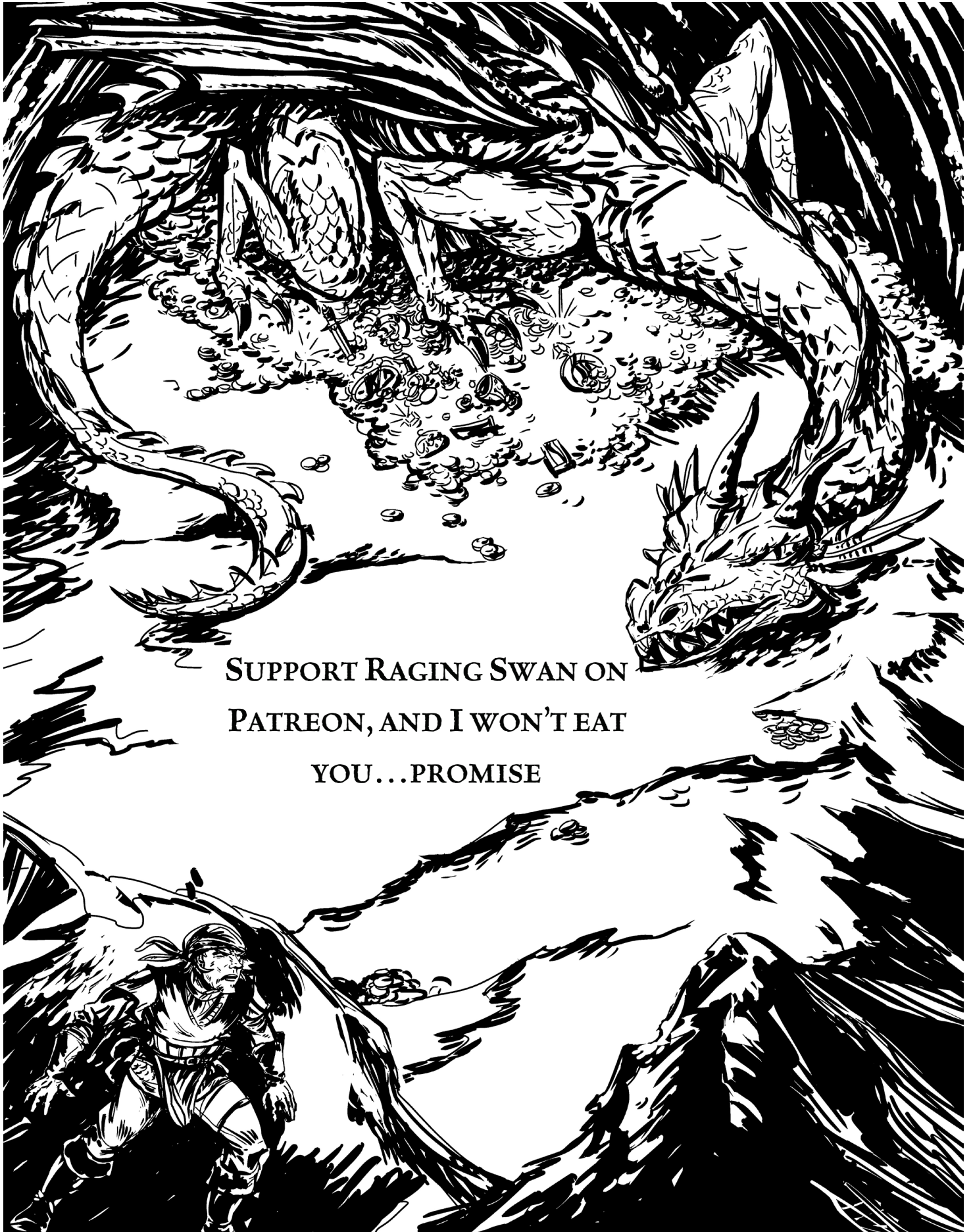


RAGING SWAN PRESS

VILLAGE BACKDROP:
KENNUTCAT





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VILLAGE BACKDROP: KENNUTCAT

The small island of Kennutcat, with its broad natural harbour and bountiful fishing, proved to be a great boon to early colonizers. After subjugating the native inhabitants, the colonizers quickly established a small prosperous village catering to the many merchant ships sailing the nearby trading routes. Yet, at night, a thick fog rolls in, blanketing the stone streets and wood shingled houses. Strange shapes move in the mists, while sibilant voices echo in the still air. These are Kennutcat's dead—fathers, mothers, sons and daughters—spirits trapped and inexplicably bound to the island by an unending, unkillable nightmarish horror. For within a tangled forest, the surviving natives pray for salvation and the spirits of the island have answered in the form of Lobata—a formless creature of darkness that lurks in the surrounding waters. Those who answer Lobata's siren call surrender to a nameless compulsion to hunt the strange beast, but find nothing more than their own watery graves amid the storm-tossed waves.

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Published by Raging Swan Press
September 2015

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KENNUTCAT AT A GLANCE

Three generations ago, a consortium of merchants and titled nobles purchased the small island of Kennutcat. Graced with a natural harbour and bountiful fishing, the sandy island promised further wealth for its investors. After brutally subjugating the native inhabitants, the Kittiwaki, the colonizers worked diligently to build a prosperous settlement. Kennutcat's ideal location quickly proved to be a boon as the villagers resupplied and repaired passing ships as well as developing their own fishing fleet.

However, despite its apparent idyllic appearance, a deep fog rolls in at night, staining the paved stone streets and shingled houses with a clinging dew. Within the mists, strange sounds echo—voices of past villagers, their footsteps treading the streets and ancestral homes—making traveling at night dangerous for the unwary. Meanwhile, family members relentlessly pace the porches perched on rooftops, known as widow walks, their eyes straining for loved ones reported lost at sea. For something lurks out in the waters, a titanic monster that lures Kennutcat's sons and daughters out onto the water with hopes of glory. Those who hunt the strange beast never return alive, but their spirits are inexplicably bound to the strange island.

