MASTER

If a player asks to make an Intelligence (Navigation) check that isn't called for by the adventure, 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 their 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 TABLE

CIRCUMSTANCE	NAVIGATION CHECK DC MODIFIER
Navigating a well-known route	-4
Out of date maps	+2
Navigating through a storm	+4
Navigating uncharted aether	+6
Avoiding other ships in open aether*	+2
Passing safely through large areas of dangerous aether (reefs, shallows, narrow straits)*	+4

\*These three examples apply only to wayfinders.

## TRAVEL

Every ship on the silver sea 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 amount of distance covered in a day of sailing is much greater than any distance that could possibly be walked in a day.

### TRAVEL SPEED TABLE

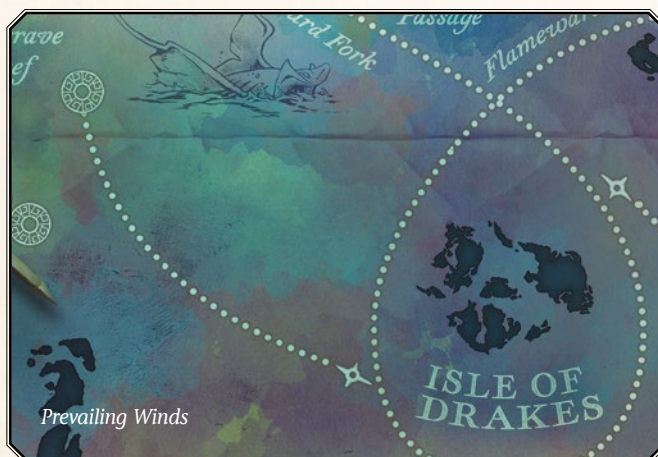
SHIP SPEED	KNOTS (NAUTICAL MILES PER HOUR)	NAUTICAL MILES PER DAY
Slow	3–4 miles	72–96 miles
Moderate	5–6 miles	120–144 miles
Fast	8–9 miles	192–216 miles

## 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, and 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. In order 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 the 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 of 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 "Ship Supplies" under "Ship Statistics"), but during travel, you 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

If you can't spend a point of grog, your mettle pool loses one mettle die.

If you can't spend enough grub, roll on the casualty table (see "Casualties" under "Ship Combat"). Having a ship's cook allows you to prepare food more efficiently, reducing the heavy 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 try to guess where they're going to 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 in order to intercept it.

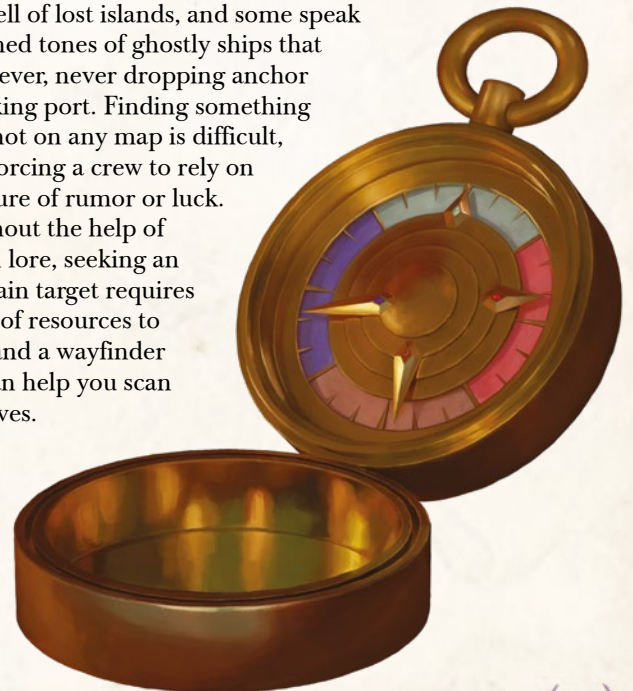
Characters can make an Intelligence (Navigation) check to use their knowledge of travel on the aether to guess at a target ship's course and try to track it down. On a success, they know where the ship is most likely to be. On a failure, they can only guess where the ship might be, and can't make another 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.







## 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" under "Ship Statistics"), which they can use to force a surrender, or tip the odds of boarding action in their favor (see "Boarding Action" under "Ship Combat").

## False Flags

But if a pirate ship flies their flag from a distance, their 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 they 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 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 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 their 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 remains 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 round of pursuit, 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 that is 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.

Just 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 round of pursuit, 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 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.

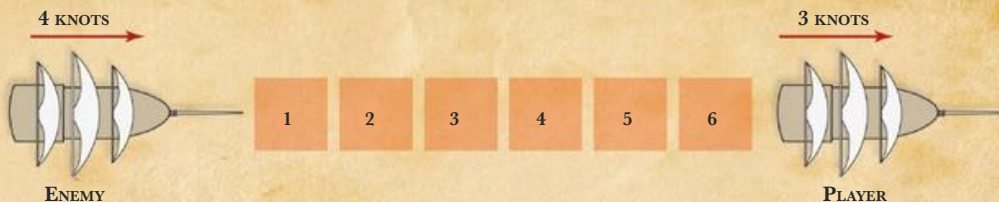
## TURN ORDER IN PURSUIT

Ships act in order of ship speed, from highest to lowest. Initiative ties are broken by comparing the rank of each ship’s helmsman. If these are also identical, roll d6s until one ship scores higher.

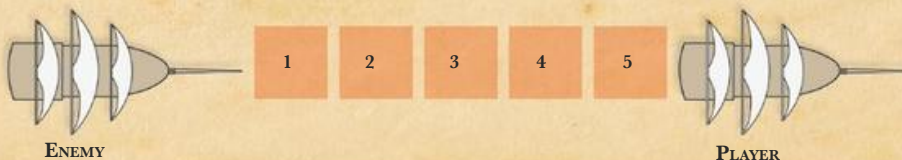
On a ship’s turn, it can make one ship action. Unlike regular combat, turns in pursuit roughly represent about 10 minutes.

### CLOSING THE GAP

IN TURN 1



IN TURN 2





## 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 speed of the target 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 own 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.

### 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 silver sea collect bottled air elemental motes (see "New Magic Items" in the *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide*) to give them a burst of speed when needed.

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" in "New Magic Items." Note that air motes all 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 costs fuel items (see "Resources" under "Ship Statistics").

### 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 under "New Magic Items" in the *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide*. In general, they function like hazards, 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 that 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 instead, the vessel takes a hit penalty for hitting it—this is usually hull damage, but might be something else, like taking casualties (see "Casualties" under "Ship Combat").

The ship's helmsman 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 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 helmsman 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 are bold enough to leap from the waves and punch through the hull of a ship 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





## ALTERNATIVE ESCAPES

Running out the escape timer isn't the only way for fleeing ships to get away. If they're lucky, they might have a few more options to consider too.

### Speed

If the fleeing ship is fast enough, it can increase the gap faster than their 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 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 TABLE

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.

## 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.

## 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 on their next ship action and escapes.

## 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!





## 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 bright 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 typically 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” under “Movement” below).
- Make attacks during the Attack Phase (see “Creatures Attacking Ships” under “Ship Statistics”).
- Take actions that heal crew or put out fires during the Status Phase (see “Firefighting” and “Healing” under “Status Phase”).

## 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”) and gives you better options for movement.

### Who Starts Where?

Just as with normal combat in the core rules this 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”).

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 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 at the same time.

## 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 in this Fable that uses 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 be still 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 Edge Cases.** 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.





## 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

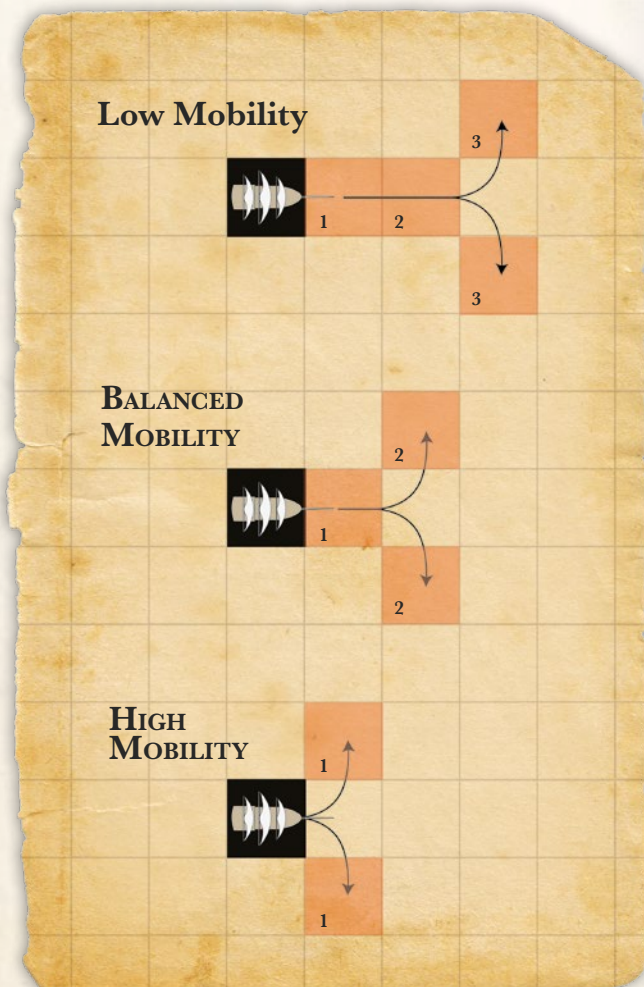
Ships with high Mobility can move into any of the 3 squares directly in front of them. When they move into a diagonal square, they also turn 90 degrees to face either left or right.

### 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 motes prevalent on the silver sea, 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.

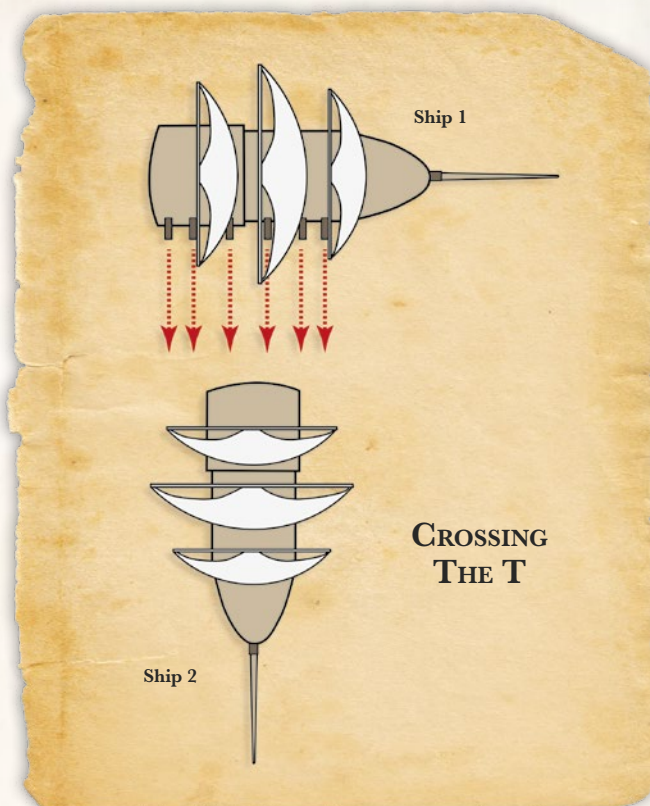
## AIR MOTES IN SHIP COMBAT

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 Motes” in the “New Magic Items” section of the *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide*.

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.





