

The background is a vibrant, stylized illustration of a stormy sea. Large, dark green waves with white foam are crashing. In the upper right, a purple sky with white rain streaks is visible. A large, pink, jellyfish-like creature with orange spots is partially submerged in the water. Several long, pink, worm-like creatures are swimming in the water. In the center, a white house icon with a single drop of water above it is positioned above the title text.

BOTTLED SEA

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WHAT IS THIS?

This is a minimalist, system-agnostic RPG setting. It may be played as a self-contained hexcrawl or plugged into an existing campaign setting. *The Bottled Sea* is an alternate dimension, where ships and sailors from across history are sucked inadvertently into, through strange wormholes and foul circumstance. Locked in a timeless state, the Sea is a flooded realm of buoyant wastes, coral-reefs of multiversal debris, floating wrecks, and makeshift technology, littered with sunken vestiges of a world that was or could yet be. Four factions with competing agendas vie for control over the Harborage, a suspended port city of rubble and ruin in the very centre of the endless waters.

HOW TO USE IT?

- 1. Set aside Hex A and Hex B – these only appear under specific circumstances.
- 2. Place all other hexes in the cloth bag.
- 3. Remove a single hex at random and place it on the table. This is where the characters will begin their adventure.
- 4a. If the hex is numbered, read the corresponding description from the central panel. Improvise as you see fit. Each numbered hex displays two sites for exploration.
- 4b. If the hex is unnumbered, you may use the *Encounters* or *Weather* tables to generate adversity. Or simply move on to a new hex.
- 5. Ask the party which direction they wish to travel in. Each hex takes two days to navigate (fast vessels take only a day, slow ones take three). Cut water and rations accordingly.
- 6. Place another hex on the map where the players are going, explore as listed in 4a and 4b respectively.
- 7. If no hexes are left to pull from the bag, traveling past the edge of one side brings the party to the hex furthest away from their previous location. The Bottled Sea is round.
- 8. Characters may only leave the Bottled Sea by risking their lives down through the Mythical Whirlpool or by finding the fabled Solid Ground.

PLUG IT INTO YOUR CAMPAIGN

In a certain part of the Sea – any sea of your campaign world – ships disappear under inexplicable circumstances. Victims vanish, as if they never were. Rumours have it that they are flushed into an unknown dimension, swallowed in the belly of a transdimensional beast. However it occurs, once there, they find themselves trapped. And there are only two ways out: either plunge yourself down the Mythical Whirlpool or find the fabled Solid Ground.

BEST PRACTICES

- Don't worry too much about preparation. Reading the descriptions and improvising will often be fun enough on its own. Alternatively, you can always detail and expand on sites that interest you in advance.
- Actions have consequences and characters should pay for poor planning, ill luck, and the uncaring tides of an endless ocean.
- Roll *Encounters* and *Weather* whenever it seems fitting, especially if the game comes to a stall. Adversity will lead to action.
- If the party is not interested in a hex, mark rations and move forward. It's a big ocean.
- If you don't like a result, change it. The tables here exist to make your stories stronger, they work for you. You don't work for them.

CREDITS

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MYTHS

- 1. Solid Ground materialises once every 100 years.
- 2. Though there is a night and day, time does not pass in the Bottled Sea.
- 3. Things from Before and What Comes Next fall from the sky, sent by Gods.
- 4. Eating an egg of the Great Cephalopod will reveal the route to Solid Ground.
- 5. The World will end when the last bonsai dies.
- 6. Find the Mythical Whirlpool and you can leave the Sea.
- 7. Machinery defying space and time are drowned deep beneath the Sea.
- 8. A floating hexahedron holds the Great Wealth of a World That Was in its vault.
- 9. To find Solid Ground, one must first piece together the Map.
- 10. Only the fabled monks at the Church of Buoyancy will be able to decipher the Map.