Deep within a forest cave, the few surviving Kittiwaki eke out a living as they have for hundreds of years in worship of unfathomable nature spirits. At night by huge bonfires, they pray to the spirits to cleanse Kennutcat of the taint of the colonisers exploiting their holy island.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Kayda Balton, Timius Holland, Patrok Talbot, Ramus Tennett, Gretchen Vankmeer

Government Council

Population 191 (163 humans [colonisers], 23 humans [natives], 3 halflings, 1 dwarf)

Alignments LG, N, LN, LE

Languages Common

Corruption 0; **Crime** 0; **Economy** 2; **Law** -2 **Lore** -2; **Society** 4

Qualities Prosperous, strategic location

Danger 10; **Disadvantages** Cursed (haunted, +10 danger)

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Apika Spiritseer (location 7; N female old human druid 7) Ancient Apika leads the last of the native islanders in their ancient rites and practises.

Captain Jayn Kell (location 1; LE female human ranger 6) Kennutcat's most esteemed captain plans to avenge her family's death by Lobata.

Debbin Hoggle (location 6; LG male halfling expert 3) Debbin keeps Kennutcat's lighthouse operational 24 hours a day.

Gretchen Vankmeer (location 2; LN female old human aristocrat 2) Gretchen Vankmeer keeps her remaining children imprisoned in their manor for fear they'll succumb to the insane desire to hunt Lobata.

Hargan Saltbeard (location 5; N male dwarf druid 4) Hargan communes with nature in a small shrine.

Kayda Balton (location 4; LN female human aristocrat 3) Aging Kayda Balton runs the Shrouded Mistress.

Patroc Ralbot (location 7; LE male human aristocrat 2) Patroc Ralbot works tirelessly to undermine the other council leaders and install himself as lord of the island.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the village comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Kennutcat Harbour:** A natural harbour, supported by a well-built wharf, is the centre of the island's trade and fishing industries.
2. **Vankmeer Manor:** Home to one of the original founding families, its current owner locks herself inside, slowly rotting away into insanity.
3. **Kennutcat Council Hall:** This stout building and adjoining tower serves the island as its centre of government.
4. **The Shrouded Mistress:** Kennutcat's main inn and tavern also serves as a general store, owned by the Baltons.
5. **Beach Shrine:** Old Hargan Saltbeard maintains a small shrine built of driftwood dedicated to the spirits of the sea.
6. **Coln Point Lighthouse:** This sturdy lighthouse, its beacon guiding ships to safety, rests at the end of a long stretch of sandy beach.
7. **Forest Cave:** A large cave burrows deep underground, its walls painted with the ancient history of the Kittiwaki and the island.

