

DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

THE SEA QUEEN ESCAPES!

#75: A LEVEL 3 ADVENTURE
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A LEVEL 3 ADVENTURE

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THE SEA QUEEN ESCAPES!



INTRODUCTION



The Sea Queen Escapes is designed for six 3rd-level characters. If the judge is running this adventure for larger or more experienced parties, he should increase the number and strength of the encounters to ensure a proper challenge for the group. This adventure can be set in any rocky coastal region. It is helpful for the PCs to have access to an ocean-going ship, and the judge should take the necessary measures to provide one for sale or for hire in order to complete the final stages of the adventure.

BACKGROUND



Half century ago, the wizard Shadankin dedicated his life to plumbing the secrets of the ocean depths. Through magical means and archaic artifacts, he made regular sojourns beneath the waves. Unlike many sorcerers, Shadankin sought not to conquer and enslave but to learn from and befriend the ocean's denizens. He counted amongst his allies both schools of simple fish and potentates of aquatic kingdoms. Shadankin was always welcome under the sea.

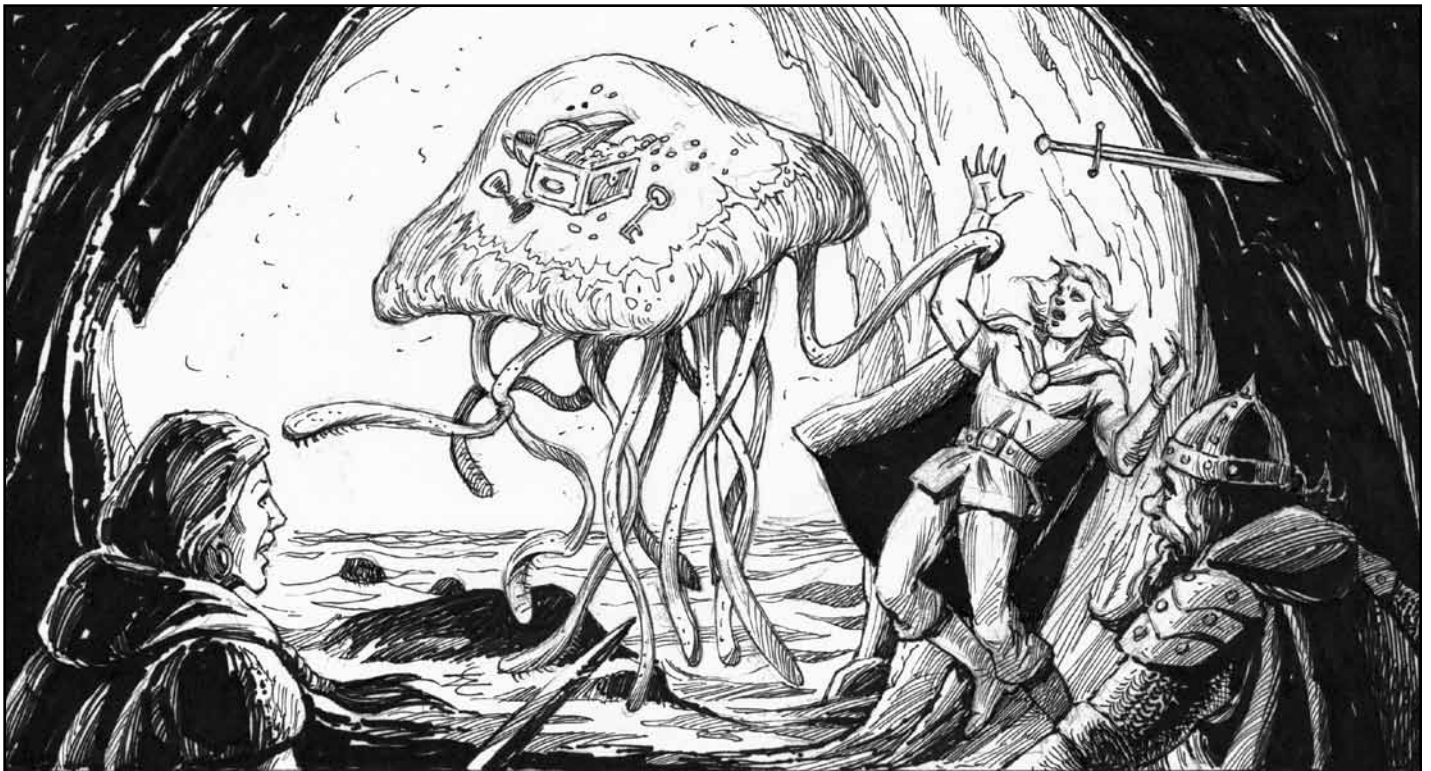
One of his dearest friends was Queen Cealheewhalool, the Imperatrix of Waves and ruler of the Sunken Kingdom of Ru. The Rueans are descendants of an ancient race who turned to the magic of watery patrons to live under the sea when their lands were claimed by the ocean waves. Shadankin was a regular guest of the Rueans and held in much regard.