## 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 at once 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 perpendicular to them. 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 runs falls to 0 hit points, its speed drops to 0 and it can’t move.

You gain one mettle die to add to your mettle pool with each hit your cannons produce.



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” under “Supply and Resources”).

## 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.

When unranked crew takes 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, rolls 2d4 casualties with a result of 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 hullbuster (see “Ammunition” under “Supplies and Resources”), the Current Crew becomes 40/46.

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” under “Ship Statistics”)!

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 are rolling 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.

## 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 boarding action.

Ships must be adjacent in order to board each other. If boarding action is announced, both ships drop to 0 speed until boarding action is resolved, as one ship throws grappling hooks over to the other.

During 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 ones 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 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 cliffhanger here, rather than run two encounters back-to-back.

## Commandeering

If you have successfully captured an enemy ship through boarding action, ship combat is likely over, unless there are other enemy ships 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, 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 in order 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 action, 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.

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 the result exceeds your explosion DC, your ship explodes.

#### EXPLOSION DCs

SHIP SIZE	EXPLOSION DC
Tiny	12
Small	14
Medium	16
Large	18
Huge	20
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 ether, 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.

## 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 as 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 x 100 (1,050)
Schooner	6d6 x 100 (2,100)
Brigantine	12d6 x 100 (4,200)
Frigate	2d8 x 1000 (9,000)
Galleon	4d8 x 1000 (18,000)
Man o’ War	6d8 x 1000 (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 Ayrissian 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” in the “Ship Statistics” section).

**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 that 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.





## 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
Sloop	16
Schooner	15
Brigantine	14
Frigate	13
Galleon	12
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.





## 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. Don't need to worry about facing.

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 action the victor chose.

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 the use of fuel items, spells, and the helmsman'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 basically 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!



## 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 refresh abilities as if you had docked at a port.

#### BREATHLESS

*Merchant Schooner*

**Size:** Small

**Base Speed:** 4 (+2)

**Mobility:** High

**Fuel Items:** 3x small bottled air motes

**Hit Points:** 12

**Explosion Cap:** 10

#### CREW MANIFEST

**Unranked Crew:** 32/32

**Maximum Crew:** 32 (+1 speed)

**Skeleton Crew:** 16

**Relevant Crew Boons:** Lucky Looter

**Mettle Pool:** 7d4

#### UPGRADES

- Ayrissian canvas sails (+1 speed)

#### PRIZE

5,000 gp, 15 Grub, 8 Grog, 12 Gear

#### ARMAMENTS

##### Port Weapons:

- Culverin (d8)
- Falconet (d12)
- Culverin (d8)
- Falconet (d12)
- Culverin (d8)

##### Starboard Weapons:

- Culverin (d8)
- Falconet (d12)
- Culverin (d8)
- Falconet (d12)
- Culverin (d8)

**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 small bottled air motes,  
1x medium bottled air motes

**Hit Points:** 15 (+2)

**Explosion Cap:** 12

#### 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:

- Culverin (d8)
- Culverin (d8)
- Culverin (d8)
- Culverin (d8)
- Falconet (d12)
- Falconet (d12)

##### Starboard Weapons:

- Culverin (d8)
- Culverin (d8)
- Culverin (d8)
- Culverin (d8)
- Falconet (d12)
- 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 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 small bottled air motes

**Hit Points:** 12

**Explosion Cap:** 10

### CREW MANIFEST

**Unranked Crew:** 20/20

**Maximum Crew:** 24

**Skeleton Crew:** 12

**Relevant Crew Boons:** Wind-kissed

**Mettle Pool:** 6d4

### UPGRADES

None

### PRIZE

1,000 gp, 8 Grub, 5 Grog, 9 Gear

### ARMAMENTS

#### Port Weapons:

1. Saker (d6)
2. Falconet (d12)
3. Culverin (d8)
4. Falconet (d12)

#### Starboard Weapons:

1. Saker (d6)
2. Falconet (d12)
3. Culverin (d8)
4. Falconet (d12)

**Ammo Items:** 2x Chainshot



NEW MECHANICS





## The Flirt

This pirate schooner has recently undergone a munity, and cooler heads have not prevailed—they're out for blood. While they're not going to take on a man o' war, they're willing to attack anything else.

### THE FLIRT

*Pirate Schooner*

**Size:** Small

**Mettle Pool:** 8d4

**Upgrades:** Mage-silk sails (+2 speed)

**Base Speed:** 4 (+2)

**Mobility:** High

**Fuel Items:** 2x small bottled air motes

**Hit Points:** 12

**Explosion Cap:** 10

### CREW MANIFEST

**Unranked Crew:** 30/30

**Maximum Crew:** 32

**Skeleton Crew:** 16

**Relevant Crew Boons:** None

### PRIZE

2,500 gp, 12 Grub, 7 Grog, 10 Gear

### ARMAMENTS

#### Port Weapons:

1. Culverin (d8)
2. Falconet (d12)
3. Culverin (d8)
4. Flamethrower (d12)
5. Culverin (d8)

#### Starboard Weapons:

1. Culverin (d8)
2. Falconet (d12)
3. Culverin (d8)
4. Flamethrower (d12)
5. Culverin (d8)

**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 medium bottled air motes,  
1x large bottled air motes

**Hit Points:** 20 (+3)

**Explosion Cap:** 14

### CREW MANIFEST

**Unranked Crew:** 60/60

**Maximum Crew:** 64

**Skeleton Crew:** 32

**Relevant Crew Boons:** Wind-kissed

**Mettle Pool:** 8d4

### UPGRADES

- Silver unicorn figurehead,
- Fey-touched craftwood (+3 HP)

### PRIZE

12,000 gp, 28 Grub, 12 Grog, 16 Gear

### ARMAMENTS

#### Bow Weapons:

1. Long Gun (d10)
2. Long Gun (d10)

#### Port Weapons:

1. Long Gun (d10)
2. Long Gun (d10)
3. Long Gun (d10)
4. Long Gun (d10)
5. Long Gun (d10)
6. Long Gun (d10)
7. Long Gun (d10)
8. Long Gun (d10)
9. Long Gun (d10)
10. Long Gun (d10)

#### Starboard Weapons:

1. Long Gun (d10)
2. Long Gun (d10)
3. Long Gun (d10)
4. Long Gun (d10)
5. Long Gun (d10)
6. Long Gun (d10)
7. Long Gun (d10)
8. Long Gun (d10)
9. Long Gun (d10)
10. Long Gun (d10)

#### Stern Weapons:

1. Long Gun (d10)
2. Long Gun (d10)

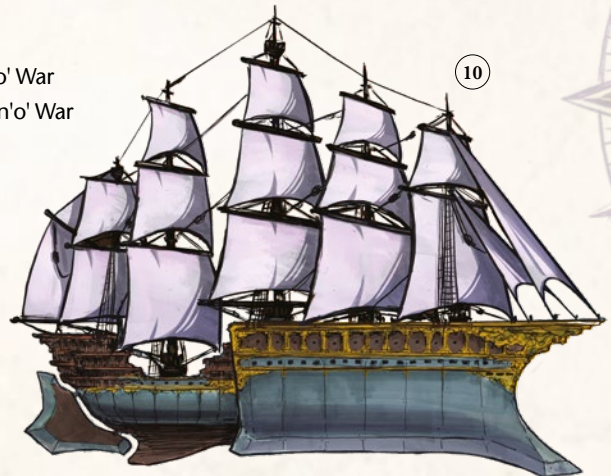
**Ammo Items:** 6x Salamanders





## SHIP SIZE COMPARISON

- |                      |                       |                          |
|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Shore Boat        | 5. Pirate Galleon     | 9. Aryissian Man'o' War  |
| 2. Pirate Sloop      | 6. Pirate Man'o' War  | 10. Karlelagn Man'o' War |
| 3. Pirate Schooner   | 7. Karlelagne Frigate | 11. Thunderchild         |
| 4. Pirate Brigantine | 8. Aryissian Galleon  |                          |





## AYRISSIAN SHIPS

### AMS Hellhound

A frigate of the Ayrissian 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's going to mean certain death.

The ship has taken damage and currently has only 10 hit points remaining.

### AMS HELLHOUND

*Ayrissian Frigate*

**Size:** Medium

**Base Speed:** 6 (+1)

**Mobility:** Balanced

**Fuel Items:** 3x small bottled air motes, 1x medium bottled air motes, 3x aetherium crystals

**Hit Points:** 15

**Explosion Cap:** 12

### 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:

1. Long Gun (d10)
2. Long Gun (d10)
3. Culverin (d8)
4. Culverin (d8)
5. Culverin (d8)
6. Culverin (d8)
7. Carronade (d12)
8. Carronade (d12)

#### Starboard Weapons:

1. Long Gun (d10)
2. Long Gun (d10)
3. Culverin (d8)
4. Culverin (d8)
5. Culverin (d8)
6. Culverin (d8)
7. Carronade (d12)
8. Carronade (d12)

#### Stern Weapons:

1. Long Gun (d10)

**Ammo Items:** 2x Chainshot, 2x Canister shot, 2x Salamanders

### AMS Euphoria

An Ayrissian brigantine making a secret delivery. Only the captain of the ship knows that it's carrying something of value. It avoids interacting with other ships at all 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 small bottled air motes,  
2x medium bottled air motes

**Hit Points:** 15

**Explosion Cap:** 12

### 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:

1. Culverin (d8)
2. Culverin (d8)
3. Culverin (d8)
4. Culverin (d8)
5. Culverin (d8)
6. Culverin (d8)

#### Starboard Weapons:

1. Culverin (d8)
2. Culverin (d8)
3. Culverin (d8)
4. Culverin (d8)
5. Culverin (d8)
6. Culverin (d8)

**Ammo Items:** 4x Carcass



## KARELAGNE SHIPS

### INS Hammer of God

A Karelagne frigate on patrol. It 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 small bottled air motes  
4x medium bottled air motes

**Hit Points:** 15 (+2)

**Explosion Cap:** 12

### CREW MANIFEST

**Unranked Crew:** 52/52

**Maximum Crew:** 52 (+1 speed)

**Skeleton Crew:** 26

**Relevant Crew Boons:** Fire in the Hole!

**Mettle Pool:** 7d4

### UPGRADES

- Astral-oak reinforcements (+2 HP)
- Imperial ram

### PRIZE

8,500 gp, 23 Grub, 10 Grog, 12 Gear

### ARMAMENTS

#### Port Weapons:

1. Long Gun (d10)
2. Long Gun (d10)
3. Long Gun (d10)
4. Long Gun (d10)
5. Carronade (d12)
6. Carronade (d12)
7. Carronade (d12)
8. Carronade (d12)

#### Starboard Weapons:

1. Long Gun (d10)
2. Long Gun (d10)
3. Long Gun (d10)
4. Long Gun (d10)
5. Carronade (d12)
6. Carronade (d12)
7. Carronade (d12)
8. Carronade (d12)

#### Stern Weapons:

9. 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 that 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.

