

The Mercy of Night

What the Dead Do Not Know



At midnight, the dead walk home, and the living stay behind.

The Mercy of Night is an adventure for 4 characters of levels 4 to 6.



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An Open Dungeons RPG adventure for four characters of levels 4 to 6

About this adventure

Running time: one session of couple of hours.

Content notes: grief and the loss of loved ones, including a daughter who died in childbirth; drowning; corpses and body horror. If a player isn't cool with this, tough shit, don't invite them to the table.

Credits

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Art and maps: Open Dungeons Publishing

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DN NOTE: Playing with 6th-level characters

The keel fight is the only encounter that scales with level. If every character is 6th level, use the level 6 Guest profile (156 HP, Save TN 9). If the party mixes 6th-level characters with lower levels, don't use the highest level's profile. Add up the party's actual maximum HP and use "Adjust before play": the Guest's HP equals that total minus 36, and its Save TN is 16 minus its HP divided by 20 (rounded down), minimum 5. For example, a 6th-level fighter (72 HP) with a 5th-level cleric (40 HP), wizard (25 HP) and thief (35 HP) totals 172 HP, so the Guest gets 136 HP and Save TN 10.

Expect 6th-level magic to shorten the night:

A 6th-level cleric's Banish Curse permanently cleanses the registry, which counts as burning it.

Sight Beyond Veils exposes every false relative.

The party's own cleric can cast Return to Life on a recovered passenger, using its six-hour nighttime ritual.

Let these work. They solve the mechanics, but each passenger's choice to leave still has to be earned. Vetch, the Skeletons and the powder-room Skulker stay as written; they're meant to be avoidable.



INTRODUCTION

THE INVITATION

Begin in the tavern at 10 p.m. Nessa is alive; someone heard her beneath the pier at 9 p.m. The passenger sheet is genuine. Mara offers 120 GP, a lantern, two 50-foot ropes, and a handcart. Her plea is read aloud at the end of "Adventure begins - the tavern".

WHAT THE SHIP REMEMBERS

Forty years ago, Captain Rován Vale repaired his pirate ship with coffin wood stolen from Mourning Isle and, with it, brought aboard the Guest, a creature that copies the dead. His bride, Elian, the island's keeper of the dead, opened the sea valves to stop him; he locked her in the bridal cabin, and the ship sank. His purser, Orsino Vetch, rose as a Wight and still keeps the book of names in the registry, area 22. Tonight Edda rang the ship's buried bell, and the wreck rose. From shore, people hear the voices of their dead. The ship offers three mourners their loved ones back; at midnight, it will take their lives in payment. Underneath it all runs one question: what would persuade someone to leave a loved one behind a second time?

TONIGHT'S PASSENGERS

Edda, surgery 12: believes her husband Jory has returned. Show that the foundry fire was not his fault. The watch captain knows; Edda carries the official finding.

Tomas, mess 09: knows his daughter Lysa is false but stays anyway. Remind him that Wren needs him. Mara minds Wren ashore; Tomas carries her drawing.

Nessa, brig 13: recognized the lie and tried to leave. She wants rescue. Her false mother still thinks Nessa is a child; Nessa is thirty-one.

WHAT THE DEAD DO NOT KNOW

An imitation begins with its dead person's memories up to the hour of death. It can follow a conversation and remember ordinary events aboard, but cannot absorb a truth that changes its bond with the bereaved after that death: a child born, blame lifted, or forgiveness given. Ordinary news earns a smile or a change of subject. A meaningful truth makes it falter, repeat the words, and briefly show wooden hands. Repeating or demonstrating that truth cannot teach it what its borrowed identity cannot contain.

That opening belongs to the passenger. A truth never destroys an imitation; it reveals a limit and lets the living choose to leave. Elian learned this first (her note, area 06). Edda's and Tomas's truths each have clues ashore and aboard; players can find them rather than guess a speech. A character may speak the truth or present its evidence. Agreement alone does not cancel an exchange:



get the passenger ashore before the exchange completes, or protect them with the magic in "Magic and preparation".

WHEN A PASSENGER REFUSES

A refusing passenger stays aboard until midnight unless an anchor falls first or the party carries them ashore; they resist with words, never violence, and remember being taken. During exploration, the first rescue conversation with Edda or Tomas costs one clock mark when the scene ends, once each, whether they agree or refuse. Do not also count that room or conversation time; reset both counters afterward. Later talks use normal time. Nessa needs no persuasion; her conversation costs no exploration time or mark. After midnight or once escape begins, everyone uses actual time; conversation suspends neither deadline.

BREAKING THE BOND

Burn the book of names in registry 22 OR kill the Guest in keel chamber 24: either stops tonight's exchange and starts the ship sinking. To free all the dead forever, do BOTH, in either order. Burning the book makes all stolen coffin wood ordinary lumber, aboard or ashore. It does not undo an imitation whose exchange has already completed; see "Three endings".

Permanently removing the book's curse by magic also works. Temporarily pausing it only buys time and does not start sinking. See Appendix F for spell rulings and background. Rescuing the living without ending the haunting is a valid outcome; the ship can return.

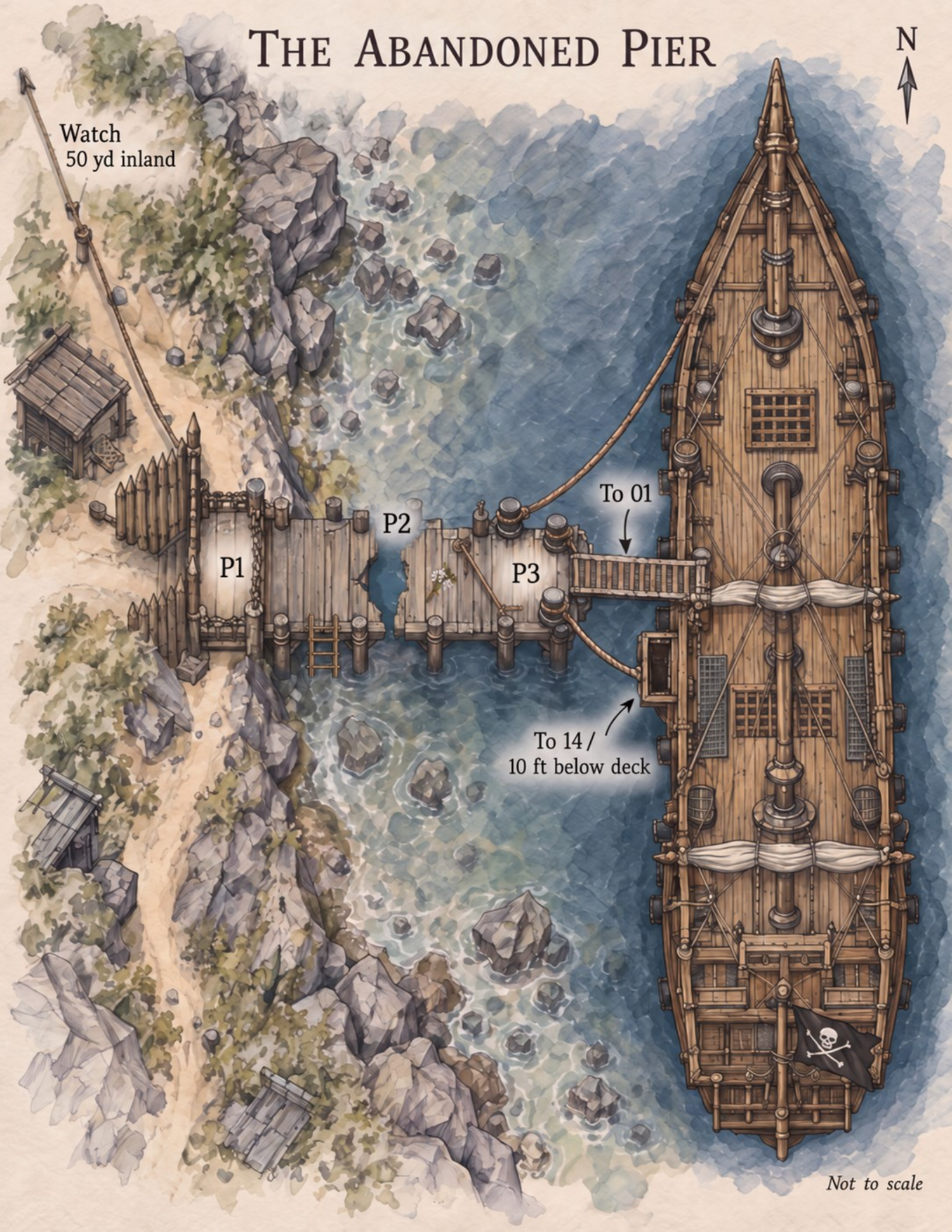
MAPS OF THE MERCY OF NIGHT

The five maps show connections, not measured distances; they are not battle grids. Follow room numbers and matching stair labels across sheets, even where their positions differ; an arrow labeled with another area continues on that sheet and is not an extra exit. On deck sheets, bow is up and stern is down; the lower-room sheet separates elevations for clarity. The gangway and cargo port both meet P3 on the port side. The side walkways of 01 continue around the cabins to the wedding space at the stern end of 01, beneath the bell at 03; cabins 05 and 07 have no door onto the bell platform. The rear panel in 13 leads down a short concealed stair to 18; removing its two pegs takes tools and one minute, with no roll. Appendix E repeats the maps; Appendix F lists routes.

THE ABANDONED PIER



Watch
50 yd inland



To 14 /
10 ft below deck

To 01

Not to scale

MERCY OF NIGHT

UPPER DECK

↑
BOW



- 01 Main Deck
- 02 Forecandle
- 03 Bell Platform
- 04 Salon
- 05 Captain
- 06 Chartroom
- 07 Bridal Cabin

