

A LEEWARD SHORE

Adventure Background

When Brechen Yura received a package from a former adventuring companion who had recently died, he thought nothing of it. Brechen had retired from the adventuring life ten years previously and enjoyed a simple life as a fishmonger in Capleon. He couldn't make it to his friend's funeral in Trombei. The package delivering two weeks after the service was a mild surprise but nothing he cared to open immediately. He reasoned it just contained mementos of their adventures together. It took him two days to open the parcel, which contained a rusted compass and a map to a small island south of Raguza. The map, showing a pair of buildings to the south of a group of standing stones, stirred memories of an ancient life he never lived. He began having dreams about walking among crab-like people—dreams giving him the sensation of being home. Curiosity about the dreams became obsession, and Brechen knew traveling to the unnamed island was the only way he could satisfy his preoccupation.

Unknown to Brechen, agents of the aboleth Qionnarrell ensured the map found its way to him. The human is unaware of his crustacean ancestry. He also does not realize he is the key to awakening one of the aboleth's servitors on the island. If he brings along a few people, all the better, because the servitor will undoubtedly hunger when it awakens, and unwitting sacrifices make the best fodder.

Adventure Hooks

The PCs may have been paid to deliver the package from Trombei to Brechen Yura in Capleon, in which case the man remembers them and asks for their help. Likewise, the PCs may see notices about a capable group of adventurers needed to accompany Brechen. Finally, the island holds clues about Qionnarrell, whom the PCs may have heard about in earlier adventures.

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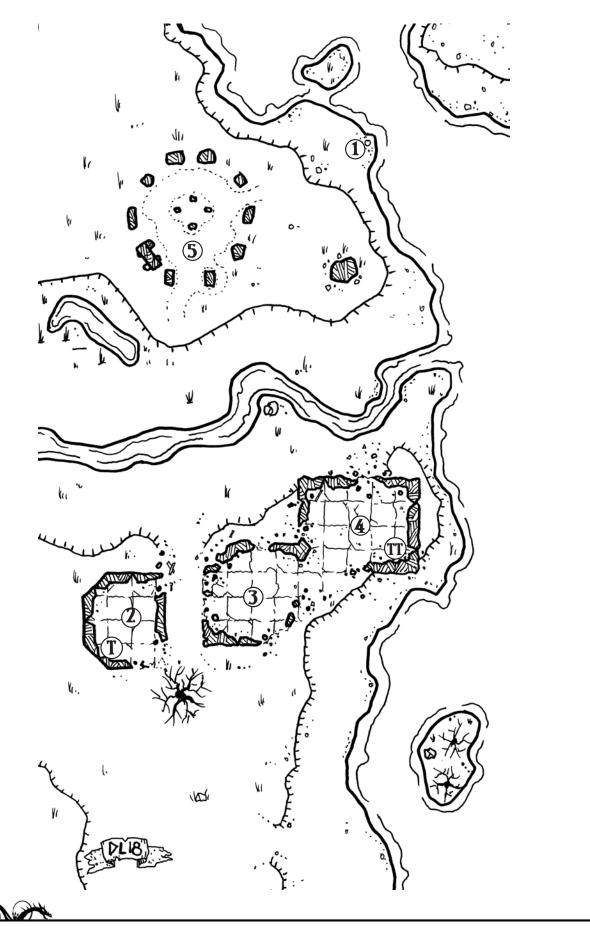
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On Board for Mystery Island

The PCs find Brechen Yura at a wharf, either during the day at his job slinging and deboning fish or during the evening at a nearby inn unwinding from the long day's work. Brechen, a human **scout** in his mid-40s with a receding hairline and tan, weather-worn skin, kept up his adventuring shape thanks to his job's physical demands. He wears simple work clothes padded with leather for protection and reeks of fish. He greets the PCs with a warm smile. He envisions discussions taking a while; if the PCs find him at his workplace, he politely asks to talk with them at the inn later that evening. After meeting the PCs at the inn, he offers to buy them a round of the cheapest ale, not taking offense to PCs who refuse to drink the stuff.

