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# Introduction Chapter 2 (Event, 100%?)

Our homeland of Aweland lays far behind us. Our journey has taken us past the perilous Sea of Fangs and the gap of open sea past Pale-Rock.

We are now at Thousand islands. A name for an archipelago sea that really does not give it justice for the amount of islands this region has.

This region of sea is vast, its a few weeks sailing in width but stretches far north and south in a band of shallow sea not unlike the Sea of fangs. Unlike the fangs, the islands here are larger and far more hospitable and home to many island-hopping Gryph Islanders.

Our purpose here is to find our war-fleet, which have sailed here a few months earlier. A fleet thats here to root out the pirate infestation thats been responsible for harassing a large part of Awe trade shipping and behind a brazen raid upon Thunderhill, a peaceful sizable coastal-town back on our homeland. Citizen were kidnapped and large parts of the port set ablaze.

The leadership back home fear this is part of a larger conspiracy toward Aweland.

We are effectively in a state of war until the truth is uncovered and justice has been served!

We are carrying supplies, reinforcements and information for our fleet. But first we must find them in this maze of islands.

We have several preset navigational points of interest to help us. Rallying and convergence points where our fleet or signs of it could be found.

Upon arriving at our first “Nav point”, a waiting scout of the fleet found us and brought dire news.

The fleet is in trouble. The pirates are more dangerously armed with weapons never seen before. Our own perilous encounter with one by Pale-rock was a dangerous testament to that.

The scouts report is sketchy at best. They were stationed here early upon arriving in this region after the fleet engaged a group of suspected pirates and were battered into withdrawing from the fight.

If the Scouts report is to be believed, they have been hounded around the Thousand islands since.

However, if they had been so outmatched and chosen to retreat, we should have encountered the fleet or elements of it returning to Aweland on our way here.

We have to find them and the truth of the matter.

## Interview with Scout.

“Where is the fleet?”

“I do not know exactly where it is Captain. As I said before, shortly after we arrived, an unknown fleet flying no colors met us. It was as if they had been expecting us.” The scout recounted.

“The Fleet-Admiral ordered us scouts to investigate them, but we were driven back by Gryph fliers before we got a good look. They were no warships though, they looked like common trade ships, some even hardly suitable for open seas. They were nearly twice our number however.” He shook his head and frowned. “Hostilities were brief. First they dropped firebombs with marginal effectiveness and then... their weapons, caught everyone by surprise. I think one of our ships were severely damaged before the Fleet-Admiral ordered withdrawal. It seemed to me they almost let us go. I think perhaps their flagship was badly damaged by ours in the skirmish.”

“What happened next?” I drummed at the table.

“They chased us for a few days until we lost them in a particularly foggy day. The captains all convened for a meeting with the Admiral. It was decided, I heard, to keep most of the fleet together rather then disperse as the originally planned. The fastest frigates parted way, I don't know on what mission.” Scout Harbinger cocked his head at me. “Did none of this information make it back home? I saw the messenger birds released myself.”

I shook my head.

“They are proving to be quite unreliable over these kinds of distances of open sea. High-Admiral only received scattered reports. Continue, what happened next?”

“Not much, Captain. We sailed this way and that a while, I was not privy to the decision making behind our movements. Occasionally we'd spot sails of pursuing ships, but for the duration I was on the fleet, we had no more engagements. I was deployed here, on Navpoint 1, shortly afterwards, in anticipation for reinforcements.”

“Well... We are all the reinforcements the fleet will get. I'm not sure how the Fleet-Admiral expected High-Admiral to release the home-fleet and leave our shores unguarded anyway, the council of Voice-Matrons would never have approved.“ I muttered sourly. But these thoughts were above the Scouts area of responsibility and he just stared at me uncertainly, not sure if he was to answer.

“Never mind. Why don't you go get that rest Scout Harbinger, you've earned it.”

## Interview with Scout 2.

Scout Harbinger has confirmed that our original charts fall-back plans are still in effect.

We have several not too distant navigational points of interest to investigate.

Upon deployment, into the sea, the standing order was to divide the fleet into appointed regions for scouting and investigation. To not entirely loose touch of each other, several points of rendezvous were marked for certain dates where elements of the fleet could converge and share findings.

The dates of the nearby 'Navpoints' have long since passed, but so has the original plan of the fleet. Our only option if we are to find them is to investigate these points of interest and gather clues.

We must find the fleet, or signs of where they have gone, the sooner the better. We probably cant investigate all our clues. For now Scout Harbinger has pointed out two points of interest worth investigating.

Navpoint 2.

A lush trio of connected islands called 'Three Sons' about a days sailing northward. A source of fresh water in the area and an appointed resupply point. This lays closest to our current position, its unlikely the fleet is here, but its sure to have stopped by here at some point. Scout Harbringer informs the fleet is likely to have headed this way after dropping him off.

Navpoint 3.

I have no notes on these groups of islands, its not part of any original Admiralty plans, but Scout Harbinger believes another scout might still be in this area. The Fleet Admiral was interested in gathering information from some native Islanders spotted in the area and dropped one off to asses their strength and possibly make contact.

This destination lays further away to the west by about 2 days.

# Arriving at Navpoint 2 (Event 100%) Exploring island.

We sail by many smaller yet forested islands. We are still at the edges of Thousand islands but already I'm starting to understand where this sea got its name.

They are craggy islands with the kind of tough vegetation that can survive being literally submerged by the harsh storms that can rage past these places. I'm none too impressed by the potential hospitality for anyone wishing to live out here, least of all build some kind of port.

As we approach our destination however, the island trio of 'Three sons' come into view well in the distance. Cliffs jut up high on the three islands and lush and diverse plant-life cling to these peaks, making them look like three thick green finger-digits. The three islands are in a sense one big island, they're clearly connected and at low-tide it would be possible to easily cross between them on foot. But right now the high-tides separate the three.

Its no doubt still a wet and windy place most times of the year, but life finds a way to cling to whatever stable place it can find.

It does not take long while circling the islands to find the beach that had seen recent use.

A bay with deep shallow let us sail in and anchor right close to he bay of the second most largest of the island trio.

Signs of the fleet having been here is everywhere. Abandoned make-shift shelters has been built amongst the woods and sections of trees have been cleared away in places and harvested for their wood judging by the remains of wood-chips and pulp.

Cut out trails of plenty of passage lead further into the island too, it looks almost as if the whole fleet had been trampling around on this beach.

Scout Report:

Scouts report that the largest trail lead to an inland pool. Its nearly been drained of usable fresh water. Other trails likewise lead to smaller wells and one to a small natural clearing.

There are some signs of landing and passage on the closest smaller island too, but none to the extent of this island, its mostly been foraged for food.

The large island seems mostly untouched, but it also has less choosable landing spots and seem to consist mostly of slick cliffs and difficult terrain.

Search for clues.

A cursory glance through the hastily erected but surprisingly firmly built shacks do not reveal much.

Little appear to have been left that couldn't be carried along. But perhaps someone with astute eyes and time can puzzle something together or find something.

Assign a Officer.

The shacks appear to have been mostly used to keep objects rather then people dry from rain. There are signs and remains that reveal they have constructed severals barrels and containers and stocked up very well on water.

One of the shacks were slightly better built then the others and appear to have housed someone in charge. Scratchings in the wood imply a lot of counting having been done.

Awe lettering and fur found around the place make it no doubt that it was Awes who were here and not some others.

Further investigation of the island show less sign of passage then expected. Whoever was here was not here long and focused on their tasks.

It seems clear someone was not planning on resupplying any time soon again and made a big operation out of stocking up quick from the islands. Judging by how cleaned up and little was left around, I suspect that although it was done under efficient haste rather then under any duress. It is likely the fleet used their supplies to move deeper into Thousand Island without having to have to worry for stops.

Officer Tick reads the scouts report and is soon meticulously stalking the area of the assembled buildings, having his assisting crew ignore the rest of the island.

At his instructive behest and knowledge in the kind of standard routines that were performed here, crew-members soon uncovers valuable information.

First-Officer Arn spreads the crew thin trying to examine as much of the island as possible at the time alloted to him. Soon Awes are coming and going with reports, but he seems to have everything under control. Unfortunately, while the fleet was here, Arns effort uncover little worth finding.

First-Officer Tung assembles several armed search parties and sends them out across the island along the trails left from the passing of the fleet and beyond.

While the returning parties do discover wild game and some hardy looking edible nuts to bolster our provisions, very little useful is found about the fleet.

First-Officer Mirr, while new at command, sweeps onto the beach and seems to assemble the crew into an efficient unit. She consults and talks with her subordinates and even manages to tear Officer Tick away from his responsibilities on 'The Attentive'.

With her art of delegation, clues are found from the right pair of eyes looking in the right places.

What cadet do you want to assign to gain experience?

Raptorians want ashore

The Raptorians have been sitting quietly down in the depths of the holds for most of the journey. Now they request permission to go ashore and stretch their limbs properly. Some have expressed the desire to be allowed a day to roam around and get proper exercise and loose their pent-up energy and tension.

The Packmaster recommends keeping them from straying too far.

Let them go ashore.

As it seems the fleet let most their crews up to stretch their legs, so I think its wise to do so for my own.

The Raptorians do not even wait to mount any boats, as a troop, they jump overboard one by one and swim the short stretch from the ship to the island.

Well on the shore they rowdily dash around with pent up energies, tackle and growl like a rowdy bunch.

The crew who are ashore to refill out own water supply wisely keep well out of their way.

Let them roam

I figure its wise to keep the Raptorians happy. I agree to their request to let them roam the island.

They do not even wait for boats to carry them ashore, as a troop they jump overboard one by one and swim the short stretch to the beach.

Well ashore most scatter, running headlong into the woods with weeks of pent up energy while some remain and rowdily wrestle and growl at each-other on the beach.

The crew who are ashore to refill out own water supply wisely keep well out of their way.

A Raptorian has gone missing.

I should almost have foreseen this happening. But as night falls and its time gather everyone, one Raptorian is reported as missing by the attending squires.

After a quick check and headcount of the crew, it was clear he had not been eaten by a crew-mate (not even Keeper could digest one of them that fast), but gone missing somewhere on the islands.

The Packmaster volunteer to search with his Raptorians and so do the Scouts, but the scouts say they cant effectively search at the same time as the Raptorians.

Who do you assign to search.

Scouts or Packmaster(Raptorians)

I'll give the Raptorians a chance to fix their mess. I figure they should know best how to find one of their own.

The Packmaster and his Raptorians disappear into the darkening woods of the island once more.

Hours pass and its well into the night as their hulking figures once again reemerge onto the beach, carrying with them their wounded comrade.

This missing Raptorians had tried to scale the cliffs of the larger island and taken a fall into a crevasse. Apparently a large opportunistic serpent of some sort was trying to make a dinner out of him and had to be fought off.

They've injured their leg but the Squires assure me its treatable.

I should have figured the Raptorians would be foolish and not stick to this one island. Next time i'll make sure they're under more supervision.

Scouts

I don't want to risk Raptorians getting into further messes and decide to let my nimble scouts get the assignment.

The scouts fan out and disappear like shadows into the gloom. Its not until well in the morning that they return with their report.

They combed the island and found nothing, after expanding the search to the neighboring islands they came upon a particularly fat snake digesting a gargantuan meal.

All signs point to this meal being our missing Raptorian. Rescue however, had come too late.

I should have figured the Raptorians would be foolish and not stick to this one island. Next time i'll make sure they're under more supervision lest they explore the digestive tract of further fauna.

Save time, set sail.

I deny their request. We don't quite the time for leisure when we have so much catching up to do.

The Raptorians will have to behave well a while longer down in the ships holds.

Next Destination

Poor investigation:

Our clues here were scant, but it appears the fleet stocked themselves up fully on these islands. Its unlikely they headed for any other resupply points.

We might have to head for Navpoint 3 where we might find another scout or perhaps some natives for more information.

Good investigation:

Its clear the Fleet stocked up well before heading in deeper into Thousand islands in a hurry. Coded clues in the abandoned shacks appear to point to one of the Fleets preset rendezvous-points deeper in Thousand islands.

We can still backtrack slightly and head towards Navpoint 3 to investigate the possibility of another scout or natives with further information or head on deeper into Thousand Islands to the next rendezvous point marked as Navpoint 4.

# Arriving at Navpoint 3 (Event, 80%) Scout Vessla and Gryph natives.

We sail deeper into Thousand Islands and the islands start to become more numerous. There's at least always one or two visible on the horizon somewhere at this point, but as we get deeper they can in places become almost a maze-like archipelago.

Navigating this sea with this many landmarks is at least easy as long as we keep track of where we are. Finding our way again if the weather throws us off with so many similar looking lone islands around would set us back considerably.

Luckily the weather has remained relatively calm, with only small bouts of sudden squalls as temperature drops for the evenings. Nothing the crew and ship cant handle with seemingly trivial ease. I still catch myself occasionally worried sometimes, only to remember I'm no longer on my old ship 'Barristan' of the East sea.

The island Scout Harbinger marked out turns out to be a sizable stretch of thin flat landmass. Its high enough above sea-level provide refuge to tides but have little in terms of high cliffs.

Still, it seems thickly forested and dense with brush. Its clearly the home of many birds as their squawking is heard well off the coast as we search for a suitable approach.