### BLEAK ASCENSION

*Karelagne Man o' War*

**Size:** Huge

**Base Speed:** 9 (+2)

**Mobility:** Low

**Fuel Items:** 4x medium bottled air motes,  
2x large bottled air motes

**Hit Points:** 25 (+3)

**Explosion Cap:** 16

### CREW MANIFEST

**Unranked Crew:** 80/80

**Maximum Crew:** 99

**Skeleton Crew:** 49

**Relevant Crew Boons:** Avast Me Hearties, Cannonward Shield

**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:

1. Long Gun (d10)
2. Long Gun (d10)

#### Starboard Weapons:

1. Coil Gun (d10)
2. Coil Gun (d10)
3. Carronade (d12)
4. Carronade (d12)
5. Wrath Cannon (d12)
6. Wrath Cannon (d12)
7. Long Gun (d10)
8. Long Gun (d10)
9. Long Gun (d10)
10. Long Gun (d10)
11. Long Gun (d10)
12. Long Gun (d10)

#### Port Weapons:

1. Coil Gun (d10)
2. Coil Gun (d10)
3. Carronade (d12)
4. Carronade (d12)
5. Wrath Cannon (d12)
6. Wrath Cannon (d12)
7. Long Gun (d10)
8. Long Gun (d10)
9. Long Gun (d10)
10. Long Gun (d10)
11. Long Gun (d10)
12. Long Gun (d10)

#### Stern Weapons:

1. Long Gun (d10)
2. Long Gun (d10)
3. 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, other than the fact 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 belowdecks, apparently torn to shreds. In the belly of the ship lurks an invisible stalker, and now it's hunting the player characters too.



# 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 accusers’ 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.

## FLOTILLA SCORING

The following is a list of winning hands in order of score—higher scores are farther down the list:

- Three pairs
- “Half ‘n half” (two three-of-a-kinds)
- Four of a kind
- “Sitting ducks” (a straight of four consecutive dice)
- “Shipshape” (a six-die straight of 1 through 6)
- “Fathoms” (six of a kind, all sixes)

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.









EPISODE 1

# TREASURE OF SHIPGRAVE REEF

Shipwrecked on a remote island in the aethereal expanse, the adventurers must band together to survive. Can they endure the challenges of Shipgrave Reef, uncover its secrets, and find a way to escape?

Episode 1 of Pirates of the Aetherial Expanse awaits!





# WELCOME TO FABLES!

You hold in your hands the first episode of *Pirates of the Aetherial Expanse*, a story of pirates and empires seeking fortune, glory, and freedom upon the starlit seas of the Astral Plane. Each episode of this Fable contains about four game sessions' worth of thrilling fifth edition adventure, enough to entertain a weekly group of roleplaying game (RPG) players until the next episode arrives a month later.

## YOU ARE A GAME MASTER

As Game Master (GM) of a Fable, you have the power of a storyteller, telling tales of heroism and adventure to a rapt audience. Imagine yourself dressed in the clothes of a traveling bard, your face cast in glowing firelight as you weave a tapestry of words. Your words draw those who sit around the fire with you into another world, a world where they aren't just the audience of a tale, but actors and storytellers themselves.

The GM's role is to establish the setting of each scene in this Fable, introduce and roleplay its nonplayer characters (NPCs), and play monsters and villains that long to bring a swift end to the heroes' adventures. The players at your table are storytellers in their own right. Though they embody a single character each while you embody many, the players have the power to make

decisions that will change the world forever. The best GMs are willing to improvise, even ignoring the text of a Fable when necessary, to ensure the characters' actions have consequences—for both good and ill.

**If you don't plan to run this Fable, stop reading now. What follows is for the Game Master's eyes only.**

## RUNNING THIS FABLE

Fables is an episodic adventure series using the fifth edition of the world's first roleplaying game. To play, you need the free fifth edition System Reference Document, or the books that make up the fifth edition core rules. This Fable takes place upon the Aetherial Expanse, a sea of shimmering starlight home to strange creatures and unpredictable magic. This expanse is a small corner of the Astral Plane, the plane which connects all other



planes of existence. Powerful magic is usually required to travel great distances through the zero-gravity reaches of the Astral Plane, but the Aetherial Expanse is unique: a substance called aether forms a sea of roiling magical power that allows conventional seacraft from the Material Plane to sail through this magical realm.

This new setting is described in the *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide*, included with episode 1 of this Fable. Before beginning this Fable, you should familiarize yourself with the locations, NPCs, and lore of the setting, as well as the new nautical rules found in the setting guide.

Additionally, the following information will help you run this Fable as GM.

## EPISODES AND CHAPTERS

A Fable is a complete story, released in six monthly episodes. Each episode is an arc of this overall story that presents a miniature sandbox environment. An episode is designed for a specific range of levels. As the GM, you're empowered to run an episode for characters of a higher or lower level than recommended, but be prepared for a more challenging or easier session unless you alter the challenges and monsters the characters face.

The characters can explore each episode's region at their leisure. An episode typically has three to four chapters, which each contain enough game content to fill one or two game sessions. Each chapter describes a specific location within an episode's sandbox environment, or it could represent a linear series of encounters that drive the plot forward.

## MONSTERS, MAGIC, AND MORE

When you see text in **bold**, that's the Fable's way of telling you a scene or location contains a monster or NPC that's ready to fight. New monsters and NPCs in Fables are usually found in appendix A: New Monsters of the episode in which they appear. If a monster's name appears in bold but isn't followed by "(see appendix A)" or a similar pointer, then that monster's game statistics are found in the fifth edition core rules.

When you see text in italics, that's the Fable's way of telling 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. New spells and magic items are described in an episode's appendixes as well, indicated by a "(see appendix B)" pointer.

*When you see boxed text like this, the characters have likely entered a new area or triggered an event such as an NPC entering the scene. This text is meant for the GM to read or paraphrase aloud to the players to set the scene.*

## RUNNING A PIRATE CAMPAIGN

*Pirates of the Aetherial Expanse* is a story about larger-than-life piratical heroes in a realm where magic is a daily fact of life. Magic pervades the Astral Plane, and in the Expanse, waves of aether, a substance sometimes called "liquid magic," washes upon the shore of every island.

As the GM, you can consider it your role to communicate the tone of this campaign to your players. Because this is an RPG campaign, you don't need to be tonally consistent the way a book or a movie does, but playing this story as a dark fantasy dirge when its tone is intentionally high action and swashbuckling might make players feel awkward or confused.

Three major elements in this story inform its tone, and you and your players will probably have more fun if you keep these elements in mind while prepping and running each chapter of this Fable:

**Heroic Piracy.** The characters are the heroes of this story. They're pirates, meaning they plunder and kill, but the fact that they do bad things as a matter of course doesn't make them any less the heroes when they save a civilization or defeat an evil empire at the end of the day. The thing that separates heroic pirates from villainous ones is a moral code. If your players are having a hard time feeling like heroes, having their captain devise a code of honor that dictates who they slay, who they spare, and who they steal from could be a way to establish a more heroic tone without losing the moral ambiguity that makes pirates so fun to play.

**Supernatural Drama.** Magic pervades the Aetherial Expanse, affecting every part of life on the sea. As GM, your NPCs and custom story hooks (if you want to create adventures beyond the episodes of this Fable) should consider what it's like to live in a world that frequently and chaotically defies what you know about it, and where supernatural mystery fills every corner of the map. Likewise, players should consider what their character's relationship to magic is; do they take comfort in its all-encompassing power, or is the unexplainable a constant threat?

**Emotional Grounding.** The danger of stories that engage in high-action heroism is that they can feel hollow or unmotivated. The best way to keep your story grounded is to include moments of heavy emotions to ground your heroes and villains. The best villains don't just twirl their mustaches seeking to cause capital-*E* evil. In this adventure, the villains are power-hungry colonialists seeking to expand their empire for the betterment of people that look and act like them. Heroic pirates aren't pirates just because they want a merry life of rum and adventure, but because something about their life was painful enough to set them on this challenging path. Find moments to allow your NPCs and player characters to express these real emotions and motivations.





## THIS FABLE'S STORY

This primer on the story and backstory of *Pirates of the Aetherial Expanse* will help you tell a compelling and cohesive narrative from episode to episode.

### OVERVIEW

In this Fable, a group of castaways band together to form a ragtag pirate crew after a devastating ship battle in a distant corner of the Aetherial Expanse. The characters likely come from a variety of backgrounds, factions, and statuses within their former ships' hierarchies. A character may have been a pirate to begin with, but could just as easily have been an officer aboard a frigate of the mighty Karelagne Empire, or a privateer flying the flag of the mercantile Kingdom of Ayris.

Separated from their former factions, these characters begin a new life of piracy aboard a salvaged ship, lured by the promise of adventure, fabulous wealth, and possibly even revenge against the faction that lured them into a doomed battle in the first place.

### BACKSTORY

Long ago, in an age lost to all record or living recollection, aether began to form in a corner of the Astral Plane.

#### Aethergeneration

A group of planefarers 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 planefarers named this sea of magical, spiritual energy "aether." Hurling 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 the 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 plane-faring 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 plane-faring 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 which 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, the Astral Plane is an easy realm for mages to create highly stable portals to. It's also a place where enterprising plane-farers 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 this Fable begins, 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 Ayris, a tiny coastal nation on its home world, which prospered as a realm of traders that its warlike neighbors maintained good relations with.

Ayris 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 Ayrisian mages' portal to the Astral Plane and go on the adventure of a lifetime, guarding Ayrisian 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 Ayris 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, and 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 the *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide*) are few in number and have only scattered communities, but they call the Expanse their home—and no one has more right to do so than them.

Defectors were common during 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 Ayris 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.





## ***PIRATES OF THE AETHERIAL EXPANSE***

This is a brief summary of the six episodes of this Fable.

### **Episode 1: Treasure of Shipgrave Reef**

A group of shipwrecked sailors must band together to form a makeshift crew, and test their nascent bonds of fellowship against the allure of treasure within Shipgrave Reef.

### **Episode 2: Come Sail Away**

The characters depart Shipgrave Reef and travel to the Isle of Drakes, a pirate haven in the Aetherial Expanse. They can explore its inhabited islands before settling on its cited central isle and using it as a base of operations.

### **Episode 3: The Lost Constellation**

Tensions between the Kingdom of Ayris and the Karelagne Empire heat up as zealots are discovered kidnapping astral emergents for devious experimentation. Gather allies, gather tools from dangerous outposts, and save the day!

### **Episode 4: Lost to the Aether**

The characters become involved in the affairs of the Sistren of the Constellation Isles, and must swim, climb, and cut their way through the Fallen Isles on the hunt for an ancient merfolk palace that contains a world-changing artifact. But not before they tread water with trouble like merrow, angry merfolk, a double-crossing swashbuckler, and more.

### **Episode 5: For Whom the Stars Toll**

The characters learn of an impending apocalypse as the Reaper, an ancient sea witch, starts harvesting souls from across the Aetherial Expanse. After developing symptoms of reaper's curse, the characters must stop her and defeat the true evil behind the scenes.

### **Episode 6: Legends of the Seas**

The Reaper's actions in episode 5 have goaded the power-hungry Karelagne Empire to hunt down a superweapon lost beneath the aether and launch a final assault against the pirates. To stop the empire, the pirates must ally themselves with the Kingdom of Ayris, or all will be lost!



## INTRODUCTION

This short introductory adventure is designed to give GMs and players a taste of the many types of adventure the Aetherial Expanse setting can provide: island exploration, ship-to-ship combat, and swashbuckling duels.

This episode can be played as a one-shot adventure, or expanded into multiple sessions' worth of gameplay using the *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide* to set your players on a course for adventure on other islands in Shipgrave Reef, or other locales on the Aetherial Expanse.

## SESSION ZERO

Before running this Fable, it's vital to prime your players with a Session Zero. This pregame event is a time for you to pitch this adventure, set everyone's expectations for what kinds of content to expect while playing, how long it might take, and then, finally, to create your characters together.