Brechen discusses the sea voyage to an island south of Raguza. He does not elaborate on its exact location, but he might share that he received clues to a hidden treasure in some belongings of a deceased former traveling companion. He offers 50 percent of any treasure uncovered. A successful DC 11 Wisdom (Insight) check picks up a sense of desperation from Brechen. If confronted about this, he briefly describes recurring dreams about crabs and his strong feeling they are linked to the treasure on the island. His fear of turning partners away keeps him from divulging the crab people in his dreams.

Owed a favor from a friend, Brechen can hire a ship at no cost and assures the PCs that they require no outlays other than personal adventuring gear. He explains the voyage will take the better part of two days and requests they embark the next morning.

A Midnight Swim

The first day of the voyage proceeds without incident. The ketch accommodates Brechen, the PCs, and a three-person crew complement in close, but not cramped, quarters. The ship's captain, a fisherwoman named Kasvera, is a friend of Brechen's. Her crew's recent large haul of fish put them over their weekly quota, so she agreed to honor Brechen's request. PCs who talk to Brechen during the voyage notice his increasing sense of excitement and dread about reaching the island. Once they are on their way, he is willing to show the PCs the map, which displays all the structures on the adventure's map with intact buildings.

At night, a waxing gibbous moon in a cloudless sky illuminates the water, which has moderate choppiness thanks to a brisk wind. Brechen stays on deck alone while the PCs retire. At midnight, Brechen dives overboard. A PC that is below deck must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check to hear Brechen's dive. A PC on deck automatically hears and sees it. Brechen or any PC in the water must succeed on a DC 9 Strength (Athletics) check

each round to stay afloat in the rough water. Brechen has advantage on this check. A PC that throws a rope to Brechen must make a successful ranged attack roll against AC 8. Brechen automatically grabs the rope if he succeeds on the Strength (Athletics) check to stay afloat during his turn.

If the PCs question Brechen after rescuing him, he can only recall a siren's call from the island and an overwhelming desire to dive into the water and swim to it—a desire broken by the shock of hitting the cold water.

Crab Island

After rescuing Brechen (or losing him if events go disastrously), the rest of the voyage to the island is uneventful. Brechen is somewhat shaken from the previous night's events, but his excitement to reach the island isn't diminished.

When the ship draws within half a mile of the island, everyone onboard sees sheer cliffs climbing to a set of standing stones in the northern part of the island. A crumbling set of buildings sits to the south of the standing stones.

Water separates the island's northern end from its southern end. The ketch cannot traverse the waterway, but the route proves easily navigable from the land. Kasvera finds a suitable landing spot along the island's northeastern edge, and she and her crew remain on the ship while the PCs and Brechen explore the island.

Lithodians, crablike humanoids whose ancestors were in Qionnarrell's thrall, populate the island's shores. When the aboleth went into dormancy, it commanded the crabfolk to guard a chuul as the creature entered a deep slumber to await its master. The lithodians eventually forgot about their charge and reverted to a peaceful, agrarian lifestyle. The PCs' recent arrival has piqued their curiosity, since the island escapes the notice of most ships. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check notices lithodians gathering at a distance as the PCs explore the island. If the PCs approach the lithodians, the crabfolk scatter and take to the sea to escape. Minutes later, they reconvene and again watch the PCs from a distance. Brechen recognizes the lithodians from his dreams and blanches upon seeing them. A PC can notice Brechen's reaction by succeeding on a DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check. The fishmonger remains tight-lipped when asked about it.

1. LANDING

The PCs discover a gruesome scene near their landing site. A dozen seagull and fish corpses are piled up and rotting in the sun. A successful DC 8 Intelligence (Investigation or Nature) or Wisdom (Medicine) check determines that the creatures died from something crushing their necks and that they have been dead for a couple of hours.

A minute after the PCs arrive, three **bone crabs** (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 40) emerge from the water to claim their carrion and attack the interlopers. If Brechen is between the crabs and the PCs, the crabs scuttle past Brechen to reach the PCs. A **serpopard** (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 342), scenting the dead creatures, makes its way toward the shore. It waits until the PCs defeat the bone crabs before coming ashore and launching attacks against wounded PCs. When reduced below half its hp, it flees into the water, intending to come back and consume the carrion after the PCs leave the area.

Ancient Temple

At the height of Qionnarrell's power over the lithodians, they built a temple to the aboleth. Here their priests sacrificed captured humanoids and communed with Qionnarrell, spreading its will to their people.