The shores around the island are shallow all the way around and we have to settle further out then I'd like. The ship will be blown around by wind and wave.

So far no sign of the supposed scout. But if they are here they might just be on the wrong side of the island so I'm not ready to make any assumptions yet. The scouts have reported some fleeting signs of habitation, but I have a hard time seeing how any natives could live here.

Due to the difficulty of landing boats in, I can only send out a limited shore party. I'll have to decide on who to send with the assignment to search.

Arn, Tung or Garsch

Scout Report:

The scouts report the island is twice as long as its wide in a vague crescent shape. Its covered by forest all through-out, in some places all the way to the shoreline. It may in fact be that the island proper is actually smaller then it seems as a form of mangrove grows along its edges and over the shallow water itself.

There are a few landing spots boats where mangrove isn't too thick, but they involve some cliff climbing.

There appears to be smoke of what could be cooking fires coming from the center of the island. However there are little to no visible open areas not covered by canopy of trees.

The scouts are unable to penetrate deep into the forest proper without making a proper expedition out of it.

Expedition

The expedition paddles away and beach their boats on the cliffs and disappear into the brush of island. I can faintly hear them call out in Awe greeting-call even from here, but its soon drowned out as they move further in. We can do little back at the ship and wait. Hopefully they will be back before nightfall or we'll have to keep a signal flame alight.

Success:

The party has come in contact with a small village of Gryph Islanders and our wayward scout who seemed to be living among them. They have brought the Scout with them along with a few Islanders who arrive with canoes from somewhere hidden of the island thick mangrove brush.

Soon the missing Scout stands on deck along with a two Gryphs. One elaborately painted and one less decorated but solid and strong looking. Islander Gryphs were notably a lot bulkier then the Kingdom variant.

Fail:

The expedition returns empty-handed and looking flustered and annoyed. The thick forest proved difficult too difficult to navigate and whats more there seemed to be several traps around which hindered of slowed the party down. As darkness began to fall, they turned back toward the ship.

But our presence has not gone unnoticed. We spot canoes warily paddling among the mangrove brush, observing our ship. Perhaps they will come to us instead.

Scout Vessla is a bushy furred and older scout then I'm used to seeing. He's carrying painted markings and garments like those the islanders have. It seems he had been integrating quite well with them.

There's a slight unmistakable air of distance in him toward us, he stands firmly with the islanders and does not quite seem to be hopping with joy to me back among his own kind.

“Scout Vessla reporting as requested.” He muttered brusquely and stood at attention as I approached.

“Im Captain Avolc of the Attentive.” I turn my gaze toward the islanders and Scout Vessla motions as he introduces them.

“This is Forager Holixer and Chief-Son Darter.” The scout switches to Trade-tongue, the language of the kingdom and the common language used in the west. I note how he introduced the larger 'Forager' before what I assume is the smaller but more elaborately painted supposed son of the chieftain.

I extend a wing to touch the Foragers before the Chief-sons.

“Fortuitous greetings.” I greet them neutrally but pleasantly.

“Honored Leader.” Forager Holixer curtsies with a bow of his head along with Chief-Son Darter, who remains silent.

“What brings you to Lanaga territory, Captain?” Scout Vessla asks absently. I frown at him, normal procedure would be to report for duty, he's clearly keeping a distance.

“I was told I could find you here, you were left on assignment by the Fleet. A Fleet I'm trying to come in contact with. I'd like your report and aid in locating their whereabouts, Scout.”

Scout Harbinger stands not far out of view and Vessla meets his eyes briefly before nodding.

“The Fleet-Admiral left me here to negotiate the Lanaga tribes future cooperation with Admiralty operations in the area. They lay claim to this area of sea and its resources as their foraging grounds.” The scout explains.

I quirk my brow at this. It was not what I heard from Scout Harbinger.

“Oh? You received such additional instructions were you to make contact with the natives?” I switch to Awe tongue. “I don't believe Admiralty officially recognizes any claim to these islands.”

This seems to test Scout Vessla who knits his brow eyes me sternly.

“Captain! My orders were to make contact, yes. But during my time here I've learned much of their customs and society. They may not be a recognized nation, but they have ancestral claim to this region of sea and we'd do well to respect them if we want future naval operations to remain peaceful.”

His defensiveness and tone is a little sudden, the Gryphs shift uncomfortably at the clipped anger in his tone, though they don't seem to understand the Aweish words. It seems he had gotten quite attached to his hosts and perhaps them to him.

“Lower your hackles Scout.” I warn him. “I'm not here to make policy or drive anyone off their islands. You better explain where this attitude is coming from, I have no patience for subtleties.”

The scout seems to visible force himself to calm and meets my eyes.

“Alright Captain. I will explain, in private, if thats okay.”

I motion toward my cabin to where we can have a debriefing. To my surprise, the two Gryphs follow in the Scouts steps before I can say anything else.

Once seated I steeple my paws together and observe the way the Chief-son seats himself close to the Scout. They have an unmistakable tender sort of familiarity with each-other. I stow that observation away for later.

“So. Scout Vessla, why don't you begin from the beginning.” I Offer in Trade-speech for the benefit of our guests.

“We spotted the Lanagans during our movement through the area. The Fleet-Admiral had hoped to gain some local information about the force opposing us most of all. But they proved elusive to our efforts for contact and I volunteered to stay and gather information.”

“Well, it seems you were successful in your efforts, the Fleet-Admiral will be pleased once we find them.” I nod toward the Gryphs. To my surprise Forager Holixer speaks up with a firm tone and hard stare.

“Vessla has joined tribe Lanaga. Only his 'report' need return, not his person.”

I pause at this, incredulous and turn to Vessla for some sort of explanation, but he remains silent, avoiding eye contact.

“Am I to understand Vessla is your prisoner?” Yet as I ask this, it makes little sense for them to be here on my ship, just the three of them if this was the case.

“No. Vessla is no prisoner. He is now Lanaga.” He continues with his burly croaking voice, the Chief-son meanwhile straightens, raising his crest with confidence and challenge while the Forager speaks for him. “We are here to ensure his wishes are heard and he not be taken away against his will.”

I find myself briefly at a loss for words and eye them back and forth, but they seemed entirely straight-faced serious. Even as I struggle at what end to grip this unexpected twist of an issue, Vessla noticeably inches closer to Darter.

“I'm not sure I understand. You joined the Islanders?” I find myself asking in Aweish.

“I did! They were very hospitable once they got over their initial suspicion of me. I came to appreciate their ways and way of life.” He eyed the Red and yellow feathered Gryph who smiled back at him. “I wish to stay.”

I suspected there was more going on then was being said. In truth it was not my business.

But what gives me strongest pause is the scouts abandonment of his sworn enlisted duties. One can not just decide to quit and go native somewhere. We Awes enter a contract when we volunteer to serve, we are trained, housed and fed and in return we protect our society, our home.

They fear I have come to reject his decision and drag him back to his duties. And as his superior, I have every right to do this, by Admiralty law.

Whats worse, if I agreed to release him and word got out, the precedent set would not only erode authority but possibly increase similar desertions.

Let him go.

There's no point forcing someone into service. If their loyalty is elsewhere, they cant fully be trusted to perform their duties.

I find myself letting out a deep sigh. The trio have patiently waited for me to finish considering their words.

“I want a full report and as much intelligence you can muster, Scout Vessla. When we leave here without you there should be nothing useful in your mind thats not in a report. You hear me?” I speak slowly in Trade-Tongue.

Vessla seems to beam and relaxes visibly with relief. Darter emits a coo and chirp and Forager Holixer nods in a pleased manner of agreement.

“Honored Leader, your generosity will not be forgotten by Lanaga tribe! Awe will be true friend of the isles. May there be union of winged fur and feather, we shall accept all Awe who wish be Lanaga.” Darter spoke up for the first time, his voice almost musical.

Committed to the decision I feel its best to take advantage to the positives it might bring.

“Awes likewise accept any Islander who'd wish to align their cause with ours.” I venture carefully. Darter accepts it with a courteous nod.

Out meeting is finished and Vessla is put to work writing down his gained knowledge of the Isles and the Lanagas.

Chief-Son Darter meanwhile has invited me and the ships crew over for a night of festivity with their tribe on the island as guests.

But I have politely turned him down as kindly as I could. We are as pressed as ever for time and though I didn't say as much, I did not wish for any other of the crew to get seduced into any bright ideas.

Negotiate Vessla return to duty.

“I must object.” I straighten firmly in my seat and eye each of them in turn. “You still have your duty to the Admiralty.”

“But Captain! This isn't just about me, its a great opportunity to further a relationship between the peoples of the Isles and Aweland. Whats... whats one Awe here and there, you can do without me!”

Whatever his relationship with the Islanders, I get a sense he more seems to fear returning rather then leaving. I have chance to reason this over peacefully.

Question his fear

“There's more to this then you are letting on Vessla. I'm not going to question your affection for these people, but it sounds to me like there is more keeping you away then to stay.” I switch to Aweish again. Much to the seeming annoyance of the two Gryph guests. But they say nothing except ruffle their plumage lightly. Vessla seems to hesitate, but my piercing gaze and words seems to hit home.

“I assume you were in the first skirmish with the hostile force. Did the thunder-weapons scare you that much?”

“I... No, you don't understand. Its... just. The Fleet-Admiral, she's... ” He seems to look for words. “Driven. Beyond driven. She's a force of nature Captain. The weapons scared me, of course, they did everyone. But not her!”

I cock my head at this, wondering what he's getting at.

“This doesn't sound like a thing to run away from. A strong leader to rally under is ideal under such circumstances, no?”

“Yes... but. You haven't met her Captain. I... felt like I was being swept away in a vengeful avalanche and had to pull myself to safety before it reached the precipice! She will stop at nothing, its victory or doom.”

I sigh and shake my head. I know the Fleet-Admiral has a reputation for being a tough fluff, even in her Matron age. Still, thats no valid reason for this “flight”. I let him know as much.

“Surely you understand that this is not good enough a reason for me to accept.”

“Accept it or not, this is the choice I have made and wish you'll respect Captain.” Vessla snaps in Trade-Tongue. The two Gryphs shift closer to him defensively. They had not understood most of the exchange but stand with their tribesman. Too much argument and they are likely to break off these talks and leave me with fewer harder choices.

Shame: Responsibility

“Listen to yourself Scout. This is all highly irresponsible to your duty, to your people!” I scold in Trade-Tongue. The Gryphs are a party to this.

“This is a time of crisis for our people. Our homeland was attacked and there are clear foes opposing us here in these seas. The Lanaga are clearly not one of them and that is good, but you'd rather hide among them then do what you are sworn and trained to do!” I give them all a tough glare and disgruntled frown.

Forager Holixer most of all seems to shift uncomfortably to the accusations, even if they're not directed at him.

“But Captain... I've served the Admiralty for many years! This is my third and final rotation, I'm not far from... retirement.” Even as he says it his voice wavers, realizing his own trap.

“Thats right. You are still in rotation, no matter how you feel about it.” I cross my arms firmly but lower my voice. “Or does the Lanaga tribe not welcome back those who return from defending their 'tribe' of birth?”

Forager Holixer straightens his crest and crawks. “Lanagara always welcomes back their own.” He turns aside to eye Darter and Vessla. “We protect our own, our family. Our home-isles.”

It seems I won points with all of them.

Duty!

“Indeed, one might ask what one Awe can do to make a difference. Our strength comes from our combined effort and in the end its one Awe that can make a difference. And you are a Scout Vessla, don't underestimate your importance to the navy.”

Threaten.

“Scout Vessla, I'm sure I don't have to tell you what the law for desertion is.” Before he can answer I give a hard slap to the gut under my belt without breaking my gaze with him.

Vessla visibly gulps nervously, but Forager Holixer seems to straighten and clack his beak briefly, coming to the scouts defense. “Threats are not to be made lightly Awe-Captain!”

“Scout Vessla abandoning his duty at this point would hurt our cause with more then just his absence. It sets a dangerous precedent that threaten the crews conviction and dedication.” I slammed a clenched paw on the table. “You are here for the defense of the homeland! Not to find a place of refuge! So I can only offer him the ONE way out everyone else gets. And I assure you there will be very little lightness about me if you interfere and force me to fit all three of you!”

They seemed to take my threat quite seriously. Shifting uncertainly, but the Chief-son Darter looked noticeably agitated.

Failure

The Gryphs have had enough. Chief-son Darter rises from his seat, clacking at the floor with his claws. It seems he has lost patience with these discussions.

“Points of view have been exchanged. But now I have heard enough and ask you to depart and leave me and mine in peace.” The Gryph places an arm around Vessla firmly and possessively. “I was told you Awes are honorable and reasonable. I trust there will be no contention and conflict.”

Forager Holixer rises along with the Chief-son. I've puzzled together that he is the protector of the Tribe-Prince and no doubt of some authority, he appears more torn but he offers no argument and stands with Darter.

Apprehend Vessla

“You are free to leave.” I tell the two Gryphs. But then nod toward the Scout firmly.

“But Scout Vessla is staying with us. Willing or not, I will not permit him to desert his duty until released from service. I'm sorry if this will cause issue between us, but we at the Admiralty take responsibility seriously.”

Guards who had been standing outside step into the room, swords sheathed but at their sides. A Raptorian looms in the corridor outside. Its an unfortunate precaution and show of force I had hoped it would not have come to.

