

Helm of the Shadow - 523SuHeSh

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When the party were offered a job across the sea they chartered an affordable and well known ship to take them to their next job. But when the journey starts off with pirates attacking their vessel, however they flee just as quickly as they come. It wasn't until a few days later that the party wished for the simple encounter between pirates.

As the skies darken, dark sails breach the horizon and the deck goes quiet. The party are caught between open water and the cries that come from the dark ship sails alongside them. However, there is something worse than the darkened sails and dark wood of the ship and as the party's vessel is approached by the ship the true horror is revealed.

DM: (The parties ship becomes prey for a predatory haunted ship that needs souls and wood to sustain its corrupted existence.)

The party set sail on the Stardrinker, leaving the docks behind with the promise of a lucrative job that could secure their future for years. The ship was known for its reliability, and the experienced crew ensured a smooth journey across the open sea. The first day was uneventful, with the party assisting the sailors to pass the time and stay active. By the second day, the ship practically sailed itself, allowing the captain to keep a watchful eye on the horizon while the party eased into the rhythm of the voyage.

Around noon, a shout rang out - sails had been spotted. A second ship was closing in, its flag revealing its true nature - pirates. As the smaller vessel charged, the Stardrinker fired the first volley, striking one of the attackers and forcing them into retaliation. Arrows and bolts flew across the water as both crews fought fiercely. Spells crackled through the air, and after a tense exchange, the pirates finally retreated, searching for easier prey. While the party helped clean up the aftermath, a lingering unease remained. If danger had found them so early in their journey, what other threats lay ahead?

DM: (There wouldn't be any hint of any deeper trouble so far so the party got busy with helping on deck aboard the Stardrinker after the brief and lackluster encounter with the pirates. Refer to **523MoShSa**)



The Stardrinker sailed smoothly through calm waters, the sun painting the sea in warm hues as the crew worked in steady rhythm. The party, settling into the voyage, assisted where needed, their spirits lifted by the tranquil evening. But as the winds shifted and the gulls took flight toward distant land, Captain Cali's gaze hardened. A breath of cold air swept the deck, and an ominous ink-black smear spread across the eastern horizon, swallowing the golden light of the setting sun. The crew grumbled about the approaching squall, yet Cali remained silent, her focus locked beyond the rain and shimmering dusk. When a party member spotted it at the



same time she did, they knew: a ship was sailing out of the storm, rushing toward them.

At first, the dark vessel appeared as a drifting shadow - tattered sails barely holding on, no crew visible, its deck abandoned but somehow still afloat. The party watched as the eerie ship crept closer, The Stardrinker adjusting course to keep distance. Yet despite their efforts, the phantom ship seemed to follow. Lanterns flickered unnaturally, their flames dimming as if swallowed by unseen hands. Cali, who had shown no fear against pirates or tempests, now barked an order to turn aside, a rare tension in her voice. But the crew, bound by superstition and the unspoken laws of the sea, hesitated. Some whispered of ghost ships appearing before disaster. Others feared abandoning potential survivors. As the shadowed vessel loomed, unmoving yet somehow aware, a deep, groaning sound rumbled from its hull. The ropes stretched. The shadows beneath its deck coiled. Something waited.

DM: (Somethings not right here but the code for these sailors is to try and render aid. Cali calls it and mutters about things being off, something about the tails of captains before her post. Refer to **523TuHeSh**,)

As Cali's orders rang out, the hesitant crew scrambled back to their stations, but they were too late. A metallic, unnatural screech tore through the air as massive harpoons launched from the ghostly vessel, tethered by thick, ragged ropes. They struck The Stardrinker's hull with crushing force, jolting the ship with each impact. Silence followed the sudden attack, a dreadful pause as the crew and the party processed what had just happened. When Cali and Roth shouted demands for release, the only response was the unsettling quiet. Then, Cali muttered the name - **The Shadow**. The words sent murmurs through the crew as they whispered prayers to the gods of the sea, but none answered. Only The Shadow remained.

Without warning, the ship's tangled mass of ropes came alive, writhing like serpents, seeking victims. The first to fall was a deckhand, dragged upward, his cries silenced as he vanished onto the cursed vessel. Roth battled the tightening coils, slashing wildly as sailors fought to keep him from being taken. The Stardrinker trembled underfoot, as if breathing alongside the monstrous entity that held it captive. Cali's command to cut the ropes was barely out before one lashed toward her, missing by inches as she ducked. The party had mere moments to act. The ropes would soon come for them, and whatever lay beneath The Shadow's deck promised horrors beyond imagination.

DM:(The ship itself seems to attack here. Ropes launch forward and attack the people on deck trying to ensnare them before dragging them above deck of the larger, darker ship. One Crew member never returns regardless of the party and what they do. This is a **moderate combat encounter** with several swarms of Entangling ropes and Harpoons which are moderately durable., **523WeShRe**. There is no map for this encounter but there is about forty feet of boat being attacked with 15ft between each harpoon holding the Stardrinker in place. with Swarm of Animated ropes spread reaching out from various points of The Shadows Hull. Refer to **523ThShDrRo** and **523FrSwAnRo**)



As the final harpoon snapped free, its severed ropes writhed before sinking into the sea. The Stardrinker groaned from the strain but remained afloat, her crew staggering with exhaustion yet miraculously alive. A brief silence settled over the waters, a moment of relief - until The Shadow screamed. The monstrous ship wailed, its agony woven into cursed planks and rusted rigging. The sea churned violently around it, dark waves dragging at its hull as if the ocean itself sought to consume it. But instead of sinking, the ghostly vessel rose, tearing itself apart to reveal its true nature - a gaping maw of splintered wood, frayed rope, and decaying metal, writhing like a living heart, pulsing with unnatural hunger.

From within the abyss, a figure emerged. It was; or had once been, a captain, its form barely human, flesh twisted into knotted rigging, bones replaced by rotting planks. Armed with rusted blades, it dragged a crippled



leg, burned and severed, a remnant of past damage. But the rest of its body remained ensnared in cursed rigging, wrapped in remnants of those who had been lost. Its hollow eyes glowed with spectral blue light - the remnants of souls consumed. As it pulled itself free from the ship's core, the vessel stilled completely. The air thickened with dread. The true battle was about to begin.

DM:(This is a moderate encounter with a single entity that can complete a few actions per round. Pirate themed so it should act like a pirate but it shouldn't be an overly difficult fight. Refer to **523SaCaSh**)