2. PRIEST'S QUARTERS

The rank and file crab people who populated the temple spent their time in the main compound. However, the temple's high-ranking priest enjoyed its own quarters where it could commune with Qionnarrell through the chuul and a collection of crabs attuned to the aboleth. Generations of the attuned crabs passed on some of their connection with the aboleth to their offspring.

Currently, four **garroter crabs** (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 208) reside here and attack any creature entering the building. The crabs focus their attacks on PCs with a prominent holy symbol or any other spellcaster if none of the PCs bear a holy symbol. A successful DC 8 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Insight) check determines the crabs' selection of targets is not natural to these kinds of crabs. Though Qionnarrell does not have direct control of them, the crabs' faint connection with the aboleth drives them to attack those wielding magic that does not belong to Qionnarrell or its servants.

When the island's lithodian inhabitants abandoned the temple after Qionnarrell went dormant, the temple's last priestess left behind a pair of coral tablets detailing the ritual to reawaken the chuul. Pictographs depicting the ritual adorn the tablets and a phrase in Common along the bottom of one of the tablets reads, "Invocation to Reveal the Sea's Treasures." The tablets show the hidden locations of the implements in the adjunct temple to enact the ritual but give no indication of the trap there.

TREASURE

A bloodstained golden fork with two prongs shaped like a crab's pincers sits under some rubble by the back wall of the chamber. The fork, used for ritual sacrifices at the standing stones, is worth 150 gp.

3. ADJUNCT TEMPLE

Lithodian cultists anointed ritual implements in this chamber before transporting them to the main temple where they carried out non-sacrificial ceremonies. The chamber is empty, and the walls have almost completely crumbled to piles of stone. The southern wall remains mostly intact, and a hidden panel within it conceals a recess containing candles and sheets of waterproof vellum with ritual words written in Deep Speech (see the Main Temple below). A successful DC 11 Intelligence (Investigation) check allows a PC to locate the panel. If the PCs found the tablets in the priest's quarters, they automatically succeed on this check.

The wall also retains enough integrity to preserve the trap associated with opening the panel.

Grasping Claws Trap. When a creature opens the panel, eight stone claws shaped like crab pincers on the ends of ancient ropes shoot from the wall and grab at all creatures within 10 feet of the panel.

Each claw makes a melee attack with a +6 bonus against a random target within 10 feet of the panel (a creature cannot be attacked by more than 4 claws). A target that is hit takes 5 (1d10) bludgeoning damage and is grappled (escape DC 13). Each round a target remains grappled, it takes 5 (1d10) bludgeoning damage from each claw grappling it. The grappled target is freed after 4 rounds if it did not escape before then as the ancient ropes holding it fray and crumble.

Prevention. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals indentations in the wall concealing the stone claws. A PC can wedge spikes or other objects into the indentations to prevent the devices from launching.

4. MAIN TEMPLE

The remains of the fragmented walls display stylized crabs etched in silver and gold. The figure of a crab etched in the floor peaks out from below sand, dried grasses, and rubble. If the PCs spend a few minutes clearing the debris, they can reveal the entirety of the shape. The stone floor is sootstained where the crab's pincers end and at the terminus of each of its appendages, indicating the regular burning of objects at each of the locations.

Hidden Sacrificial Pit. This room is devoid of creatures, but it does contain a hazard. If a creature weighing more than 50 pounds steps into the southeastern corner of the room (the spaces labeled with a "T"), the floor gives way and the creatures in the southeastern corner fall 10 feet. In addition to the falling damage, the creature takes an extra 5 (1d10) piercing damage from the broken rocks and bones littering the floor of the ancient sacrificial pit. A creature in the pit must succeed on a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to climb up the blood-stained walls and out of the pit

Prevention. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the crumbling trapdoor covering the pit.



DEVELOPMENTS

Brechen, who has been quiet and introspective for most of his time on the island, animates if the PCs indicate they want to perform the ritual detailed on the tablets from Area 2 and in the vellum from Area 3. He talks about how he will finally get answers to the riddle presented in his dreams and imagines the unveiling of a wonderful treasure when the ritual is complete. He is eager to perform the ritual and will suggest the PCs perform it if they don't suggest it first.