This Session Zero has three main parts:

- Pitching the adventure, to make sure all your players are interested in playing it
- Setting content expectations by clearly stating what types of content everyone wants to include in this story, and what kind of content anyone doesn't want to include
- Creating characters together, so their stories will work together from the very beginning



## PITCHING THIS FABLE

You can pitch this Fable to your players by reading the following boxed text, and asking if this adventure sounds fun to them.

*Pirates of the Aetherial Expanse is a story where you play as pirates sailing upon a sea of starlight on the Astral Plane. This setting is extremely magical—the very sea you're sailing on is made of magic!*

*In the first episode, your characters awaken in the aftermath of a gruesome naval battle in the treacherous Shipgrave Reef. The three factions vying for control of the Aetherial Expanse, the Karelagne Empire, the Kingdom of Ayris, and the pirates of the Isle of Drakes, each sent a pair of warships to claim a treasure long thought to rest on an island in the reef.*

*Countless sailors died in this bloody conflict, and only a scant few survived. Your characters are among these lucky survivors. They cling to flotsam in the sea, as the aether upon which they float causes magical tingles in their flesh. Their only hope of survival is to find a way out of the aether and to make it to land before aether poisoning sets in. And from there, to find a way to escape Shipgrave Reef, hopefully with its fabled treasure in hand. After that, your pirate legend is yours to write; in gold, or blood.*

## SETTING EXPECTATIONS

When setting expectations for this Fable, be prepared to state what kind of content you're excited to include, and what content makes you uncomfortable. Then, ask your players if they have anything to add to the Yes, please! list, and anything they want to add to the No way! list.

Encourage your players to put things on the Yes or No list even if someone else has named it on the opposite list.

If you know your players extremely well, you may not need to ask them about what type of content is exciting or uncomfortable for them. Still, even if it feels overly formal, it's never a bad thing to check in with your players.

## Piratical Content

We can't list every type of content you'll encounter in this Fable. However, things to consider include:

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



## Voting Yes

GMs aren't obligated to include every theme, topic, or type of content their players want to see in the game, but it's a great way to build a list of cool things that will raise the stakes, up the intensity, and increase your players' investment in the story.

## Hard No, Soft No

When the lists are made, go through the No list and ask the group if it's a Hard No or a Soft No. A Hard No is a topic a player wants to avoid at all costs; these generally fall into the topics of traumas and phobias. A character who experienced a traumatic family death may want to avoid exploring similar things, or someone with a debilitating case of arachnophobia might not want to encounter giant spiders, even though they're a fantasy staple.

If a topic is listed a Hard No from even a single player, it shouldn't be included in the game. The point of an RPG session is to have fun, and including content that violates someone's boundaries is a great way to ruin that fun. They don't owe anyone an explanation about why they want to vote Hard No for a topic.

A Soft No, however, is a challenging topic a player might want to explore in a limited or specific way. Talk with your player about how this topic, which might border on the traumatic or phobic, could be used to make the game more exciting—and how the player can signal to avoid it.

**Veto Power.** If a player has reached their limit on a Hard No or Soft No topic (whether they listed it in Session Zero or discovered they're uncomfortable with the topic just that moment), they have the power to veto the topic instantly. RPG designer John Stavropoulos recommends using a card with an X marked on it, and placing it on the table to veto a scene. A player can also say something like "I'm not comfortable with this, let's move on."

Some GMs prefer to move on instantly, no questions asked. Others like to take a break, give everyone a chance to have a snack, and then move on to give people a chance to shake the awkwardness that sometimes comes with expressing your discomfort.

## CHARACTER CREATION

It's time for your party to create characters together! This section follows the general character guidelines laid out in the fifth edition core rules. The *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide* also includes information on how the core races and classes in fifth edition can be adapted to best fit this setting.

In addition to choosing your race, class, and background, consider the following details to add more depth to your character and help them fit into a piratical adventure in the Astral Plane.

## Your Nationality

Two nations exert a colonial force over the Aetherial Expanse: the Karelagne Empire and the Kingdom of Ayriss. These nations are described in detail in the *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide*. Additionally, countless people who aren't colonists of either nation live on the Expanse. The Isle of Drakes is a haven for people of all stripes, many of whom are outlaws of Karel, Ayriss, or both.

This adventure begins in the aftermath of a bloody naval battle between pirates, Karelagnes, and Ayrissians. It's encouraged that the party includes one person of each nationality; many pirate crews in the real world were multinational hodgepodes of fortune seekers with a common goal that transcended nationality: treasure, or revenge.

## Your Former Vessel

Six ships took part in the Battle of Shipgrave Reef:

- *AMS Acquisition* (Ayrissian; destroyed)
- *AMS Endeavor* (Ayrissian; destroyed)
- *Black Spot* (pirate; destroyed)
- *INS Predestination* (Karelagne; survived)
- *INS Triumph* (Karelagne; destroyed)
- *Kraken's Revenge* (pirate; destroyed)

Each character should choose which ship they served aboard in the Battle of Shipgrave Reef. They can also make up details about the ship: Who was captain? Did the character have any friends aboard? Were they an enlisted sailor, an officer, or were they press-ganged into service?

**Falling Overboard.** Each character was, at some point during the battle, hurled into the aether and survived by clinging to a piece of floating detritus. The most likely reason for this is that their ship was destroyed.

The *INS Predestination* is the only ship that survived the battle. A character who served aboard that ship knows unique information that will become relevant in this episode: the *Predestination's* captain, Hadley Koston, was killed in the battle and the ship's power-hungry wayfinder, Argo Skerrick, took command. This wizard spoke in a rasping whisper, and was feared by the entire crew.

## Your Role in the Crew

Each character had a specific role on their former ship. See the Crew Role table for suggestions. Roll on the table if players are undecided about their characters' roles.

Since the characters are from different factions, their roles may overlap. These roles are described in more detail in the "New Mechanics" chapter of the *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide*.





## Crew Role

D10	ROLE
1	<b>Captain.</b> The ship's commander leads the crew and is the final arbiter of decisions made aboard the ship.
2	<b>First Mate.</b> The ship's second-in-command maintains discipline, leads boarding parties, and takes command when the captain is indisposed.
3	<b>Quartermaster.</b> The ship's third-in-command manages the ship's supplies, divides the loot, and acts as a tiebreaker when command decisions are disputed between the captain and the first mate.
4	<b>Navigator.</b> This expert crewmate charts courses and directs the helmsman. A mage serving in this role is called a wayfinder.
5	<b>Helmsman.</b> This expert crewmate maneuvers the vessel through the tides and currents of the Aetherial Expanse.
6	<b>Boatswain.</b> The junior officer under the quartermaster maintains the ropes and sails.
7	<b>Cook.</b> A linchpin of crew contentment, the cook works with the quartermaster to provision the crew and bolster morale.
8	<b>Surgeon.</b> The ship's doctor treats illnesses and injuries and sees to the crew's overall wellbeing.
9	<b>Carpenter.</b> This specialist in ship construction is responsible for maintaining the vessel.
10	<b>Master Gunner.</b> The master gunner leads the ship's troops as they fire cannons in battle.

Each character gains 2 ranks in the role they had aboard their former vessel, as described in the "New Mechanics" part of the *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide*. They also gain 1 rank in any other role, which they picked up by helping or observing other members of their crew.



## Memento

Each character has one item from their old life that survived the battle. This item must be something they can carry on their person. The best mementos have a deep, personal meaning to your character. It might represent someone you long to protect, someone you've sworn vengeance against, or something you want to find or destroy at any cost.

If a player can't think of a memento for their character, roll on the table below to determine their item.

## MEMENTO

D20	ITEM
1	A gold ring embossed with your family crest
2	A page torn from a nursery rhyme book from your childhood
3	A scrap of paper with the last known address of a loved one
4	A vial containing gold flecks from a holiday when you were a child
5	A small book signed by your favorite writer
6	A worn notecard containing your grandmother's recipe for stone soup
7	A photograph of your family
8	Your mother's wedding ring
9	A ticket from a festival where you met an incredible person with unforgettable blue eyes
10	The coordinates for a future astronomical event you eagerly anticipate
11	A satchel with the last dried beans from your garden
12	One smooth moonstone of a pair; your best friend has the other
13	A tooth of the tiger you killed, with a small amethyst placed in the opening
14	Two coins you stole from a holy fountain
15	A box of matches from the last place you felt as if you were at home
16	A small journal with a secret inside; you've kept it for years
17	An ancient quill with an aetherium shaft, made of a feather plucked from an aethergull
18	A gold necklace you were given on the day you came of age
19	The last letter your father wrote to you before he died
20	A pair of daggers with your initials engraved in the hilts



## Secret of the Shipgrave Treasure

Each character knows one secret about the fabled treasure of Shipgrave Reef. Their player can choose how they came about this knowledge; a captain may have been entrusted with this secret by an admiral, while a ship's cook might have heard it as a rumor spreading through the crew.

The GM can choose which character knows which secret, or you can roll on the table to determine it randomly, rerolling repeated results.

### SHIPGRAVE TREASURE SECRET

D6	SECRET
1	The treasure was laid to rest here by the great merfolk pirate Amil Markhoff, captain of the lost ship Legend.
2	The treasure is aetherium worth hundreds of gold pieces, and it supposedly possesses the ability to charm aetherbeasts.
3	Privateers have conducted extensive searches of the reef's shallow seafloor; neither the wreck of the Legend nor its treasure were found.
4	Shipgrave Reef was once a volcano connected to the Elemental Plane of Fire, and its submerged lava tubes still haven't been fully explored.
5	After the Legend ran aground on the reef, its crew was stalked by a humanlike terror that rose from the aether.
6	A secret cove within the reef holds a half dozen ships an unknown person has repaired. The only survivor of the Legend famously used one of these ships to escape.

**The Truth of Shipgrave Reef.** The true secret of Shipgrave Reef, one the characters can piece together over the course of this episode, is that Amil Markhoff, a merfolk, survived the wreck of his ship with a number of his crew. However, the crew was assailed by an astral merrow that made the reef its home and kidnapped several members of the crew.

Amil Markhoff made a bold rescue attempt, but succumbed to the merrow in battle. Merrow are merfolk that have been corrupted by demonic power. A merfolk that suffers grave wounds from a merrow can be afflicted by the same demonic magic that corrupted their attacker. And so, Amil succumbed.

The merrow that resides in the secret vault beneath area G8 of Shipgrave Reef is Amil. His last memories were of protecting his crew, safeguarding his treasure, and of fixing his ship and escaping Shipgrave Reef. For the past several decades, he has clung to the remnants of his former self by defending the treasure he salvaged from his ship, and by hauling shipwrecks with his merrow mate—that same creature that corrupted his body and mind—into a secret cove and repairing them for reasons he can't fully explain.

### CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

The characters begin this Fable at 1st level. By the end of this episode, they will have risen to 3rd level.

Characters gain a level each time they complete one of the following objectives. They can't rise to higher than 3rd level before the start of the next episode in this Fable.

- The characters survive at least three encounters in Shipgrave Reef.
- The characters escape Shipgrave Reef on the schooner in Detritus Cove (area C8c).