Unbeknownst to all, Queen Cealheewhalool dabbled in arts that were old and forbidden long before her kingdom sank. In doing so, she mistakenly contacted forces best avoided, and through her they found a way back into a world that

had forgotten them. They transformed the Imperatrix into their agent, warping her mind and body, much to the horror of her subjects, who frantically summoned Shadankin to assist them.

Shadankin rushed to the Sunken Kingdom and found the queen in the midst of massacring her people. Despite this atrocity, Shadankin could not bring himself to destroy his friend and consort, and used his magic to bind her instead. He hoped he might divine a method to free her from the grasp of evil. He carried Queen Cealheewhalool to the lands above the waves and placed her within a prison that harnessed the forces of earth to keep her bound until she might be emancipated from the fiendish forces that gripped her soul. With the queen safely ensconced in this gaol, Shadankin hid the key inside his most secret vault, one located within the shell of an ancient and massive sea turtle he had befriended. With the Imperatrix contained, Shadankin dedicated himself to restoring the queen's mind and soul. Unfortunately, he died in far-off lands whilst searching for his friend's salvation.

Since that time, Queen Cealheewhalool has remained trapped within the Earth Prison, abandoned by the Rueans and her demonic patrons. Recently, earthquakes have damaged her prison, causing its protective magics to weaken. Through a crack in the prison's wards, the queen reaches out to touch the minds of those who possess items once dear to her. She plays the part of an innocent and beautiful princess stolen by a malignant sorcerer and held against her will. Desperate for rescue, she promises her would-be heroes riches, strange magic, or even a throne once she is restored to her rightful position as potentate. Freedom is her only goal, however, and she intends to honor none of her promises once released...





HUGH SUCCESSFULLY PERFORMS A MIGHTY DEED!

THE SUNKEN KINGDOM OF RU

A MINI-CAMPAIGN SETTING



Millennia ago, the kingdom of Ru was an island realm renowned for its sailors, tradesmen, navigators, and its sorcerers. The Rueans commanded the waves in graceful ships unlike any others known today and possessed an understanding of the tides and stars far beyond that of their rivals. Ru was a hub of trade and learning, with exotic wares arriving daily from distant ports and learned men traveling to its capital of Rucepheelceal City to learn from the Ruean sages and wizards.

Towering above their contemporaries in knowledge, wealth, and accomplishment, it is little wonder that the citizens of Ru grew arrogant. They held themselves above all others, seeing their rivals and allies as younger siblings in need of education, guidance, and the occasional punishment to keep them in line. Legend holds that the Rueans' haughtiness even exceeded the physical plane and that the people of Ru believed they should be lifted up from the world to dwell amongst the gods in the heavens. Although history may never know for certain, it is possible this final hubris brought about the end of Ru as the world knew it.

In a span of five days, the island of Ru sank beneath the waves, drowned by either the wrath of the gods or by the violent but natural contortions of the earth. Many citizens fled the sinking island, but more died in the cataclysm of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, flooding, and titanic waves that rocked the island.