THE RITUAL

Carrying out the ritual to awaken the chuul is difficult without the tablets. The ritual's steps can be figured out by someone who succeeds on a DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check. The candles must be placed at the tip of each claw and at the end of the other appendages, and they must be lit in a counterclockwise direction starting from the appendage just below the right claw. The burning candles exude an odor of rotting fish, and the wax dribbles into trails that look like ropy tentacles. While the candles burn, someone must stand in the middle of the crab figure and intone, "Qionnarrell, grant us your bounty. We are in awe of your might and wish to bask in your glory," in Deep Speech. When the candles are lit, formerly unseen purple symbols appear on the tablets from Area 2. These symbols break down the Deep Speech phrases phonetically for whomever is observing the tablet, so anyone can speak the words. If the PCs do not know Deep Speech and do not have the tablets to help them along, Brechen goes into a trance, walks to the proper location, and speaks the words. After beseeching Qionnarrell three times, the wind whips up, clouds form over the standing stones on the cliff across the small ravine, and a bolt of purple lightning strikes the ground in the standing stones' center. After the lightning strike, everything returns to calm.

Sacral Stones

The standing stones on the cliff opposite the ancient temple are the site of the greatest sacrifices to Qionnarrell. The aboleth's servant slumbers beneath the stones, waiting to be awoken.

5. STANDING STONES

Crab motifs cover basalt menhirs circling a clearing where four thin obsidian stones sit. Each obsidian stone is tapered and terminates at a bulbous formation of white stone. The stones are situated on a cliff standing 20 feet above the sea. The sheer walls of the cliff are streaked with erosion caused by wind and waves. A creature must succeed on a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check to climb the cliff. If a creature

fails the check by 5 or more, it takes 5 (1d10) slashing damage from the jagged rocks along the cliff in addition to falling damage. A creature using a rope with pitons or other appropriate climbing gear has advantage on this check.

Before the PCs perform the ritual in the main temple, this location presents no danger, allowing them to investigate the site. While observing the area with a *detect magic* spell, the outer stones emit a faint aura of conjuration. The inner stones emit no aura. A PC who succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check notes crab-shaped glyphs hidden among the carvings on the outer stones. A PC who succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check deduces the inner stones are styled like the eyestalks common to crabs.

AFTER THE RITUAL

Once Brechen or the PCs perform the ritual, the standing stones glow purple. When the PCs return to this location, a **chuul** with crablike features bursts out of the standing stones' center to devour its expected sacrifices. It leaves a 10-foot-diameter, 10-foot-deep pit in its wake. It fights until it is reduced to 20 or fewer hp, and then it attempts to leap into the sea and escape.

DEVELOPMENTS

As the chuul bursts out of the ground, Brechen undergoes a transformation during the first two rounds of combat. The skin on his head splits open as a crab shell acting as his skull bursts out. The rest of his skin then sloughs off, revealing segmented limbs, oversized pincers in place of hands, and a thin carapace covering his torso, giving him the same appearance as the lithodians the PCs saw earlier. A PC witnessing this transformation must succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) or Wisdom (Insight) check to recognize Brechen has succumbed to some external influence and has not transformed of his own volition.

Brechen becomes a **berserker** with the following changes: AC 14 (natural armor), *Claw. Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 9 (1d12 + 3) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 13). Brechen has two claws, each of which can grapple only one target. (If Brechen no longer accompanies the party, one of the lithodians instead goes crazy and races toward the PCs. It uses the same statistics.) Brechen cannot act in combat until initiative count 20 on the third round after the chuul's emergence. He focuses his attacks on PCs inflicting the most harm on the chuul. If the chuul attempts to escape, Brechen maneuvers himself to thwart attempts to chase the creature. If Brechen is reduced to 0 hp, he does not die, instead falling unconscious (if the berserker was one of the lithodians, it dies when reduced to 0 hp).



Ancient magic infusing the standing stones responds to sacrifices made within the circle of stones. A creature reduced to 0 hp while within the standing stones activates this magic. When activated, the chuul and Brechen regain 10 hp and have advantage on attack rolls until the end of their next turns as the magic of the sacrifice empowers them.