MARKETPLACE

Resources & Industry Fishing, shipbuilding, trading

Base Value 700 gp; **Purchase Limit** 3,750 gp; **Spellcasting** 3rd;

Minor Items 2d4; **Medium Items** 1d4; **Major Items** -

When the PCs arrive in Kennutcat, the following items are for sale:

- **Potions & Oils** *comprehend languages* (50 gp), *eagle's splendour* (300 gp)
- **Scrolls (Arcane)** *obscuring mist* (25 gp), *water breathing* (375 gp), *whispering wind* (150 gp)
- **Scroll (Divine)** *detect undead* (25 gp), *helping hand* (375 gp), *protection from evil* (25 gp), *undetectable alignment* (150 gp)

VILLAGE LORE

A PC making a Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (local) may know some information about Kennutcat. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 10: Kennutcat boasts a wide, natural harbour and excellent fishing waters for such a small island.

DC 15: Many claim to hear voices or see spirits in the deep fogs shrouding the island at night.

DC 20: Despite the prosperity of its citizens, many seem to go mad, possessed by a desire to slay a legendary sea beast.

VILLAGERS

Appearance The colonisers have pale skin and dark hair and eyes. Men wear their beards long while women prefer their hair wrapped in buns with ornate jewelled pins. The Kittiwaki are dark-skinned with reddish to black hair and green or blue eyes.

Dress Coloniser women wear long, heavy drab dresses while men prefer loose pants ornamented with a colourful sash and open chested shirts. Kittiwaki wear animal furs, mostly rabbit, and leather. They wear little in the way of ornamentation.

Nomenclature *male* Argis, Fellen, Korl, Potrus, Tarl, Ulwich; *female* Cassiway, Enda, Hendi, Renna, Sorah; *family* Balton, Holland, Ralbot, Tennett, Vankmeer

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A PC can use Diplomacy to gather information about Kennutcat and its surroundings. This takes 1d4 hours and requires a DC 10 check. A character exceeding this check gains one additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10. Use the table below to determine which rumour(s) the PC learns.

| D6 | RUMOUR |
|----|--|
| 1 | Lady Vankmeer keeps her youngest children locked inside their manor house. |
| 2 | Captain Jayn Kell is paying well for a crew to help her avenge her family's death by Lobata. |
| 3* | The Kittiwaki practice human sacrifice, evil magic and cannibalism. |
| 4 | Families often leave out food and drink for their ancestors who do not seem to rest in peace. |
| 5* | The reason the island seems haunted is that the Council members are actually vampires practicing vile sorcery. |
| 6 | Hargan Saltbeard jealously guards his shrine. He won't let anyone inside. |

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: KENNUTCAT HARBOUR

A long, sandy stretch of land protects the deep harbour from waves, making the island an ideal place to dock and provision passing ships. The villagers built a long, wide wharf with numerous piers to accommodate ships of all sizes. The villagers reserve part of the harbour for their own ships—a few larger trading ships but mostly small fishing boats pulling up the clams, crabs and fish living in abundance in the surrounding waters. Recently, old Captain Jayn Kell (LE female human ranger 6) pulled into the harbour with the *Pale Bette*. Her husband and two adult children perished in their attempt to slay the mysterious sea beast, Lobata. Swearing vengeance, Captain Kell claims she possesses special knowledge to defeat the monster and seeks crewmembers brave enough to hunt this seemingly unkillable beast. A few have already signed up for the promised large reward.