## CHAPTER 1: WASHED ASHORE

This Fable begins with the characters washed ashore, slowly coming to consciousness. Read or paraphrase the following to set the scene:

*You awaken slowly. Your body feels heavy as you blink tingling aether out of your eyes. You cough, and some of the sparkling, purplish liquid spatters onto the black sand. It explains the heaviness; you can only hope you didn't spend enough time in the sea for aether poisoning to set in.*

*There are other people around you, also slowly coming to consciousness. You're on a black sand beach, underneath the perpetually twilight skies of the Aetherial Expanse. The last thing you remember is a battle: six ships converged on Shipgrave Reef, hunting for a treasure. You were aboard one of those ships, and now, you can see their wreckage floating on the aether off in the distance.*

*Who are you? What was your last memory of the battle before you were hurled into the aether and awoke on this desolate shore?*

This Fable begins with an opportunity for each player to share a short flashback of the last moment of their character's old life, when they were a sailor aboard a real ship before being blown away. Any player that shares a flashback of their hunt for the treasure of Shipgrave Reef, whether it's long or short, gains inspiration.

## FELLOW CASTAWAYS

Whatever happened before, the characters are now castaways on a tiny rock in the endless aether. They've awoken on the black sand shore of Floe Island (area G1 on the Shipgrave Reef map, see chapter 2). Many tall, volcanic rocks jut from the beach.

In this moment, the characters are waking up from being knocked out and left adrift in the aether, which is toxic to humanoids if they spend too much time in it, or consume more than a mouthful.

## ROLEPLAYING THE AWAKENING

This is the first time the characters have met one another (unless two or more players weaved their characters' backstories together). This scene is a good opportunity for the players to describe one or more of their characters' surface level details:

- Their race
- What they're wearing
- How big they are
- Any visible scars, tattoos, or prosthetics
- How they sound when they speak, or how they communicate

If a player is having trouble, ask them to think about how their character would be introduced in a movie. Describing these details gives the other players a clear first impression of what the character is like.

Ultimately, this section's goal is for the characters to cooperate to escape Shipgrave Reef together. It's okay if the characters aren't all friends yet; tension between characters can sometimes be fun, especially if it's because they're from opposing factions. A stiff-collared Karelagne naval officer learning to like a devil-may-care pirate could be a great moment of character development. The goal is to get the characters to work together, even if they don't necessarily like each other.

## TAKING STOCK OF SUPPLIES

If the characters search their persons, they find, in addition to whatever items and equipment they gained during character creation, they have only the following supplies:

- An astral compass (see the "Constellations and Navigation" section of the *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide*)
- 10 days' rations of salt pork and hardtack
- A dented but functional spyglass; using it grants a character advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to see things at least 100 feet away, but disadvantage on checks to notice anything closer.

Notably, the characters have no fresh water, unless it was marked on their character sheets.



## AETHER POISONING

During this awakening scene, the character with the lowest Constitution score, must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, they suddenly experience intense vertigo and vomit a bellyful of aether onto the sand. They then start to exhibit a mild fever. Astral emergents and astral merfolk are immune to aether poisoning, and automatically succeed on this saving throw.

Ask for every character to make this same Constitution saving throw, possibly spacing the saving throws out between introductions. Over the next 5 minutes, all characters who failed their saving throw begin to feel the effects of aether poisoning set in.

### What's Happening!?

If a character fails their saving throw against aether poisoning, any character who makes a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check recognizes the symptoms of aether fever, the first stage of aether poisoning (see the “Aether Poisoning” section of the *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide*). Additionally, the character also knows how to make an antidote for the early stages of aether poisoning, if they can find the right herbs.

## CURING AETHER POISONING

There's an herbal cure for aether poisoning, but it's only effective before the poisoning advances to the second or third stages. For any creature suffering from stage 1 aether poisoning, the aether in their body must be neutralized before it wreaks further damage upon their body. This remedy requires four components:

- One ounce of fresh water
- One kammik nut, ground into a powder
- A handful of merblood petals, pressed for juice
- A fire to simmer the liquid for 1 hour, until it changes color from green to clear

A character who makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check, or who succeeded on the earlier DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check by 5 or more, also knows that anyone afflicted by aether poisoning only has a certain amount of time before it advances into a stage that can't be cured by this antidote.

Each character has a number of hours equal to  $2d12$  + their Constitution score before the poisoning advances, e.g. a character with a Constitution score of 10 (a +0 modifier) would have  $2d12 + 10$  hours.

### SIMPLIFIED TIMER

With this system, the characters only have as much time as the member with the lowest Constitution score before things go downhill fast. If you don't want to single out a character, the characters instead have 24 hours from this point to create their antidote.

## Ingredient Locations

The characters must explore the islands of Shipgrave Reef to find their antidote. The ingredients are in these locations, found in chapter 2:

- **Firewood:** areas G1, G2, and G5
- **Fresh water:** areas G1, G2, and G5
- **Kammik nuts:** areas G1, G2, and G7
- **Merblood flowers:** area G3

A character who climbs one of the volcanic rocks jutting from the beach, or otherwise finds a vantage point, and surveys the reef can use their skill proficiencies to identify where these ingredients might be found.

**Firewood.** Any character can easily tell firewood is best found in jungled areas.

**Fresh Water (Arcana).** A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that most freshwater sources on the Astral Plane link to the Elemental Plane of Water. Getting too close to an elemental rift causes astral compasses to point directly toward it, as a normal compass is drawn to a magnet.

**Fresh Water (Nature).** A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that all tropical plant life must be supported by fresh water. Any island with a jungle likely has fresh water.

**Kammik Nuts (History).** A successful DC 10 Intelligence (History) check reveals that this nut is native to the Material Plane, and is heavily traded in Ayris as a medicine. It tastes terrible and has little nutritional value. It's now an invasive species on islands across the Aetherial Expanse.

**Kammik Nuts (Nature).** A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that these nuts grow in tropical jungles and are common on any island with jungle terrain. They grow on tall shrubs and take strength to pick.

**Merblood Flowers (Arcana).** A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that these flowers feed on aetherial magic and are a crucial component needed to filter aether out of a creature's body.

**Merblood Flowers (Nature).** A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that merblood flowers are named for their purple-and-teal coloration, just like merfolk blood. They grow all over small rocks and reefs in the middle of the aether.

## Developments

Now the characters know each other, and have a pressing need to find an antidote to aether poisoning, they're ready to explore Shipgrave Reef. Their ultimate goal may still be to find the lost treasure and to find a ship to carry them away from this place, but the antidote must come first.

The reef's islands are described in chapter 2. To escape Floe Island, the characters must find the small dinghy run aground on the other side of the island.



## CHAPTER 2:

# EXPLORING SHIPGRAVE REEF

Time is of the essence as the characters hunt for the ingredients to make an antidote to aether poisoning. Once they've done so, the pressure eases off and they can leisurely explore the reef in search of its fabled treasure, and a means of escape.

If you want to impress this time pressure on your characters, keep a tally of how many hours they have left on a table, and count off each hour that slips away as they search islands for resources, travel between islands, and take short and long rests.

Time spent in combat or exploring dungeon areas is measured in seconds and minutes; unless the characters take a short or long rest within a dungeon area (like area G8), it doesn't count against their time.

## SEARCHING AN ISLAND

The four main islands of Shipgrave Reef (Floe, Tektite, Bulwark, and Sentinel) are all sizeable landmasses more than 2 miles across. Searching an island for resources or for hidden areas takes time, and while the characters are searching for a cure to aether poisoning, time is of the essence.

Each island's description includes a "Searching" section, which describes how much time the characters must spend traversing the island before they can make an Intelligence (Investigation) check to search it. On a success, they find whatever important items or locations the island has. Every character who participates in the investigation can make a check, and they can choose whether or not to reveal what they've found to the whole party.

On a failure, a character only finds clues that something is on the island, and the time is otherwise wasted. However, as long as the characters are willing to spend the time to search the island again, they can repeat this Intelligence (Investigation) check with advantage, since they found a clue when they failed the check the first time.

## YOUR FIRST SEARCH

Before the characters can leave Floe Island (area G1, below), they must search the island for a boat. Finding a boat is easy because the search DC for Floe Island is very low. However, Floe Island also includes a small patch of jungle terrain. If the characters successfully search the entire island, they find four vital resources they'll need to survive and escape Shipgrave Reef:

- Fresh water
- Kammik nuts, for their antidote
- Firewood
- A rowboat to travel to other islands

## TRAVELING BETWEEN ISLANDS

Once the characters have found the dinghy beached on the other side of Floe Island (area G1), they can use it to sail to any other area on the Shipgrave Reef map. Doing so takes time, and time is a valuable resource for creatures succumbing to aether poisoning.

## TRACKING TRAVEL TIME

The winds in Shipgrave Reef are generally mild, keeping to about 10 knots, which allows a small craft to travel about 10 miles per hour. Keep track of the miles the characters have traveled using the scale marker on the Shipgrave Reef map. Every time the characters travel a total of 10 miles, deduct 1 hour from the time they have left before their aether poisoning progresses to the next stage.

## ENCOUNTERS WHILE TRAVELING

Four potential encounters can occur while the characters travel between islands. A good rule of thumb is to include two of these encounters per session of gameplay. However, you can make encounters more frequent if you want a more immersive game, or less frequent you want a fast-paced game.

While the characters are traveling between islands, roll a d4 and consult the table below to determine what they encounter. If you roll an encounter that's already happened, reroll it. Each encounter is detailed below the table.

Use the Aether Reef battle map included with this episode to run these encounters.

## OPTIONAL RULE: FOCUSED SEARCH

Typically, Intelligence (Investigation) checks are used to search specific areas for fine details, like searching a lock for fingerprints. Since these islands are large, searching the entire island can take a long time. If a character wants to only search a specific part of the island, e.g. just a jungle portion, they can do so. Searching in this way takes half the time it would to search the entire island, but the character can only find resources or locations in that specific part of the island.

For instance, if a character wanted to search only Floe Island's beaches, with a successful check, they'd find the rowboat located there, but not the water, wood, and kammik nuts in its jungle area.

You can also use this method if the characters want to split up and search multiple parts of the island at once, restricting what each character or group finds, as appropriate.



## SHIPGRAVE REEF

### TRAVEL ENCOUNTERS

D4	ENCOUNTER
1	Burning <i>Predestination</i>
2	Hunting Aetherwolves
3	Shrieking Gulls
4	Stalking Merrow

### Burning *Predestination*

In the distance, a ship explodes, creating a fiery spout of aether and debris on the horizon. This ship was the one surviving vessel of the Battle of Shipgrave Reef: the Karelagne naval frigate *INS Predestination*.

**Encounter Location.** Choose a location near where the characters are traveling to: area G3, G6, or G8. The *Predestination* ran aground on a reef there, and in attempting to free the ship, its captain, Argo Skerrick, used magic that ignited the ship's powder magazine and detonated the ship, killing most of the crew.

**Combatants.** If the characters investigate the wreckage, they find survivors: **Captain Skerrick** and four Karelagne **sailors** (see appendix A for both stat blocks). Fervently loyal to Skerrick, the sailors fight to the death and will kill any survivors of the battle, including fellow Karelagne naval officers. If captured, however, they may find that cooperating with the characters is their only option, and they do so grudgingly.

Skerrick is an ambitious coward with nothing left to lose. He speaks in a hoarse whisper and calls any Karelagne members of the party "dirty traitors" and "treasure thieves."

**Treasure.** If the characters search the burning wreck of the *Predestination*, they find scattered rations, waterskins, earrings, and amulets worth a total of 50 gp and one unexploded keg of black powder.

**Black Powder.** A keg of black powder, if set on fire as an action, burns for 1d4 rounds, then explodes, dealing 21 (6d6) fire damage to creatures and objects within a 15-foot radius and making a loud noise that can be heard from 300 feet away. As an action, or as part of the action used to light it, a creature can roll the keg up to 20 feet away from it. The terrain may impede the keg's ability to roll, at the GM's discretion.