↓
STERN

Not to scale

MERCY OF NIGHT

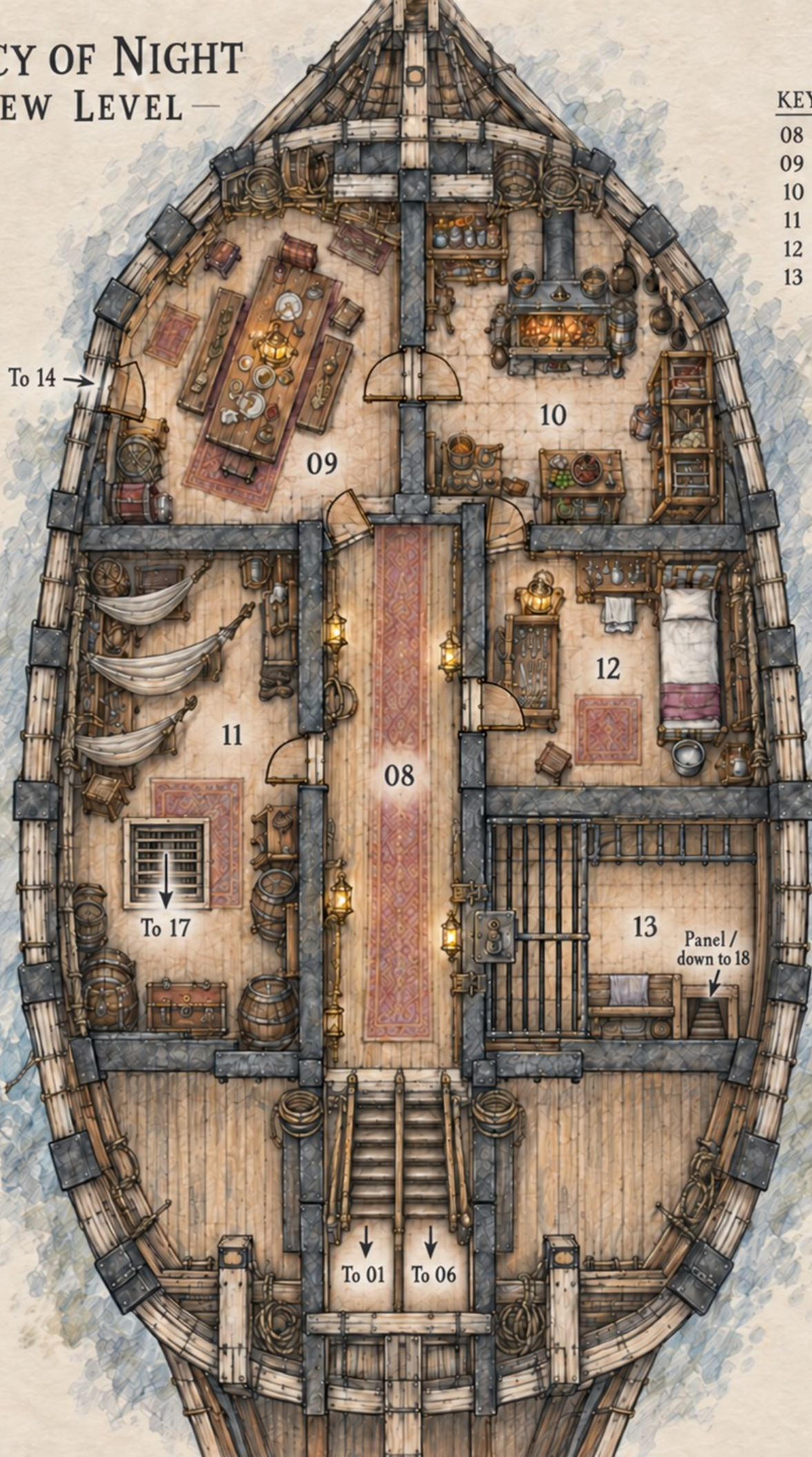
— CREW LEVEL —

BOW



KEY

- 08 Crew Passage
- 09 Mess
- 10 Galley
- 11 Hammocks
- 12 Surgery
- 13 Brig

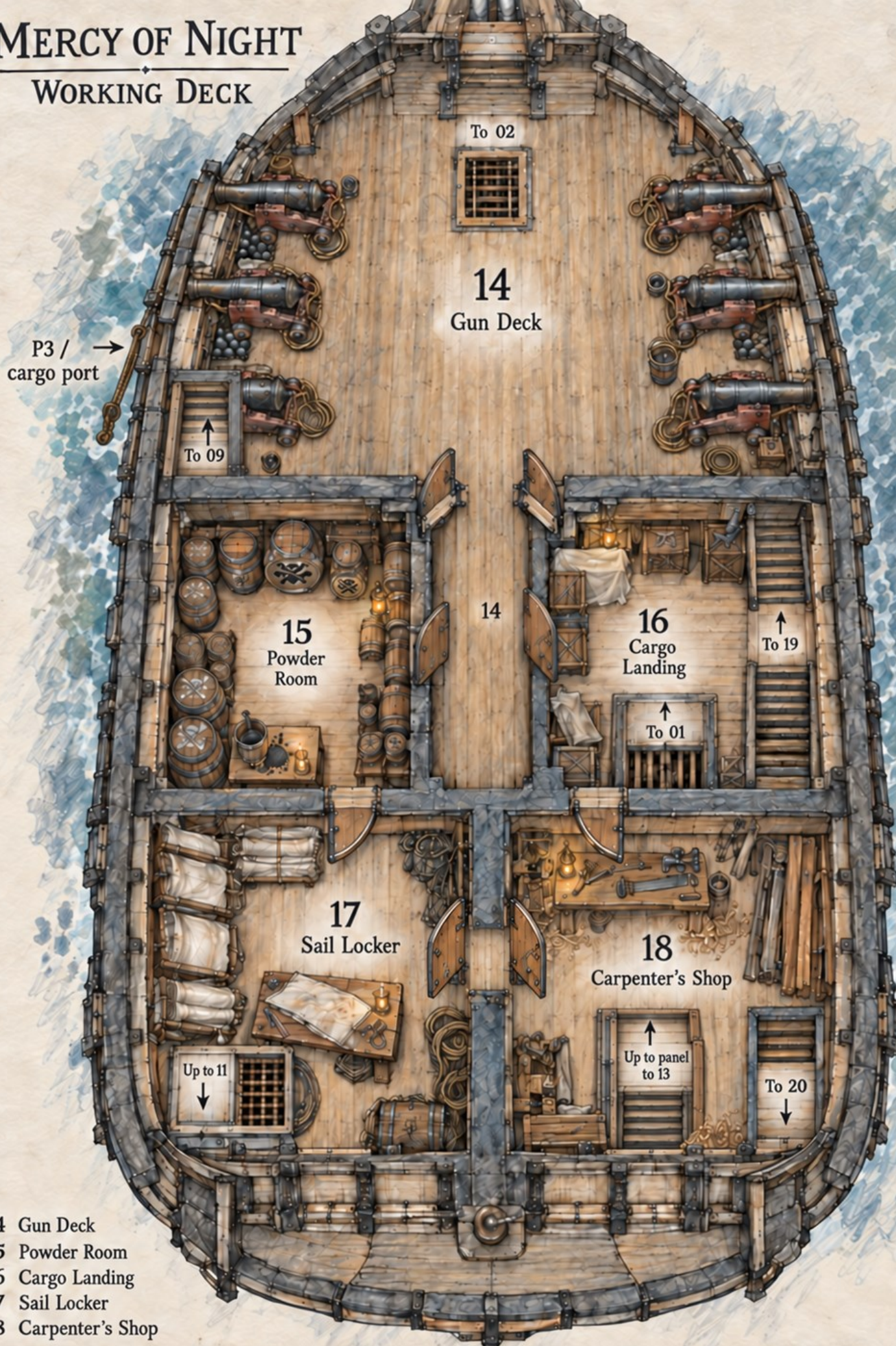


Not to scale

MERCY OF NIGHT

WORKING DECK

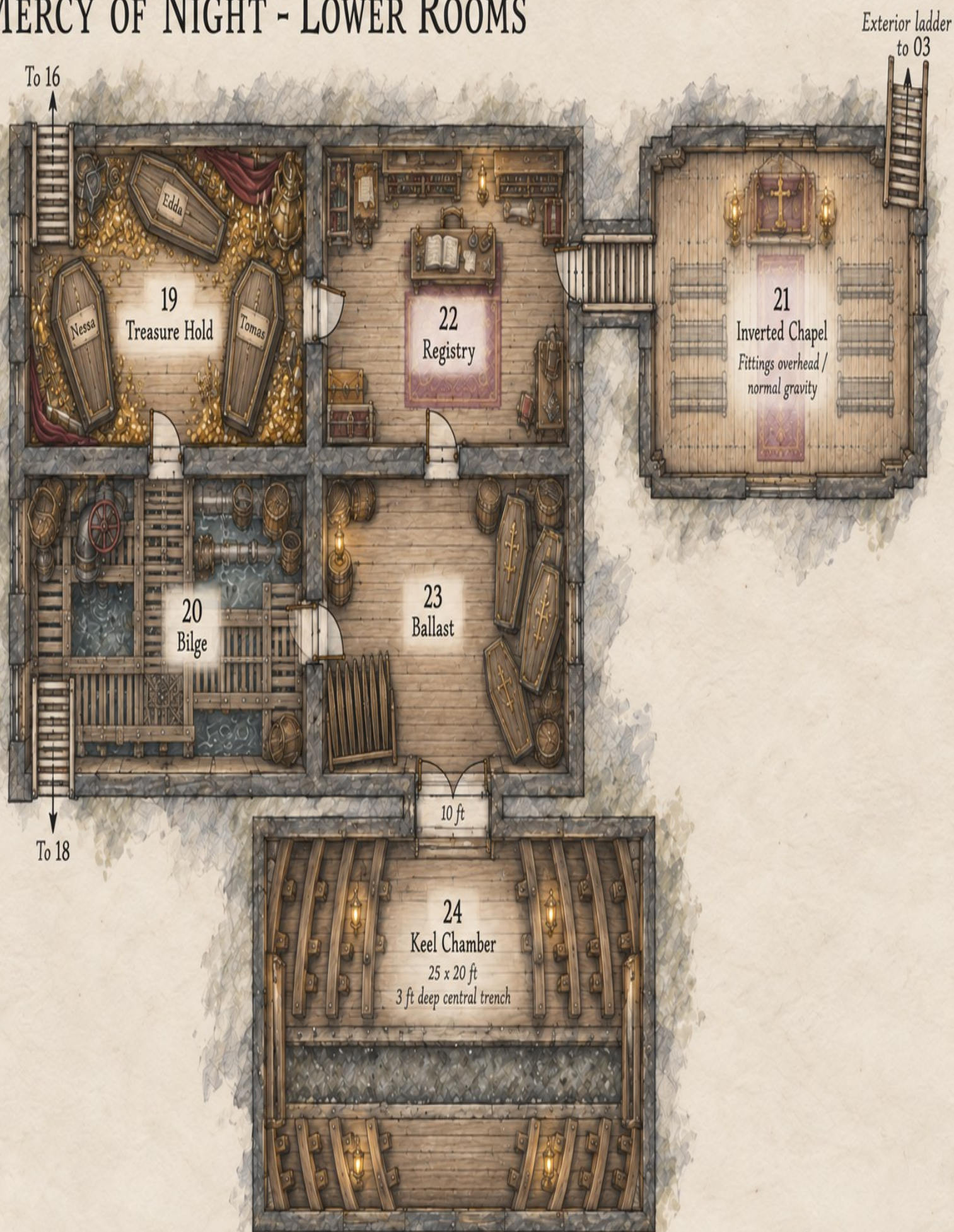
↑
BOW



- 14 Gun Deck
- 15 Powder Room
- 16 Cargo Landing
- 17 Sail Locker
- 18 Carpenter's Shop

Not to scale

MERCY OF NIGHT - LOWER ROOMS



Schematic - not to scale



BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Start here: Mara brings the passenger sheet. At P1 The gate, read the arrival passage and let the party act. Their goal is to bring Nessa, Edda, and Tomas ashore before the ship claims them. Essential clues need no roll when their source is examined; failed rolls change the situation, never erase the only way forward.

Keep the clock: Start at mark zero at the pier. Advance one mark after two newly investigated ship locations OR twenty cumulative minutes of other activity, whichever comes first; reset both counters. Travel, talk, waiting, and combat count toward time; revisits do not count as new rooms. The first rescue conversation with Tomas or Edda costs one mark instead; see "When a passenger refuses". Explain the clock to players; spell durations remain unchanged.

Announce the changes: At marks 1-2, wedding music begins and clocks read eleven. At 3-4, water runs upward and boarding preparations are announced. At 5, the three passengers are called. At 6, midnight strikes. Announce each stage before the next decision, and use each passage once. Read-aloud passages are in Appendix F, "Running the midnight watch".

At midnight: Run "Midnight strikes" in Appendix F. With both anchors active, unprotected passengers aboard collapse and a ten-minute rescue window opens; midnight itself does not start sinking.

Break an anchor: Burning or permanently cleansing the registry, or killing the Guest, cancels the exchange and starts escape immediately. Switch from marks to elapsed time and use "The ship begins to founder". Midnight cannot restart a canceled exchange. Tearing pages or moving the book changes nothing. Temporary magical suppression stops unfinished exchanges but does not start sinking; see Appendix F, "Magic and preparation".

Look up details when needed: Appendix F holds the ship connections, spell rulings, and keel fight preparation. Appendix A has creature statistics. Set the Guest's level-based profile before play; consult the fight adjustments for a different party. Honor working abilities and shortcuts. The party never needs to visit every room.



ADVENTURE BEGINS - THE TAVERN

DN preparation

The party starts in the Salvager's Rest a little before 10 p.m. Its long bar, like Mara's front door, is coffin wood salvaged from the wreck. Hale knows; nobody here says it aloud. Since dusk, people along the shore have heard the voices of their dead. Let the party settle in, ask around, or watch the light at the pier until Mara arrives at ten.

Read aloud to begin the adventure

The road behind you is long: ruins, bargains, and more than one fight that should have killed you. You have spent enough gold to know there is always more to find. Rumors of work brought you down the coast to this harbor town, where no one knows your name yet.

The Salvager's Rest tavern sits at the top of the harbor steps. Nets and old ship's lanterns hang from the beams, and the fire has burned low. The long bar is dark, heavy wood polished smooth by years of elbows, with small brass plates set along its edge, their engraving long since worn away.

Nobody is talking much. Most of the patrons stand at the front windows, drinks forgotten, looking down at the harbor. There is no wind tonight. The water lies flat as slate, and the gulls are gone. Beside the end of the old pier, where no ship should be moored, a row of windows glows warm.

An old fisherman next to you speaks into his cup. "My brother drowned off that pier twenty years ago," he says. "Tonight he called my name. I heard him plain."

The clock above the bar shows a few minutes to ten. Then the door opens, and a woman comes in out of the night holding a sheet of wet paper.

If the party asks around, patrons share any of these:

"A bell rang under the old pier at dusk. Next thing, the wreck we've picked over for forty years was sitting at the pier with her lamps lit."

"Edda Marr, the bell founder, went down to the old wreck at low tide this evening. Nobody's seen her since."



"The watch has the shore closed. Captain Hale won't let anyone near the pier."

"Half this town was built from what we pulled off that wreck. Don't ask what."

DN NOTE

Two quiet seeds are in there. The worn brass plates on the bar are burial nameplates, which pays off when Hale's secret about the coffin wood comes out. The fisherman's drowned brother sets up the voices-from-shore lure before Mara ever mentions Tomas.