2: VANKMEER MANOR

One of Kennutcat's founding families, the Vankmeers slowly rot away in their once splendid manor house. An ill stroke of luck took the three eldest heirs to the family when they left to hunt for Lobata, leaving only old Gretchen Vankmeer (LN female old human aristocrat 2) and two grandchildren behind. Fearing the children will eventually fall victim to Lobata's curse, Lady Vankmeer keeps them locked in their rooms. She has gone so far as to hire a strange breed of off-islanders to guard them—large, brutish figures almost apelike in their posture. Recently, one of the children smuggled a note out through a discarded bottle, offering a reward if anyone helps them escape. The bottle can be found randomly with a DC 15 Perception check by any PC walking near the manor.

3: KENNUTCAT COUNCIL HALL

A wooden tower, storing the island's records, sits attached to a large, two-storey building. Like most structures in Kennutcat, the building is shingled to protect against the damp island weather. Here, the council members of Kennutcat's founding families meet to discuss pertinent issues. Lately, the young head of the Ralbots, Patroc (LE male human aristocrat 2), works tirelessly, assuming more and more duties and responsibilities in a bid to gain total leadership of Kennutcat and establish himself as a noble lord. To gain favour with the villagers, he perpetuates rumours about the "evil doings" of the Kittiwaki, including blaming them for the island's curse. Patroc is planning to put a bounty on their heads, demonstrating his ability to take action against threats to Kennutcat (even ones created by him). He would greatly like to hire a group of disposable adventurers to take care of the Kittiwaki.

4: THE SHROUDED MISTRESS

This imposing two-storey inn and general store takes its name from Kennutcat's nickname, "The Shrouded Mistress"—referring to the nightly fog blanketing the island. The inn provides plenty of rooms for visitors while the locals gather nightly to have drinks and share gossip in the large common room. Skeletons of various sea creatures washed ashore decorate the walls and many rooms. The proprietor, Kayda Balton (LN female human aristocrat 3), spends less and less time attending to civic duties. In her youth, a liaison with a Kittiwaki resulted in twins and stained her family name. The twins, Ferris and Nedrok (LN male human expert 1), run the general store but still experience exclusion from the villagers, especially with the rising anti-Kittiwaki sentiment fuelled by Patroc Ralbot.

5: BEACH SHRINE

Driftwood and seaweed form a small hut-like structure on the beach, its only entrance curtained off with ratty sailcloth. An odd dwarf, Hargan Saltbeard (N male dwarf druid 4), maintains the hut as a shrine to the sea's nature spirits. A former weapon smith washed ashore when the galley he was travelling sank during a storm; Hargan claims sea spirits visited him, saving him from drowning. Most believe Hargan to be quite mad, however, he asserts he can commune with the sea. He senses an unnatural presence in the water he cannot name (Lobata) and at night in a sleepwalking state, works on crafting a +2 *ghost touch harpoon*. He can give no reason for why he is making such a weapon—only that the spirits compel him to do so. He has told no one so far about the harpoon, fearing he may be going mad.

6: COLN POINT LIGHTHOUSE

This slender stone tower stands at the end of a long, sandy stretch of land called Coln Point. The lighthouse serves a vital role in guiding ships in and out of Kennutcat harbour, thus local law decrees it must be manned 24 hours a day. Debbin Hoggle (LG male halfling expert 3) and his teenage son and daughter diligently perform this task. Debbin moved his family to Kennutcat after a burglar murdered his wife and oldest son in a botched robbery. An inventor, he utilizes a popular lighting method combining glass and lamp oil which produces a steady, smokeless flame. Debbin mans the lighthouse most hours of the day with his children filling in a few hours here and there to let him sleep—a sleep filled with nightmares of late. Debbin dreams of a monstrous sea beast and fears he is succumbing to Lobata's curse. On foggy nights, he swears the light from the lighthouse illuminates the creature just below the water. The few nights he goes out into town, he mutters, while deep in his cups, that he can find and slay the beast.

7: FOREST CAVE

Poor, sandy soil and salt soaked sea winds create a small stretch of stunted, twisted trees. Within the tangled groves, dwell the remaining Kittiwaki who survive by fishing and hunting seals. A small cave complex runs deep underground in the middle of the forest—a sacred site to the native islanders. Within, Apika Spiritseer (N female old human druid 7) prays to the Kittiwaki ancestors for guidance. Too few to resist the colonizers, Apika seeks a way for her people to survive in peace. Little does she realize the spirits already have their own answer to the problem—in the form of Lobata, a powerful haunt prowling the seas and luring the colonizers to their deaths. Despite this, Apika strives to bridge the gap between her people and the colonizers though radicals on both sides hinder these efforts.

