

The rogues prove themselves heroes or scoundrels as they rescue — or extort! — the survivors of a deadly shipwreck; and uncover an intriguing mystery!

*Grim Tidings can be played alone or as the introduction to the full-length adventure **A Night of Blood and Teeth**, forthcoming from Pinnacle for Lankhmar: City of Thieves. This text will be updated with a link once it's available!*

It is a cold, gray night in the city of Lankhmar. The heroes, scoundrels, warriors, and rogues of the party mournfully pass the night in the Black Kettle, a tavern near the water, between the North and South Docks. Most are deep in their cups, musing over love spurned, gambles lost, or the glory of battles long forgotten.

Tell the players this, and that their mood is melancholy. Ask them why, and let each of them tell their own tale of woe. Reward those who do with a Benny at the end of their performance (this is like an Interlude but the focus is on something that's making them sad and depressed).

Once everyone has had a chance to tell their story of misfortune, read the following.

It's odd. When you entered the Black Kettle several hours ago you were laughing and congratulating each other on your last misadventure. Now just a few short hours later, armed with better food and ale than the place lets on, you find yourself—and your friends—seeped in melancholy.

Something feels...wrong. Unnatural.

Suddenly the door bursts open and two seedy-looking rogues enter, carrying a third man bleeding viciously from the thigh. His clothes are torn and even in the gloom you can see chunks of meat and the glint of bone.

"Thazzi!" one of the men yells to the one-eyed, one-handed former marine who owns the place. "We need your help!"

The rogues clear plates and mugs violently from a long table and throw their dying friend atop it. Thazzi grimaces but grabs a towel and a bucket of water to help.

Thazzi has Healing d4 but Glib's wounds are beyond his meager skills. If the player characters get involved, they can, however. If they don't, Glib continues gushing blood onto the tavern floor until he shudders and expires.

Either way, everyone in the party makes a Notice roll. The highest roll sees the glint of something gold clutched tightly in Glib's hands. The other rogues notice it a heartbeat afterward and tuck his hand up into his chest, hiding whatever treasure he's found without taking it from him (yet).

RESCUERS OR ROGUES?

If the adventurers save Glib, one of the other rogues, a rough but comely lass named Lyssa, tells the group what led to her friend's dire predicament. If the group doesn't help Glib, she comes to them and phrases the following in the spirit of a bargain rather than gratitude.

"Me and Punt 'ere wuz out by the rocks just pas' the South Gate when we heard what sounded like thunder. But there weren't no rain and no storm. One's comin', but t'aint here yet, y'see. So, bein' the curious sort, we head up the shore a bit more and see this little sloop

all crashed up in the shoals. Don't know why it didn't pull into the docks, proper-like.

We saw some survivors swimmin' to shore but most wuz all cut up and bloody and didn't make it. We figured they'd been attacked by pirates. Or maybe they wuz pirates. Maybe that's why they avoided the docks, eh?

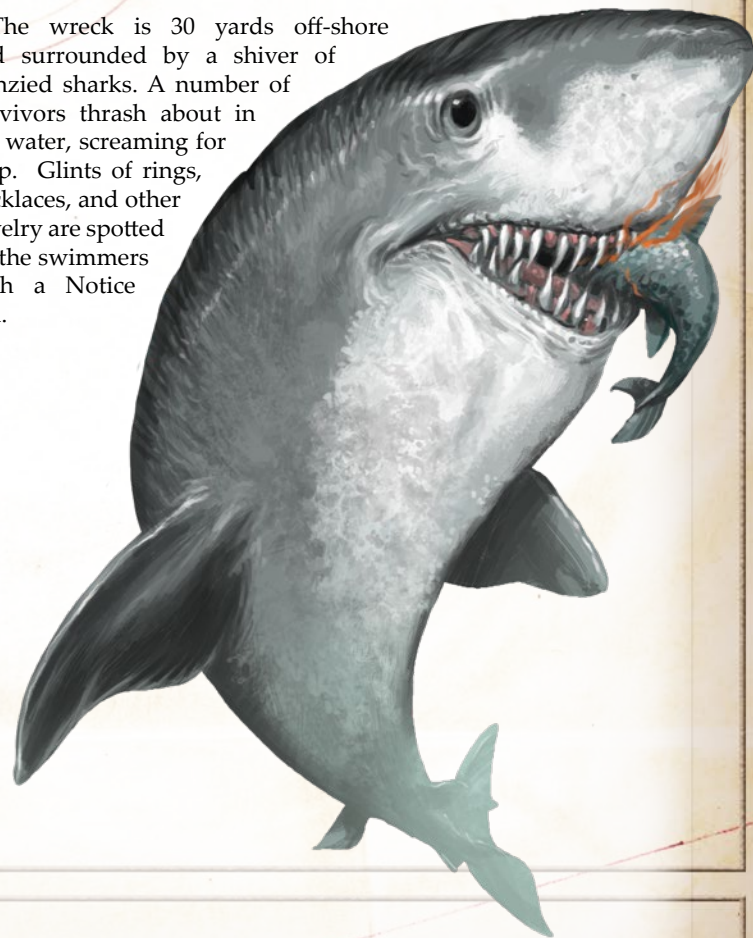
One of 'em almost made it. Crawled right up into the surf, holdin' up a hand for help. Glib waded in and took his hand but then this big shark rose up and bit 'im! We yelled at Glib to run for it—we ain't no swimmers, see—but he got bit too! We dragged Glibby out and ran here—we know Thazzi's stitched a few cuts in his day as a marine.

That wreck's still there. Help us, uh, rescue the survivors and maybe we can gather up whatever goodies those who didn't make it left behind, eh?"