Both the Gryphs visibly tense and plumage rises in outrage. But before anything escalates further Vessla calls out.

“Wait! There's no need for violence! I will submit. I will fall in line, just nobody needs to get hurt.”

I nod firmly and the tension drains out of the room. It seems Scout Vessla has some reason in him after all. But Chief-Son Darter looks extremely displeased by our heavy-handedness, even as I offer an olive branch as we part ways and they leave the ship for their canoes.

“Scout Vessla will be allowed to return once his service is completed. If things go well in our anti-pirating efforts around these seas, that might be sooner then you think.”

“The Lanaga will remember the way you shackle your own to duty. We shall be careful in our deals with you.”

Avolc eats Scout

Vessla does not get far. I charge him into a wall and although he puts up a worthy brief fit of resistance I soon have his arms pinned behind his wings and pressed up against the hard wall.

“Don't make a fuss about this! You wished to retire, I'm retiring you.”

The scouts head vanishes in a wide chomp of his head. His complaints are muffled as I swallow hard and feel the muscles of my gullet stretch with the lump of his snout. Its a warm, filling kind of feeling as he's dragged down my throat with easy heaving swallows.

Its not the first time I swallow a fellow Awe, but its pretty rare to have one fighting so fiercely. It tickles something primal in me and I cant help but grab on to him more firmly and squeeze and push at him roughly into my jaws.

He whimpers briefly, realizing his inferior strength pretty soon and to some surprising disappointment relents with his struggles and goes limp and slightly shivering as he finally acknowledges his fate.

Only his haunches remain and those are easily enough finished. I glance a glimpse of myself in the mirror as I do and watch myself tilt my head back with smooth tossing gulp and send those feebly moving legs and feet deeper and deeper into my jaws.

The pressure in my stomach builds as he's forced down to curl up, it swells and bulges with his form only as much as it needs to. But for someone his size, a light bodied scout, its enough to put good-sized rounded shape to it without becoming all too obstructing.

'Bwuuooorrp!' A loud belch and a solid pat on the gut seals the deal. While its a pity I couldn't gain another potential scout to the roster. Maintaining discipline and morale among the crew I have is more important. Scout Vessla will have to be part of the ranks in his own way, as part of my authority.

Avolc eats all three

The scuffle is brief, the two Gryphs and Scout are overpowered and overwhelmed before they can offer much resistance.

To think they'd be that insolent. Thinking they can just steal one of my crew and then become aggressive when I don't agree with it.

My stomach rumbles loudly and I pat it reassuringly before I undo the buckle of my weapons-belt.

The big Gryph Holixer seems to be guessing my intention. He lets out a spiteful and shrill croak of protest before I grab his feet and shove them into my jaws.

I get a kick for my casualness and growl. My subordinates pin him more thoroughly and hold him down as I consume him whole. I can tell already he's going to be quite a fighter down there, he's my own size so its going to be quite a fit.

But no matter his fiestyness, down my gullet he goes. This is the first Gryph I've ever eaten and their feathers have quite an exotic taste to them. Their bodies are of the same mass as an Awe, but they are taller and more lithe. His legs and lower-body are already kicking around in my stomach before I've swallowed him past his shoulders.

But finally with a happy long gulp, that cursing complaining beak of his slide over my tongue and vanish wetly to become but a round lump in my beck and then a large writing mass in my belly.

“Houuffff... filling! And delicious. Do all Gryphs taste the same? Lets find out.” I leer at the other pinned Gryph with a toothy smirk. They claimed this was a Chief-son of some kind. Thats a pretty high ranking meal.

“Captain of Awes! Let us forgive and forget this transgression!” He stammered, blinking up at me and the shape of his squirming comrade.

“Ho now, you pronounced yourself the enemy of Awes. Now you wish to be friend? Thats not how it works Chief-son.”

I had him hoisted up with a motioning flick of my paw and then open my mouth wide, to give him a clear view of his oncoming fate for crossing the Admiralty. He had time but to chirp and squeak before the Awes carrying him shove him in headfirst.

This one is smaller then his comrade, but he shares his exotic and curious taste. I almost forget the fullness of my belly as I swallow his squirming form down.

My stomach swells even further, pretty soon packed with two moving shapes.

I come to the conclusion that gryphs are best swallowed head first. While their beaks are a bit pointy, they possess strong clawed feet that make quite a struggling kick from ones jaws.

I let Chief-Son Darter wear himself out before I swallowed the last of his feet down.

By now I was stuffed and past what was comfortable. My stomach sagged to the ground between my thighs and I found myself slightly hunched over it as it settled, gwurrrbled angrily and churned the two feisty Gryphs into tighter positions.

# Navpoint 4. Stranded Awe-ship. (Event 90%. Demo-level.)

The seas are rough and overcast. Spray of seawater regularly splash onto the deck and pool around before getting funneled out the sides.

We are spared the worst of the salt-spray upon the higher deck of the helm, but I can see several miserable Awes who's unlucky shift it is to assist with the sails from the bottom of the riggings and lower decks. But such is the life of a sailor. Having salt-frayed and disheveled fur is something of an inevitable mark of a long time sailor, some even display it with pride.

The seas are mostly shallow around the Thousand islands, so the waves do not become quite as monstrous and lethal as they do upon the true open sea. But despite my years of experience I still find myself cringing silently whenever start to crest a particularly large wave that looms like a dark wall of water.

But my ship, 'The Attentive' is handling the waves with stride. It is built for this and I marvel now at the craftsmanship that allows it to so smoothly climb one wave after another. Our bow seems to split the sea before it as we crest another wave smoothly and gently flow down the other side.

The ship isn't doing all of this on its own of course, it would be nothing without the expert handling of our navigator Nyxie at the helm.

I hover by her side, observing our progress, but I've found myself grow fully confident in her ability to skillfully and accurately guide us to our destinations. I can put my mind to other matters as we make our way forward.

Our destination is a lone island away from the other clusters and chains of islands. Its remoteness should guarantee that its uninhabited. Thus its one of the preset rendezvous points of the fleet that we are out here to find.

It is unlikely they will be loitering around this area, we are still at the edges of Thousand Isles proper, but its on the way and might offer clues.

A cry from high up in the masts rouses me from my thoughts. “Haaa-hoooo” the pitched cry of the lookout calls, land has been sighted. Nyxies navigation has been on-point once more it seems.

She has no time to grin in triumph however as she now shouts orders for the sails to be lowered to turn down our speed. She still has to get us close without crashing us into any inevitably lurking reefs.

The scout-master approached without needing to be summoned. He knew his duty and heard the cry.

The black-furred male Awe, enveloped in his heavy protective cloak nodded respectfully. Theirs was the task to find out what we were heading into. Not only to spot a safe approach to the island but also to get a preliminary glance at whatever awaited us.

“Difficult winds today Captain. It will be taxing to fly through.” The scouts yellow eyes scanned the horizon toward the growing black shape on the horizon which was the island.

“You wish to get closer before you depart?” The Scout-master was a proud one. He would not outright ask for leniency in his duties, but at least he had sense to let me know when something would be difficult.

“At your discretion.” The scout-master lowered his head again. He would follow out whatever orders I ordained, his small cadre of Scouts were highly disciplined and loyal, I knew as much and how invaluable they were.

I turn to Nyxie and divert her focus for a minute. But she has been listening and knows he procedure.

“I'm not sure captain, with the seas like this I'd sure be more comfortable to have an approach route scouted out for us. I cant quite make out the shallows like this and I'd hate to run into one with these waters.”

They look to me for a decision. Let the scouts fly into the difficult weather now but secure our approach or wait until we're closer and keep relying on Nyxies cunning navigation and sharp eyes of our lookouts.

We delay the scouts flight to the isles. The seas continue to be rough and the wind even picks up slightly, making us lower further more sails.

I can tell Nyxie is tired from being on edge and at the helm for so long by the time the scouts finally discard their protective cloaks, unfurl their precious wings and climb the masts to take off.

But she relaxes visibly as the winged figures speed ahead and show no signals of any course changes needing to be made.

By the time we are close enough to anchor the scouts return from their trip around the island. They are exhausted, flying takes a lot out of an Awe, even a highly skilled one.

The Scout-master approaches and with some surprisingly animated haste reports his findings.

“There is an Awe-ship on the far side of the island Captain! It looks like its been run aground onto the beach inside an inlet. We saw no encampment or signs of life. The Island looks uninhabited too, no visible settlements from the air. Dense foliage all around so hard to fully say if anyone is hiding however.”

“The ship is intact?” I blink at the startling news. Seems we are on the right trail after all, but these news are more then a bit puzzling.

“There was visible marks of battle-damage, but it looked mostly intact from our vantage.” The Scout-Master replied.

I send the scouts ahead despite the weather and wind. The safety of the ship is paramount and they'll will have to endure a little difficulty now and then.

The Scout-master makes no complaint as his cadre discard their protective cloaks, unfurl their precious wings and climb the masts to take off.

Nyxie relaxes visibly as the departing winged figures make no signals about any needed course changes. It seems my navigator is now allowed to finally relax.

By the time we are close enough to anchor the scouts return from their trip around the island. They are very exhausted, flying takes a lot out of an Awe, even a highly skilled one.

The Scout-master approaches and with hard eyes of concern haste reports his findings.

“There is an Awe-ship on the far side of the island Captain. It looks like its been run aground onto the beach inside an inlet. We saw no encampment or signs of life. Island looks uninhabited too, no visible settlements. Dense foliage all around so hard to fully say if anyone is hiding however.

One of my scouts had to land near the ship as we were taking a look, caught a downdraft but got lucky. They were unable to take off again and are waiting on site.”

Its only now that I indeed realize they are one short, but the startling news take precedent.

“The ship is intact?”

“There was visible marks of battle-damage, but it looked mostly intact from our vantage.” The Scout-Master replied.

Seems we are on the right trail after all, but these news are more then a bit puzzling.

I'm informed we cannot simply sail around the island to the inlet. The only safe approaches are on the north and south side and we are on the southern side. We'd have to sail out and around and then return and with these hard waves and wind and sun low in the sky its best to leave that for tomorrow.

For now I should send a crew ashore to go investigate the site (and recover our scout).

The chosen officer and their team will secure the island and the beach and set up a small camp. We don't have many small boats and we cant get the 'Attentive' that close without risking beaching ourselves as well.

As much as I'd like to go personally, Admiralty doctrine states to send at the most the First-officer for initial excursions like this. The Captain should always to stay with the ship unless its safety absolutely secure.

Below are the Officers on the current rotation to handle the mission.

First-Expedition

First-Officer

Arms Officer.

Support Officer.

The expedition sets out right away, rowing their boats toward shore. The sky is dimming but they should be able to make it to the site before nightfall.

We loiter for a while to ensure they make their landing safely and then start our journey to backtrack out of the shoals that surround us and come back on the far side with the inlet by the light of morning.

Its a mystery to as to why a Awe-ship has been seemingly abandoned here. Admiralty doctrine is very clear on the matter that our ships must never fall into foreign hands, lest they receive a way to construct and copy our strengths and learn of our ships weaknesses. A ship must always be scuttled and destroyed if its about to be lost or has been too severely damaged.

The ship appears to be somewhat well-hidden, but there is only so much you can do to truly hide a whole frigate.

This breach in rules carry with it some unsettling possibilities. Did they not have time to sink it? Were they wary of the smoke of burning it? Has there been betrayal? Tomorrow will hopefully bring answers.

The ship is entirely empty, there is no one there. Whats furthermore, our scout is missing.

They have not been found around the stranded ship where they were last seen having landed.

Scout-master assures me that Scouts are trained to stay put if they get separated from their team in these situations and that they will not have wandered off on their own without very good reason.

They have chosen to hide or someone has taken them. Either way, we need to deploy some heavier resources to search the islands, preferably as quick as possible.

We arrive on the north side to find our expedition waiting along with our stranded scout.

The expedition team reports finding little but dense and difficult brush and woods upon the island. The scout reports hearing noise and movement during the night but there are no trails or initial signs of inhabitance, a more thorough search could be made but would take needless time and resources. Focus which I'd rather put to investigate the mystery of the stranded ship and why its here.

It appears the Awe-ship, a frigate of the same model of ours, is entirely abandoned. There has been nothing of use left behind. Its stripped clean and is little but a empty husk.

The damage the scouts initially reported is extensive. Part of the main mast is missing and the hull carries several punctures on the side that match the kind of damage we sustained in our own battle not long ago.

Its clear the frigate is unfit for open-sea, was slowed considerably and would not have made it back home to port. The expedition have spent much of the night searching the ship for any messages or further clues but found nothing.

Officer Tick is insistently requesting to disembark and investigate the stranded Frigate further. He also reports that despite the ship being thoroughly stripped of supplies he might be able to use the ship itself to gain some useful replacement parts for our own ship.

He knows these ships best, so perhaps he can uncover some clues others might have missed too.

But he'd need a day to perform his scavenging operation.

Investigate only, Light Scavenge. - Heavy scavenge.

The cadets have been growing restless and getting underfoot. Perhaps they need a mission of their own to occupy their time and give them some experience as junior officers. There are a number of things they could be put in charge of.

They could be ordered to assist Ticks operation with the stranded ship, that would be safe but there's a chance they might hinder more then help, but Tick rarely tolerates any nonsense.