If the chuul moves more than 100 feet from Brechen or Brechen is still alive when the chuul dies, his mind returns to normal, but his body remains unchanged. Horrified at his transformation and apologetic for his actions, he throws himself on the PCs' mercy.

TREASURE

A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the white stones on the tops of the eyestalk-like stones each contain a pearl worth 100 gp. Searching the pit uncovers a pair of *crab gloves* (see below) among sacrificial implements (worthless) and six flawed sapphires (worth a total of 70 gp).

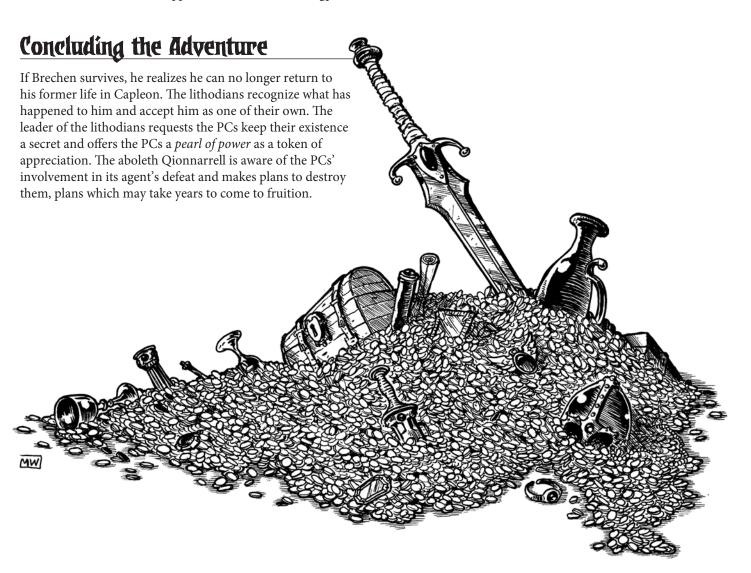
CRAB GLOVES

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

These gloves are shaped like crab claws but fit easily over your hands. While wearing these gloves, you can take the Attack action to make two melee weapon attacks with the claws. You are proficient with the claws. Each claw has a reach of 5 feet and deals 1d6 + your Strength modifier bludgeoning damage. If you hit a creature of your size or smaller than you, it is grappled. Each claw can grapple only one target. While wearing the gloves, you have disadvantage on Charisma and Dexterity checks, but you have advantage on checks while operating an *apparatus of the crab* and on attack rolls with the apparatus' claws.

A lithodian wearing these gloves has two human-sized and shaped hands instead of claws. It can wield weapons with the hands and has advantage on Dexterity checks that require fine manipulation.

Pulling the gloves on or off requires an action.



Lithodian

A crab given humanoid form waves its powerful claws in warning.

Lithodians are clannish crabfolk created by aboleths for menial labor and protection. Many lithodians live their entire lives as humans. They might never realize their true natures, which are revealed only when their patron aboleth calls for them. A bloodline of lithodians attuned to a slain aboleth might spend generations as humans, ignorant of their heritage until another aboleth finds one of them and claims that bloodline as its own.

LITHODIAN

Medium humanoid, neutral

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 10) **Speed** 30 ft., swim 20 ft.

 STR
 DEX
 CON
 INT
 WIS
 CHA

 14 (+2)
 9 (-1)
 14 (+2)
 10 (+0)
 13 (+1)
 7 (-2)

Saving Throws Str +4

Skills Athletics +4, Survival +3 **Senses** passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Deep Speech

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Aboleth Change. A lithodian born to a human family resembles a human child, but it transforms into an adult lithodian sometime after age 20 when the aboleth its parents' tribe is attuned to calls for it.

Amphibious. The lithodian can breathe air and water.

Fine-Jointed Legs. The lithodian has two pairs of jointed lesser legs along its torso that allow for fine manipulation. These legs are not strong enough to wield weapons, but the lithodian can use them to interact with, pick up, or hold small objects.

ACTIONS

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 12). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained and the lithodian can't use that claw to attack another target. The lithodian has two claws, each of which can grapple only one target.

Pinch (Recharge 5-6). Each creature grappled by the lithodian must make a DC 12 Strength saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.





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