Read aloud when Mara approaches the party

A woman lays a wet passenger list before you. "I'm Mara Pell. My sister Nessa is aboard that ship. Edda Marr and Tomas Reed are missing too. Boarding ends at midnight. Please bring them home." She grips the paper. "Tomas followed his dead daughter, Lysa. But her little girl survived. Wren is four, and I am looking after her tonight. Tell him she needs her grandfather."



THE ABANDONED PIER



P1 THE GATE

DN preparation

From the tavern: Mara answers questions freely and repeats her offer from "The invitation". Once the party agrees, she leads them down the harbor steps to the gate. Hale lets them through his cordon because Mara vouches for them and they go willingly; he still holds the townspeople back and won't send his own guards aboard unprepared.



At dusk Edda reached the buried bell along the exposed shore; ringing it raised the wreck around her. Tomas and Nessa later bypassed the locked gate by the shore and pier ladder, before the watch cordon formed. Characters may also wade around the gate to that ladder; the gate is no magical barrier. Mara has its key and recognizes Nessa's handwriting on the passenger sheet. Give both sides freely. Nessa passed it through the gate before Vetch caught her.

Watch captain Bram Hale keeps civilians fifty yards inland and will not send unprepared guards aboard. Asked about Edda, he confirms the inquest cleared Jory; she carries the finding. Hale's father ran wreck salvage for thirty years. Hale knows coffin wood became the tavern bar, chapel roof, and Mara's front door, but has not told Mara.

Read aloud on arrival

Beyond a chained gate, the abandoned pier stretches toward a ship with light in its windows. There are no gulls. A lantern swings aboard her, but the rope above it does not move. Behind you, Captain Bram Hale and his harbor watch hold the townspeople fifty yards inland. Ahead, your footsteps return from beneath the boards, one step late. Mara holds out the gate key. The paper she brought is still wet; its ink has not run.

When the characters read the passenger sheet, read the following aloud:

MERCY OF NIGHT. Final boarding at midnight. Departure at first light. Nessa Pell. Edda Marr. Tomas Reed. Living names inspected below the chapel. O. Vetch, Purser. On the reverse, another hand has written: "The book is dry. It can burn. - Nessa."

If asked about Edda, Hale supplies this freely.

"I led the inquest into that fire. It wasn't her husband's lamp. The finding cleared him. Edda carries the paper with her, but knowing a thing and believing it are different matters."

P2 THE BROKEN WALKWAY

DN preparation

A secured rope makes the crossing safe. Unsupported hurried leap: STR Chance TN 10; failure leaves the jumper hanging. An ally pulls them up with one action. Alone: STR Chance TN 12; failure drops them six feet into shallow water for 1d4 physical damage, reduced by DR. The ladder is ten feet away; no instant drowning.

Touching the bouquet triggers the whisper below. Its ELIAN VALE ribbon helps Rován listen later; it is a harmless memory.



Read aloud on arrival

Halfway along the pier, three missing planks leave a six-foot gap over the water. The boards end in broken edges, but sound posts stand on either side. A ladder descends to the shallows nearby. Across the gap lies a fresh bouquet tied with funeral ribbon. Below it, the harbor reflects an upside-down ship. People stand on that reflected hull and knock upward, as though the surface of the water were a locked ceiling.

Only when someone touches the bouquet.

A woman's whisper rises from the flowers: "He shut the door himself." The ribbon bears a name: ELIAN VALE.

P3 THE MOORING AND GANGWAY

DN preparation

The hull is 120 feet long and 30 feet wide. Gangway: 01. Cargo port: 14, ten feet below deck; the boat hook and rope enable access. Cutting moorings removes an escape line but does not dispel the ship.

Nessa's real voice travels from the brig through a speaking tube. The voice under the pier repeats exactly, even when answered. Following either reveals the cargo port. Boarding remains the party's choice.

Read aloud on arrival

The Mercy of Night stands upright beside the pier, although her reflection hangs upside down beneath her. Two mooring ropes hold the hull close. A dry wooden gangway crosses from the pier to the main deck. Lower down, an open cargo port waits ten feet below deck level; a boat hook and rope lie within reach on the pier. A woman calls for help from aboard the ship. Then the same voice calls again from under your feet, repeating the words exactly.



UPPER DECK

ABOVE THE WATERLINE

01 MAIN DECK



DN preparation

The covered, wheeled coffin is empty and warm, with Nessa's plate and three breathing holes. It is intended for her body, not a monster. The chairs are wedding places.

Two Skeleton deckhands guard the ceremony ("Creature reference"). Walking around the chairs avoids them. Moving the coffin or attacking provokes them. "The ceremony is finished" pauses them for one round only. They never pursue belowdecks; destroyed deckhands stay destroyed.

The speaking tube gives Nessa's real directions to 08 and 13. Routes: P3 gangway; open deck to 02 and 03; doors to 04 and 06; stairs to 08; hatch to 16.



Read aloud on arrival

The gangway meets the main deck beside the cabins. Side walkways lead around them toward the stern; the cabin walls hide what waits beyond. A speaking tube stands beside the stair. From its mouth comes a woman's voice: "Crew passage. The locked door. Please hurry." Ahead lies the forecastle. Two cabin doors open off this deck, and a cargo hatch offers another way below.

Read aloud when the party follows a side walkway aft.

Beyond the cabins, rows of empty chairs face a covered object beneath the stern bell. Each seat holds a puddle. In one puddle, an eye opens and watches you. Two skeletons patiently coil rope beside the wedding places, taking no notice while you keep clear. The bell platform is just above this aft space.

When the covering is lifted; no roll is needed.

Under the cloth is a coffin on wheels. Three fresh holes, each the width of a finger, pierce its wood. The brass nameplate reads NESSA PELL. Inside, there is no body. The empty wood is warm.

02 FORECASTLE

DN preparation

The lookout is an inert corpse. Searching safely yields the BRIG key and 12 GP, no roll. Lowering him stops the whistle and reveals the chalk clue below.

The forward ladder reaches 14; the open deck returns to 01. The exterior stern ladder is visible on arrival at 03, not from this position.

Read aloud on arrival

A lookout stands at the forecastle with his body facing the mast and his head twisted toward the harbor. Ropes hold him upright. He does not breathe. A thin whistle sounds through his open mouth, carrying the same melody that drifts from belowdecks. A loose sail hangs nearby, and a forward ladder disappears into the ship. The open deck leads back toward the cabins.



After the corpse is searched and lowered; disclose only the actions completed.

His pocket holds twelve gold pieces and a key marked BRIG. When the body is lowered, the whistling stops. Chalk on the wood behind him reads: "The purser counts names, not bodies."

03 BELL PLATFORM

DN preparation

Looking up reveals the snag without a roll. Pulling the rope drops the sail: DEX Quick or become covered and unable to move. One action cutting free or an ally's help releases the victim; no damage. Remove Traps clears the snag; striking the bell directly avoids it.

Each ring exposes all false relatives' hollow faces for one minute and alerts Vetch to the party's location. It causes no damage, stops no clock, and can be repeated. The exterior ladder safely reaches 21. The platform opens onto 01.

Read aloud on arrival

At the stern, a bell hangs above the wedding space. Its clapper is a brass coffin handle. The bell rope hangs within reach, running upward into a pulley beneath a heavy folded sail. An exterior ladder descends along the hull toward a door near the water. The wet canvas overhead hangs still, even when the air moves across the platform.

If a character looks up at the pulley; no roll.

The rope is caught in the pulley mechanism. The snag is holding the wet sail above you. A pull on the rope would release its weight.

THE CAPTAIN'S ROOMS

04 CAPTAIN'S SALON



DN preparation

The mirror replays the wedding: Elian carries burial plates; Rován laughs with Vetch. Touching it: WIS Mind or hear one's own voice and speak in whispers for up to one minute. Casting remains possible. Repeat the save each turn's end; covering, breaking, or Spellbreaker ends the effect.

Behind the glass, the ledger names Mourning Isle and Vetch's black registry; give the clue below when examined. The decanter holds fresh water. Four silver cups are worth 5 GP each. Door: 05. The other door returns to 01.

Read aloud on arrival

A long mirror reflects a crowded wedding reception. Everyone inside it turns to admire your arrival, although the room around you is empty. A woman in a dark dress carries a bundle of brass plates. Nearby, the captain laughs at something the purser has said. One place in the reflected company is already occupied by a pale likeness of one of you. On the real table stand a decanter and four silver cups. Another door leads farther into the captain's rooms. A second door opens onto the main deck.



After the ledger behind the mirror is uncovered and examined.

The cargo ledger records timber taken from the burial houses of Mourning Isle. Beside the names, the purser has ordered a second copy made in a black book. The last entry reads: "Keep the original names. Without them, our guest has no voices."

05 CAPTAIN'S CABIN



DN preparation

Rovan is a harmless repeating memory, not an undead combatant. Attacks pass through him into the chair. He claims the bride is delayed, admits the timber theft if asked, and repeats his excuse about the locked door.

Elia's ribbon or testimony from 07 breaks the loop without a roll. He admits choosing the false brother over Elia, reveals the burnable registry below the chapel and living Guest in the keel, and can still all surviving Skeleton deckhands and gunners for the adventure with one order. Vetch and the Guest are unaffected.

If the party has met Tomas, Rovan adds, "Then take him off my ship." He asks no forgiveness. Other clues suffice if he remains in denial. Door: 07. The salon door leads to 04.



Read aloud on arrival

The captain sits in his chair with seawater standing in his lap. He does not try to empty it. His gaze lifts toward you, then returns to the doorway as if he expects someone else. "My bride is delayed," he says. "We are waiting for her." A second door stands beyond him. The water in his lap remains perfectly still.

If asked about his bride or the scratched door, before his repetition is broken.

"I meant to return before the water reached her." He stops. His eyes return to the doorway. "I meant to return before the water reached her."

After Elian's ribbon or testimony breaks the repetition; give his directions freely.

"I knew it wasn't my brother. He never asked what became of the family. I kept him because he could not blame me. Elian called, and I chose not to open the door." His eyes settle on you. "Vetch has the black book below the chapel. Burn its pages. Tearing them does nothing. The thing in the keel has flesh. It can die."

THE ROOMS KEPT FOR THE BRIDE

06 CHARTROOM

DN preparation

Studying the wall plan gives the mapped connections, registry location, and keel skull without a roll.

The key in the ink saucer opens the drawer. Pick Locks also works; forcing it makes noise but destroys no evidence. Inside: Elian's note (read below or give the handout) and two labeled Potions of Minor Healing, 1d4+2 HP each. No hidden hazard. Stair: 08; aft door: 07. The main-deck door leads to 01.

Read aloud on arrival

Charts cover the walls, all showing this same pier at different ages. On one, the harbor is busy with ships. On the newest, small figures show your party crossing the gangway. A wet mark creeps toward midnight. Among the charts hangs a plan of the vessel. Beneath it is a locked drawer; a key lies openly in an ink saucer. A stair leads down, and a door stands in the aft wall. Another door opens onto the main deck.



When the ship plan is studied; show the mapped connections.

Someone has circled the registry beneath the stern chapel. Farther below, a skull marks the keel.

When the drawer is opened; give Elian's note as a handout.

Beside two sealed bottles labeled Potion of Minor Healing lies a note: "He promised I could speak to my father. It knew the old stories. It did not know that I had forgiven him. Something that borrows our dead cannot imagine what we have done since losing them. Orsino's book gives it the names. Burn that book."

07 BRIDAL CABIN



DN preparation

Elian's remains lie behind the bed. Examining the inner door reveals her gouged words; touching the tablecloth shows the memory below. No attacking spirit or compulsory terror save; anyone may stop watching.

The original key hangs outside the door to 05. The door to 06 was added during the ship's rebuilding; both are unlocked tonight. The wardrobe's SERA VENN burial plate lets her speak in 21, but naming her there also works.



Burning the registry stops the rising damp. Killing the Guest as well relaxes Elian's hands and leaves an ordinary cabin.

Read aloud on arrival

A wedding dress hangs from the wardrobe, wet below the knees. As you watch, the wet line rises. A handprint appears on the inside of the cabin door. The room holds a bed and a wardrobe fitted with a brass nameplate for a handle. Two doors now connect this cabin to the rest of the ship. One door bears scratches on its inner face, deep enough to expose pale wood.

When the inner door and space behind the bed are examined.

The scratches form words: "Rovan, you have the key." Beneath them, smaller: "Do not let him wear my voice." Behind the bed lie a woman's remains, wrapped in the wedding tablecloth.

When someone touches the tablecloth; anyone may stop watching.

For a moment, the cabin is whole. Elian stands at the door. On the other side, Rovan lifts the key out of the lock. She calls to him. He hears her. He leaves. The memory releases you before the water reaches her.