Or they could be set to work to find useful supplies on the island. We are not really in any kind of short supply, but it will be useful and arduous experience. The island is small enough that it would be quite a feat for them to get lost.

Assist Tick, Forage for supplies.

Raid

Something has happened over night at the stranded Awe-ship. A rushed and confused report woke me to inform me that there has been some form of attack upon Officer Tick and his crew during the night. No serious injuries are reported but the officer is missing, likely he's been captured in the confusion. The identity of our attackers are not entirely clear either, apparently no one got a clear look at them.

The ship is already on high alert and I'm met by my First-Officer as I walk out of my chambers, still clasping my cloak.

“What are your orders Captain? The scouts took a quick tour into the air and report seeing no other ships then ours.”

“Has anyone gone after them?”

“Captain. The Cadets were on site during the attack. They were spotted rushing after them into the woods.”

I bite down a curse and consider my options briefly.

I can unleash the Raptorians upon the islands and have them scour it. Its a bit of a heavy-handed move, they are not the most delicate tool for potentially non-violent options.

Or I could deploy the scouts to lead as pathfinders to fine-comb the island with a unit of Awes. A more versatile approach but not quite as fast.

-

“I expect you to fill all three of these barrels with some manner of fresh or otherwise edible produce that will pass Cooks inspection.”

“Yes, Captain! Of course!” Glint saluted stiffly, eager to please and make up for their previous mischief.

Two other two cadets equally stood silently, seeming to share their fellow cadets excitement. This would be a rare chance for them to have some autonomy and be away from the ship.

But I suspected they didn't quite understand yet that it was no field trip they were being sent out upon.

In a way I was setting them up to fail, they only had a day and the island, although dense, was small and seemed to contain mostly brambles and knotty old trees of the non-fruit bearing variety.

But it would be interesting to see what they came up with, even if they ended up shoving each-other into the barrels.

“You have a day, then I expect the barrels back right here on deck, full or with a damn good excuse!” I added quite some bite to my tone.

“Yes, Captain!” All three saluted in unison, their fur bristling.

“Get to it then, dismissed!” I watched them pause in hesitation, look at the barrels and then at the shore of the island not far from our anchored position. I raised my brow at them and they scrambled in confusion, grabbing a barrel each and rolling them aimlessly in separate directions before erupting in a chatter with each other.

They would have to arrange transport to and fro on their own too of course.

“You lot are joining the search party.“ I announced to the 3 arrayed cadets standing at attention.

“Yeah!” Ziggy gleefully proclaimed, before withering under my gaze and returning to silence with a straightened back.

“This is no fun and games. There is potential danger involved and if you spot something you are to take no actions on your own. Is that understood?”

“Yes captain!” All three replied briskly. There was a varying level of excitement in them. This was in a way one of their first real expedition missions outside training.

“Good. No heroics and don't get in the way of the professionals. You're here to learn, not to return to me in pieces or as lumps of undigested fluff.”

“Yes captain.” The three replied more uncertainly.

“Report to the beach and to the expedition leader. Dismissed.”

The three of them scampered off with haste. I felt my claws itching with the desire to join them. But a captains duty is with her ship foremost.

Tick was not an Awe who bothered hide his disdain. He eyed the three cadets with a look of resigned weariness as I saddled the three of them upon him. He was a notoriously hard Officer to please so it was with some satisfaction I issued my orders and watched the Cadets squirm.

“You're to assist Officer Tick with his work on the Frigate. You shall obey his every whim and order to perfection and unless I receive a glowing review from him of your work by the end of this I might be inclined to find another use of you that will, for as long as that takes. Whether that means new careers tarring the bilge or serving him breakfast. Understood?”

“Yes, Captain!” The three cadets spoke in practiced unison.

I waved them off with a paw and the short Awe officer sighed, crossing his arms. He showed no sign of enjoying this, but then again I wouldn't expect as much from him.

“Alright. Come along Breakfasts.”

He turned on his heel and marched off, Cadets falling in step behind him after a moment of hesitation.

Officer Tick stood before me once more. For having been through an ordeal of being captured and nearly taken away to some unknown end, he seems like the same old bored Tick I'm familiar with. While this Officer was not a great combatant, he sure seemed unflappable.

“So they revealed nothing of their intentions. What were the things they took, did you see?” I inquired from my seat in the Captains cabin.

“No Captain, they kept their beaks shut. They seemed to have taken metals mostly. A piece of the hull-metal and some of the light plating from supports and struts.” Tick replied unimpassionatly.

I mulled this over a while. Metal was very valuable in the west, it was certainly something worth stealing. But how had they known a ship was hidden here? And why kidnap an officer?

There was only one way to find those answers.

But first there was another matter.

“And the Cadets. How do you review their conduct? Did they pass muster?” I grinned.

“Not at all Captain. They were terrible help, constantly wasted breath on chatter, didn't know the difference between a Bow and a Mid-angle cut and generally dragged their feet. Do you wish for me to devour them?” Officer Tick snorted sullenly.

“I don't know. They indeed are willful and foolish, but they did assist in recovering an officer of mine. They might not make good engineers but perhaps they are not terrible Officer-Cadets.” I chuckled as I leaned back.

“Perhaps...” Tick agreed in a rare admission of what might be praise.

“Well, stow your gear Officer Tick. We are setting sail west.”

Someone there among the Gryph Islander tribes of Sand-Isles had knowledge and interest in Awe ships and officers.

I inspected the three barrels with a mild look of displeasure. They were far from full and seemed to mostly contain the most random assortment of goods I ever could have expected. One even had a something scampering around inside.

“So this is what you claim will pass for foraged rations?” I looked up at the cadets arrayed in front of me. They looked a bit rough from not only a day of digging through brambles but also having had a run in with raiders. They shifted their footing uncertainly.

“Whats this, why is this one half-full of just grass?” I tapped the first barrel.

“I-its Sour-grass Captain.” Valnos spoke up. “You can boil it and drink the soup. Its... supposed to...”

“I wouldn't even serve sour-grass soup to prisoners! Not unless I really enjoyed watching peoples faces shrivel up, but there are laws against that.” I huffed and Valnos looked down at his toes.

“And this, someone explain this rat.” I tapped the side of the second barrel in question.

“Thats mine!” Ziggy raised a paw enthusiastically. “I caught that!”

“So you caught one miserable rodent for one sailor to sup on?” I raised a brow.

“There's other stuff in there. Whole lot of Knot-berries!” Ziggy protested hesitantly, getting a little frustrated with this show.

“You mean this trampled mush or these little pellets most of them have transformed into?”

“What...? Oh...”

“And don't get me started on this unholy mix of a mess in this one.” I tapped the third barrel, it was Glints turn to cringe, to her credit she remained silent. “Mushroom bits, twigs with berries, dirt with roots. Whats this, Bark?”

“For tea.” Glint squeaked silently.

“Oh, how considerate! So the cook is just supposed to boil the whole barrel is he?”

The cadets all had the look on their faces now of where they thought me unfair. They had probably expected me to shower them with praise for helping save Officer Tick, not this. I softened my tone, here came the lecture.

“You failed to follow my orders to fill these barrels usable forage. You could not even fulfill a part of my order by filling one.” I paused and looked all three over closely. “Had you worked together, you could have filled one of these up with berries, there's enough scattered and ruined in all three. Perhaps you could even have organized fast enough for something for a second barrel too.”

I continued, stepping up to pace behind them.

“You are a crew. Crews work together! They don't compete or rush off to do their own thing, we are weaker divided. You do not rush off on your own, you consolidate and cooperate!” I let the words sink in.

“You may aided in Ticks rescue today. For that I will overlook your failed assignment.

Don't mistake that just because you were fortunate today that it was right thing to do. I might just as likely have ended up missing more then just an Officer. Now go get yourselves cleaned up and take a day off.”

Arn: “I would make a quick sweep of the center island for any hidden camps before setting up base at the inlet.”

Ulv: “I'd head straight for the ship first, cap! Thats where anyone would be if there really is anyone here.”

Tung: “Ship ain't going anywhere! If someone's living on the island, my sweep should find them.”

Arn: “There appears to be no trace of any permanent inhabitants on this island. Though there were signs of cut trees in many places, people have been here. There are no Awes on the island of that I'm sure, no response to our cries.”

Ulv: “Ho, Captain. We've set up a perimeter around the stranded ship and cleared some brush to increase visibility. I'm unsure whether its worth reporting, but there are some curious animal tracks around the inlet and the stranded ship. But we seen or heard nothing out of the ordinary. The ship is a mess however, poor thing!”

Tung: “No one lives here, but there's been people on the island and not only Awes, of that I'm sure. Cut trees and some old dismantled canoes are left behind among the brush on the west shore. We searched extensively Captain, if there's anyone on this island beyond us, they are very few or hiding very well.”

Keep searching the island.

Arn:

“Aye Captain, if thats your wish. I don't believe there is much to find out there but twigs and burrs but if thats your order, we'll make sure.” The First-Officer gruffed glumly. He was not happy about the assignment and orders, but at least he was not straining against them like he used to.

“We could take the Cadets along.” Arn suddenly suggested. “I hear they have been driving Officer Tick into early shedding.”

I considered this briefly. I had some assignments of my own I was planning to make them busy with.

“Let me talk to them first, I will let you know if they join you in a bit.”

“Aye captain.”

Ulv:

“You want us to traipse up and down the woods of the Island, aye? Well, I suppose thats fair, we hardly gave it a very good look over on the way in to the bay.”

Ulv scratched at her prominent neck-tuft before shrugging.

“I'll round up the girls and take a walk around the island Captain. If there's anyone out there we'll give 'em a smack and a howdy!”

I blinked once but decided not to question what that meant, I think I got the gist of it.

Tung:

“Good! Yeah, we'll head out there. I feel it in my pelt that there's someone out there watching us.”

Tung smacked his paws together audibly and grinned savagely. As always he defied the timid male stereotype with more gusto then anyone.

“We shall head out immediately.

Maintain position.

There was a raid in the night. I woke as the faint sound of a warning horn echoed over the small bay we were anchored in.

Its not long until I receive the report, buttoning my cloak and sword-belt and hurrying out on deck.

Some Islander gryphs had been trying to sneak into the camp surrounding the stranded Awe-ship.

Ulvs diligent defensive perimeter however spotted them.

“They appear to have been few in number, up to 4 of them at most Captain. I'm not sure what they were trying to achieve or steal.” My First-Officer reported. “They have fled back into the island. Im afraid some Awes have already gone after them in pursuit.”

“On who's orders?” I frown surprised.

“Its the Cadets, Captain. They were spotted rushing after the assailants into the woods after they were initially fought off.”

I bite down a curse and consider my options briefly.

Cadets cause mischief:

They might have hidden his tools on him, or told him there was a part of the ship that looked like it was rotting so he spent all day looking for it, or painted what looked like a hole somewhere it oughtn't be so that he would try to fix it?

Glint: “Who's is this broken hammer and why was is it on my bunk?”

Ziggy: “Uh....”

Valnos: “A carpenters hammer? Looks pretty ornate.”

Ziggy: “Ah...”

Glint: “Whats the point of an elaborately ornate tool? It'll just break. Seems foolish and expensive.”

Valnos: “Perhaps it was not meant to be used?”

Ziggy: “Its Officer Ticks hammer. I might have accidentally borrowed it.”

Glint: “You....”

Valnos: “...broke Ticks hammer?!”

Ziggy: “I didn't know it was important! You got my back, right?!”

Glint: “We're dead!”

Glint: “My shoulders are killing me!”

Ziggy: “Tick-shifts reeking stinks!”

Valnos: “He does push us further then the other Officers do.”

Glint: “Why did we have to assemble crates only to pull them apart again for half a day?!”

Valnos: “I suppose its educational.”

Glint: “We're Officer-Cadets, not shipwrights or laborers!”

Valnos: “Not so loud! Last time you said that he doubled our workload!”

Ziggy: “Ye! Shut your snoot-gob Glint!”

Valnos: “Finally, an island!”

Glint: “The ship will be busy.”

Ziggy: “Too busy to push us around!?”

Valnos: “Maybe they'll let us ashore?”

Glint: “Would love some solid ground under my paws.”

Ziggy: “Fight pirates!”

Valnos: “Oh... maybe not that...”

Ziggy: “You'd rather stay and swab the deck, Eh? Then you wont need this!”

Valnos: “Give that back! I just head it cleaned.”

Ziggy: “Only officers get caps. You're a sailor now!”

Valnos: “Come on Ziggy! Glint?”

Ziggy: “Ooop, its in Glints pouch now!”

Glint: “HEY!! Ah! Paws off!”

Arn:

“There is no sign of the scout, captain. We've looked through the ship and called for them but got no response. They might have wandered off, but I don't know, its strange. Scouts are a disciplined bunch.” Arn paced slowly, nodding to the Scout-Master that hovered nearby.

“Thats right Captain. Standard procedure is to wait. He's the newest in my troop, but I cant think of a reason for why Scout Vessla would wander off.” The Scout-master rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

“Something drove them off or snatched them. Either way, I wouldn't classify the island as secure until we had a good proper sweep of it.” Arn muttered.

“Finding our scout is a high priority. But I also need this ship investigated. It holds too many mysteries that I need answers to.” I glance over at Officer Tick who has found his way to my cabin without needing to be summoned. The short officer seems to have a knack for knowing when he's needed. That or he's as keenly interested in the stranded ship and its mysteries as I am.