SALVAGE

- 1. Coffers full of combative crabs. They attack!
- 2. Containers: (1) food-cans, (2) seed packets, (3) pharmaceuticals, (4) fertile soil.
- 3. Paper: (1) bottled message, (2) sheet music, (3) love letters, (4) Sudoku puzzles.
- 4. Junk: (1) old batteries, (2) firecrackers, (3) carved petrospheres, (4) antique ceramics.
- 5. Art: (1) Cubist masterpiece, (2) marble effigy, (3) Rococo bust, (4) the Mona Lisa.
- 6. Navigation: (1) barometer, (2) storm-glass, (3) astrolabe, (4) compass.
- 7. Barrels: (1) gold doubloons, (2) tobacco, (3) spices, (4) cocoa.
- 8. World Map: (1) antiquated, (2) futuristic, (3) odd timeline, (4) PC's world.
- 9. Plants: (1) tomato, (2) goji-berry, (3) kumquat, (4) strawberry.
- 10. Plastics: (1) bags, (2) bottles, (3) tupperware, (4) clothes hangers.
- 11. Ancient Viking longsword, etched with runic enchantments.
- 12. V-shaped electric guitar and Fender valve amplifier.
- 13. Gold-foil Phoenician tablet depicting a *Myth*, possibly cursed.
- 14. Automated circular vacuum cleaner (needs batteries.)
- 15. Atmospheric diving suit made of metal with a glass helmet.
- 16. Ornithopter, wooden flying machine operated by cranks and pulleys (needs repairs.)
- 17. Oil motor and damaged thruster (only the Collectors can use it properly; needs oil.)
- 18. Alternator that yields electricity (10% chance to break on each use.)
- 19. Fully functional jet-ski with enough fuel for 1d4 days.

20. Old bottle containing the left half of the encoded Map* to **SOLID GROUND.**

*The Map is split in two. The left half is attainable through Salvage; the right half by exploring the hexes. It is also possible to obtain a missing half via fishing/diving or random encounters. If the same half would (re)appear again, ignore it.

SOLID GROUND

- **The Idol.** A gigantic statue. If touched, it speaks in a booming voice. "I am always in front of you, yet I am never here. What am I?" If Future is answered, the Rectangle begins to hum with energy.
- **The Rectangle.** A great portal threshold, timeless and still. If crossed while energized, the characters are returned to their world of origin, 3d20 years passed their current time. In this world, Solid Ground vanishes, turning into a map, torn in half by unseen hands, placed inside two bottles, and sent floating off into the endless sea.

Hex A will only appear in play once the party unearths the two halves of the map to Solid Ground, and the monks at the Church of Buoyancy (Hex 8) decode them. Once this occurs, place this hex on the map face-down in the furthest possible space. Once the players go there, turn it face-up.



PELAGIC ENCOUNTERS

- 1. **Collectors:** (1) en route to The Machine, (2) returning to The Harborage.
- 2. **Ichthys:** (1) deep-diving for *Salvage*, (2) fleeing another *Encounter*.
- 3. Deserting **Shepherds:** carrying (1) stolen sheep, (2) either half of the Map.
- 4. 2d4 **Dolphin-Riders** (low-level, bearded marauders riding dolphin-chariots.)
- 5. **Wild Dolphins** (low-level, sought after by the Dolphin-Riders to tame.)
- 6. 1d4 **Castaways:** from (1) the future, (2) the past, (3) the PCs era, (4) another dimension.
- 7. **Merchant skiff:** selling (1) *foods*, (2) rain water, (3) sunscreen, (4) *Myths*.
- 8. **Ghost Watercraft:** containing (1) 2d4 animals, (2) books, (3) *container*, (4) *junk*.
- 9. **Carpenterfish School** (low-level, attempts to eat wooden watercrafts.)
- 10. **Mugger Crabs** (low-level, invade watercrafts to eat and steal rations.)
- 11. **Archerfish School** (low-level, spits jet of water into boats until given rations.)
- 12. **Bioluminescent Hydrozoa** (mid-level, hypnotises prey; save or dive into the sea.)
- 13. 2d4 **Flying Anglerfish** (mid-level, leaps out of the sea & flesh-eating bites.)
- 14. 1d4 **Double-Tusked Narwhals** (mid-level, tusks ground out magic.)
- 15. **Behemoth Frilled Shark** (mid-level, serpentine moves & mangling bites.)
- 16. **Mother Sea Cucumber** (mid-level, whale-like; spouts out toxic jets of acid.)
- 17. **Hagfish Covenswarm** (high-level, snotty school; slimy bloodsucking attacks.)
- 18. **Floating Boxjelly** (high-level, hovers above water; huge burning appendages.)
- 19. **Mimic-Islet** (high-level, attempts to swallow landing parties whole.)
- 20. **The Great Twenty-Tentacled Cephalopod** (nearly unkillable, good luck!)