### Hunting Aetherwolves

Aetherwolves are feared by sailors as deadly, bestial predators. Though their alien appearance shares little in common with wolves of the Material Plane, they share a pack mentality, bestial cunning, and an indiscriminating eye for prey.

These beasts prowl shallow reefs and open sea alike, hunting for warm flesh to eat. A pack of four **aetherwolves** (see appendix A) attacks the characters while they sail between islands. Once a wolf is reduced to 5 hit points or lower, it breaks off its attack and flees.

### Shrieking Gulls

A flock of four aether-poisoned gulls (**blood hawks**) shriek at the characters as they pass. The birds swoop in, practically collapsing on the deck, and frantically, deliriously swipe at the characters.



These creatures are suffering from severe aether delirium, and fight to the death. A character who makes a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check learns that the gulls want nothing more than to be thrown into the aether. A gull thrown into the aether calmly sinks beneath the waves and isn't seen again.

### Stalking Merrow

A mated pair of **astral merrow** (see appendix A) haunt this reef. They prey upon sailors fleeing from shipwrecks and other unfortunate travelers.

One merrow stalks the party in the water, while her mate lurks in his lair in area G8b. Characters who have a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 15 or higher notice something following them through the water. Read or paraphrase the following:

*Something's in the water, trailing you from about a hundred feet away. Every few seconds, you see a webbed fin rise above the aether, then slip back in. Something long and swift is trailing you, and gaining.*

The merrow stalks the characters at a distance of 100 feet. When you roll this encounter, the merrow keeps her distance and doesn't attack. If attacked, she disappears beneath the aether.

**Ambush Tactics.** One hour after this encounter starts, the merrow ambushes the characters. Since merrow are amphibious, this attack can happen even out of water. If the merrow ambushes the party in water, she tries to grapple a character who's sat at the edge of the boat, favoring armored characters, and drown them under the aether. It floats on the surface of the sea and can still be attacked while drowning the character.

If the merrow ambushes the party on land, she hides behind a boulder and attacks the character wearing the least armor.

**Battle Map.** If the merrow ambushes the characters on land, use the Aether Shoreline battle map included with this episode.



# AREAS OF SHIPGRAVE REEF

The following areas are keyed to the Shipgrave Reef map.

## SHIPGRAVE REEF FEATURES

The outdoor areas of Shipgrave Reef have the following general features:

**Astral Sky.** The sky is a deep purple, filled with streaks of blues, yellows, and greens, and twinkling with countless tars. The world is brightly lit, but creatures and objects cast shadows in all directions.

**Aetherial Sea.** Similar to the sky, the sea's surface is a shimmering purple. The surface waves reveal streaks of color roiling beneath. Swallowing aether or spending too long in the sea can cause aether fever (see the "Aether Poisoning" section of the *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide*), or cause stage 1 aether poisoning to advance.

**Black Rocks and Sand.** 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.

**Calm Winds.** Small, unstable portals to the Elemental Plane of Air fill the reef with calm but frequently shifting winds.

**Lush Jungle.** 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.

## G1. FLOE ISLAND

This episode begins on the shores of Floe Island. Read or paraphrase the following when the characters start exploring the island:

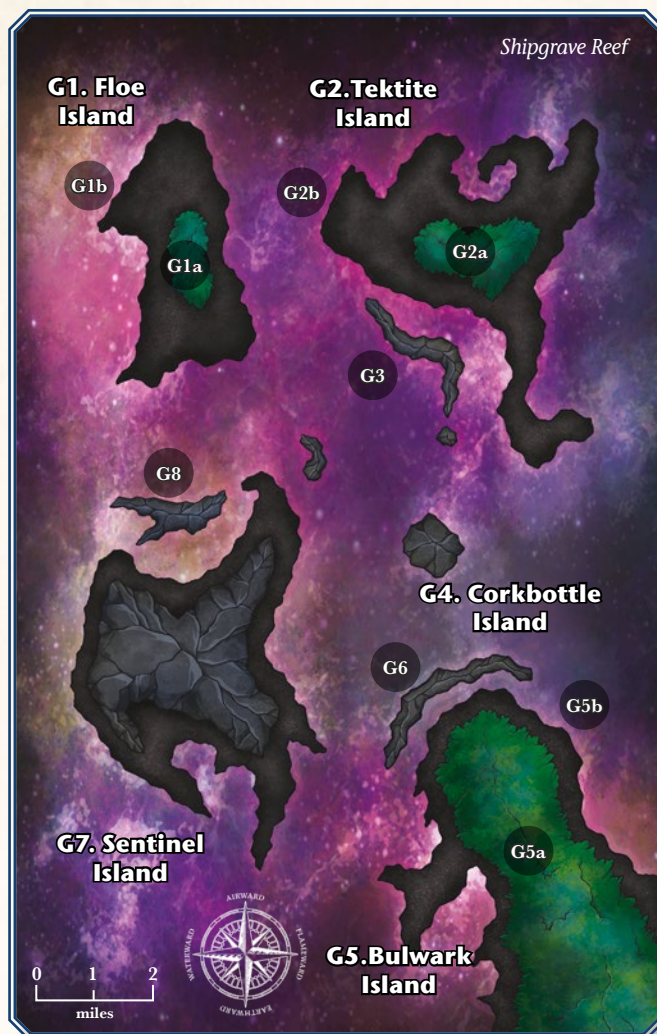
*You stand on the black sand shores of a rocky island in the middle of the aether. You can see three larger islands in the near distance, close enough to sail to with a small craft, and a dozen stretches of treacherous black rock jutting from the aether.*

*In the middle of the island you're on is a stand of jungle trees. The other side of the shore is obscured by these trees.*

If the characters venture into the jungle, go to "G1a: Floe Jungle." If they scout the shores, go to "G1b: Floe Shores." Remember to use the rules in "Searching an Island," earlier in this chapter, while the characters explore this and other islands in the reef.

## Searching Floe Island

A character who searches the island for useful items must spend 30 minutes to scout the island's perimeter and then delve into the small patch of jungle. After doing so, they



make a DC 5 Intelligence (Investigation) check. On a success, they find:

- Fresh water and kammik nuts in the jungle (see G1a: "Floe Jungle," below).
- A damaged dinghy on the shores (see G1b: "Floe Shores," below).

## G1a. Floe Jungle

*The chill air becomes instantly humid under the canopy of these broad-leafed jungle trees. Rivulets of water trickle through the loamy soil.*

Characters who investigate this jungle find a tiny, fist-sized portal to the Elemental Plane of Water that trickles an infinite supply of clean, fresh water. They also find kammik nuts in the canopy.

**Picking Kammik Nuts.** To pick a bunch of nuts, a creature must first climb the 10-foot-tall tree with a



successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check, then make a successful DC 13 Strength check to tear the nuts away. A creature using a dagger can make an attack roll against the tree (AC 13) instead.

If the second check fails, the creature falls off the tree and takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage when it hits the ground.

### 3G1b. Floe Shores

*Jutting from the sand on the far side of the island is a small dinghy with its sails mostly unharmed. Beyond this shore is endless aether, stretching out to all horizons.*

Characters who investigate the shore find a dinghy, a craft too small to sail the open aether, but perfect for sailing between islands within the reef. It's damaged, but there's enough material scattered across the beach to perform makeshift repairs.

**Making Repairs.** To repair the dinghy, a character must spend 1 hour working, then make a successful DC 10 Strength or Intelligence check. A character with ranks in the Carpenter role automatically succeeds on this check.

### Setting Sail

Once the characters repair the dinghy, they can travel to the other islands in Shipgrave Reef, but not beyond the reef itself (see "Traveling between Islands" earlier in this chapter).

## G2. TEKTITE ISLAND

Tektite Island is covered with small, black, bulbous glass objects called tektites, created when meteorites struck the beach's sand. Tektites resemble obsidian, and can be thrown as an improvised weapon (range 20/60 feet) that deals 1d4 slashing damage. The tektite shatters when it strikes anything solid.

When the characters arrive on Tektite Island, read or paraphrase the following:

*Strewn across the black sand shore of this island are fist-sized bulbs of coarse black glass. A copse of jungle trees occupies the center of this island.*

### Searching Tektite Island

A character who searches the island for useful items must spend 1 hour to scout the beach and then delve into the jungle. After doing so, they make a DC 5 Intelligence (Investigation) check. On a success, they find a wild **boar** in the jungle, as well as fresh water and kammik nuts (see "G2A. Tektite Jungle," below).

If this check succeeds by 5 or more, the characters also find a bottled message on the shores (area G2b).

### G2a: Tektite Jungle

This jungle is very similar to the jungle on Floe Island (area G1a). Additionally, this jungle shelters a wild boar population. While deadly, anyone skilled enough to kill a boar can turn it into a fresh meal. After enduring weeks of preserved rations, a character gains inspiration after eating fresh-cooked meat.

**Boar Fight.** When approaching the jungle's edge, a single **boar** bursts from the tree line and attacks the characters. Use the Aether Shoreline battle map included in this episode.

**Picking Kammik Nuts.** To pick a bunch of nuts, a creature must first climb the 10-foot-tall tree with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check, then make a successful DC 13 Strength check to tear the nuts away. A creature using a dagger can make an attack roll against the tree (AC 13) instead.

If the second check fails, the creature falls off the tree and takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage when it hits the ground.

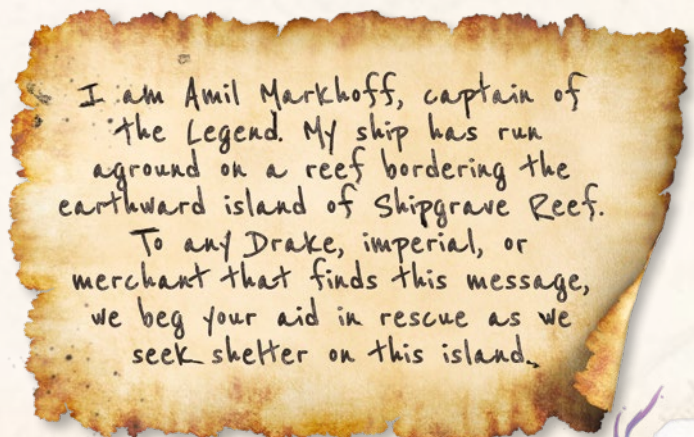
### G2b: Tektite Shores

These desolate shores are covered in tektites. On the beach is a damaged longboat—an oared boat that larger vessels keep aboard to transport crew from ship to shore. It isn't seaworthy, but could be repaired by spending an hour gathering scattered supplies from the beach, and another hour fixing it (no check required). If a character's Intelligence (Investigation) check to search Tektite Islands succeeded by 5 or more, they find a stoppered glass bottle containing a scrap of parchment.

Scrawled on this paper in charcoal is the following message:

*I am Amil Markhoff, captain of the Legend. My ship has run aground on a reef bordering the earthward island of Shipgrave Reef. To any Drake, imperial, or merchant that finds this message, we beg your aid in rescue as we seek shelter on this island.*

Years ago, Captain Markhoff's desperate missive didn't go out to sea as hoped, and was carried to the shores of this equally wayward isle. The wreck of the *Legend* is on a reef (area G6) near Bulwark Island (area G5).





## G3. AIRWARD RIDGE

*A reef of black rock protrudes from the surface of the aether. Though the reef is deadly to any ship that unwittingly crosses it, the small patches of beautiful purple-and-teal flowers that cover its surface belie the danger it poses.*

These flowers are merblood flowers, one of the essential ingredients to an antidote for aether fever. There are four patches of these flowers.