Tung:

“Ah, beats me captain. They were not at the ship when we arrived. And if they did not fly back to the ship then... “ Tung made an elaborate shrugging motion. The Scout-Master spoke up.

“Standard procedure is to wait. He's the newest in my troop, but I cant think of a reason for why Scout Vessla would wander off.” The Scout-master rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

“Well as I reported. There's signs of other visitors having been here. Seems clear to me that if we find them we might find out scout too.”

Ulv:

“No sign of the scout at all?” I fixed Ulv with a steady gaze.

“No Captain. We beelined straight for the ship as planned, but they were not here. I set the lassies up to secure the ship first. Then we looked briefly around the woods surrounding the beach, but no signs. No answer to calls.” Ulv shifted weight around on her paws.

“Standard procedure is to wait. He's the newest in my troop, but I cant think of a reason for why Scout Vessla would wander off.” The Scout-master rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

“Well its likely he did. Or something on the island took him. We don't know whats out there, but its not a big island. We can make an effort to search it.”

There is a limit of how much crew I'm willing to send ashore at one time. These are obviously hostile waters, if we're caught anchored in this tight bay by an enemy ship we're done for. So only enough Awes that can be quickly evacuated.

That means I have to choose how to prioritize operations. The weather is worsening, I do not want to become stuck here by a storm either so time is limited.

Prioritize searching for the scout by sweeping the island. Or give Tick all the paws he need to make a proper investigation of this ship. Of course I could try splitting the crew equally, but that might mean half-measuring both.

Encounter Cadets:

“Who're you?” Valnos squeaked in alarm as the figure emerged from the shadows of the brush.

It was no Awe. Tall and beaked, they appeared to be a brown-feathered Gryph with painted black markings over their body and feathers. But is was no elegant lean Kingdom Gryph, this stocky well-built figure was an Islander.

They did not reply to Valnoses prompting but advanced, holding a wicked spiked quarterstaff.

“Back off!” Valnos cried out, hearing the stammer and fear of his own voice. He readies his spear in front of him, pointing it toward his foe just as in practise.

WHACK! The spear is effortlessly smacked out of his paws with a wicked blow off the staff. One moment he was holding it the next there was just an stinging absence.

With the spear goes the Cadets courage and he spins around to flee with a cry of alarm. “H-help!”

But he falters after a mere step, the Gryph has lunged forward and grabbed him by the tail. They are larger, stronger and seemingly faster too.

“Stop, help!” Valnos gasps, kicking with his all his might, watching helplessly as the gryph raises his staff in a one-handed grasp to silence him.

“HEY! LET HIM GO!” Ziggys voice cries out. The ginger-maned Awe rushing out of the brush with blades in both paws. She rushes the Gryph like a whirling little dervish of blades.

The blow meant for Valnos is redirected toward the sudden attacker and smacks down hard at the new assailant.

Ziggy catches the blow by crossing of her blades in a guard, visibly staggering and barely dodging under the reach of the staff.

Valnos suddenly sails through the air, swung by his tail to impact into Ziggy, bowling the two of them over.

“Gah, guhhff!” Goes both the cadets in a tangle of confusion. “Get off me!” Ziggy barks in anger, seeing the Gryph grip his staff in a two handed grip and about to wallop them both.

THNK. A spear whizzes past and thuds into the trunk of a tree, missing the Gryph by a good measure but still having the desired effect of causing him pause.

“Assailants! This way! Help!” Glint cries out loudly, to alert anyone else in the area. She too rushes forward, drawing her sabre in aid of her comrades who are beginning to rise and recover.

Two more figures step out of the brush, more Gryphs as tough and wicked looking as the first one.

The three cadets huddle, wing to wing and slowly retreat.

But a cry is rising up from the nearby woods now. The call of other Awes, the rest of the expedition, reinforcements!

The Islanders exchange glances and then pull back and dash off, leaving the three cadets breathless and stunned.

Chase after

“Ziggy stop!” Valnos cries out shrilly, struggling to catch up to his fellow cadet. Besides him the gold furred cadet Glint keeps apace.

“Quiet Valnos! She can hear you just fine, she just wont stop.” She muttered angrilly.

“Why are we chasing them? We cant take them on alone!” Valnos squeaked more quietly. The spear in his grip did not give him comfort. The Islander Gryphs that had appeared were robust and strong. They had quickly overwhelmed and captured Officer Tick before anyone knew what had happened.

“We're not going to fight them we have to see where they're going, we cant let them take him away.” Glint replied, slowing her pace as Ziggy too seemed to have slowed down and was peering ahead intensely while holding up a paw. “You hear that Ziggy?” Glint whispered harshly.

“Yeye, whatever! Shut up, they stopped moving I think.“ Ziggy replied, clutching her twin sabers.

The trio listened intently, ears perked and flicking in various directions. The night and woods were silent and dark, it was hard to make out anything.

A snap of wood. A disturbed piece of foliage. A shadow stepped forward. Valnos squeaked in fright.

Conclusions:

-

I stand atop the mast in the crows-nest with the look out as he points out the tiny sails racing away from the island to me. Two very small vessels, perhaps not even as big as our landing crafts, are escaping the island toward the west. The boats are small enough to easily maneuver over and past the reefs covering the area there.

Its not long before the report from the response team reach me with the results. The enemy has fled, they failed to catch them. But Officer Tick has been rescued and recovered, with help from none less then the Cadets who apparently were instrumental in seeing him freed.

They are shook up and bruised, but none worse for wear. I'm torn whether to chastise them right away or later for their recklessness. Things could have gone far worse.

I'm told the assailants was a group of Gryph Islanders who had been laying low and hidden on the island all along. They were not of a tribes we have yet to encounter, likely they belong to the numerous fertile 'Isles of sand' to our west. They had materials which they had been scavenging from our ship but its unclear what their intentions were with trying to kidnap Officer Tick.

-

I stand on the deck as the thundering noise of a full compliment of Raptorians crashing themselves through the tree-line and disappearing into the woods of the island slowly fade.

Their eagerness for action and a hunt is comforting, but I cant help but nervously hope they have the restraint to leave people they are supposed to rescue intact in their enthusiasm.

Its a time of tense waiting while I organize a second party to make landfall and follow up on the Raptorians word arrives sooner then I had expected.

The captors have been found and dealt with. The missing Officer and cadets are recovered and mostly unharmed, if somewhat bruised. I'm told the cadets were even instrumental in guiding the Raptorians to the right place before they could leave the islands on very small sailing crafts that they had kept hidden and disassembled.

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Alas none remain to be questioned.

-

A report from the expedition arrives. They have finished their sweep of the island an managed to successfully recover our scout and defeat the assailants. It was apparently a hard fight and they would not surrender. Still, we managed to capture one of them.

I'm told the Cadets ended up in the heart of it and saw some action. But they're unharmed if only a little shaken up, some less then others I suppose.

Scout Vessla, our formerly captured scout is also unhurt. He claims they came for him not long after he made his landing on the beach. They had been lurking around the ship, scavenging tidbits of materials in terms of metals. But they were quite interested in apprehending him.

He did not quite glean the reason for his capture, but they seemed quite eager to get away and off the island with him. But the initial first sweep of our expedition kept them in hiding and prevented them from getting to their canoes before night fell. It seemed they were not keen on trying their luck over the reefs in darkness luckily, even with their fascinating light boats.

The Captured Gryph has kept his beak shut and refused to cooperate. Its up to me what to do with him.

I can keep him as a prisoner until he decides to speak or he comes to some other use. Or we can deal with him like we do with all who make themselves the enemies of the Admiralty.

A report from the expedition arrives. They report an encounter with Islander gryphs.

Apparently the cadets ended up in the heart of it and saw quite some action. But they're unharmed if a little shook up.

The attackers however made an escape. They had assembled what appears to be small connected canoes with sails and are sailing away on the opposite side of the island. They have our missing Scout with them, captured.

I have ordered all crew back to the ship and to raise the anchor. We are going to pursue them.

We are much faster on the open sea, but we still have to sail out of this bay and surrounding maze of reefs before we can get on their tail.

I've consulted my charts and judging by their heading and size of their craft. They must be heading toward the Sand-Isles. So thats where we are going next.

TICK

“Permission to devour the cadets captain.” Tick suddenly announced himself and simultaneously requested at my door.

“Excuse me, permission to do what?”

Tick sighs, clearly frustrated with having to repeat himself. “I'm asking permission to consume the cadets.”

I snap at him irritatedly for being so curt. “I heard what you said, but I need a bit of context and explanation here!”

“They are rowdy, they are insubordinate and they chatter amongst themselves constantly about everything. They have caused the ship damage and need to be made an example of for the good of discipline and order.” Tick explained calmly with a steady tenor, arms behind his back.

“Is this about your hammer? I found myself asking, holding back a grin rather successfully. To Ticks credit, he held his expression perfectly in his standard bored neutral.

“No. But but it is one of many examples reckless thoughtlessness.” Tick replied.

“Are they truly such menaces to warrant this...? I have not heard similar complaints of other officers. And I cannot punish someone to be forcibly deepened for excessive chatter.” I queried curiously.

“During the week they have been under my tutelage, they have broken several tools. They perform tasks with no expedience and complain of orders.

They have grown complacent and lazy from lack of consequence and proper discipline. They are your direct subordinates and I cannot perform potentially impairing disciplinary actions to parties responsible without your permission. I do not mean to end anyone, only exert discipline.” Tick seemed to puff himself up. But he was the smallest of the Officers on board in stature, perhaps even one of the smaller Awes. It looked a little bit comical.

But none of his words were fully as amusing. Though Tick was renowned on the ship for being being the toughest and most fastidiously hard to please Officer to work under he rarely raised a fuss up the rank unless something truly rankled him or somehow threatened the ship.

“I sense some rebuke toward me there, do you imply to say that I am part responsible?” I fix the Officer with a cool gaze, deciding to test his resolve in this matter. Perhaps he's let out enough steam to have cooled his head.

“... Yes Captain.” Tick replied after but a moments pause. “If you wish to take responsibility I'd be satisfied by consuming you in their stead.” He sensed the trap and doubled down. I'm momentarily utterly baffled by his boldness and impertinence. But he remains standing there in his 'at ease' posture, committed to his words.

“Officer Tick. You have some presumption.”

Let him discipline the Cadets. (Tick devours one or several cadets)

Take responsibility (Tick devours the Captain)

Show him who's the captain. (Avolc devours Tick)

Lecture and Dismiss. (No stomachs are filled)

Get ate

Tick was riled up enough to confront me about this, even going so far as maneuvering this situation into

“Well, Officer Tick.” I turned and plucked my cap off my head and started to disrobe my heavy cloak and epaulets. “I'll take responsibility for my underlings, you are right to demand disciplinary action.”

The usually stoic officer seemed to gulp visibly and shift his weight uncertainly. Perhaps he had not quite expected this outcome, neither was I. But this was the track we were going on.

“I believe standard disciplinary stomach-time equals half a shift. For the three cadets thats a total of one and half shift-time, no?” I raised a brow at Tick, curious to hear his response. The Officer had stepped forward and started to loosen his necktie and vest. His movements were clipped, mechanical, nervous.

“A full shift would be at the limit to where our career choices risk drastic change. There is no warrant for your permanent demotion.” Tick responded with all formality.

“Very well, we will start with half-shift and then take it from there.”

I walked across the room and opened my door briefly. Glint, the current attending Cadet on duty perked to attention.

“Tell the First-Officer I will be indisposed for a shift or so and that they are in-charge for the time being.”

Cadet Glint blinked, saluted, glanced once past me into the chambers at Officer Tick and then hurried off without a word.

I then climbed into Officer Ticks mouth and proceeded to let myself get eaten.

Half-shift

Officer Ticks stomach was cramped and uncomfortable, he was not a very large Awe to find yourself crammed into. But I could tell it might had been much worse had he not had ample practice with stomaching Awe-kin, most High-Officers of his rank do.

The Officer knew better however to try amble out of the room. Seeing their captain in the belly of the ships maintenance officer would only unnecessarily shake up their faith the strength and stability of their leadership. I felt him transport us to more comfortable seating, where he leaned back with a heavy sigh.

We exchanged no words and let only the occasional hiccup, gurgle and stray belch sound in the room. This was informal, just plain protocol. An act that needed to be carried out.

After four hours I admit I found myself having relaxed enough to almost doze off when Officer Tick spoke up, paw knead/shaking at me through the belly.

“Half a shift as passed, Captain. Do you wish to space out this sentence or carry on?”

His stomach was tighter around me. It had begun to churn and undulate faintly as his bodys gastric tract had begun to carefully probe at me. One can only mentally hold such at bay for so long.

Full-shift

“We carry on Officer Tick” I replied curtly, trying to sound as formal and unbothered as possible. Though my voice was no doubt a little strained as his stomach-walls churned in response to my movement.

“Humf... Very well Captain.” Tick replied as curtly as always. I felt him shift and jostle his body back. Something rested against my back on the outside of his belly. It took a while to realize he was reading a tome.

The second half of the full shift was less pleasant. The Officers stomach grew increasingly slick and animated. Low grumbling groans and long drawn out grumbles echoed loudly around me and no doubt through the room.

There was little rest to be had as his body and stomach increasingly constricted itself firmer around mine, pulling me deeper against his body. Only the mental willpower of my Officer kept the true onslaught of digestion at bay.