WEATHER

- 1. Storm Tempest: if carrying metal, character is struck by 1d3 lightning bolts.
- 2. Waterspout: character is tossed into the air, with a 20% chance of serious injury.
- 3. Torrid Winds: personal water evaporates and rations dry.
- 4. Heavy Squalls: 1d6 pieces of equipment go overboard.
- 5. Blazing Sun: character takes one irrational action due to heat exhaustion.
- 6. Doldrums: party cannot move for 1d3 days. No fish, no breeze (cut rations.)
- 7. Strange Tides: party is thrown 1d3 hexes in the direction they came from.
- 8. Tsunami: an adjacent numbered hex sinks, replace it with unnumbered hex.
- 9. Colossal Cyclone: shuffle and re-arrange all hexes in play.

10. **The Mythical Whirlpool:** place Hex B on the map in an adjacent space.

When facing hazards 1-5, each character must roll an appropriate save or ability check. Thos who fail must endure the consequences. When facing hazards 6-10, the effects apply automatically.

THE MYTHICAL WHIRLPOOL

A swirling anomaly that casts mariners into strange places. If players decide to move into this hex, they are swallowed into the Whirlpool and flushed out elsewhere: remerging on the shores of their original world – or Hex 2 of the *Undying Sands*. Their watercrafts will be wrecked, and they will be injured by the journey.

Otherwise, the Whirlpool vanishes after 1d6 days. Remove the hex from play afterwards, (re)placing it only if rolled again under *Weather*.

Hex B appears in play when a 10 is rolled on *Weather*. Place the hex on the map, adjacent to the current hex being explored. If no such location is available, remove a random adjacent hex from play and replace it with the Mythical Whirlpool.



• The **Abandoned Arboretum**, now the nest of the Beelzebufo (high-level, giant sticky tongue.) Choose or roll endemic flora: (1) acid-apple trees, (2) marching coconut palms, (3) explosive kiwi-melons, (4) giraffe-sized floral man-eaters. Use *The Plantary* for additional inspiration.

• **Pink Miasmic Fog** swirls above the water. It drones in low tones. Upon investigation, the fog is a scintillating mass of pink and green, two-headed mosquitoes. They whisper a *Myth*.

1

• The **Alabaster Fingers**. Three colossal rocks jutting from the ocean, whitewashed with shoebill guano. A sacred site, a *Myth* is carved here in the form of a pictogram. The eggs of the feisty birds are a rare delicacy, but climbing is dangerous.

• Raft of the **Clairvoyant Hover**. An oracle wearing eight-lensed cubist spectacles tells *Myths* in exchange for mad honey. Will also offer the precise whereabouts of a particular location (never Hex A or B), if offered a bonsai - place that location's hex on the map wherever you see fit.

2

• **Iceberg Floe**, a labyrinth of potable glacial water. A treasured resource, scarce and prized in the Bottled Sea. A colony of sea lions and seals dwell within, likely worth something on The Harborage. Roll *Weather* on approach.

• Two **Wrecked Watercraft**, entrenched in the ice. In need of repairs. Upon inspection, they have been sealed from within. If entered, roll *Encounter*. One craft has a mini-cube hidden within. The other has *Salvage*, and the right half of the encoded map to Solid Ground.

3

• **Drifting Dealers**. A market of rope-joined watercrafts. Roll or choose what's for sale: (1) one *Salvage*, highly priced, (2) ambergris & whale oil, (3) scrimshaw, (4) diving gear, (5) fake plants, (6) a *Myth*, told by an ancient mariner.