THE WRECK

Lyssa and Punt lead the group south from the Black Kettle, about 100 yards south of the South Docks to a short and rocky shoal. The vessel is the *Voyager* out of Ilthmar, and it was carrying a most dangerous and precious cargo that will be revealed in the upcoming adventure *The Night of Blood and Teeth*. It's not important to this tale, except that it is the source of the sudden feeling of depression washing over Lankhmar.

The wreck is 30 yards off-shore and surrounded by a shiver of frenzied sharks. A number of survivors thrash about in the water, screaming for help. Glints of rings, necklaces, and other jewelry are spotted on the swimmers with a Notice roll.



Those with noble intentions can attempt to wade in and help the struggling survivors. Those of a more selfish bent can do the same but for the reward they plan to extort from them! Either way, the only way to save or salvage is to enter the bloody surf.

GOOD SAMARITANS

The survivors are a mix of sailors and lesser merchants from Ilthmar. Pulling the exhausted and panicked men from the sea is a modified Dramatic Task. Here's how it works.

- There are 10 possible survivors and five rounds before a massive pack of sharks devours them all.
- At the start of each round, each player decides if he'll fight off sharks or save a survivor. Make sure this is clear to the group so they can make an intelligent choice or all the merchants may die quickly!
- Then, those fighting off sharks make a Fighting roll (Spellcasting and Shooting won't help here as the sharks are underwater). A success stops one shark attack, and a raise stops two. (Don't roll damage—the hero simply prevents the sharks from attacking someone this round.)
- For each of the six attacks that *isn't* stopped, roll a die. Odd, it kills a survivor. Even, it bites a player character in the water for 2d6 damage.
- After the shark attacks are resolved, those who attempt to save survivors must make the lower of their Strength or Swimming rolls to wade out, battle the waves, and haul in a struggling swimmer. A success saves one victim, and a raise saves two. Once saved, the survivor can no longer be harmed by the shark attacks. Assume Lyssa and Punt tend to the wounded on the beach while the party deals with the more dangerous threat.

After five rounds, the Dramatic Task ends. Any survivors who weren't saved sink beneath the waves in a froth of red.

Of those who remain, roll a d6. On a roll of 1–4, the character is a sailor who has 2d20 silver smerduks worth of minor jewelry on his person. On a 5–6, he's a merchant with 2d20 gold rilks worth of coins or jewelry. The victims are happy to give up half of the wealth on their person if they're rescued from the terrible savagery of the sharks. Of course if the heroes are truly scoundrels, they might threaten, pilfer, or cajole more from those they rescued. This is up to the rogues...this is Lankhmar, after all.

ENTER THE BLADES

As the heroes lie panting on the sand, healing the wounded, or extorting cash from the merchants, one of them tells the group what happened.

"I'm Nestor. We're all merchants from Ilthmar. Most of us are just agents of larger houses, really. No one of import. We were supposed to berth at the South Docks as we had a thousand times before but this one stranger, a bald man who kept to himself the whole way, paid the captain 100 rilks to let him off on these shoals before putting in. He had a small pouch he guarded carefully. It was hidden beneath his cloak but he checked it constantly and I saw it a time or two. Must have been something important—and something he didn't want the customs house to know about.

He had just loaded up on a dinghy for shore when something massive hit us from below. The ship couldn't move and started to sink, so we grabbed what we could and went into the water. The only small boat was the one the bald man took so we swam for it. That's when...they came..."

Nestor points out to the sea and the fins still circling through the settling chum. He knows little else of use. The captain died early and the sailors know nothing of the bald man. If they're questioned, however, one of them says the crew was struck by a terrible melancholy the moment he boarded. (Change this to a merchant if no sailors survived.)

In truth, the ship was followed by Simorgyans and cracked by a deep rusher. This tale will be told in future adventures.

THE WORST KIND OF ESCORTS

Once that information is conveyed, a group of 12 brigands, the Bloody Blades, show up and walk carefully but confidently down the short slope to the beach.

"What happened here?" says the leader, a crafty rogue named Karstan. He wants the story and gets it from Nestor if the party holds back for some reason. If it doesn't come out that the bald man jumped ship and vanished, Karstan asks specifically. "We're looking for a bald fellow. Kind of rough-looking. You see what happened to him?"

The Blades were paid to meet and escort the bald man to a rendezvous somewhere in the Waterfront District. He vanished and will not be seen again until an adventure later in this series.

What happens next is up to the group. The Blades aren't looking for a fight for no reason, but if they sense they're being lied to, see too much of the merchant's treasure, or Karstan feels his authority is on the line, he demands half of whatever salvage they found and will fight to get it. Otherwise, the Blades can be convinced to leave with some convincing roleplaying and a Persuasion (or Intimidation) roll since their "client" disappeared.

- **Bloody Blades (12):** Use the Bandit profile from *Lankhmar: City of Thieves*. Karstan is a Wild Card with Agility d8, Fighting d8, and the First Strike Edge. All are armed with short swords (Str+d6).

A BRIEF RESPITE

Lyssa and Punt, also rewarded by some of the survivors or loaded with a bit of salvage, suggest the group return to the Black Kettle and warm up by Thazzi's fire. Assuming they do so, the owner buys them the first round if they attempted any sense of rescue. Thazzi was a mercenary marine and knows the terror of a shipwreck in dangerous waters.

The respite is well and needed, for Lankhmar is about to burn...

See what happens next in *A Night of Blood and Teeth!* Soon to be available at www.peginc.com, *DriveThruRPG*, or FREE if you back our current *Lankhmar* Kickstarter!

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