By the time I felt another firm shake and rub from his paws kneading against my form, almost in a possessive way. I was being kneaded and churned around in the midst of a chorus of wet sloppy eager burbles.

“Thats a full shift, Captain.” Was all the Officer announced before waiting for my reply.

One and half-shift

“We shall... carry on, Officer Tick.” I grunted from within his distended noisy gut.

I felt him shift once more, jostling me around as he moved with unknown purpose. It was hard to tell from within the dark roiling depths of my Officers stomach. But from the shift of angle, I think he was now laying down.

“Very well Captain. As you choose.”

Moments passed slowly, the undulating stomach shifted gear, each pulse and squeeze of muscle seemed stronger then the last. Sticky fluids was all in my fur and getting squelched and rubbed in everywhere. The stomach gourgled and glrrrnnned aggressively about me as it worked.

It was hard to maintain concentration, I felt I was going in and out of focus. It was hard to discern elapsed time. I was about to ask the Officer, but I remembered he was a diligent one that would make sure to announce with this third and last half-shift ended.

But even now I knew better. He was actively digesting me by now. An Awe can only hold back the workings of their belly for so long. He warned me too before going in. He had accepted my choice and now let his body deal with me.

Glug, glurrnn, blurble. My world was a hot roiling stewing churning cauldron. Ticks small body would have no problems breaking mine down. He'd become a plump little Officer after he was through with me.

“One and half-shift, Captain.” A faint voice announced somewhere for away. I added myself onto that voice.

# Navpoint 5 - The Gators in a cave (Event 10%, concept stage)

“Captain, we've found several Gator-kin, probably pirates, holed up in defensive positions in a cave.” The scout curtly snapped to attention and delivered his report.

“How many?” I find my ears perking, now this was an interesting find!

“Hard to say, they have barricaded themselves up pretty tight and they warning anyone who approach to keep away. They seemed prepared and ready, they must have seen us come.”

“It could be a pirate supply stash they are guarding.” I muse out loud. The scout remains silent, dutifully only reporting what he has observed. “Co-operative or not, this is a good opportunity to gain information.”

“How shall we deal with them, Captain?” My first-officer inquires, awaiting orders.

Martial:

Attack their defensive position.

(Fails with casualties or Gators seal themselves in with lighter injuries.)

Social:

Try to negotiate

(They request to speak to you. High success gives clue on demeanor)

Special:

Search for alternative methods.

(Fails with wasted time or collapse the entrance)

If you negotiate:

Trapped.

Talk and stall for time while they dig you out. Fail means getting eaten, success means you stalled for time and high success is persuading them to feed you.

Fight and get swallowed. Rescue becomes costly and you might be digested.

Cave turns out to be an Iron mine. Decent quality ore. Gators have extremely high demand for Iron.

# The Dance (Event. 20%. Rules and leadup)

An event Priestess Ljus proposes to hold an annual short traditional courting festival to lighten the mood on the ship.

She claims that even if you don't endorse it, it will most likely be celebrated and held in private by large part of the ship.

You can choose to participate or not. She even offers to practice “the dance” with you so you can refresh your memory.

The festivals main event involves a 'courting dance', where Awes dance in a long line in the shape of a circle then face each other and perhaps seek eye-contact with those who interest them.

Finally, the music changes and the participants break the circle and mingle together in a blur spinning Awes until the music changes again.

Those who made eye contact seek to find each-other but anyone may clasp paws and exchange a few ritual words to show appreciation for one another (Or more). Traditionally only females instigate the clasping of paws and males may only respond.

If you clasp paws with someone, you spin around with them and the instigator speaks one out of three lines.

The most common phrase is, “I admire your Spirit”. Which is a neutral phrase and one of friendly praise and appreciation.

The other phrase is a more uncommon. There is also “I admire your Beauty”, which is a “dominant” courting phrase. Often used to express your romantic interest toward the other.

The third and rarer phrase is. “I admire your Form”. Which is a submissive courting phrase, often implying you wish to submit, often to their appetite or if a female, pouch.

The responder must respond with one of these three phrases. Often its an exchange of admiration of spirit. But the spirit phrase may be used to politely turn down the other two phrases.

The third stage of locked paws is taken either by the instigator or the party with most “dominance” from the phrase exchange.

They may suggest.

“Shall we retire the dance?” or “The dance continues”

And other other must respond with affirmative or “The night is still young.” to break apart.

Often these dances and exchanges are noncommittal unless both parties agree to retire. They then go to the dominant or instigators partners chambers and spend the night together.

Most of the time these dances are merely a time where everyone are equal and the shy, the bold or the curious may try to gage the interest of someone in they fancy to keep in mind.

Dancers may ofcourse find eachother again, but if you've instigated clasped paws with someone its bad form to do so again, you must wait or hope they come to you.

I clasp the young Cadets paws, smirk at his happy expression of my attention and speak. "I admire your Form." The young cadet stammers, forgetting his words, before blurting out. "I admire your Sp...beauty!" he blushes fiercly and his eyes wide, disbelieving his own words. We spin in a circle a while and i chuckle a smile at him before remembers he has right to the last phrase. "S-s-shall we retire the dance?" <Respond: yes> <Respond: 'The night is still young'>

# Avolcs Dream – Homesickness/doubts (Event, 100%. Picture?)

The towering mountain peaks reach for the skies before me, familiar with their constant unwavering presence. They pierce the clouds in their splendour and seem as eternal as the world itself.

As I grew up, they loomed always within sight no matter how far I strayed. The mountains a comforting guiding presence, that as long as I saw them, they too seemed to see me and stood in silent vigil.

I travelled a few times to their snow-covered peaks and though they seemed to welcome little life into their lofty midst they always felt invitingly cool and hospitable.

From their shoulders, I shared their far gaze over the world. Up there, nothing would ever reach me or threaten me.

Now I feel small under their shadow. How long have I been away from their view? They do not recognize me anymore, nor do I them.

The comforting vista around me shifts, grows further unfamiliar. These are my homelands, but I cannot recall its details. Where was the valley, the hill and the stream? Where have the blooming trees gone, the sky and ground beneath me is one and the same. Only the mountains remain.

However, they seem to sway and move their great forms before me, slowly undulating and shifting into one another. It is no longer mountains I see, but towering waves. These hold no promise of protection; they threaten crash down upon me and destroy me should my heart falter and I fail to hide my fear from them. Before them, I must be the mountain. Constant and unwavering.

# Heading toward Kingdom – Homesickness/doubt (Flavor/content for event. 20%)

Our efforts feel insurmountable. There is a whole other larger world of people out here and it seems like they are set on our demise.

The crew is reeling under our recent losses. To be honest im not sure what is holding them all together. The dedication and focus of duty perhaps, to focus on moving forward. Their trust in me. That I'll somehow see them through to the right path and salvation.

There's a deep pit inside me that is threatening to swallow me up. But if I falter, I suspect they will all follow me down to the bottom.

I have to be strong for them, we have to be strong for each other. On our wings are the burden of responsibility to see this through.

Our heading toward the Kingdom of Plumes are set. We go there for answers. That ancient nation of trade and wealth that has survived centuries by using its central position to seemingly manipulate those around them if sources are to be believed.

If its all true, if Aweland are truly a pawn in their games of succession and power, they are about to find out what a shipload of vengeful bristle-furred Awes can do.

# Location descriptions (Flavor/content)

The Capitol port of the Kingdom is in sight.

On approach it looked very small, for it looked like we were approaching a forested shore with small huts nestled along its branches and roots. Not the grand visage I had envisioned from a ancient prestigious kingdom.

But as we came closer, the size and stature of the trees become more obvious. These were towering sentinels, stretching far into the sky. Of course, they are but twigs compared to the mountain ranges from home, but its no less impressive to see something living attain this size.

The buildings were no huts at all, but sizable domed structures pocked with balconies and platforms for arrival and landing. They seemed to have been built with careful consideration, to fully utilize the size of the trees without overburdening or crowding them. This is a people with an instinctive regard for the welfare of their tall hosts.

## Port-nowhere

The “Port”, is at first glance nothing but a massive crisscross of connected old ship hulks and driftwood.

My eyes have trouble making sense of where buildings start and end, with all the interconnected bridges and floating platforms. There is some order to the chaos, there are larger hulks near the center, with what looks like proper construction of buildings around it. As we circle the port looking for a free space to dock at, its clear the port is city in itself, with several districts with their own purposes. We pass what our noses clearly tell us are the fishmongers docks and next to are several bulky constructions and a large hulk that look like dirty warehouses. While its clear this is a place that has grown haphazardly and randomly at first, there have been made efforts into guiding the growth.

## Thousand islands

The Archipelago sea is easy to navigate. Unlike the Sea of fangs, the many islands are widely enough spaced, often into smaller clusters that there is little trouble traversing the place. Though there are still the risk of shoals and shallows our look-outs have to keep a close eye out for when passing close or between islands.

Also unlike the Sea of fangs, these islands are large enough to have vegetation and even wildlife on them. Though none of them seem large enough for permanent habitation, as I understand it, Gryph islander tribes live and travel these islands, like foraging nomads.

The charts are extensive and detailed, so there is little risk of getting lost out here. But the sea is still vast and the amount of islands seemingly endless.

If we are to find what we're looking for, we are going to need more clues.

## Novinus

The Lands of Novinus are in sight. For a moment it looks almost like home, mountain ranges loom in the distance, not as large as home, but of enough respectable size to stir something in my weary soul.

As we approach the coastline and sail along it, the coasts look largely uninhabited, there are little to no signs of settlements. Where the sea hasn't eroded the cliffs into natural towering barriers for landing. there are clear visible defensive construction to prevent easy landing. Everything between fortified seawalls and jutting carved stones make any thoughts of landing a foolish idea.

As we pass a river inlet I spy what appears to be a fortification built to overlook the inlet.

Drudges are said to have lived and flourished with their advanced culture centuries before the first few Awes decided to venture out of our mountains. But it seems to me they've spent that time ensuring they would have no unwelcome visitors.

Novinus is by far not a small island, it verging on a continent. Yet I somehow find myself not doubting that the coast all around must look like this.

I wonder briefly what threat could possibly have prompted this kind of large scale endeavor.

# Meeting Fleet-Admiral (Flavor/Content for Event. 40%)

The Fleet-Admiral is a matron of imposing presence. Taller then the Awes around her, sturdy wide-hipped and with a thick groomed mane, she stands well apart from the common Awe.

But its not her physical size or length of fur that gives her such an bolstered almost inspiring presence.

She has an aura of command around her, an air of confidence of one who's had her whims obeyed for most of her life and knows she's respected. Its not quite arrogance, though there's some of that too, its a deep confidence and certainty in her own competence, hard-earned through a life-time of experience.

She's a master of her expertise the art of Command and she knows it.

She turns her violet eyes to me as I approach, glancing me up and down in a moment of appraisal.

Whatever her first impressions of me were she let none show.

I step forward to her to touch wings and brush paws in respect and acknowledgment of her higher authority.

Up-close it becomes pretty hard not to notice how her rounded stomach shifts faintly and emits a faint moan and digestive 'gwurble'. Someone was in the process of adding themselves on to her frame, had they not moved and made a sound I would not have noticed, such was the thickness of her figure.

“Fleet-Admiral.” I bobbed my head.

“Captain Avolc.” She rumbled, her voice strong, Matron deep and quite husky from a lifetime of shouting orders. “I like what I see and your arrival is fortuitous. My only regret is that you seem to come alone?”

“Yes, Admiral. I was sent to appraise the situation along with supply and support. The Grand-Admiral has received only scant updates on your status out here. No word of the enemies we face have gotten through.” I summarized quickly.

“I see, that explains it. Our messages back home are being intercepted then.”

# 1st Fleet engagement/battle scene (Event. 60%)

The Awe-fleet sailed in staggered column formation with its two heavy battleships bringing up the front. Though at close inspection the slight battle-damaged and tattered condition of the ships was evident, it did not take away splendor and show of might which 3rd Fleet represented.

The reinforced decorative ramming bows gleamed and banners fluttered in the hard wind of today. This was the power of Awe ingenuity and diligence. Paired with Admiral Newtrees hard unflappable steely-eyed resolve as the driving force at the heart and soul of it all, it was easy to imagine us invincible.

So despite its setbacks and terrifying reality of the enemies armaments, I observed nothing but disciplined confidence in my crew and of those of neighboring ships as we sailed head on toward the mass of sails which represented the pursuing pirate force.

“Signal from flagship: Echelon formation.” My First-officer observed.

“Proceed.” I muttered clasping paws behind my back under my cape, rubbing digits together out of sight.

Smoothly the ships eased into position, the attentive in the center of this diagonal line of ships. We were the newest additions to the fleet, but unlike the Mercenaries and requisitioned two traders bringing up the rear, our crew were all Admiralty trained.

The enemy fleet was not as orderly. Though their jaws were probably salivating in anticipation of finally ending their long chase in this confrontation, their lead elements had smartly turned around to regroup with their trailing slower ships. This made their 'Fleet' a mess of sails and masts were converging in a scattered kind of chaos.

But as things were at sea, we were still a long way from clashing together, they could see us coming and would have time organize.

All-together I counted about 30 sails in their number. Though many of these were of a smaller variety of ships. It looked like they had about 5 Galleons, former cargo-ships as heavy and large as our battleships, 10 frigates of similar class to ours and the rest were smaller more nimble craft.