• The **Bloat of a Leviathan**, its carcass being dismantled by dealers. Hammerhead sharks (mid-level, ripping bites) swim in circles. *Salvage* and a mini-cube can be found in the Leviathan's guts, but there is a 1-in-6 chance each round of the corpse exploding in a rain of rot.

4

• **The Machine**, a double-craned contraption said to birth islands from the seabed sand. It has been mathematically calculated that the process will take another 132 years to be completed. Controlled by the Collectors, who occasionally sell the sand for profit.

• The **Crab-Jumble**. A roaming mountain of red crabs, feeding on microscopic life, kelp fragments, and anything else they can get. 1-in-6 chance of finding *Salvage* (up to 3 pieces), but each search is greeted with 3d20 crab pinches.

5

• **Junkman's Float**. A scrapyard of broken watercrafts run by a posse of Junkmen. They want engines and sources of energy. They trade in parts and half-damaged boats. Roll 1d3 *Watercrafts* and *Salvage* for what is available.

• **Killer's Quay**. A bloodsports arena. Choose your weapon: (1) boomerang, (2) speargun, (3), harpoon, (4) whalebone saw, (5) shark-tooth machete, (6) barbed fishnet. Challenge a champion to win glory, 1d10 plants, and a jar of dirt.

6

• Drifting junk slum called **Atoll-Key**. Built from refuse of the Plastiglomerate, currently ruled by a gang of Dolphin-Riders looking to hire mercs to raid The Harborage. They have two *Salvage*, and will barter with one of them.

• The **Plastiglomerate**, an amalgam of rocks and plastics, bottles, molten fishing nets, and fossilized food cans. It towers up through the clouds. A pair of Ichthys are scouring for loot, holding *Salvage*. They are not alone. Roll *Encounter* for what else is plundering the heap.

7

• **The Church of Buoyancy**. Inside, 1d6 monks tend to millennial bonsais and contemplate the possibilities of dry land. They toil day and night copying as many books, parchments and scrolls as possible and will pay handsomely for more. Only they can decipher the encoded map to Solid Ground (see Hex A.)

• Piercing through the waters is the **Protruding Forest**, one hundred sequoia trees just high enough above sea level to survive. They yield quality resin and are populated by colourful songbirds. Cutting the wood is highly sacrilegious.

8

• **The Hives**, managed by cryptic beekeepers selling hallucinogenic mad honey. The swarm (mid-level, hundreds of stings) will relentlessly attack anyone who harms the beekeepers. If mad honey is consumed, there is a 80% chance of a bad trip, 20% chance of prophetic visions (roll a *Myth*).

• **Bountiful Sargasso**. Drifting plains of ball-shaped algae, a staple food in the Bottled Sea. Populated by tiny, tasty lobsters. Roll *Encounter* if the algae is harvested. Takes double time to cross this hex.

9

• **The Great Dross Reef**. The only shallows in the Bottled Sea, a cluster of garbage pulled by currents. Organic life has flourished despite the slop. Roll *Encounter* when diving to collect fish, rare corals, and *Salvage*.

• **The Floating Slums**. A trifling junk atoll whose inhabitants subsist off the reef. Occupied by a Land-Seeker sect who worship sand and dirt. They hold *Salvage* and a mini-cube in their most secure building, and will trade all of it for soil or ceramics, which they consider sacrosanct.

10

• **The Floating Hexahedron**, a sealed cube made of polished, reflective materials. Inside dwells a herd of livestock (cows, sheep, pigs, and chickens.) The entrance is revealed only when three mini-cubes are placed in respective sockets on its surface.

• **Boiling waters** surround the floating cube, caused by a huge hydrothermal vent beneath the structure. Will cook characters alive if they fall in. Roll *Weather* if approached. A pair of Ichthys are attempting to find rare volcanic stones, despite the danger.

11

• Derelict **Seahorse Breeding Post**. Can be repaired with hard labour and new power source, but is currently infested with sea louse, radioactive glowing lichen, and is home to the Unctuous Gastropod (high-level, slimy clutch.) Within the structure is *Salvage* and 1d4 cold-preserved broods of seahorse, an exotic treasure.