CREW LEVEL

WHERE THE LIVING ARE ENTERTAINED

08 CREW PASSAGE

DN preparation

The answer inside the wall is harmless. Nessa's chalk arrow points to 13. Open doors and audible conversation identify the mess, hammocks, and surgery; no search is needed to locate the passengers. Connections: stairs to 01 and 06; doors to 09, 11, 12 and 13.

Read aloud on arrival

The passage smells of soap, wet wool, and earth. Brass burial plates serve as cabin numbers. At the aft end, someone strikes a locked door three times; at the forward end, something inside the wall answers. A chalk arrow points toward the locked door. Through the open doorways you hear a man laughing over a meal and, elsewhere, a woman saying, "Stop apologizing." A moment later she says it again. Two stairs lead upward; open doorways also reveal the hammocks.

09 MESS



DN preparation

Tomas knows Lysa is false. She died in childbirth at twenty-seven, remembers pregnancy, and sincerely believes she is his daughter. She cannot fight. Attacks splinter wood and frighten her; the bell or a burial plate exposes her without persuading Tomas.



Wren's drawing is in Tomas's coat; Mara's message supplies the same truth. Explain that the baby lived and offer to walk him home: he leaves without a roll, even after failed persuasion. Without that truth, CHA Chance TN 15 persuades him to say goodbye for one minute, then accept an escort ashore. Failure means he stays and asks the party to go. The same appeal cannot be rolled again; new evidence or a substantially different approach permits another attempt.

Tomas resists carrying only with words. Before midnight Lysa may follow aboard but cannot cross the gangway. An anchor's destruction unravels her mid-sentence before the exchange completes; completed imitations survive ashore. Use "Midnight strikes" after midnight and charge the first rescue conversation as specified in "When a passenger refuses". Doors lead to 08, 10 and 14.

Read aloud on arrival

A man sits across the table from a young woman who has cooked for him. She sings softly between words, watching his face for signs that he remembers the song. His coat hangs on a peg beside the door. When she notices you, her singing stops and she looks back to him for reassurance. "Father," she asks, "did the baby come?" He does not answer her at once. Three doorways lead out of the room; beyond one, steps descend.

If the party challenges Lysa's identity or reveals her wooden form.

Tomas puts a hand on the table between you and his daughter. "I know what she is. I'm staying." Lysa looks from him to you. She seems frightened, not triumphant.

When the party tells Lysa about Wren or shows the drawing; apply the rescue conditions above.

"Wren?" Lysa repeats. For a moment her hands look like carved wood. "What is her name?" Tomas looks at her, waiting. "What is her name?" she asks again. He reaches for his coat. "She's waiting for me," he says. "Walk me home."

10 GALLEY



DN preparation

Opening the apron reveals a denture chewing the lining; removing it stops it. It is not a monster.

Pantry wire: careful inspection reveals it; hurried search needs INT Chance TN 13. Trigger: DEX Quick or 2d6 slashing damage, reduced by DR, once. Remove Traps disarms it; the loose side panel bypasses it.

The pantry contains oil, tinderbox, and enough dry kindling to burn the registry. Service door: 12, looping to 08. The main door leads to 09.

Read aloud on arrival

A cook's apron hangs from a hook. Its pocket moves with a small, persistent chewing sound. Beside it stands a pantry, with a rack of cleavers nearby. The room has the abandoned tools of an ordinary galley, but no cook tends them. A service door offers another way out.

After careful inspection reveals the wire, or a successful hurried search.

A taut wire runs from the pantry latch to the rack of cleavers. The pantry also has a loose side panel, away from the latch.

When the pantry is safely opened.

Inside are lamp oil, a tinderbox, and dry kindling. In this wet ship, the wood is dry enough to catch a flame.



PASSENGERS BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

11 HAMMOCKS



DN preparation

The hammock shapes are empty. Refusal is safe. Lying down: WIS Mind or a funeral vision replaces sight for up to one minute. Repeat each turn's end; an ally's touch or Spellbreaker ends it.

The nearby key opens the chest: 30 GP and Bellmetal Band with 1d3 charges ("The bell and the harbor"). Hatch: 17. Door: 08.

Read aloud on arrival

Hammocks sag around the shapes of sleeping sailors, although no faces or hands show above their edges. A sea chest stands nearby, its key hanging within reach. A hatch leads down through the floor. From one of the hammocks, a whisper says, "Climb in. Take the watch off your feet." None of the shapes rises to greet you. A door opens into the crew passage.

When a hammock is inspected without lying in it.

There is nothing inside. The canvas still holds the hollow shape of someone resting.

When the chest is opened.

Among thirty gold pieces lies a bronze circlet. Its metal has the color of an old bell.

12 SURGERY



DN preparation

Jory is wood under the bandages; extinguishing the lantern reveals his empty outline, not his death. Edda still wants him: "Then he'll be wood at home." Proof alone does not free her.

The inquest finding is in Edda's coat. Tell Jory it was not his lamp: his hands turn wooden, his words repeat, and Edda agrees to leave without a roll, even after failed persuasion. Otherwise CHA Chance TN 12 wins a minute's goodbye, then she accepts an escort ashore. Failure leaves her beside Jory. The same appeal cannot be rolled again; new evidence or a substantially different approach permits another attempt. Apply the first-rescue-conversation clock rule.

The drawer holds two labeled Potions of Mending, each 3d6 HP over three rounds. Edda knows the bell reveals rather than destroys false images and saw Vetch carry the registry through 19. Doors: 08, 10.

Read aloud on arrival

A broad-shouldered woman sits beside a man whose burns have been dressed in fresh bandages. A lantern lights them both. "I'm sorry about the fire," he says. She asks him to stop apologizing, but her hand stays near his. "We can go home," she tells him. He looks toward the lantern. "If that goes out, I'll die." She turns toward you as though you might know how to keep it burning. Two doors lead out of the room.

When the inquest truth is spoken to Jory; resolve Edda's response as above.

Jory tries to answer the finding. "It wasn't your lamp," he says. His hands become wood. "It wasn't your lamp." Edda waits for him to understand. At last she turns away from him. "He can't hear it, can he?"

13 BRIG



DN preparation

Nessa is lucid and uninjured. Key: 02. Pick Locks or STR Chance TN 14 opens the brig. Failed force reveals the pegged rear panel and concealed stair from 18; tools and one minute remove its two pegs without a roll. The grating opens to 08; the rear panel links to 18.

Her torn name strip proves pages reform in the registry; it curses no carrier. She freely explains borrowed memories and the exchange below. She requests Edda's and Tomas's rescue first but follows the party's decision. Nessa needs no persuasion. Her conversation adds no exploration time or mark; after midnight or during the escape, track its actual elapsed time.

Registry route: 08-09-14-16-19-22. Nessa can escort survivors along a secured route; any rescued adult can retrace a clearly explained safe route alone.

Read aloud on arrival

Behind the locked grating, a woman grips a strip of paper that keeps trying to crawl between her fingers. She is alert and watching the passage. "Nessa Pell," she says. "Mara's sister. Please get this door open." She holds up the restless paper. "This is my name. I tore it out of his book. It grew back."

Once the characters can talk with Nessa; she gives this information freely.



"It looked like my mother. It asked how my lessons were going. I'm thirty-one. It knows the life she had, but nothing that happened to us after she died. Tomas and Edda are listening to theirs. At midnight we collapse and they get to walk ashore. We have ten minutes after that. Get us ashore, or stop the book or the thing in the keel before the exchange finishes. Please don't leave them here."

When asked where the registry is.

"Through the crew passage and the mess, down to the gun deck, then the cargo landing and treasure hold. The registry is beyond it. I'll show you. Or I'll take the others ashore if you've cleared a way."



WORKING DECK

THE SHIP'S WORKING BELLY

14 GUN DECK



DN preparation

Two Skeleton gunners ("Creature reference") demand payment. Any coin on the carriage pays for everyone. Attacking or bypassing payment starts combat; they stay here. Rován's order stills them.

The cannons are split underneath and cannot fire. Veils are safe to take; examination reveals the embroidered route below. Cargo port: P3, rope-assisted exit. Ladder: 02; doors: 09, 15, 16.

Read aloud on arrival

Six rusted cannons point through open ports, their mouths stuffed with mourning veils. Above you, an empty captain's chair creaks against its bolts in the ceiling. Two skeletons turn to face the entrance. Words scratched into a gun carriage read: "Let no cargo leave unpaid." A ladder rises toward the forecabin, and an open cargo port faces the pier. Three doors lead to other compartments; beyond one, steps rise to the deck above.

When a veil is examined.

An embroidered route runs along the cloth: "Chapel-Registry-Ballast."

15 POWDER ROOM



DN preparation

One Abyssal Skulker hides behind the barrels ("Creature reference"). Visible toes and deeper shadow warn investigators or broad illumination before it moves. An open escape to 17 lets it withdraw; it attacks only when cornered or pursued. Wet powder cannot explode.

A dry pocket holds a copper wedding token worth 5 GP, with the clue below. This Skulker never joins the keel guards. Doors: 14 and 17.

Read aloud on arrival

Black mud leaks from the powder barrels. Thumbprints rise in its surface as though someone underneath were pushing upward. Where your light falls directly, the prints stop. Beside one leaking cask, something like toes protrudes from behind the stack, next to a strip of shadow darker than its surroundings. A second doorway waits beyond the barrels.

When the wedding token is found and examined.

A copper wedding token lies in a dry pocket. Scratched into its reverse are the words: "The Guest has teeth. Make it bleed."



16 CARGO LANDING

DN preparation

Weight cracks the rotten net support. Stopping permits a safe detour. Rushing: DEX Quick or fall six feet into crates for 1d6 physical damage, reduced by DR. Honor Cat's Landing and other fall protection. Return by fixed ladder; Remove Traps secures the support, or bypass/trigger it from safety.

Coins sound from 19, sawing from 18. The main-deck hatch opens freely from below; no puzzle lock obstructs escape. Connections: door to 14; door to 18; stairs to 19; main hatch to 01.

Read aloud on arrival

The broad cargo stair descends from the main hatch to a landing above the hold. Netting along its rail lifts toward passing hands, as if seeking a grip. Beneath the net, a support is rotten and strained. From below comes the sliding sound of coins; from another room, the steady work of a saw. A fixed ladder offers a way back from the lower crates, while the main hatch remains overhead. Two doors open off the landing; the sawing comes from beyond one. Stairs descend toward the sound of coins.

CLOTH AND COFFIN WOOD

17 SAIL LOCKER

DN preparation

Bilge air pockets cause the breathing. Cutting or unfolding the sail releases a sigh and reveals funeral cloth and three burial plates; no body. Any plate briefly exposes a false relative's wooden hands. The names are ordinary islanders, not passwords.

If the Skulker fled 15, it may hide here; this is the same creature. It withdraws through an open door or fights if trapped.

Salvage: twenty feet of dry sailcloth, spare lantern, 50-foot rope. A plate clipped to rope makes an identifying sound. Hatch: 11; doors: 15, 18.

Read aloud on arrival

A folded sail lies on the table. Beneath the canvas, a person takes a careful breath. Then a second person breathes somewhere near the first one's feet. Dry sailcloth, a spare lantern, and a coil of rope lie among the stores. A narrow hatch leads upward, and two doors lead out of the locker. The breathing continues without a word.



When the sail is unfolded or cut.

The sail releases a long human sigh. There is no body inside. Funeral cloth has been stitched into the canvas, and three brass burial plates are sewn along its edge. Each bears a different name.

18 CARPENTER'S SHOP



DN preparation

Touching the saw stops it. Names mark the wood's undersides. Dain is a bound remnant, not a combatant: one tap means yes, two no. He points out the rubbing, witnessed the first exchange, and directs the party to Vetch in 22 without a guessing game.

The obvious short stair reaches 13's rear panel: tools and one minute remove two pegs, no roll. Tools: mallet, chisel, pry bar. The box holds 18 GP with no curse. Stair to 20 is sound. Doors: 16 and 17.

Destroying both anchors frees Dain to thank the party and vanish. Breaking his partition produces only splinters; explain before prolonged excavation.



Read aloud on arrival

A saw works through a board with no hand holding it. Nearby, a man is half absorbed into a wooden partition. His mouth has become wood, but two fingers still move. He taps once, twice, then points urgently toward a charcoal rubbing nailed above the bench. Tools lie within reach: a mallet, a chisel, a pry bar. A short stair rises toward a pegged panel, and another descends into the ship. Two doors offer other ways out of the workshop.

When the rubbing is read; no roll.

"The black book binds us. Fire frees the names. The flesh in the keel must die, or it will learn new names." The man taps beside the words and points toward the registry's direction.

When the boards and scraps are turned over.

Names have been carved into the undersides of the wood. These pieces were made for burials before anyone made them into a ship.