Normally smaller ships would be of little concern, but armed with the thunder-weapons they might prove to be a major nuisance in a large engagement.

Our fleet of 15 ships, shiny as it was, seemed not quite as invulnerable against those odds. But the Admiral was gambling on this decisive battle. Gambling the future of western trade and perhaps safety of western coast both.

Engagement

The battle is about to start, the signal orders are coming in rapidly from the flag-ship as the enemy force lines up their broadsides toward us in preparation to fire.

“Signal from Flagship: Attentive, target stern, keep momentum.” First-mate notifies me.

“Understood” I reply. I feel the tension growing, not only in me, but the rest of the crew. Combat ramming in open sea this far from any friendly port is a risky venture. We cannot afford any poor hits that might wedge us stuck or do undue damage to our hull.

Speed is another factor, we have to maintain it at any cost and not get bogged down. We have solid good winds today, but have to be careful with the maneuvers.

The arrayed enemy fleet is seemingly unafraid of our ramming bows. They have formed two lines, one behind the other, in anticipation for our breakthrough to be able to fire upon us from both sides no doubt.

The sudden echoing thunder of fire soon reach us, the lead ship of the formation is in range and taking fire already. Soon so is the second ship, the Flag-ship itself. Not before long its our turn as the entire wall of ship ahead of us spew fire and smoke and send their projectiles whistling through the air.

TWANG, SPLASH. Their only target is our massive armored bow which seems to deflect a shot. Another splashes into the sea off our side.

More fire thunders.

CLANG, CRASH, SPLASH. Another hit to the bow and one shot goes high, tearing a circular hole through sails and snapping pieces of the rigging, narrowly missing a sailor in the sails.

Ever more fire, a constant thunder now from all over as the pirate fleet are firing their armaments all across the line at our approach.

A shot whistles past, another one splashes sea-water high enough to reach us. A third seems to graze our side hull with a tearing sound.

Then they're turning their ship to port to point their bow toward us to guard their sides as we head straight for them.

“Signal from Flagship: All fleet to port, 45 degrees!” My officer calls.

“Port 45 degrees!”.

As one the whole fleet turns left, no longer heading straight for their target ship, but the one left of it. This was the Admirals plan as far as she had let us know beforehand. A clever strategy and one seemingly the enemy did not anticipate to such an organized degree.

The enemy ships try to veer away as they realize their foes they were trying to out-maneuver was not aiming for them at all, another ship was. In some cases, like ours, the ship we were aiming for is now heading straight for our right side. But they lack the equipped ship and resolve for ramming and are turning desperately, straight into the path of our flanking partner.

We smash a glancing hit at the rear of our target. A little too glancing for my taste, but its a loud satisfying 'CRACK' all the same as our ships pass each-other.

Their crew are scrambling, a mix of Gators and some Gryphs. But we're past before they can fire into our side, having not anticipated a close pass on this side.

Our previous target, now the victim of our flanking partner was less lucky. They teeter and groan from a devastating impact that shears off part of the stern. They wont be sailing anywhere anymore.

“Signal from Flagship: All fleet with speed, turn starboard for another pass. Target small-craft.”

“Understood.” From here on out, it would be mostly up to every captain.

The chaos of battle is unleashed. Our preplanned formation is already breaking apart, but that much had been expected.

The constant din of thunder from the powerful enemy thunder-weapons echo across the sea and smoke is starting to thicken the air. Our initial charge seem to have incapacitated a few of the enemy frigates, I can see one of the smaller crafts floundering in the water. In the distance I spy our lead battleship locked in boarding action with one of the enemy galleons, pitched hand to hand combat taking place.

Out starboard turn has given full find to our sails, the Admiral had planned this maneuver well and we quickly pick up lost speed as we turn back to the enemy scattering battle-line.

A damaged frigate lays right ahead, low on speed and an easy target for another glancing blow. Beyond it though, a smaller more nimble ship harrying an Awe-Frigate with flanking shots of its two broadside Thunder-weapons. If I want to catch the smaller ship I have to maintain speed.

Hit the Frigate

Go for the smaller craft.

Frigate:

“Ramming maneuver! Frigate right ahead of us!” I order the crew loudly, to prepare them.

Our ship homes in on the target. They see us coming but we have higher speed and the impact is inevitable.

A shout of warning suddenly alerts me to another enemy small-craft suddenly having an angle of fire on us. Their weapons flash and I manage to raise my wing-guard in time to deflect shrapnel of wood as a projectile slams into the side of our deck and explodes the wood into fragments.

Some other crew are not as fast and collapse onto the deck with pained whines.

But there's no time to focus on that. Moments later we smash the stern of the frigate hard with a jolting groaning impact through the whole ship. Our weight and momentum trashes the rear of their ship so much that we nearly go through it. Luckily we do not get stuck and scrape past them. We pass close enough that I can clearly see onto their deck and who I think is their Gator captain angrily bellows what must be obscenities. They're as good as dead in the water now and probably taking on a mighty leak.

They seem unable to turn as we pass, but we still come enough into their firing arch for them to punish us for our move.

A powerful shot from seeming point-blank range explodes through the side of our ship into the interior compartments, causing untold havoc in there. But one shot is all they manage to fire, other weapons either incapacitated or reloading.

Small craft:

“Past the Frigate, go for the Carrack!”

The smaller ships are the most pesky to deal with considering their speed and maneuverability. They may fit less of the weapons on their deck, but they're able to put get in better position to fire.

'The Attentive' homes in on the target. We go past the damaged frigate, past its rear and they no doubt sigh a breath of relief.

We don't go without punishment for our pass, the frigate fires a broadside at near point-blank and 2 shots explode through the side of our ship into the interior compartments, causing havoc below deck.

Or forward and Rear ballistae return fire. Their firepower are pathetic in comparison to the thunder-weapons and wont be able to damage the frigate itself. But thats not who the crews are aiming for.

The Carrack sees us coming as we emerge from behind the Frigate. It slowly turns to try to avoid us, but we are maintaining speed and cut it off. Nyxie is spinning the wheel rapidly turn the into the smaller crafts side.

'CRACK', the ship shudders from impact, hull groaning. But the brunt of it was no doubt felt by the smaller sailing ship. They reel, are pushed aside and spin across our bow. The hit was a glancing one and they look intact on first glance.

“There a big gap in their hull Captain!” My First-officer proclaims, peering closer as we pass them.

We are low on speed now, we've managed to damage two ships but taken a few hits in return. So far our ship is holding up well. I order us to steer us into some wind for more speed and watch as the sailors in the sail work hard to adjust, trim and make the most out of the wind we are getting.

A whistling shot flies past just above deck, making several heads dodge on instinct, including mine. Our maneuver to pick up speed have put us slightly in the open and the numerically superior enemies are everywhere, it seems wherever we go we'll be in the angle of fire of somebody.

'THUNK' goes our bow as a shot slams into it, quickly followed by a less promising 'SMACK' of a iron ball embedding itself into our side from somewhere.

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Another shot explodes into an Awe-Frigate ahead of us to our port who seem to have gotten themselves wedged into another enemy frigate in a less successful ram. They appear to be frantically working on dislodging themselves while fighting a backwards and forwards boarding action.

“See if they require assistance!” I motion swiftly, waving to our scout to fly over inquire about assistance as our ship approaches theirs. It seems to be 'The Resolute'.

The scout departs only to return after barely a moment, landing heavily and saluting.

“The Captain informs that unless we can somehow magically pry their ship loose we should focus on battle and try not to repeat their mistake, but they did add that if we could drop off some Raptorians that would speed things up.”

“Well, that was politely put.” I smirk.

“I was paraphrasing some needless language.” The scout announced curtly.

On our starboard another Awe-Frigate is angling to ram itself into another small-craft, though they are looking like they will miss.

We can try to assist the wedged Awe-frigate or go for ramming the small-craft from a sudden opposing angle to hem it in.

**Help wedged Awes.**

“Take us up along 'The Resolute', get me a squadron of Raptorians on deck and prepare them for boarding action!” I order loudly over the din of crashing wave and bellowing background thunder of our foes weapons.

For a moment I feel almost overwhelmed by everything going on around me, the noise, movement and action. So much being at stake! But its only the briefest of lapses of focus. A heavy shuddering impact and explosion of a direct hit on our ship is what jolts me back to focus and anger, my own snarling words calling out without having thought about it.

“Return fire on whoever hit us with that!”

The Ballistae crew who had been busy shooting at targets of opportunity turn their weapons and obey. Whether the orders will be particularly effectual or not does not matter.

Packmaster arrives to report his squad ready. 10 Raptorians should suffice to turn the battle into our allies favor and not leave us too understrength.

Our ship, 'Attentive' soon comes up alongside 'Resolute' and the Raptorians leap overboard. We do not pass close enough for for them to jump from ship to ship, that is too risky, but Raptorians are better swimmers then Awes and they should be able to climb aboard.

We veer away, having picked up speed again as the battle progresses. The other Awe-frigate to our starboard managed only a light glancing blow the small-craft and appear to be turning to finish the job, having captured the ship with ropes of boarding hooks in their pass. They should be able to neutralize it quickly but it will take more time.

**Go for small-craft**

“Turn us starboard, cut off the small-crafts escape!”

Our speed isn't great, but assisting the other Awe-Frigate, the 'Avalanche', should make short work of the Small-craft who is fast and nimble but haven't quite detected our sudden course change to come straight for the opposite side.

They are currently laying punishing fire upon 'Avalanche' as they approach, angling away from their charge and it seems increasingly clear that without our help it'll be a glancing hit at best.

They notice us too late, in panic turning their ship to prevent themselves from being skewered by our ramming-bow and thus putting themselves more in line for 'Avalanche'.

Its a sickening crunch of groaning and cracking wood as 'Avalanche' plows into their rear, almost entirely shattering the whole rear section of the ship apart. I see Crew-members of the enemy small-craft thrown overboard by the jolt of impact, some jumping voluntarily as now we come in from our own angle and add our own less impactfull but no less crunching touch of our armored bow to the side of their own.

Some crew of the 'Attentive' and 'Avalanche' cheer and hoot at one another as we pass one another. I spot the Captain of the 'Avalanche' touching her cap in my direction and I return the gesture.

The battle progresses around us, giving a stark reminder to crew as an enemy frigate lands a few close hits splashing water from an impact and then shuddering the hull under my feet with a hit to our rear. There's no damage to our rudder, but the shot has pierced several compartments below deck.

“Direct orders from Flagship, captain!” My First-Officer suddenly announces. “Assist Battleship 'Daring dive'!”

I turn my head to survey the rest of the battle. There were still the echo of thunder all over, but it seemed we were in the center of the fight, were there were the least concentration of enemy ships. Most of them seem to have scattered to surround our smaller force as best they can, Awe-ships at the edges of the slight encirclement are taking the worst of the brunt. The battle-ships most of all.

'Daring Dive' is locked in boarding with a galleon and surrounded by a frigate and a smaller craft who were leisurely bombarding it. Already it looked like smoke was rising from the Awe Battleship.

I immediately set course in their direction, even though it would take us through the firing arch of a few enemies.

“How is the Flagship itself doing?” I query my First-officer.

“They are spitting out one order after another, direct commands to several ships. They just reduced the sails of a frigate to splinters with those heavy ballistae of theirs.”

“How about the battle itself?”

“I count 10 destroyed or disabled pirates. No lost Awe-ships yet, though not for their lack of trying. 'Hard-Paw' is floundering and I cant see which ships they are due to smoke but we have two frigates on fire.”

A huge explosion in the distance thunders as one of the pirate ships, a big galleon, who had been on fire for some reason suddenly comes apart in an exploding ball of flames and debris. Our third battleship, 'Truth', who was sailing near it rocks heavily from the blast, sails nearly ripped from the masts entirely.

“Frightfully double-edged swords these thunder-weapons. They growl, they bite but they turn on their masters. We are winning, overwhelmingly so!”

“Its not over until its over!”

**Daring-Dive**

We come to the Battleships assistance, seeming to be the first Awe-Frigate on the scene. Though its not a great distance, it takes us several minutes close the distance. Well enough time for the enemy frigate to spot us and maneuver to intercept and put fire on us.

We cant turn to help 'Daring-Dive' against the Galleon without exposing our sides to the Frigate, so they have to be dealt with first. They appear to have taken some punishment from the heavy ballistae on our battleship. They are unable to hoist full sails as parts of the mast appears broken and dangling with flapping broken sail.

'THOOM'! Their weapons thunder at us. A shot comes whistling in, coming in over our armored bow and bouncing once on mid deck only to devastatingly plow straight into our rear castle upon which I'm standing. Debris from breaking wood clatter against my wing-guard and armor and sting me painfully in several places. Other shouts and injured cries of crew follow soon after.

'KFOOM'! Another shot comes in before I've even regained my composure. But it impacts the bow with a loud clattering clank and sound of shearing metal. It sounded like they sheared away part of the armor.

I'm unsure whether this Frigate is shooting something a lot more potent or they just have more skill.

“Keep course! Ready boarding hooks! We are not letting these ones go!” I bellow as I examine the devastation around me.

The shot hit just the edge of our platform, hard enough to leave a gaping hole all the way through out the back of our ship.

The injured are being taken below deck, but with holes like this being made I wonder if they're really much safer down there at all.