• A thick kelp jungle called the **Underwater Garden**. The algae extends above the sea level and the kelp is used both as food and textiles. Twin Horticulturists maintain the site and sell these wares.

12

• **The Lunar Octant**. A resplendent flotilla of futuristic sextants, octants, and astrolabes. Two bumbling scholars seek to unravel its mysteries. If used, players may draw three hexes and place one on the map. They may also re-roll *Weather* once in the future. The Lunar Octant can only be used at night, when the stars are out.

• A **battalion of Manta Rays** encircle these waters. Travel takes double time and risks an *Encounter*. The rays will alert the party to the encounter if their behaviour is observed.

13

• Wreck of the **CYCLOPS**, a derelict tanker. Impossible to fix or operate, unless one is creative and has ample time. Within, a group of *castaways* and a tank loaded with refined oil, which will make a motor or engine work, but only the Collectors will understand how to properly use, after 1d6 weeks of thorough investigation.

• **The Deep Blue Hole**. A benthic sinkhole funnel into the deep abyss, surrounded by a flooded atoll. The alleged lair of the Great Twenty-Tentacled Cephalopod, Master of the Bottled Sea.

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• **Phantom Galleon**, infested by mutated mice whose bites cause disease. The ship is equipped with cannons, *Salvage* within its hull, and 2d6 pigs locked within the hold. In the captain's quarters, the right half of the encoded map to Solid Ground.

• **THE BEACON** a lighthouse on a miserable rock. Run by a telekinetic eccentric known as the Keeper (high-level, mutant wizard). Uses the Light to attract crews and steal their stuff.

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The Light. If broken, the Keeper goes berserk. Also, it causes a *Watercraft* to crash here tonight.

Weather station control panel. Two buttons. If both are pressed, electricity arcs into the sky: triggers "Doldrums" and attracts a Floating Boxjelly, which the Keeper can mind-control.

The Keeper, trapped in a mental prison by a spell-gone-wrong. May speak or cast spells, but can't move. Will be freed by winning a game of chess. Promises *Salvage* to anyone who plays. If ignored, attacks. (The GM can play chess with the players IRL, or checkers, dominos, etc.)

Wizard spellbook: (1) telekinesis, (2) mental prison, (3) illusion, (4) light, (5) mirror image, (6) control jellyfish.

Plans for a huge robotic floater to harvest salvage from the Sea (stolen from the Collectors).

Electric ray aquarium, wired to generators powering the Light (worth a fortune).

Cabinet of Curiosities: mammoth skeleton, two narwhal tusks, coral display in cupboard, fossilized eggs (label "The Great Cephalopod"), carbonized tree, and inflatable boat.

Reinforced steel door. The Keeper has the key. 1d3 *Salvage* within.

Lush plants circling a mermaid statue. Ringing the doorbell makes it sing. Those who hear it suffer a penalty vs. spells for 1d6 days.

Secret passage

Doubllette holding Shepherds, who were attracted by the Light. They hold one half of the Map (if the GM wants).

Device labelled "cosmic beamer". Actually, a giant blender to dispose of corpses, turning them into fertilizers. Smells like noxious chum.

Steep and slippery rock; speckled axolotls (mid-level, poisonous tongues) prey on climbers.

WHAT IS THIS?

The Harborage is the makeshift metropolis of the Bottled Sea. A buoyant palimpsest of junk, debris, and countless ages of flotsam; all vacuumed and assembled precariously to form a suspended city of waste. Travellers are free to moor, the Harborage always needs more resources and more bodies. Dirt, paper, and plants are highly valued and function as a currency in this barter economy. Four factions with their own agendas dwell within, each looking to supplant the others.

ROLL AN EVENT

1. It hasn't rained in months. Potable water is at a premium. People are drinking salt water.
2. The Great Cephalopod shall arrive in 1d6 hours, heralded by a storm. It wreaks havoc.
3. Roll *Weather*. The weather remains this way around the Harborage for a week.
4. Dolphin-Riders from Atoll-Key (Hex 7) arrive to raid the Harborage. They want *Salvage*.
5. A raft of *castaways* arrives. They bear half of the map to Solid Ground, but need aid.
6. A team of Ichthys return to the Harborage landing with rare *Salvage* (roll 1d10+10.)
7. The High-Rainmaker is missing! The faithful accuse other factions and kindle a revolt.
8. 2d6 sheep are found poisoned. The Shepherds begin a witch hunt.