LOWER ROOMS

THE PRICE OF SALVAGE

19 TREASURE HOLD



DN preparation

Taking coins from a coffin creates a following silhouette; it cannot touch or fight. Returning them or burning the registry removes it. Close inspection distinguishes real valuables from painted wood: 90 GP, pearl worth 25 GP, four copper bands worth 2 GP each. No lasting curse.

The three passenger coffins contain matching clothes until completed exchanges bring their bodies here. Give the inscription below when opened. REGISTRY door: 22; stairs: 16; forward door: 20.



Read aloud on arrival

Coins cover the floor like fallen leaves. Coffins have taken the place of strongboxes. Three lids bear fresh, familiar names: NESSA PELL, EDDA MARR, TOMAS REED. Beyond the coffins is a door labeled REGISTRY. Stairs lead upward; another door opens forward, with water lapping beyond it. The money shifts softly underfoot.

Before a completed exchange, when a passenger coffin is opened. After an exchange, describe its body instead.

Folded clothing lies inside, identical to what its named passenger wears. Inside the lid are the words: "Names entered aft. Bodies stowed below."

When coins are first lifted from a coffin.

A dead sailor's silhouette appears behind the person holding the coins. It neither reaches out nor speaks. When the person moves, it follows.

20 BILGE



DN preparation

Rust and a bulging pipe warn of pressure. INT Chance TN 12 identifies the dangerous wheel from a distance. Avoid it, or use Remove Traps to secure it. Careless turning: DEX Quick or 2d6 physical damage, reduced by DR, and knockdown; regaining footing costs the next significant action. It stays open and cannot trigger again.



Knee-deep water requires no swimming checks. The plaque supports Elian's account. Raised walkway: 23; stairs: 18. This valve cannot sink the restored ship. Either anchor starts the twelve-beat escape; both permanently end the haunting. Door: 19.

Read aloud on arrival

Water stands knee deep around a half-submerged grating and an old valve wheel. Rust streaks run along a pipe that bulges under pressure. A raised plank walkway leads to a doorway, and stairs offer another route upward. Somewhere beneath the water, a fingernail circles the inside of a glass. Each slow circuit seems to end directly beneath your feet. A brass plaque remains fixed near the mechanism. A second doorway opens off the bilge.

When the plaque is examined.

The plaque records that the bridal cabin's handwheel opened the sea valves. The captain ordered them closed. His counterorder came too late to save the ship.

THE SERVICE BELOW THE STERN

21 INVERTED CHAPEL



DN preparation

Exterior access from 03 ends at a watertight door above the water. Gravity is normal; inverted fittings recall the first sinking. Naming Sera or returning her plate from 07 lets the empty coffin speak freely. The chapel was her burial house.



The bell reveals the hidden door to 22. Its latch and draft already mark it; touching the latch also reveals it. No bell ritual is required.

Read aloud on arrival

Funeral benches and an altar hang upside down overhead. Beneath them, the floor is level and dry. Candle flames rise toward the ceiling while wax drops normally to the floor. An open coffin is fixed above the altar, its faded lettering spelling SERA VENN. Elsewhere, a brass latch seems to hang against an unbroken wall; a draft comes from its edges. The exterior door opens onto the ladder beneath the stern bell.

After Sera is named or her plate is returned; no roll.

A woman's voice emerges from the empty coffin. "This was my burial house before they made it their chapel. The names hold us. The flesh uses us. Burn the names, kill the flesh, and there will be no voyage after this one. Those faces you came for are borrowed memories. They cannot leave before the exchange."

22 REGISTRY

DN preparation

Vetch uses Wight statistics ("Creature reference"). He converses but attacks anyone reaching for the registry. His replacement offer is false: erased names reform, as Nessa's strip proves. Conversation consumes clock time.

Distract him, then DEX Chance TN 13 to snatch the unattended book; failure alerts him. Honor Distraction Artist. An ally holding him off allows seizure with one action. Mage's Reach lifts the unattended two-pound book.

A torch burns the dry registry at round's end. Arcane Severance destroys it outright, no Tough save. Tearing reforms; magical destruction or permanent curse removal counts as burning. The party may take it elsewhere.

Doors: 19, 21, 23. Turned Vetch may flee to 23; he never blocks every exit or gains story immunity.

Read aloud on arrival

The purser sits at a desk without a chair, his knees bent backward beneath him. As he writes, the skin along his jaw pulls tight enough to show every tooth. An open black book rests on the desk. He pauses over the fresh entries and looks up. "Three passengers," he says. "Perhaps you have come to discuss their places." Three doorways lead out of his office.



When the book is close enough to read.

The three fresh names are Nessa Pell, Edda Marr, and Tomas Reed. The pages are dry.

If the characters bargain over the passengers. This is Vetch's false offer.

"Bring me three replacements," the purser says, "and I shall cross out the names you want." His pen waits above the paper.

BENEATH THE BORROWED NAMES

23 BALLAST CHAMBER

DN preparation

Touching the leaning lids reveals instability. Rope or the opposite wall bypasses it. Rushing: DEX Quick or 1d6 bludgeoning damage, reduced by DR, and a pinned leg. An ally lifts it with one action; alone, STR Chance TN 12. Failure adds no damage. Fallen lids stay down.

Two Skulkers watch the doorway to 24 at every supported level. They are the Guest's two guards, not additional creatures; neither pursues beyond 23. The powder-room Skulker never joins them.

If Vetch fled here, turning continues normally. Afterward he bargains or escapes through 20 or 22; he never joins the keel fight. Exits: 20, 22 and 24.

Read aloud on arrival

Coffin lids stand packed upright like books where ballast stones should be. Three newer lids are blank. Loose boards lean toward the clear route across the chamber. Beyond them, a broad doorway exhales air warm enough to fog a lantern chimney. Two other passages lead out of the chamber; water laps at one threshold.

24 KEEL CHAMBER



DN preparation

Select the Guest's profile before play ("Preparing the keel fight"). It is a living adapted Aberrant Hunter, not undead, with speech and reasoning but no special resistance or immunity. Normal weapons and valid spells work.

Its first borrowed faces are Nessa's mother and Rován's brother. An after-death truth briefly drops a face only. It bargains; words sign no contract. Threats or entering its alcove provoke attack. Burning the registry makes it scream and ready an attack, never strike through walls or out of turn.

Room: 25 by 20 feet; doorway to 23: ten feet wide; trench: three feet deep. Falling causes no damage; climbing costs movement. Coffin ribs provide cover. No concealed shore exit. Killing it first leaves time to return through 23 to burn the registry during escape.

Read aloud on arrival

The keel is open like a split rib cage. A trench divides the chamber, with coffin ribs rising along it. In that hollow lies a pale creature wearing one human face after another. Beneath every face, its own mouth remains visible, working at a strip of red ribbon. Its body is solid flesh. The doorway behind you is broad enough to retreat through; ahead, the chamber ends around the exposed keel. The creature lifts its borrowed face toward you and offers treasure and safe passage.



THE LAST INVITATION

CHOOSE THE CONFRONTATION THE PARTY EARNS

The final situation depends on what the characters have done. Keep progress visible. Select the Guest's HP before play using "Preparing the keel fight"; never add HP or a second body during the fight. Vetch never returns once destroyed. Wounded enemies retain their lost HP between rooms.

If the registry burns first, all still-bound false relatives lose their faces, come apart, and vanish; any unfinished exchange is canceled. The captain's image can speak one final sentence: "I knew it wasn't him." The Guest cries from below, exposing its location. Begin the escape sequence, but give the party the stated time to reach and fight it if they choose. The dead remain trapped until it dies. Imitations whose exchanges have already completed ashore survive, as described in "Midnight strikes".

If the Guest dies first, all still-bound false relatives vanish and any unfinished exchange reverses. The registry begins crying with the voices of the bound dead. It remains a dry, burnable book wherever the party left it. Begin the same escape sequence; burning the book within it permanently ends the curse.

RUNNING THE FIGHT

The Guest makes two melee strikes per round, each dealing 1d8+2 damage on a hit. Void Strike replaces BOTH strikes: one visible target within 30 feet makes DEX Quick to avoid 1d12+2 necrotic damage. After use, two complete rounds must pass before reuse (used in round 1, available in round 4).

Its mouth and tongue reach five feet. It stays beside the keel trench, dividing its strikes between adjacent armed threats when possible; otherwise it strikes one threat twice. It does not attack a fallen character while an active threat is in reach. Any Skulkers try to separate attackers but never seal the doorway.

A character can spend an action to pull down a loose coffin rib with STR Chance TN 12. On success it lands between the creature and one adjacent character, preventing their direct melee contact until one moves around it. Failure changes nothing. The rib is a tactical option, not a mandatory boss weakness.



RESCUING WITHOUT KILLING

The party can lead all three passengers ashore, or use the protective magic in "Magic and preparation", and leave both anchors intact. The coffins close. At midnight there are no valid victims to exchange; after the ten-minute grace period, the ship waits at the pier until dawn. At first light, start the escape sequence; its promised departure is a descent beneath the harbor.

If characters burn the registry and retreat, the current exchange is over and the living can escape. The surviving Guest goes down with the ship and eventually rebuilds the haunting. It does not leap ashore for an unannounced final attack.

No ending requires sacrificing a character, marrying a ghost, or speaking a password that was never supplied.

UNTIL FIRST LIGHT

When the grace period ends, the wedding music stops and the windows dim to a single lantern. The ship holds at the pier until dawn, about six hours later. No new exchange can occur tonight. Creatures and hazards remain where they are; Vetch, if he survives, begins entering the next voyage's names.

Any completed exchange sends its imitation ashore. Each walks to the home of the person it was copied for and behaves as though it has come home. It cannot fight and does not know what it is.

When an exchange completes and its passenger dies, the ship draws the body through its timbers into that passenger's coffin in 19. Recovering one before dawn keeps Return to Life possible. Destroying either anchor during these hours still starts the escape sequence immediately. At first light, start it automatically.

When the grace period ends, if neither anchor has started the sinking.

The wedding music stops. Light drains from the ship's windows until only a single lantern remains. The hull stays beside the pier, waiting in the dark.

Only if the characters witness a completed exchange and its passenger's death.

The still body settles into the boards. The timber parts around it, draws it down, and closes again. No opening remains.

If the characters see a completed imitation go ashore.

The figure walks along the pier toward town, taking the familiar way home. It does not look back at the ship.

"The book is dry. It can burn." - Nessa





GETTING BACK TO SHORE

THE SHIP BEGINS TO FOUNDER

Destroying the first anchor, permanently cleansing the registry, or first light starts twelve one-minute escape beats. A careful room-to-room move takes one beat; stationary actions consume their actual time. Twelve combat rounds equal one beat. Track partial beats. This replaces the exploration clock; a second anchor does not reset it. Fast movement magic can shorten travel.

Explain the twelve beats and exits. Separated groups share elapsed time; do not charge twice for simultaneous travel. Conscious passengers keep pace. Carrying one unconscious passenger adds one beat to the journey unless a class ability or magic removes the burden. Spell durations still use actual minutes and five-second combat rounds.

At beat 4 previously dry lowest rooms flood ankle-deep; the bilge remains at least knee-deep. At beat 8 water in the lowest rooms reaches waist height; at 10 furniture slides; at 12 the ship sinks. Anyone beside an exterior opening may leave immediately. Otherwise, each round allow STR Chance TN 12 to reach a connected room; a rope or swim magic makes this automatic. After a failed attempt, CON Tough or 1d6 suffocation damage, ignoring DR. This emergency immersion rule is scenario-specific; water-breathing prevents suffocation.

The shortest route from 24 to the gangway is 24-23-22-21-03-01-P3, six moves. Another is 24-23-20-19-16-01-P3. The cargo-port exit is 24-23-20-19-16-14-P3. A rope already secured there makes the last crossing safe.

When the escape sequence begins. Explain the twelve beats and available routes before reading.

A long groan travels through the hull. The deck begins to settle beneath your feet. Water presses through the lowest seams. The ship is going down; the routes you opened are now the ways back to shore.

At beat 4 in a previously dry lowest room; in the bilge, describe the existing knee-deep water stirring.

Water spreads across the floor and rises around your ankles.

At beat 8 in a lowest room.

The water has reached your waist. Loose things drift past, turning slowly in the narrowing space.



At beat 10, wherever furniture is present.

Furniture breaks loose and slides across the tilting deck. Wood strikes wood all along the ship.

THREE ENDINGS

Both anchors destroyed: the coffin timber separates into plain floating boards. The trapped dead briefly stand along the pier, facing away from the town. Elian leaves her wedding ribbon on the rail. At dawn, the harbor reflects the sky correctly, and Mara's front door is only a door. A completed imitation already ashore stays as it is: destroying the anchors frees the dead but cannot undo a finished exchange.