DANGEROUS HAUNTS OF KENNUTCAT

Although many of the spirits returning to the village are essentially harmless (see “Harmless Haunts of Kennutcat”) a few more powerful souls manifest as dangerous haunts, poltergeists or shadows. Some other spirits in Kennutcat are more dangerous and the locals know to avoid them.

MERWYNE HOLLAND CR 4 (XP 1,200)
A thin, emaciated, dripping wet woman lets out a scream, raising a harpoon over her head. Crabs tear at her flesh.

NE persistent haunt (15 ft. by 10 ft. area near location 4)

Caster Level 4th

Notice DC 25 Perception (to hear dripping water)

hp 18; **Trigger** Proximity; **Weakness** Slow; **Reset** 1/week

Effect When Merwyne manifests, she lets out a scream, affecting one random creature as if by a *doom* (DC 11 Will negates) each round. Additionally, she lashes out with a ghostly harpoon, which acts as *spiritual weapon* (+4 melee, 1d8+1 force damage).

Destruction A former matriarch of the Hollands, Merwyne died battling Lobata and cannot rest until it is destroyed.

JARRID VANKMEER CR 5 (XP 1,600)
A nobly dressed man, his skin shrunken and eyes hollow pits, opens his mouth, a stream of tentacles oozes from his eyes suddenly blaze with fire.

NE haunt (15 ft. radius near location 2)

Caster Level 5th

Notice DC 23 Perception (to hear a low, rage-filled murmuring)

hp 10; **Trigger** Proximity; **Reset** 1/week

Effect When Jarrid manifests, he lets out a terrible shout full of hate and rage, affecting all creatures in his area of affect as if by *unholy blight* (DC 16 Will).

Destruction Gretchen Vankmeer’s deceased husband, Jarrid, cannot rest until Lobata is truly destroyed.

THE KELLS CR 5 (XP 1,600)

The forms of an older man, and young adult man and woman twist together, their features shrunken with seawater leaking from their eyes, ears and mouth.

CE haunt (15 ft. radius, location GM’s choosing)

Caster Level 5th

Notice DC 25 Perception (to hear three voices muttering curses and calls for vengeance)

hp 10; **Trigger** Proximity; **Weakness** Slow; **Reset** 1/week

Effect When the Kells manifest, their forms shift from one Kell to another—father, son and daughter, each calling out for someone to avenge their deaths. This acts as a *geas* (DC 19 Will negates) on any creatures in the area of affect, compelling them to hunt down and destroy Lobata.

Destruction The Kells, the slain family of Jayn Kell, can only be laid to rest when Lobata is no more.

THE WARNING WOMAN CR 6 (2,400 XP)

A hunchbacked skeletal crone, her eyes ablaze with gout of flame, screams, “Leave! Leave the island now!”

NE haunt (20 ft. by 10 ft. area near location 3)

Caster Level 6th

Notice DC 18 Perception (to see two pinpoints of fire in the fog)

hp 12; **Trigger** Proximity; **Reset** 1/day

Effect The skeletal crone shouts its warning at one random creature. The next time the creature sleeps it is afflicted as if by a *nightmare* (DC 17 Will negates), dreaming of a monstrous sea creature of claws, tentacles and teeth pursuing it across a raging sea.

Destruction Another victim of Lobata’s, the Warning Woman cannot rest until Lobata is destroyed.

NARDOC PAULWAIN CR 8 (3,200 XP)

This ghostly sea captain gibbers madly, his empty eye sockets weeping blood.

CE haunt (15 ft. radius area near location 1)

Caster Level 8th

Notice DC 20 Perception (to hear laughter becoming more hysterical)

hp 16; **Trigger** Proximity; **Reset** 1/day

Effect When Nardoc manifests, one random creature must make a DC 20 Will save or be affected as if by *insanity*. Part of the creature’s insanity is an obsession to find and slay Lobata.