**Picking Merblood Flowers.** Any attempt to pick merblood flowers is cut short when the aether-infused plants react to being dismembered and rise as four **awakened shrubs**. They don't understand any language, and violently attack their assailants.

A creature that makes calming sounds and shows a willingness to be peaceful can make a DC 8 Charisma (Persuasion) check with disadvantage, as the shrubs can't understand language. On a success, the shrubs stop attacking. Following that up with a successful DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check made with disadvantage convinces the shrubs to peacefully surrender a handful of flowers, despite the discomfort it causes them.

## G4. CORKBOTTLE ISLAND

*A cloak of steam surrounds this small, black island. As you draw closer, you see it's almost perfectly circular, and is wider at its top than its base, so it vaguely resembles a cork in the neck of a bottle. The steam hisses up from where the island meets the surface of the aether.*

Corkbottle Island is aptly named, for it's a blockage that formed inside a portal to the Elemental Plane of Fire. Long ago, this portal created a volcano on the Astral Plane that spewed forth the magma which created Shipgrave Reef.

**Walk of Fire.** This island is hot to the touch, but not hot enough to burn a creature wearing boots while walking on it.

**Aether Vapor.** The air is thick with toxic aether vapors. A creature that stays on this island for a number of minutes equal to their Constitution score contracts aether fever (see the "Aether Poisoning" section of the *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide*).

## Unbottling the Portal

Detonating a powder keg or another explosive cracks the island, giving the portal below the chance it needs to surge open. Magma begins to rapidly ooze from the cracks in the island, and 1d4 hours later, a full eruption shakes the islands.

**Eruption Developments.** This eruption causes the merrow in the reef (both the one in the random encounter table and the one lurking beneath area G8) to investigate. The merrow are distracted for 4 hours or until attacked.

## G5. BULWARK ISLAND

Bulwark Island is home to the largest jungle on Shipgrave Reef, and is rife with wildlife ranging from wild boars to parrots to small monkeys. This thriving ecosystem also contains clues to where the survivors of the *Legend* fled, many years ago.

## Searching Bulwark Island

A character who searches the island for useful items must spend 1 hour to scout the beach and then delve into the jungle. After doing so, they can make a DC 8 Intelligence (Investigation) check. On a success, they find:

- A long-abandoned campsite in the jungle now home to a troop of monkeys, as well as fresh water and kammik nuts (see G5a: Bulwark Jungle," below).
- The half-submerged wreck of the *Legend*, lodged upon a nearby reef (see G5b: "Bulwark Shores," below).





## G5a. Bulwark Jungle

Characters who investigate this jungle find a tiny, fist-sized portal to the Elemental Plane of Water that trickles an infinite supply of clean, fresh water. They also find kammik nuts in the canopy.

Additionally, the characters also find a camp that was clearly abandoned years, perhaps even decades, ago. Read or paraphrase the following:

*A half dozen tents made of tattered canvas stand in a circle, overgrown with jungle creepers. A small troop of monkeys chitters and leaps around the abandoned camp, cracking hard-shelled nuts on stones and playing. They squeak and flee as you approach.*

This camp was made by crew of the *Legend* after their ship ran aground. It was abandoned years ago after it was attacked by merrow.

**Searching the Camp.** Characters who spend 1 hour searching the camp can make a DC 5 Intelligence (Investigation) check. On a success, they find a wooden stake lodged into the ground. Words in Common are carved into the stake's surface. It reads:

*Crew taken to large, rocky island by beasts from the depths. These islands are unsafe. Do not linger.*

Except for the kammik nuts the monkeys were cracking and eating, there's nothing of value left in this camp.

**Lingering in Camp.** If the characters remain at the camp for 2 hours, two **apes** wander in and try to scare the characters off. The characters can instead scare the apes off with a successful DC 13 Charisma (Intimidation) check. If the check fails, the apes attack, but flee if reduced to 9 hit points or fewer.

**Picking Kammik Nuts.** To pick a bunch of nuts, a creature must first climb the 10-foot-tall tree with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check, then make a successful DC 13 Strength check to tear the nuts away. A creature using a dagger can make an attack roll against the tree (AC 13) instead.

If the second check fails, the creature falls off the tree and takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage when it hits the ground.

## G5b. Bulwark Shores

From these shores, the characters can see a black reef, upon which the rotting timbers of a long-lost ship rest (see area G6). A character who uses a spyglass and makes a successful DC 11 Wisdom (Perception) check spies the ship's figurehead and its name written upon its wounded hull.

- The figurehead is an elven figure wearing a tunic and a pointed hat, with sword and shield in hand.
- This ship is the *Legend*, a notorious pirate ship rumored to have been lost in this reef years ago.

## G6. EARTHWARD RIDGE

The wreck of the *Legend* is decomposing on this reef. Characters brave enough to delve into the aether can explore the sunken portions of this ship for its lost treasure. Its true valuables, however, have already been hauled into the vault beneath area G8 by the merrow residing there.

### Diving into the Wreck

Entering the wreck of the *Legend* requires characters to hold their breath and swim through the aether. Most of the ship has collapsed and is inaccessible, but three areas can still be reached from the surface.

Each area is marked with the time it takes to reach from the surface (which is the same amount of time it takes to surface from there). The time it takes to travel to each area is halved for creatures with a swimming speed. Swimming in aether is similar to swimming in water; for more information, see the "Swimming in Aether" section of the *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide*.

### G6a. Gunnery Stations

*Requires 30 seconds to swim to*

The ship's cannons have degraded beyond repair. A magically reinforced keg of gunpowder has survived, however.

### G6b. Crew's Quarters

*Requires 60 seconds to swim to*

Empty hammocks float like specters in the abandoned crew's quarters. A character who spends 1 minute gathering valuables from the room can salvage 50 gp worth of earrings, pendants, and coins.

### G6c. Captain's Quarters

*Requires 90 seconds to swim to*

An empty bed, a broken desk, and a shattered mirror are all that remain in this room. A character who spends 1 minute searching this room finds an ivory carving of an astral merfolk wrought in stunning detail, and a golden cameo necklace worth 50 gp that contains an image of the same merfolk.



## G7. SENTINEL ISLAND

Sentinel Island is a desolate waste, bearing no life on its rocky, windswept surface. Though the largest isle of Shipgrave Reef, Sentinel Island has nothing for the characters to find, save a warning.

### Searching Sentinel Island

Searching this island takes 1 hour. After doing so, any characters who searched can make a DC 8 Intelligence (Investigation) check. On a success, they find a stone tablet in the center of the island's rocky plateau.

## Sentinel Headstone

This crudely carved stone reads:

*I AM CAPTAIN AMIL MARKHOFF. BENEATH  
THIS STONE, I IMPART MY LAST MEMORIES TO  
WHICHEVER DOOMED SOUL FINDS MY GRAVE.*

Markhoff made this stone in the days after his failed battle with the astral merrow that attacked his crew. Feeling his true self slipping from him, this stone is a monument to a man who died, and was reborn as a merrow beneath the island. Digging through the compacted gravel beneath this stone reveals a tattered journal. It reads:

### Day 1

Much of my previous captain's log was lost in the shipwreck. I jettisoned the aetherlogged and useless pages to save my remaining paper. Today is our first day marooned upon this desolate reef. I've done my best to keep the crew's hopes high, but short of creating a bonfire on the island to draw a ship near, we have no hope of rescue, or escape.

I will remain confident and brave, as befits a captain.

### Day 10

We numbered twenty strong-and-able sailors when we pulled ourselves from the aether. In the few days it took us to scrape together an antidote, half that number succumbed to aether poisoning. We put them out of their misery as soon as it came to the delirium; we've no healers among us, no one to break a curse.

We're lucky to be on an island so full of life; we could live here for many months, if need be, so blessed with animals and water it is. This reef has its name for a reason—I believe there might be a vessel trapped here that's less wrecked than ours. I've given my quartermaster command of the camp while I'm away, and begun plans to scout the nearby islands. It'll feel good to stretch my fins again, merfolk aren't meant to be away from the aether for weeks at a time.

### Day 12

Amid scouting, I dove into the wreck of the *Legend* and managed to find my aether pearl before the ship's hold collapsed. I don't think I can go back into that hulk again. I felt my chest shuddering and hands shaking as I emerged onto the sand.

This pearl is my treasure, the crew's treasure. We fought and died for it before we were smashed against this godsforsaken reef. I'll keep it safe, even from the crew, lest it stoke their greed and unrest.

### Day 21

Scouting continues fruitlessly. The sailors are beginning to lose hope, but I have assured them that these islands will be but a temporary home for us, so long as we maintain the signal fire. We have fresh water, fruit, nuts, and game. They've told me grim tales of a creature stalking them along the shore, though it never ventures into the jungle. I don't doubt their stories, but I must maintain their spirits.

Meanwhile, I continue my search for a way home.

### Day 43

I feel fear every time I set foot upon the rocky, waterward isle of this reef. I've taken to calling it Sentinel Island, for its rocky skull seems to look over the other islands like a stern watchman. Something is wrong with this island, yet I am drawn toward it. So much flotsam surrounds its airward end, but nothing large enough to be a complete wreck. I suspect there's a cove of some sort hidden from sight.

### Day 61

Just as I found Sentinel Island's airward cove, I was forced to return to camp for weeks to ensure the crew's stability. Then, this morning, I awoke to the sound of screams. The creature the sailors spoke of had mustered the courage to enter the jungle and attack the camp. I think it a merrow—my foul kin. It drowned the man it captured and swam toward that dark island—Sentinel. I conclude this entry, perhaps my last, and begin pursuit. The other sailors have no way off this island; I must trust they will endure this panic.

### Day 67

I write final entry. I feel strange.  
Didn't fare well battle. Now escape. Before  
changes happen. Will warn crew. Make grave  
for me. Beware cove. I return there.  
Protect pearl.





## G8. WATERWARD RIDGE

Characters who search the airward (northern) side of Sentinel Island see an imposing ridge of rocks emerging from the aether. A character who observes the ridge with a spyglass from Sentinel Island, or who explores the ridge for at least 1 hour, finds a stone door carved into the ridge's volcanic rock (no check required).

### Amil's Door

This door was carved by Amil Markhoff as a surface entrance to the secret cove he discovered while scouting the reef. He crafted it while he was slowly transforming into an astral merrow, while his mind slowly deteriorated. He placed an enchantment on the door to stump intruders, but allow him easy access.

**The Puzzle.** Above the door is carved MY NAME.

Upon the door are four blank rectangular spaces the size of playing cards. If a creature traces the letters *A*, *M*, *I*, and *L* onto these blanks with a finger or a makeshift stylus, the letters begin to glow as the door rumbles and slides into the rock, revealing the passage beyond.

**Blow the Door Down.** The door can also be forced open with a successful DC 21 Strength (Athletics) check, or broken down by reducing it to 0 hit points. The door has AC 13, 20 hit points, damage threshold 15, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. This sturdy stone door's damage threshold means that unless a single source deals 15 or more damage to the door, it takes no damage. Exploding a powder keg might be the only way for the characters to destroy it.

Breaking the door raises a racket, and alerts the astral merrow lurking in the vault (area G8B) below.

### What Lies Below

When the characters open the door to the vault, read or paraphrase the following:

*Crudely carved stairs descend into darkness, quickly turning a corner and obscuring the remaining descent from view. A cold wind blows from the depths.*

Once the characters descend the steps, proceed to the vestibule; area G8A in chapter 3.