One anchor destroyed: the rescued live, and no unfinished exchange continues after the ship sinks. The remaining anchor preserves the haunting. Weeks later, a different harbor hears wedding music. This is a possible sequel, not a reversal of tonight's rescue.

Neither neutralized: rescued people remain safe; the ship sinks at first light with those aboard. A finished exchange cannot be reversed by later destroying an anchor. It does not consume the victim's soul: a recovered body and free, willing spirit may qualify for Return to Life, with its six-hour nighttime ritual and other requirements. That is an aftermath rescue, not an instant combat cure.

THE HARBOR AT DAWN

Mara pays the full 120 GP if Nessa returns alive and helps every survivor without charging for their rescue. If Nessa is lost, she still pays 40 GP for an honest account and returned belongings. If rescued, Tomas walks home to Wren and Edda returns to her foundry. Neither is secretly an imitation if rescued before the exchange finishes.

Only when both anchors were destroyed and the party can see the pier.

The coffin timber separates into plain boards on the water. For a moment, the dead stand along the pier, their faces turned away from town. A wedding ribbon rests on the rail where Elian stood.

At dawn after both anchors were destroyed.

The harbor reflects the morning sky correctly. Light lies on the water and on the scattered boards. At Mara's house, the front door is only a door.





APPENDIX A CREATURE REFERENCE

Damage includes the listed bonus. Attacks roll d20 vs AC; do not add ability bonuses. Natural 20 attacks automatically hit, double damage and ignore DR. Specials replace normal attacks and use base character Save TNs, with no invented caster level. A successful special save negates its effect. Monster Save TNs use maximum HP and never change with injury.

SKELETON DECKHAND OR GUNNER

HP 14; AC 11; DR 1; one attack. Bone weapon: +1 to hit, 1d6+1 damage, reach 5 feet. Save TN 16; Quick +0, Tough +1, Mind -1. Mindless undead.

A hit can instead hold its target until STR Chance TN 12 succeeds; the attempt takes an action. Destruction frees the victim. Piercing damage is halved before DR; bludgeoning ignores DR. Spoken proof of a completed order pauses it one round. Turn Undead works normally.

ABYSSAL SKULKER

HP 18; AC 11; DR 0; one attack, 1d4 damage. Save TN 16; Quick +1, Tough +1, Mind +0. Living shadow creature for this adventure.

Motionless for a minute, it counts as unseen. Shadow Strike: DEX Quick or 1d4+1 necrotic damage; two-full-round cooldown. In this adventure, range is 5 feet. Moving or attacking reveals its position. The powder-room creature and any keel guards are separately tracked individuals.

ORSINO VETCH USING WIGHT

HP 80; AC 14; DR 1; two blade strikes, each +2 to hit and 1d8+3 damage, reach 5 feet. Save TN 12; Quick +1, Tough +3, Mind +2. Undead; immune to poison, disease, charm and sleep. Direct sunlight gives -2 to attacks and saves.

Life Drain replaces both blade strikes here: one target within 5 feet makes CON Tough or takes 1d8 necrotic damage and loses that many maximum HP until it rests. DR reduces damage, not maximum-HP loss. Success negates both. Two-full-round cooldown. Any kill-to-thrall effect is aftermath only; no new combatant rises during this adventure.

THE GUEST, ADAPTED ABERRANT HUNTER

HP 92/124/156 for four level-4/5/6 characters; AC 14; DR 0; two strikes, each 1d8+2 damage, reach 5 feet. Save TN 12/10/9 respectively; Quick +1, Tough +2, Mind -1. Large living creature with no special resistance. Fix its profile before play.



Void Strike: one target within 30 feet, DEX Quick or 1d12+2 necrotic damage; success negates damage. Replaces both strikes; two-full-round cooldown. These HP and attack changes are adventure rules, not the catalog profile. See "The last invitation" for tactics.



APPENDIX B INCIDENTS AND RECOVERED THINGS

UNSETTLING MOMENTS

Choose two or three incidents during movement or revisits. They require no roll, cause no damage, and add no clock mark. Do not repeat one simply to delay the party.

1. A cabin door opens. Someone wearing a character's coat walks past on the other side. The coat in the character's pack is still there.
2. Every flame leans toward the same wall. Pressing an ear against it reveals applause, then one person quietly begging it to stop.
3. A puddle reflects the characters as old people. One reflection notices the others and begins to cry.
4. The wedding music stops halfway through a note. A wet voice asks the musicians to begin again, "before she hears the screaming."
5. Someone below knocks a familiar rhythm. If answered, all the ship's doors answer together. Nothing opens.
6. A brass nameplate warms in a character's hand. A stranger's voice says, "Thank you for carrying me where there is light."

TWO BRIEF HANDOUTS

Passenger sheet: "MERCY OF NIGHT. Final boarding at midnight. Departure at first light. Nessa Pell. Edda Marr. Tomas Reed. Living names inspected below the chapel. O. Vetch, Purser." On the reverse: "The book is dry. It can burn. - Nessa."

Elían's note: "He promised I could speak to my father. It knew the old stories. It did not know that I had forgiven him. Something that borrows our dead cannot imagine what we have done since losing them. Orsino's book gives it the names. Burn that book."



APPENDIX C TREASURE AND REWARDS

TREASURE ACCOUNTING

Payment: 120 GP for Nessa alive. Ordinary salvage: $12 + 20 + 30 + 5 + 18 + 123 = 208$ GP; with payment, 328 GP for the party. Award OD's 100 XP per table hour, subject to DN adjustment, rather than treasure or kill XP. A five-to-six-hour session gives 500-600 XP; advancement follows the adventure.

Two Potions of Minor Healing in 06 restore $1d4+2$ HP each. Two Potions of Mending in 12 restore $3d6$ HP over three rounds and knit broken bones. Drinking takes an action; for Mending, restore $1d6$ immediately and $1d6$ at each of the drinker's next two turn starts. Each potion is single-use.

Burial plates are clues and memorials, not additional saleable magic items. Survivors may ask to bury them. Carrying one away does not impose a secret curse. The ship's projections and counterfeit wooden coins have no resale value or continuing power.

THE BELL AND THE HARBOR

BELLMETAL BAND

The bronze circlet in 11 grants +2 Quick saves and +2 Mind saves against illusions while worn. It begins with $1d3$ charges. Spending a charge takes an action here: for one minute, every creature within 30 feet stands in its true shape; no illusion, disguise or shapechange holds within that radius. After the last charge, the band still rings whenever an illusion is made within 30 feet. Its save bonuses remain.

Revealing is not destroying. The band exposes wooden imitations without ending their exchanges or persuading their passengers. It shows the Guest's living body under its borrowed faces, granting no additional weakness. Use the truths in "Tonight's passengers" to resolve the rescue scenes.

EARNED HELP ASHORE

If rescued, Edda offers the party one foundry job without charge: repair damaged metal equipment or make a mundane metal fitting she can produce, worth up to 50 GP in labor and materials. She cannot make magic items. The offer is shared by the party and remains available after this adventure.

If the party returns with survivors or credible evidence of the ship's danger, Captain Hale owes them one practical favor: a harbor introduction, access to public salvage records, or watch assistance transporting recovered bodies. His favor grants no authority to seize private goods or sell burial remains.



The 328 GP maximum cash reward remains unchanged. These services and the Bellmetal Band are additional rewards, not extra coins. Let surviving passengers thank the characters as people, not merely as payment sources.



APPENDIX D KEEL FIGHT PLAYTEST LOG

This encounter targets a substantial optional fight, not guaranteed Hard difficulty. Test the published profile without increasing HP or damage during combat. A fighter successfully screening the doorway is a tactical success, not a reason to force Skulkers past the line. Record positions and results before deciding whether your table needs different preparation or tactics.

BEFORE COMBAT

Record party level and composition, each character's current and maximum HP, and major resources remaining: healing, defensive or control magic, and the cleric's turning castings and pool. Note whether Vetch was fought, turned or bypassed, and any maximum-HP loss. Record the starting exploration mark or escape beat.

DURING COMBAT

Record the round when the first Skulker falls; if neither falls, write "none". For each Skulker, note whom it attacks, whether it reaches the wizard or thief, and whether armor prevents damage. Record how often the Guest uses Void Strike and how many characters were within its melee reach on those rounds. Note the wizard's lowest HP and any character deaths.

AT THE END

Record rounds fought, healing spent, and escape beats remaining when the last party member or rescued passenger reaches safety. If the escape clock never started, write "not started". Note retreat, bypass or a noncombat resolution rather than treating these as failed tests. If the fight happens after midnight, record the in-world hour.

READING THE RESULTS

Compare starting resources and positioning before comparing outcomes. Skulkers reaching an exposed wizard and Skulkers stopped by an armored fighter can produce very different fights. Both are legitimate. Look for repeated patterns across tests before adjusting the encounter; preserve advantages earned through preparation and good decisions.



APPENDIX E MAPS

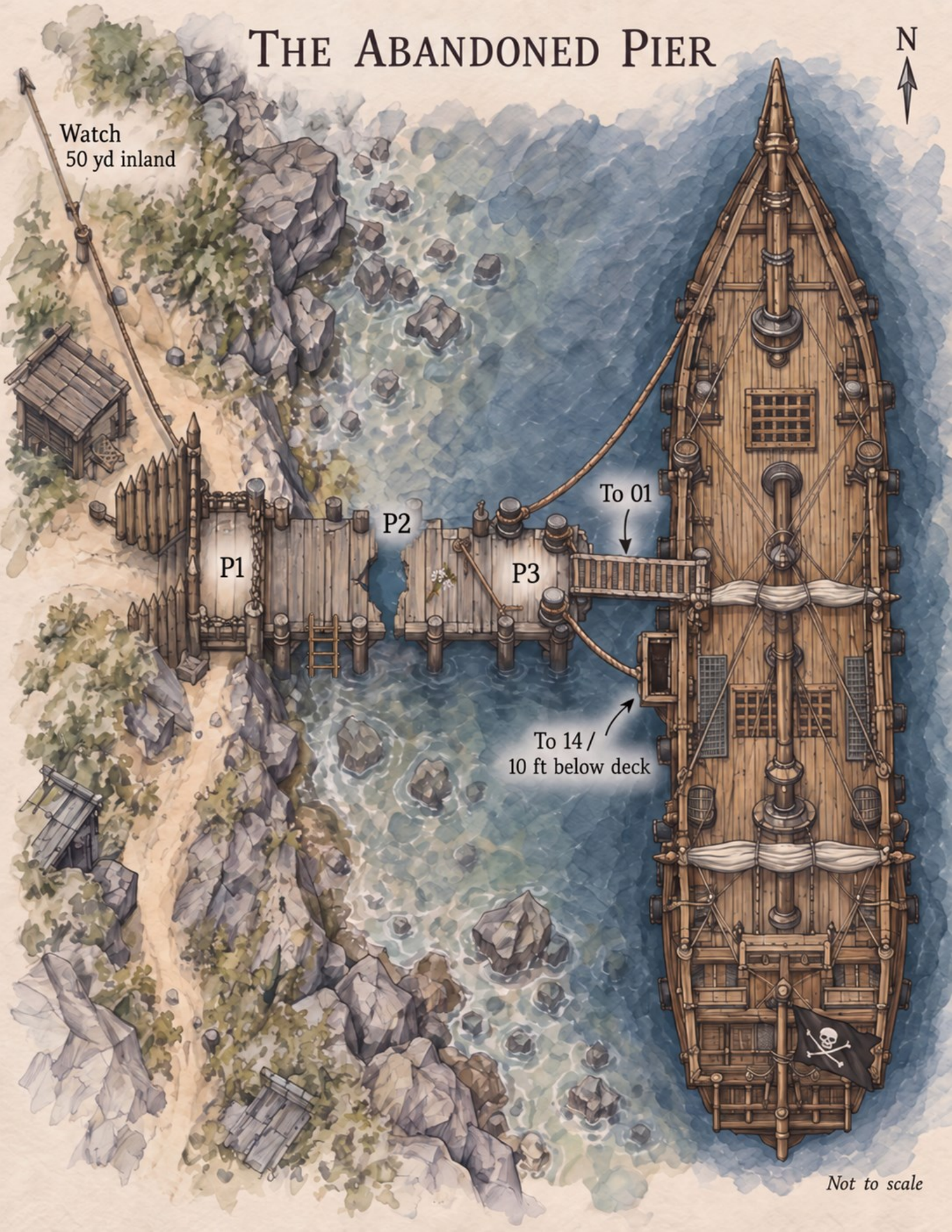
These five full-page maps repeat the opening map set for use at the table. Numbered transitions connect the sheets; all maps are schematic and not to scale.

The abandoned pier, upper deck, crew level, working deck, lower rooms.