Destruction One of the early settlers on Kennutcat, Nardoc won’t rest until Lobata is destroyed.

LIFE IN KENNUTCAT

TRADE & INDUSTRY

The majority of Kennutcat's villagers engage in fishing. As a waypoint along major routes of trade, many ships dock in the island's harbour to resupply and get repairs from the excellent craftsmen living on the island. Kennutcat sends its own ships out to engage in trade, bringing further riches to the island, despite the dangers of encountering Lobata. Despite its sometimes dire reputation, Kennutcat's natural beaches and quaint charm attract rich nobles and merchants, some of which hire bodyguards to protect them from the "savage" Kittiwaki. The Kittiwaki, in turn, mostly fish and hunt seal, and trade any they don't need, particularly seal pelts, with merchant ships willing to deal with them.

LAW & ORDER

Kennutcat's council governs the island's affair, though of late, Patrok Ralston runs most of the daily affairs as the other noble families sink into decay. The council makes rulings on disputes between the villagers, usually over land or fishing rights. The island maintains a small townsguard, mostly to keep unruly sailors in check. Most petty criminals spend a night in a cramped, mouldering jail cell or a day in the stocks. The colonizers send potential serious criminals off-island to the mainland to be judged by local magistrates.

HARMLESS HAUNTS OF KENNUTCAT

Those killed by Lobata, after falling victim to its siren call, return to Kennutcat as spirits. Most haunt their former abodes, harmlessly. Listed below are some of the harmless spirits PCs might encounter in Kennutcat either outside at night or in one of its old, wood shingled homes.

D10 HAUNT

| | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Footsteps pace constantly. |
| 2 | Small nearby objects are constantly being rearranged. |
| 3 | A particular perfume wafts in the air. |
| 4 | A shadow moves across a wall or floor. |
| 5 | Incessant sobbing echoes in the air. |
| 6 | A large object falls suddenly and without warning. |
| 7 | Anything being eaten or drunk suddenly tastes bitter and salty, like tears. |
| 8 | A bloodstain appears and then quickly vanishes. |
| 9 | A human apparition floats through the room. |
| 10 | The PCs feel something breathing close to them. |

EVENTS

While the PCs are in the village, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D6 EVENT

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Drunken villagers have a small Kittiwaki boy cornered, and pelting him with refuse and insults. The boy looks at the PCs, his face pleading for help. |
| 2 | A native ship pulls into the harbour, its crew gloomy and sullen after an encounter with Lobata. Old men and women wait on the wharf expectantly. |
| 3 | A woman wanders the dock, searching the ships for a husband lost at sea years ago. She questions the PCs in near hysteria. |
| 4 | A sudden fog rolls in without warning. Strange voices echo within its confines as the villagers hurry to their homes. |
| 5 | A dark shadow crawls along a row of houses before it disappears with a laugh while the sudden scent of pipe smoke wafts in the air. |
| 6 | A family wails from the docks as a family member boards a ship while vowing to slay Lobata. |

LOBATA

A manifestation of the nature spirits on the island, Lobata lures the villagers out into the open sea to their deaths. Adult creatures spending a year on Kennutcat must make a DC 5 Will save or be compelled to hunt Lobata as if under a *geas* spell. Only a *miracle* or *wish* can break this enchantment. Unlike traditional haunts, Lobata can appear anywhere in the sea wherever there is a Kennutcat villager.

LOBATA

CR 11 (XP 19,200)

N persistent haunt (60 ft. radius)

Caster Level 11th

Notice DC 15 Perception (to see faces appear in churning water) **hp** 49; **Weakness** Slow, susceptible to *ghost touch* weapons;

Trigger Proximity; **Reset** 1 week

Effect When Lobata manifests, the sky suddenly grows dark as the waters begin churning, emulating a *storm of vengeance* (DC 23 Reflex) as a black sea creature rises from the depths—all eyes, teeth and tentacles. The latter form acts as a *shadow conjuration* (DC 16 Will disbelieves) with Lobata preferring to use *black tentacles* (CMB +16) to drag its victims below water.

Destruction Lobata can only be permanently destroyed if the colonizers leave Kennutcat, the Kittiwaki die off or peace is made between the two groups.

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