THE FOUR FACTIONS

Collectors: a masonic lodge of inventors and innovators. Junk artificers, rumoured to assemble automatons from salvaged art. Obsessed with creating an artificial island.

Ichthys: amphibious mutants, experts acquisitionists and deep-divers. Capable of retrieving salvage from the seabed. Dream of a greater unity between sea and surface.

Shepherds: cult that owns and worships Sheep for their wool and sweet milk.

Self-impose a disciplined ascetic lifestyle. Wish to herd their flock out of the Bottled Sea.

Rainmakers: priests of the rains. In truth, liars who use a secret 'tempest prognosticator' (barometer with bell-ringing leeches) to forecast the weather and control the populace.

MAYBE YOU CAN HELP...?

Ryes-Crux, the Master-Collector

1. Steal bezoar stones from the Shepherds.
2. Salvage working machinery from the sea.
3. Devise and construct a hydroplane.
4. Expose the Rainmaker's secret.
5. Freight tools to the Machine (Hex 5.)
6. Rebuild the desalinization unit.

Meh-Meh, the Great Shepherd

1. Steal Ryes-Crux's prized mini-pig.
2. Design a sacred automated wool shear.
3. Retrieve livestock from the Seas.
4. Steal 1d4 Great Cephalopod eggs.
5. Dismantle the sea lion milk farm.
6. Copy the full map to Solid Ground.

Llull, the Ichthys Thalassocræct

1. Bring castaways to the Harborage.
2. Protect the seals in the Icebergs (Hex 3.)
3. Appeal to the Great Cephalopod.
4. Confront the Dolphin-Riders.
5. Restore the Seahorse Post (Hex 12.)
6. Liberate the sea lions and medusas.

Nabia, the High-Rainmaker

1. Sabotage the desalinization unit.
2. Seize control of the Temple.
3. Destroy Collector's barometer schematics.
4. Receive a vase of mad honey (Hex 9.)
5. Rig the wishing window to their favour.
6. Steal storm-glass from the Museum.

HAWKERS TOWPATHS

• **Foods:** (1) fish-paste cakes, (2) dried algae chips, (3) squid & kelp gumbo, (4) salted sashimi, (5) gull beak soup, (6) boiled crab claws.

• **Weapons:** (1) stevedore's hookclub, (2) deck cutlasses, (3) spearguns & harpoons, (4) salvaged flintlocks, (5) narwhal-tusk fencing blades, (6) volcanic-stone daggers.

• **Underworld:** (1) fermented bloat grenades, (2) algae amassers, (3) wetsuits, (4) air-recyclers, (5) chumming bait, (6) shark fins & drowned masks.

• **Treasures & Luxuries:** (1) dirt & sand, (2) paper & books, (3) plants in vases, (4) seal furs, (5) live ducklings, (6) volcanic-stone surgical tools.

16 The Harborage



1. The Cephalopod-Killer
2. The Aquaponic Tanks
3. Derelict Desalinization Unit
4. Sea Lion Milk Farm
5. The Mills
6. Cask of the Medusae
7. The Temple
8. Islet of the Last Coconut Tree

9. The Sheep Pen
10. The Drifting Scrap
11. The Museum of Discarded Curiosity
12. Seaweed Grog Brewery
13. The Grand Gate
14. Compost Sludgepools
15. Salvage Storehouses
16. Hawkercowpaths

17. Harborage Landing
18. The Cultch Casino
19. Blood Polo Sharkadrome
20. Seabed Sand Trawler
21. The Collector's Lodge
22. Marine-Mycologist Clinic
23. Algae Scraper Pond
24. Pigeon Post

25. The Rainmaker's Cistern
26. Oyster Ranch
27. Hydroponic AgriTowers
28. Crowswatch Tower
29. Wishing Window
30. Sea Cucumber Spa
31. Crab Cages
32. Float-Inn

*Underlined locations are the headquarters of each faction.