THE ABANDONED PIER



Watch
50 yd inland



To 01

P2

P1

P3

To 14 /
10 ft below deck

Not to scale

MERCY OF NIGHT

UPPER DECK

BOW
↑



- 01 Main Deck
- 02 Forecandle
- 03 Bell Platform
- 04 Salon
- 05 Captain
- 06 Chartroom
- 07 Bridal Cabin

STERN
↓

Not to scale

MERCY OF NIGHT

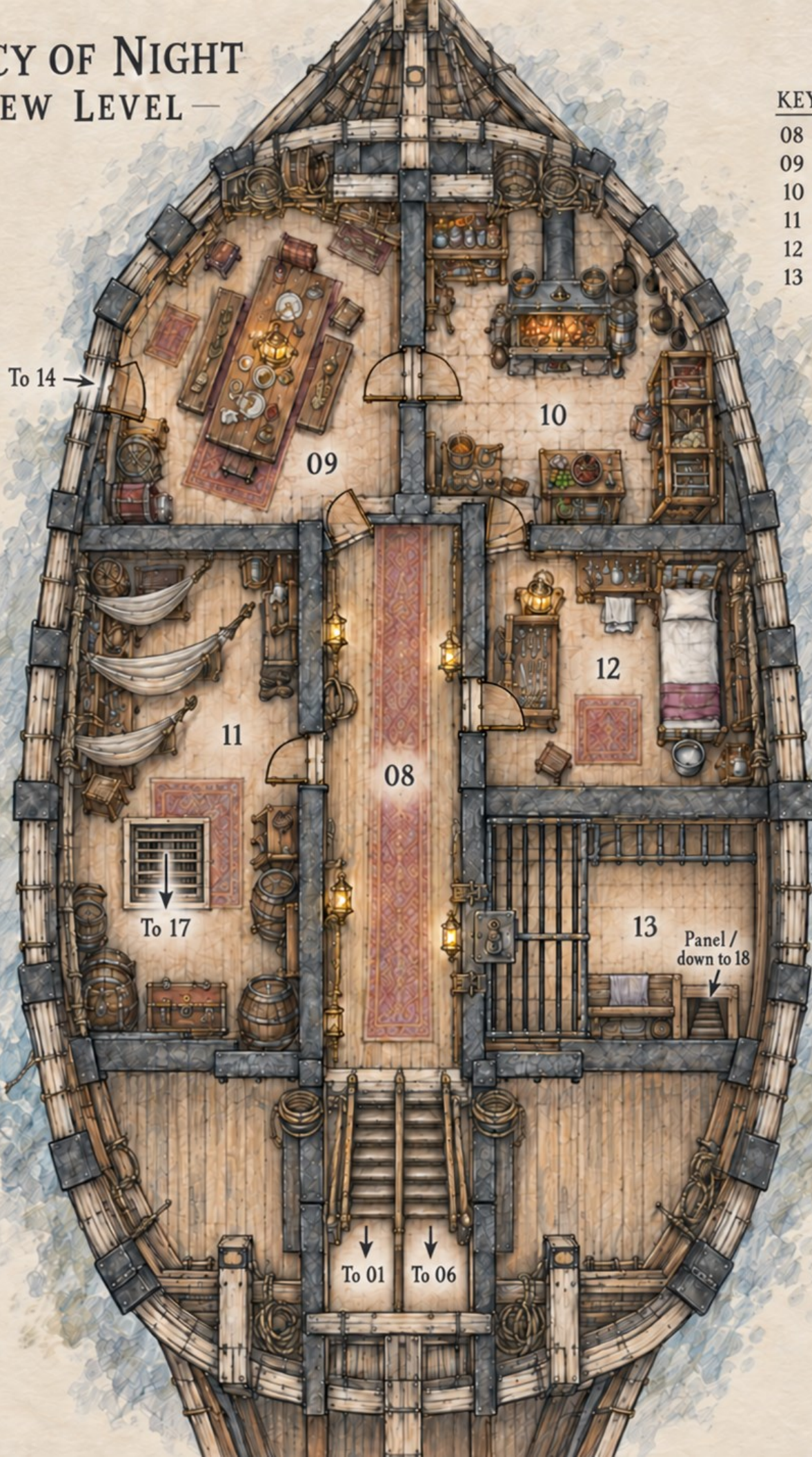
— CREW LEVEL —

BOW



KEY

- 08 Crew Passage
- 09 Mess
- 10 Galley
- 11 Hammocks
- 12 Surgery
- 13 Brig

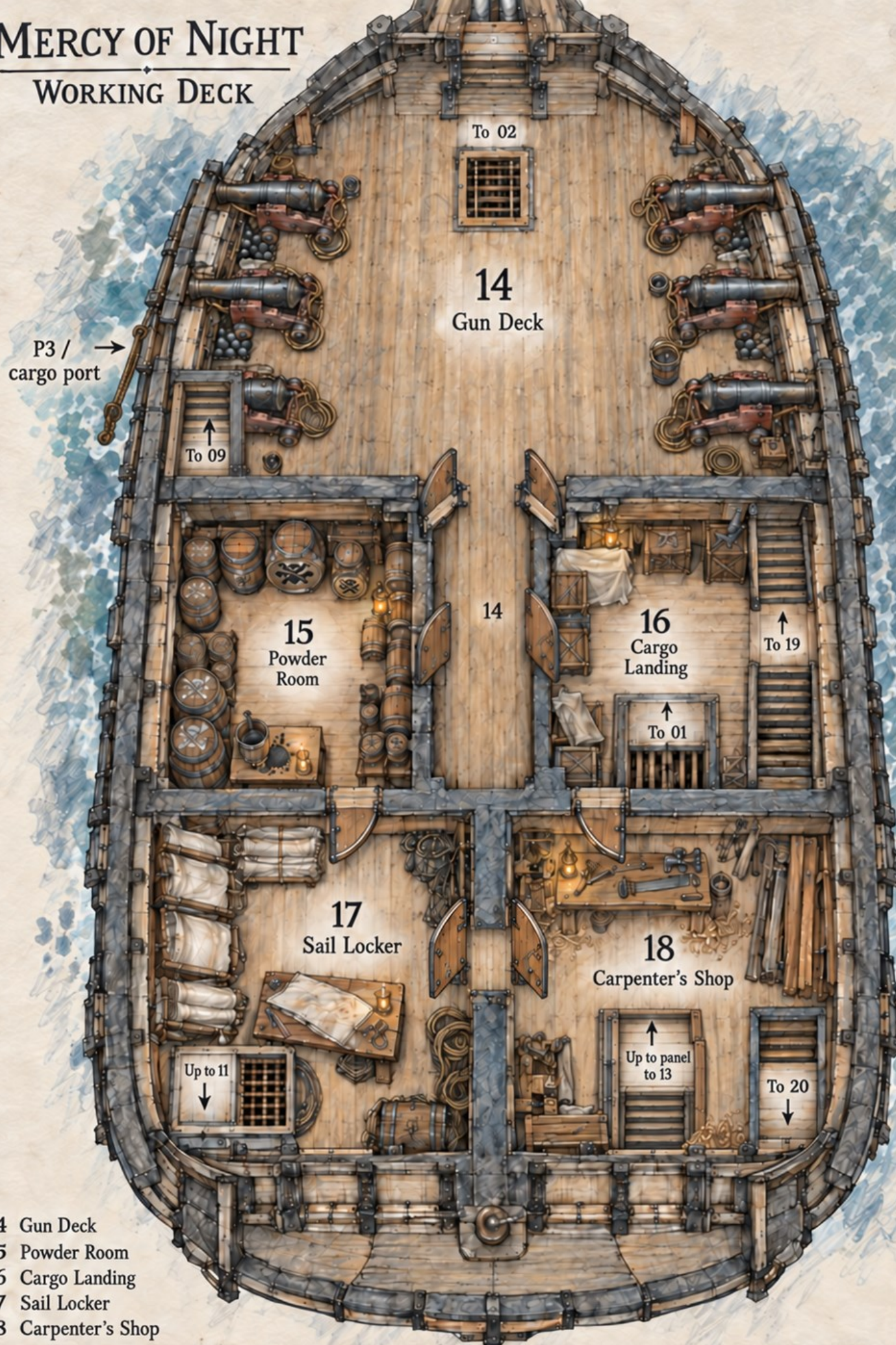


Not to scale

MERCY OF NIGHT

WORKING DECK

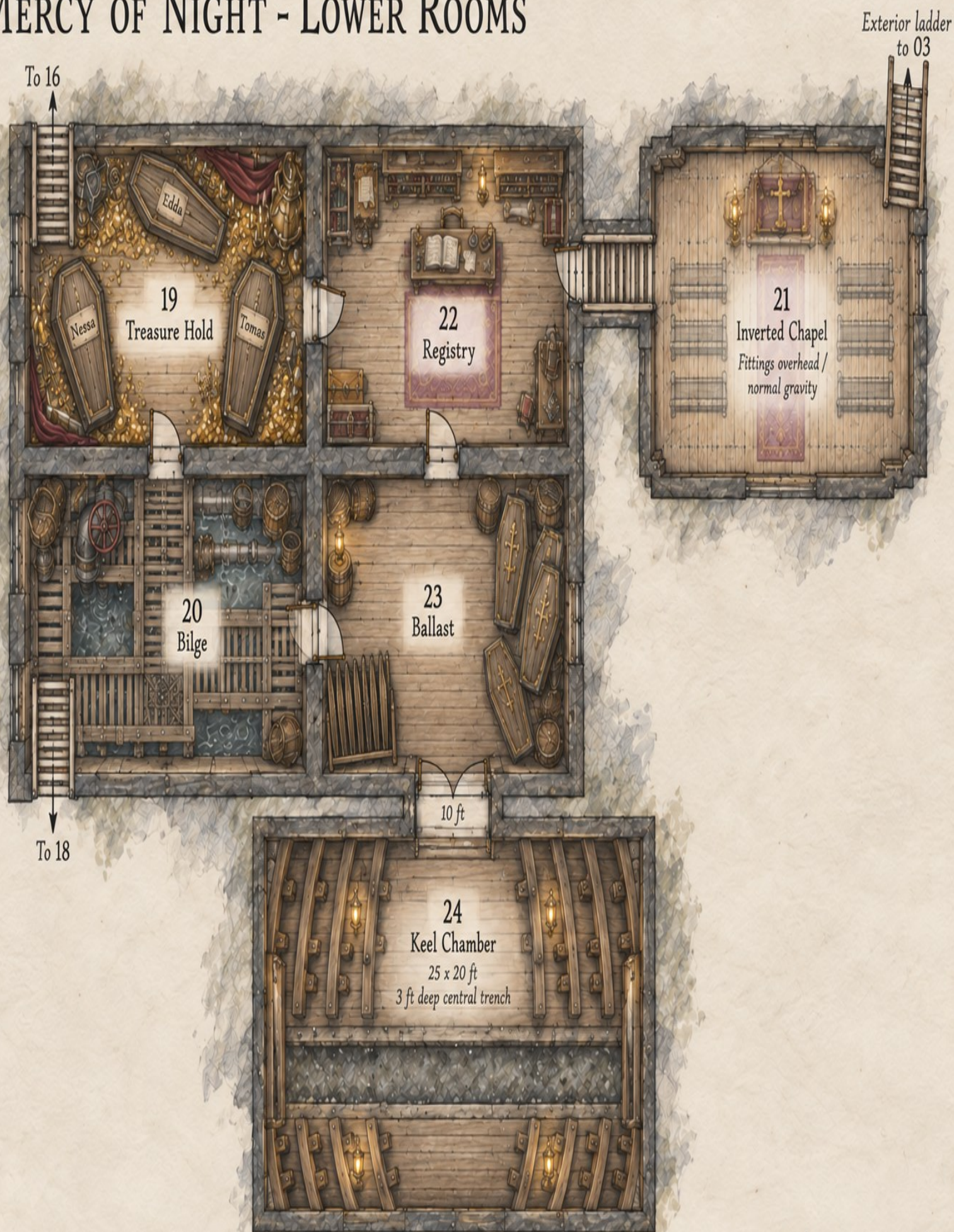
↑
BOW



- 14 Gun Deck
- 15 Powder Room
- 16 Cargo Landing
- 17 Sail Locker
- 18 Carpenter's Shop

Not to scale

MERCY OF NIGHT - LOWER ROOMS



Schematic - not to scale



APPENDIX F RULES DURING PLAY

Use this reference when a clock event, route, spell, or encounter needs a ruling. Begin play with "Before you begin" and P1 The gate.

RUNNING THE MIDNIGHT WATCH

THE SIX MARKS

Midnight is a scheduled event in the story, never a random encounter or a roll. The six marks pace the hours before it. Let the party change what midnight brings; do not delay their successes or force an exchange to occur.

Run the clock as described in "Before you begin": when marks advance, what each stage announces, and what changes when an anchor falls. The first rescue conversation with Tomas or Edda costs one mark, as described in "When a passenger refuses". Use each read-aloud passage below once.