Not all were prepared to abandon their native land, however. As the disasters that decimated the island reached their crescendo, the nobles, priests, and the devout gathered in the most sacred of temples and called upon Pelagia, the Lady of the Sea to intercede and save them. The frenzied faith of the last remaining Rueans, pleading to their deity even as the seawater rose about their necks, moved Pelagia to act. In a single, awesome demonstration of divine power, she forever changed the Rueans so that they might never have to abandon their homeland. Each of the Rueans assumed a new form, one that could sustain them beneath the waves that drowned their homeland.

The Rueans' transformation was startling, but with little choice in the matter and able to remain in their now-submerged land, the people grew to accept, then revel in their new existence. It took many years to restore their land and become acclimated to underwater life. Buildings were no long made from marble and brick, but fashioned from coral, igneous stone, and *peralool*, a strong material made from the shells of giant oysters. The Rueans lost their mastery of their world, but gained piety and humility in return.

Today, the Sunken Kingdom of Ru has achieved some measure of equilibrium beneath the waves. Aside from a terrible time a few decades ago when the then-reigning Queen Cealheewhalool succumbed to dark magics and turned on her own people, Ru has existed in a state of watchful peace, on guard against incursions from neighboring underwater races.

THE RUEANS

The residents of Ru were once human, but the intervention of the Lady of the Sea forever altered them into something else. Humanoid in appearance and human-size, the typical Ruean has blue-green skin, but dark green and light blue tones are also encountered amongst their race. Small patches of scales are common around the eyes, the backs of the hand, atop the feet, and along the shoulders and thighs. Hair color runs from deep indigo to light green, although offspring of the noble bloodline are commonly

born with silver or pearlescent hair. Eye color is largely green, blue or gray. Rueans are partially amphibious and can function outside of the sea for a number of hours equal to their Stamina score. Rueans can live up to 150 years.

The Sunken Kingdom of Ru is a matriarchy, ruled by a noble bloodline that extends back to the days before the island kingdom sank. The ruling potentate is known as the Imperatrix of Waves and bears the title of Queen. She may take a husband if she desires, and although he has no direct power as Consort-King, he often serves as her trusted advisor. The current Imperatrix of Waves is Queen Wuushsharee, the niece of the deposed former Queen Cealheewhalool. She has yet to take a husband, but gifted with beauty, power, and youth, she has a surfeit of suitors.

Not all Rueans are satisfied with their existence, however. Lurking amongst the happy citizens of the Sunken Kingdom are a splinter group known as the Imposed. These Rueans are the descendants of the few original Rueans who were angered by the Lady of the Sea's gift, believing that the transformation into their new aquatic form was no gift, but an imposed curse. They cried out for their land to be saved after all, not for themselves to be changed so they might live like animals beneath the waves. The Imposed move slowly and stealthy, and seek to both reverse the "curse" that plagues their people and restore the kingdom of Ru to its rightful place above the waves.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

The Rueans are a devout people, as they owe their very existence to the intercession of the Lady of the Sea long ago. While there is a separation between ecclesiastical and secular power in Ru, the reigning Sea Queen always considers the high priest or priestess of the temple of Pelagia one of her foremost advisors.

Religious rites are held four times a day in Ru, occurring at high and low tides. Most Rueans attend at least two of the daily rites, with more devout citizens being present at all four. These daily rituals revere the Lady of the Sea in her varied aspects—her serene guise of placid seas and the terrible visage of the raging ocean. Ruean priests regularly perform auguries for citizens as most of the populace believes the Lady is a capricious deity prone assisting or interfering with endeavors as the mood suits her.

Funeral rites in the Sunken Kingdom involve an aquatic form of "sky burial." After imparting the necessary rites over the deceased and holding a ceremony in their honor, the body is conveyed to a special funereal location outside the boundaries of the community. The corpse is placed inside a cage-like casket fashioned from *peralool* and raised atop a high post of the same material. The body's flesh is slowly consumed by aquatic wildlife and, once reduced to skeletal form, the bones are collected and returned to the family. The bones of loved ones are either interred in coral or *peralool* mausoleums if the family is wealthy or kept in the home and honored on the deceased's birthday if from a family of more modest means.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER AQUATIC RACES

The Rueans are not the only intelligent species to dwell in this undersea region. Since the drowning of island nation, the people of the Sunken Kingdom have had to contest with others for resources