## CHAPTER 3: THE LEGEND'S LOST TREASURE

In this chapter, the characters descend into the vault where Amil Markhoff, merfolk captain of the wrecked ship *Legend*, met a tragic end, and stowed his great treasure.

Amil Markhoff, once a proud astral merfolk, was gravely wounded in his battle with the astral merrow that lurked in this vault—the same merrow from the “Stalking Merfolk” encounter in chapter 2 of this episode. Now, Markhoff has succumbed to the aether in his wounds and transformed into a merrow himself. He lurks within this vault, jealously guarding his treasure and obsessing over repairing the ships he’s salvaged from the reef—something he longed to do as a captain, and now can only fixate upon as a slowly degenerating merrow.

### AREAS OF THE VAULT

The following areas are keyed to the Shipgrave Vault map.

#### SHIPGRAVE VAULT FEATURES

The rooms of Shipgrave Vault have the following general features:

**Dimensions.** The vault’s ceilings are 40 feet high, except for in the low, cramped tunnels, which are only 5 feet wide and 6 feet high.

**Lighting.** The rooms of the subterranean vault are dimly lit by natural light filtering in through the exits, or by the blue glow of the aether pearl.

**Sound.** Amplified by the high ceilings, the vault echoes with the sound of crashing aether waves. Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing are made with disadvantage. Only loud noises

**Walls.** The walls of this cavern are naturally rounded, formed by lava tubes from the volcano that once made up this reef.

#### G8A. VESTIBULE

After descending the stairs behind Amil’s puzzle door, the characters emerge into a 20-foot-diameter vestibule. Another tunnel continues forward into darkness—a bottleneck the characters can use if they retreat from combat in the next areas.

#### G8B. TREASURE CHAMBER

Read or paraphrase the following when the characters enter this area:

*You step into a cavernous chamber supported by natural stone pillars. A blue glow emanates from a plinth in the chamber’s center, casting an eerie light over a carpet of glittering gold coins, rotting wooden chests, and other treasure.*

If the characters entered the vault quietly, this chamber has no creatures inside it. If they blew the door down or forced it open, Amil Markhoff the **astral merrow** (see appendix A) is hiding behind one of the pillars. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 13 or higher spot the merrow. When a character sees Markhoff, read or paraphrase the following:

*Lurking behind one of the room’s natural pillars is a grotesque, fishlike humanoid creature covered with spines that peers at you with blank, lamp-like eyes. Its long fingers twitch anxiously as it watches you, waiting for you to draw closer.*

Markhoff attacks any creature that moves within 15 feet of the glowing aether pearl on the plinth in the chamber’s center (see “Treasure,” below). He fights ferociously, but never moves more than 15 feet away from the aether pearl. If a character uses ranged attacks to take advantage of this, Markhoff retreats behind one of the pillars in a way that gives him total cover from the ranged attacker.

If Markhoff isn’t calmed, he fights to the death.

#### Calming Markhoff

A character who makes a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check recognizes something reluctant and defensive in this merrow’s fighting style.

A character who recognizes this creature as Captain Amil Markhoff can convince him to stop attacking with a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check. A character has advantage on the check if they mention Markhoff’s name. If convinced to stop, Markhoff looks searchingly at the character and approaches slowly, like a scared animal. He haltingly, growlingly says, “I am Markhoff. This pearl is mine.” Markhoff won’t let the pearl be taken while he lives, no matter the circumstances. If the characters invite Markhoff to join them, he eagerly shows them the ships he’s been building in Detritus Cove (area G8C).

#### Treasure

This chamber is home to 500 gp in gold and finely crafted objets d’art. The real prize of this treasure hoard, however, is an aether pearl—a 1-inch-diameter aetherium stone so pure, it could be cut with so many facets that it appears round.

This pearl is near priceless, and its facets contain tremendous amounts of stable magical energy. Merchants in honest ports or the Isle of Drakes may offer a price for it, typically 1d4 × 1,000 gp, but this amount pales in comparison to its true value, and any character who makes a successful DC 11 Wisdom (Insight) check while dealing with a merchant realizes such. Its true value lies in trading



for magic items: the aether pearl is worth one Very Rare magic item or four Rare magic items.

The aether pearl could also easily be worth a ship—a frigate, or maybe even a galleon—but few merchants would make such a deal. Despite its value, something about the pearl’s tiny size makes trading it for something so large as a ship seem wrong.

## G8c. DETRITUS COVE

If the characters entered the dungeon without breaking down the door, the **astral merrow** (see appendix A) Amil Markhoff can be found here; he reacts as described in area G8B, except he ferociously and mercilessly attacks whoever has his aether pearl.

Read or paraphrase the following when the characters enter this area:

*Aetherial waves lap against the shore of this cove, sheltered from sight by a veil of stalactites by the cave’s mouth. A two-masted ship over one hundred feet long dominates the interior of this cave: a schooner clearly cobbled together from salvage, giving it a unique look that’s at once Karelagne, Ayrissian, and piratical.*

## One Ship from Six

The two-masted schooner in this cove was cobbled together from salvage and repaired by Markhoff, who harbors a confusing, secret longing to return to the Isle of Drakes. Markhoff prevents anyone from taking this ship, unless he’s been calmed (as described in area G8B).

This ship is seaworthy, and the characters can sail it away from Shipgrave Reef, provided they have a captain, a navigator, and a helmsman. Even if the person filling a role has no ranks in that role, they can perform it at a basic level. (See the “New Mechanics” part of the *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide* for more information on crew roles.)

This schooner was cobbled together from six different ships, whose names are all present somewhere on its hull. The names of these six ships were:

- AMS *Storm Rider*
- AMS *Trade Wind*
- *Gambit*
- *Heroes’ Welcome*
- INS *Hellion*
- INS *Thunderbolt*

Of course, the characters can rename this ship to whatever they wish. For game information about schooners, see the “New Mechanics” part of the *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide*.

## Treasure

A simple sea chart of the Aetherial Expanse is unfurled on a table near the ships. This chart shows the winds and routes most efficient for sailing from Shipgrave Reef to the Isle of Drakes.

# ONWARD TO PIRACY!

The characters now have their own ship, but they lack a crew. For a group such as them, made up of people from many nations, laden with treasure, and piloting a salvaged ship, they may have no choice but to make port at the legendary pirate haven known as the Isle of Drakes. It’s the best place for a ragtag crew to expand their ranks and learn of new opportunities for profit and plunder.

Episode 2 of this Fable takes place in the environs of the Isle of Drakes. However, if the characters go a-pirating elsewhere in the Aetherial Expanse, you can use the ship battle rules and other information in the *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide* to create your own adventures, before the need to sell their stolen booty on the black market inevitably brings them to the Isle of Drakes in their own time.

## CREWING YOUR SHIP

The “New Mechanics” part of the *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide* explains the importance of fully crewing a sailing ship on the Aetherial Expanse. Without a crew of their own, the characters must fill the roles aboard their ship, which is a tiring process, and one which no one wants to keep up for long.

Even with no ranks in a crew role, a character can perform that role passably; they just won’t gain any bonuses to performing that role.

## Prisoners as Crew

Many pirates became pirates because they were pressed into service, which is to say, they were kidnapped or captured and forced to work. If the characters spared the Karelagne sailors from the “Burning *Predestination*” encounter in chapter 2, those sailors each have 1 rank in a role of your choice.

**Ranks.** These sailors are nothing special, but they’ll help fill in the gaps in the characters’ crew roster, and they’re happy for an opportunity to leave Shipgrave Reef.

**Development.** After this episode, it’s up to the GM to decide who these NPCs are, and if they’ll stick with the characters once they reach dry land.

## Markhoff as Crew

Due to his long isolation from society and his corruption into an astral merrow, Markhoff is twitchy and hard to communicate with. His physical transformation polluted his mind, but if he was calmed and encouraged to leave Shipgrave Reef with the characters, he can still be a font of experience for this ragtag crew. His breadth of knowledge allows him to provide the characters with a skilled sailor in a trio of positions.

**Ranks.** Markhoff has 2 ranks in the Captain, the Carpenter, and the Quartermaster roles. Though he can only fill one role at a time, his experience will be useful if the characters are unable to properly fill one of these three roles.

**Development.** After this episode, it’s up to the GM to decide how Markhoff interacts with the characters, and if he’ll accompany them further once they reach dry land.



# APPENDIX A: NEW MONSTERS

This appendix details the new creatures that appear in this episode of *Pirates of the Aetherial Expanse*.



## 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.

### VARIANT: AETHERCASTING

As aetherbeasts draw their power directly from the aether, they have the ability to 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. (See the "Aetherbeasts" section of the *Aetherial Expanse Setting Guide*.)

## 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*.





## 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.

### 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

**Blood Frenzy.** The merrow has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

**Limited Amphibiousness.** The merrow can breathe aether and water, but it needs to be submerged at least once every 4 hours to avoid suffocating.

**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.





## CAPTAIN SKERRICK

Argo Skerrick was formerly the wayfinder of the Karelagne warship the *INS Predestination*. He declared himself captain amid the Battle of Shipgrave Reef and drew many like-minded, power-hungry sailors to his side.

Skerrick cares for little personal hygiene, and dresses in utilitarian rags that keep him warm and contain multitudinous pockets for his spell components. His greasy blond hair hangs in front of his haggard face. Magical experiments with consuming aether ravaged his vocal cords, and now he speaks only in a harsh, grating whisper.

Loyal to the Karelagne Empire only so long as it serves him, Skerrick is bent on finding the treasure of Shipgrave Reef, which he suspects is an aether pearl that was stolen from a Karelagne laboratory just over two decades ago. This highly refined aetherium gemstone could amplify his magical powers.

### CAPTAIN SKERRICK

Medium Humanoid (Human), Neutral Evil

**Armor Class** 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

**Hit Points** 45 (10d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

**Saving Throws** Int +5, Wis +3

**Skills** Arcana +5, History +5

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Dwarvish, Elvish

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

**Sea Legs.** Skerrick has advantage on ability checks and saving throws to resist being knocked prone.

### ACTIONS

**Blazing Strike.** *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d10) fire damage.

**Spellcasting.** Skerrick casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability:

*At will:* *light*, *mage hand*

*1/day each:* *counterspell*, *mage armor*, *misty step*, *shield*





## SAILOR

An experienced sailor is familiar with all facets of working on a functioning ship, and has the knowledge and physical strength to competently work across the vessel from serving as lookout in the crow's nest to swabbing the poop deck 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.



# OPEN GAME LICENSE

## OPEN GAME LICENSE Version 1.0a

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc ("Wizards"). All Rights Reserved.

**1. Definitions:** (a) "Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b) "Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d) "Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) "Use", "Used" or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.

**2. The License:** This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.

**3. Offer and Acceptance:** By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.

**4. Grant and Consideration:** In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty---free, non--- exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.

**5. Representation of Authority to Contribute:** If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You

represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.

**6. Notice of License Copyright:** You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.

**7. Use of Product Identity:** You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co---adaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.

**8. Identification:** If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.

**9. Updating the License:** Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.

**10. Copy of this License:** You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.

**11. Use of Contributor Credits:** You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.

**12. Inability to Comply:** If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.

**13. Termination:** This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.

**14. Reformation:** If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

**15. COPYRIGHT NOTICE:** Open Game License v 1.0a © 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

System Reference Document 5.1 © 2016, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.; Authors Mike Mearls, Jeremy Crawford, Chris Perkins, Rodney Thompson, Peter Lee, James Wyatt, Robert J. Schwalb, Bruce R. Cordell, Chris Sims, and Steve Townshend, based on original material by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.