The wedding begins, marks 1-2

Wedding music begins somewhere aboard. The tune passes through the partitions as though the musicians were in the next room. Every clock you can see reads eleven.

The ship prepares, marks 3-4

Water runs upward along the walls, tracing the seams between the boards. A voice carries through the ship: "Passengers, prepare for departure."

The final call, mark 5

The voice calls again, clearly enough to reach every deck. "Final call. Nessa Pell. Edda Marr. Tomas Reed." The wedding music continues beneath the names.

MIDNIGHT STRIKES

DN preparation

Pause for midnight at mark 6, or when elapsed time reaches it after an early escape. Start with the harbor chimes below, then describe the result the party earned. Only describe events they can witness; show distant consequences when they reach them. Midnight requires no roll.



With both anchors active, each unprotected named passenger aboard collapses and their imitation becomes physical, heading ashore. The imitation cannot fight. Ten in-world minutes (120 rounds) remain: neutralize either anchor, free the victim by magic, or carry them ashore. Otherwise the passenger dies and the completed imitation survives only ashore. People already ashore or protected by Soul Anchor are safe. Honor temporary suppression and other protections in "Magic and preparation".

Tell players when the ten-minute rescue window begins and track actual time using the movement and carrying rules in "The ship begins to founder": one minute per room move, plus the stated carrying delay; stationary actions take their actual time. Simultaneous journeys share elapsed time. Using this pace does not start sinking. Any passengers who die when it ends pass into the coffins in 19; the ship holds until dawn ("Until first light"). Midnight itself never starts sinking. If an anchor already fell, continue the existing escape or aftermath; there is no new exchange or reset.

Read aloud as midnight arrives, aboard or ashore.

From town comes the sound of a clock striking twelve. Its notes carry across the harbor, one after another. The last stroke fades over the water. Midnight has come.

Aboard with both anchors active; an unprotected passenger is present. Name that passenger.

The passenger's knees give way and their eyes close. Their borrowed relative stands, suddenly bearing the weight of a living person. It turns toward the way ashore. The passenger still breathes, but does not wake. Along the hull, the water remains level. The ship is waiting.

Both anchors remain, but every passenger is safe. Read from aboard or within sight of the ship.

The ship's windows remain lit after the final stroke. No rescued passenger falls. The promised hour has come, and the ship has no one to exchange.

An anchor fell earlier. Read after the chimes; keep any ongoing escape moving.

The last stroke passes without calling the rescued back. No borrowed face returns to claim them. What you broke aboard the ship remains broken.

WHEN AN ANCHOR FALLS

Before midnight: Every unfinished exchange is canceled and the false relatives vanish. The escape sequence starts at once, and midnight later passes without claiming anyone.



During the ten-minute window: Neutralizing either anchor saves every collapsed passenger still aboard, and their imitations vanish. The escape sequence starts at once.

After the window, before dawn: Unprotected passengers left aboard have died; their bodies lie in their coffins in 19, and their completed imitations live on ashore. An anchor still starts the escape sequence at once but cannot undo a finished exchange. Recovering a body before dawn keeps Return to Life possible.

No anchor falls: The ship waits at the pier until first light. Then the escape sequence starts on its own, and the ship sinks with anyone still aboard.

Temporary suppression: Magic that only pauses the registry stops unfinished exchanges but never starts the escape sequence.

FINDING A WAY THROUGH THE SHIP

READING THE SHIP MAPS

Bow is forward; stern is aft. All numbered areas have ordinary gravity except the visual effect in area 21. The ship's reflection is supernatural scenery, not a second navigable vessel. Ceilings are seven feet high, with ten feet in areas 14, 19, 21, and 24. Passageways are five feet wide; the main cargo routes are ten feet wide.

The following connections are two-way unless their descriptions state otherwise. Ordinary doors are unlocked. Locations are chambers or bounded deck areas; no unnumbered corridor is needed to connect them.

01 Main Deck connects to 02, 03, 04, 06, and 08; a cargo hatch descends to 16.

02 Forecastle connects to 01; its ladder descends to 14.

03 Bell Platform connects to 01; an exterior ladder descends to 21.

04 Captain's Salon connects to 01 and 05.

05 Captain's Cabin connects to 04 and 07.

06 Chartroom connects to 01 and 07; a stair descends to 08.

07 Bridal Cabin connects to 05 and 06.

08 Crew Passage connects to 01, 06, 09, 11, 12, and 13.

09 Mess connects to 08, 10, and 14.

10 Galley connects to 09 and 12.

11 Hammocks connects to 08 and 17.

12 Surgery connects to 08 and 10.

13 Brig connects to 08 and 18 through a removable rear panel and short stair.

14 Gun Deck connects to 02, 09, 15, and 16; its port opens outside.

15 Powder Room connects to 14 and 17.



16 Cargo Landing connects to 14, 18, and 19; a hatch rises to 01.

17 Sail Locker connects to 11, 15, and 18.

18 Carpenter's Shop connects to 13, 16, 17, and 20.

19 Treasure Hold connects to 16, 20, and 22.

20 Bilge connects to 18, 19, and 23.

21 Inverted Chapel connects to 03 by exterior ladder, and to 22.

22 Registry connects to 19, 21, and 23.

23 Ballast Chamber connects to 20, 22, and 24.

24 Keel Chamber connects only to 23.

USEFUL ROUTES

The speaking tube leads toward the brig: 01-08-13. The missing passengers occupy the crew level. The exterior ladder offers a quick route to the registry: 01-03-21-22. The broader route to the keel is 01-16-19-20-23-24. Discovering a shortcut saves clock marks; never require the party to visit all twenty-four locations.

MAGIC AND PREPARATION

LET OPEN DUNGEONS ABILITIES WORK

Banish Curse (level 3) or Purge Malice (5) ends one passenger's exchange curse; their name stays inert tonight. Soul Anchor (4; two turns, eight hours) prevents the exchange, even while unconscious. During the grace period, these spells save the victim and erase that imitation. No substitute victim is selected.

On the registry, Banish Curse suppresses its curse for 72 hours at levels 4-5: all unfinished exchanges stop. Suppression does not trigger early sinking; the ship still begins its descent at first light unless another effect starts it sooner. At level 6 it permanently removes the curse, equivalent to burning. Killing the Guest while the book is only suppressed leaves its anchor intact; destroy or permanently cleanse it for full release.

Adventure ruling - Spellbreaker: it ends one discrete mirror or hammock effect, or one false relative whose exchange is unfinished, even after that imitation becomes physical at midnight. The image stays gone tonight; ending a false relative saves its passenger. This exception to the spell's restrictions on curses and innate traits affects only these individual manifestations. It cannot affect the registry's curse, the Guest's underlying ability, or an imitation whose exchange has completed. Apply its nonstacking -1 CON Backlash until morning preparation. This does not free all the dead.

Arcane Unseal opens the brig and locked drawers. Sight Beyond Veils (6) exposes the false relatives. Sense Arcana detects nearby magic within its range and barrier limits; it does not explain the whole curse. Last Testament works on Elan's corpse; Grave Tongue cannot reach a forty-year-old death at levels 4-6.



Blessed Freedom removes physical holds, not the exchange curse or Vetch's Life Drain. Gills of the Deep, Tread Waves, flight and teleportation remain real escape options within their printed limits. No invisible barrier blocks departure. Projections have no body heat; Thermal Vision can reveal them. Honor racial vision and class abilities.

PREPARE THE PARTY

For four level-4/5/6 characters, give the Guest 92/124/156 HP and two keel Skulkers of 18 HP each. Encounter totals are 128/160/192 HP and four normal attacks per round. This is a Challenging HP baseline for a Fighter/Cleric/Wizard/Thief party; see "Preparing the keel fight" for limits and adjustments.

Turning requires both an available casting and sufficient remaining pool (20 x Cleric level when full). Range is 30 feet with line of sight. If Vetch's HP exceeds the remaining pool, he is unaffected and makes no save. Otherwise use base Save TN 12 + Cleric level, Mind +2. Failure turns him for 2d6 rounds, or destroys him if his current HP is at most 10 x Cleric level. His full 80 HP exceeds that destruction threshold at levels 4-6. Skeletons have no save; trapped turned undead suffer -4 to attacks. See "Honor the cleric" for resource limits.

Vetch uses the Wight profile with explicit special-attack timing; the Guest uses the adapted profile here. Haunting, clocks and other stated scenario rulings remain adventure-specific. The map appendix follows the connections in "Finding a way through the ship".

PREPARING THE KEEL FIGHT

THE STARTING PROFILES

For four characters of level 4, use Guest HP 92 and Save TN 12; with two Skulkers the encounter has 128 HP. At level 5, use HP 124 and Save TN 10, for 160 total. At level 6, use HP 156 and Save TN 9, for 192 total. Save TN always uses maximum HP and never changes with wounds. The Guest makes two strikes; each Skulker makes one. Void Strike trades the Guest's two strikes for one ranged special.

ADJUST BEFORE PLAY

The reference party has 32 HP per level: Fighter 12, Cleric 8, Wizard 5, Thief 7. Compare actual maximum party HP, attacks, defenses and control with OD's Encounter Formula. For a different group, a starting Guest HP is party maximum HP minus 36 for the two Skulkers; recalculate its base Save TN as 16 minus floor(maximum HP / 20), minimum 5. HP alone does not establish final difficulty. Do not scale against wounds acquired aboard or change the profile after combat begins.

KEEP THE FIGHTS DISTINCT

Vetch is not included in the keel totals. If he survives and reaches 23, he may bargain or flee through 20 or 22 once turning ends; he does not join the Guest's fight. The Guest and guards do not



pursue beyond 23. They retain wounds if the party retreats. The powder-room Skulker remains a separate, avoidable encounter.

HONOR THE CLERIC

Check castings and pool separately before resolving turning. Against full-health Vetch, a cleric needs a casting left AND at least 80 pool HP remaining. Only then does he save on TN 16/17/18 at Cleric levels 4/5/6, adding Mind +2. With no other modifiers, his failure chances are 65%/70%/75%; these are conditional save odds, not unconditional chances to turn him.

Each Skeleton turned or destroyed spends 14 pool HP. With no other pool expenditure, level 4 starts at 80: one Skeleton leaves 66, locking out full-health Vetch. Level 5 starts at 100: one leaves 86, but two leave 72 and lock him out. Level 6 starts at 120: two leave 92, but three leave 78 and lock him out. A casting must also remain. If full-health Vetch fails his save, he spends 80 pool HP; if he succeeds, he spends none. For this adventure, either outcome spends the attempted casting. Another casting does not refresh the pool.

Casting allowance: the OD Cleric progression explicitly lists two castings per day at level 4 and three at level 6; it does not give a level-5 entry. For this adventure, carry the two-casting allowance through level 5, increasing to three at level 6. This is an explicit interpretation of the omitted level, not a quoted level-5 rule. Use an established table ruling instead if one already applies.

The two Skeleton groups are in different rooms. One turning affects both only if they actually gather within range and line of sight. Honor successful turning, avoidance and retreat; do not give Vetch resistance or immunity to counter the cleric. A party that avoids his Life Drain should reach the keel in better condition.

STORY REFERENCE

THE SHIP'S PAST

Forty years ago, Captain Rován Vale stripped the burial houses of Mourning Isle to repair his pirate ship. Coffin boards became partitions; brass nameplates became fittings. His bride, Elian, had served as the island's keeper of the dead; she recognized the timber when she came aboard for their wedding.

One sealed coffin held something living: an Aberrant Hunter the islanders had imprisoned for feeding among their graves. Lining the keel, it learned to draw voices and faces from the stolen burial names. The crew called it the Guest. Its body lives in area 24.

Rován fed it prisoners in return for an imitation of his drowned brother. He knew the brother was false and kept it because it could not blame him. When Elian opened the sea valves, he locked her in the bridal cabin and ordered them closed. Too late: the ship sank beneath the pier with its wedding guests aboard.

The theft bound the dead to their stolen names. The Guest exploits that bond; it cannot resurrect anyone. Each registry entry supplies a loved one's memories up to the hour of death, and nothing after ("What the dead do not know"). Only three living entries can bind each voyage. The false



relatives cannot leave the ship until the midnight exchange begins; only a completed exchange lets them survive independently.

Orsino Vetch, the ship's undead purser, keeps the book of names in the registry, area 22. He helps the Guest steal the passengers' lives. The Guest has promised him a rescuer's body so he can live again. That promise is a lie.

Captain Rován's image, a harmless repeating memory rather than an undead spirit, remains in his cabin, area 05. He admits stealing the coffin wood but claims Elia drowned by accident. Her account in area 07 can make him admit the truth. His help is useful, but the party can succeed without it.