'BWOOM'. The Small-craft has turned to fire upon as well. This one using our focused charge on the Frigate to get an angle on our side.

Several small things whistle past in the air, some clattering the side of our ship, some rending small holes all through our sails. Its not until I a unlucky sailor from the sails falls from her post and dangles from her safety harness that I realize they're shooting something much more insidious. They've loaded their shot with tiny shrapnel or bullets and just spraying it in our direction. They cant destroy our ship with it, but they can tatter our sails and hit our crew.

“Captain! Orders!?” My First-mate has made the same realization. We may have drawn fire away from our battleship and relieved them of some pressure in their boarding battle with the Galleon. But now we're in a pinch between two dangerous opponents.

**Maintain course (Frigate)**

The Frigate represent a larger threat to our ship then the scatter-shot of the smaller craft.

I keep us on course, we should have enough speed to catch them.

'BWOOF!' Another blast of shrapnel come whistling in from the side as the Small-craft maintains pace alongside us, tearing holes in sails and injuring my crew.

“Reeking hot hells! Put some shielding cover up on starboard side and time their shots! If we cant find cover from their shots we have to make some!” I curse as I watch replacements rush out to take over posts of those fallen or injured.

'THOOM! CLONG-clack!' I watch a piece of our armored bow go careening off into the air from the force of the impact. The outer plating being sheered off.

'BWOOM-BDOOM' A second and a third shot follows. A spray of water off our side and whistling projectile leaves a circular hole in the sails without any further effect.

My Ballistae crews have prepared boarding hooks as per my previous orders and are holding fire and keeping their heads down. I wish they could have been as effective on return fire, but at these distances they can but hope for lucky hits.

**Change course ( Small-craft)**

The Scatter-shot of the smaller-craft represent a threat to crew and sails unlike the larger projectiles of the frigate.

A few more shots and they might tear our sails to tatters and effectively immobilizing us.

We turn our bow toward the smaller craft, giving them a harder target to waste their shrapnel at.

The enemy frigate is turning slowly to compensate for our sudden turn to keep us in their firing range. Our side is more exposed to their more powerful projectiles, but hopefully the last few shots were simply lucky.

'BWOOF'. The Small-craft ahead of us fires another shot and the armored bow rattles and clinks with a shower of tiny pieces of metal rain. Only a few pieces fly over high bow and hit the sails. Their weapon now seems highly ineffective against us, seems they cant aim it that much higher.

'BWOOM-KWOOM-BDOOM!' The frigate however fires next, with a salvo of three shots.

Its devastation as

# Escape from Nowhere (Event. 10%)

We cast off amid the reigning chaos, constant thunder echoes over the waters of the port. Enemies are everywhere and our allies are scattered and assailed from all sides as friends have turned to foes. The dark night is lit by scattered pillars of flame. Many from burning ships, Awe-ships, but parts of the port too. The last resort of an Awe-ship facing capture is to burn it and abandon ship and I'm sure the enemies would rather capture an Awe-ship then set it ablaze. So many desperate struggles, like our own, must be taking place all over.

The eyes of the crew are harried and frightened. The fleet has been overwhelmed, being destroyed as we speak. Awes are fighting for their lives and we are powerless to help them.

“We need to help rescue those trapped! We cant leave them!” A voice calls in frustration.

“No, we must flee while we can! We risk loosing everything, someone has to make it out!” Another argues back.

A whistling shot impacts into the side of our bow just behind the armor with a shuddering crack. Someone has a bead on us.

“What do we do captain!?”

Even if I could rally to some allies, how do I find them? The reinforced enemy fleet is tightening its noose around Port-Nowhere, soon escape will be impossible.

“Its the Daring-Dive! They are heading straight for them!” A voice calls from the masts and points northwestard.

There I spot the Battleship heading straight for a cluster of enemy ships, taking fire from many directions as they go.

They are not a fast ship, but it's solidly built and for a moment it seems like it will sail on straight through their midst and escape. But smoke soon rises from the Awe-ship and sails sag and flutter as the masts take damage.

Suddenly they turn and with deliberate certainty ram right into one of the larger enemy ships, a gator-built Galleon with plenty of oars cleave their way halfway through before coming to an halt, stuck.

Use the distraction to escape.

Search the edges of the port for Admiralty personnel.

“Take us along the southern district, we cannot leave yet!” I order sharply, leaving no trace of hesitation. The smart thing would be to flee, but if there are chances to get some Admiralty personnel out we must take it.

We sail along slowly with headwind, surveying the distant chaos.

A cluster of activity ahead on one of the fishing docks seem promising at first, but a sudden flash and THOOM reveal the presence of a small contingent of Pirates and a Thunder-weapon having set up.

Their shot impacts the side of our hull, but seem to be of a smaller caliber as the ship merely shudders lightly.

Our Ballistae return effective fire on the small exposed crew, forcing them to run for cover.

I glimpse more rowing bands of armored Gators in the city, rowing the streets and the occasional figure of wings are lit up the light of fires, Gryph fliers rowing the skies.

“Captain, as we come around the port, we might run into the hostile fleet circling around from the north!”

# Pelican - Vore (Flavor/content for Event. 80%)

I turn to a yelp from behind me and am surprised to see a sailor guard of mine beset by the large previously slumbering bird we had ignored.

It has nabbed her across the chest and waist in its large beak and gives her a worrying shake.

I frown at them, feeling more annoyance then concern. The pelican has neither sharp beak or claws to be of any major danger.

“Quit playing with the wildlife sailor and drive it off.” I snap at her in annoyance.

“Aye, aye Captain...! But... it's got quite a... Yaaah!” She's interrupted as the Pelican seems to engulf half her body into his beak-pouch and starts to shove and toss her down into it. Its clearly trying to make a meal out of my sailor. The stupid bird has probably never seen Awes or a sword. Its oblivious to the slicing threat one armed Awe possesses.

My sailor is not doing a good showing of herself however, blinding swinging her sword against a rock and loosing her grip of it.

“Are you TRYING to get eaten, Sailor? Because I've been feeling rather peckish all morning. You could just have asked me instead!” I approach the bird angrily to save my clumsy subordinate. By now only her tail stuck out from the pelicans beak, the pouch underneath it squirming and bucking with movement.

The pelican eyes me with leery suspicion and spreads its wings to make itself look larger and caution me away. I have half a mind to just let it have its meal, but I have a responsibility to the crew.

Before I know it, I am sliding down the tight and taut gullet of the Pelicans throat, a solid large round lump down its neck and then crammed down into its already full stomach. The squeaks and squirms of my fellow Awe push against me as we're both mushed up together tightly in the birds distended belly. I groan with frustration, anger and disbelief. How did this happen!

But no amount of incredulity will help me escape this predicament and what’s worse, I can clearly feel the bird wiggle itself comfortable, nestle its beak under its folded wings and settle down to digest its prize catch of the day.

# Nyxie sequence – Romance/Vore (Event 70%)

While in my cabin, bent over our charts and updating our course with Nyxie, I look up to find the navigational-Officer smiling at me shyly.

Something about her amicable smile is infectious and for a moment I quirk an amused quizzical smirk back at her. Role of Captain and subordinate temporarily set aside.

“What is it Nyxie?”

The Officer lets out a cheerful chirp as she replies.

“Oh, its just that I cant help but enjoy that concentrated look you get when you're focused, Captain.”

“Oh? Is there something funny about it?”

“No, nothing funny per say. But its more that person behind the captain shines through for a while.” Nyxie crooned a purr softly. I was not sure what amused her so, but her good humor always tended to rub off on others and did so now.

“Well, I'm glad I broke my poor un-captainlike habit of sticking out my tongue while focusing back in the academy.”

Nyxie chuckled at that mirthfully, before she exhaled loudly, as if deciding something, prompting me to look up at her.

“Would you like to spend some time in me, Captain?” Nyxie boldly broaches whats on her mind. Her fur bristles with visible nervousness as she asks.

“Excuse me? 'In' you?” I ask surprised.

“Yes! Inside of me, down here.” Nyxie placed a paw to her abdomen and patted herself gently. She was flushing, but pressing on. “For a little while. No deepening or dominance, just...us.”

“But... what brought this on all of a sudden?” I blink, unable to deny the slight flutter her proposal stirred. Or is it just flattery?

“Oh, Captain.” Nyxie shuffled her feet and took a gentle step closer. “Its just that I watch you be so stoic and strong for everyone all the time, so we can place our absolute trust in you.

But here, while you're pouring over our maps, counting distances with that look of vulnerable focus, I'm reminded you're just a Awe like the rest of us. And like any Awe, you must feel lonely and stressed too.”

Nyxie gently reached forward to place a paw on my shoulder. “I guess what I'm offering is to be someone you can place your trust into. Someone to carry you and your load a while.”

“I... Well.” I clear my throat briefly. “This is very considerate of you Nyxie. I...”

Accept (Pouch)

“I confess your pouch looks very inviting right about now.” I find myself casually admitting, turning to face her more.

Nyxie seems to beam at my agreement to her offer, letting out a cooing soft sound.

“Oh, delight! I was worried I was being too forward. But it seemed like the direct approach was the best approach with you.”

“Accurately observed Nyxie. Subtle signals would go right over my head.” I place a paw on her hip, looking down at the lip of her pouch. That flutter goes through me again, it was evidently more then just flattery.

I see Nyxies and others pouches every day, us Awes display them proudly. But now somehow, hers is different, its open to me and soon it will hold me tightly.

Nyxie slides a paw down to ease it open for me invitingly. She giggles softly and pecks my cheek with a brief nuzzle.

“There's that endearing focused face again, you look about ready to dive in already. So go ahead, dive.”

I needed no further prompting, charts and maps forgotten, I put my trust into my navigational officer and follow her recommended course. Paws slide into the stretching furred folds, then I'm engulfed in warm darkness as my snout and chest follows.

Nyxie is about my own size, but she wouldn't have suggested her pouch if she wasn't confident in her capacity. Still, its expectantly an awkward squeeze to push myself down into her. I can feel the sides of her pouch-walls stretch around me, they do so reluctantly and I hear an inevitable wince or two from Nyxie as parts of her lower abdomen and belly has to expand and make room for me.

But all through it all, there's the vibrating reassuring companionable purr. She is greatly enjoying the privilege of pouching her captain no doubt.

I relax and relinquish control of the situation to her, letting her steer me down into herself and it takes a little time for her body to adjust itself to me and let me down entirely. But the pouch expands, bulges and adjusts as determined Awes put its dormant capacity to use.

By the end there's a final few more squeezes and I feel her shoving down at my hindquarters and legs, folding me inside before closing the lip around me.

My snout is nestled deep in the depths of her pouch, resting against its bottom curved fold, encompassed in darkness and silken soft short fine fur.

My position with my back against her belly is a little awkward, but we both wait for the pouch to further loosen and for me to settle down against the now sagging bottom of the pouch before I'm spun around.

Soon, comfortable and nestled in, I close my eyes and let myself drift. Nyxies crooning cheerful background purr pull my thoughts away from any worries and responsibilities. I can feel her move, carrying me with her across the room and settle down. For now there is just rest and trust.

Accept (Belly)

“I think... filling your stomach sounds rather interesting!” I ventured with a quiet tone, looking down at her figure.

“Oh..!” Nyxie beamed and smiled nervously, putting a paw on her belly, following my gaze down before looking up again. “I confess I meant my pouch, but I certainly have little qualms about the thought of eating you!”

I could but return her sheepish smile and shuffle my feet bashfully. It had been a while since I placed my trust in anyone to this level. Letting someone eat you, was never risk-free. A stomach is for food and would treat you as such after a period of time, no matter the feelings involved with both parties.

But I felt comfortable with Nyxie. Comfortable enough that the idea of letting her consume me and place all of me in her offered trust was an attractive idea.

“I like you Nyxie.” I said and pressed myself close to her, paws gently stroking the sides of her belly and hips. “I would consider it a privilege to have you eat me.”

Nyxie chuckled merrily in reply.

“I'd never dare believe I'd hear those words out of you, Captain.” She licked her lips in a teasing way as she leaned forward against me. “But I cant say I didn't wish you would!” Her paws wrapped around my back in an embrace, locking eyes with mine.

“We're both adults, we know the risks of this kind of play.” She assured in a rather redundant but traditional check of consent.

“Of-course.” I replied.

“Well then, let me hear you say it one more time. I liked hearing it!” Am infectious mischievous grin spread on her face as she squeezed tighter.

“Please eat me, Nyxie.” I complied with a slight shudder. Nyxie, for all her gentle playfulness had quite a bit of a dominant side to her, no matter what she claimed. I submitted to it.

Nyxies eyes twinkled and she yawned wide before of my snout. She paused to give me an ample view of her gape, noting that she had a fine healthy row of teeth and a speckled pattern on her palate before her paw pushed at the back of my head and shoved me against her tongue and gullet.

I was unable to resist letting out a soft moan as she swallowed briskly, pulling my snout down over the back of the tongue and into tight and moist gullet. She paused there a while, before I realized I was being quite tense and relaxed into it, letting her consume me.

She swallowed down my entire head in short succession before I felt her paws run along my body, undoing my uniform which we in our haste had forgotten about.

It clattered to the floor, cape, vest and pauldrons and then she heaved me inward, consuming me in earnest.

The dark pulsing passage of her undulating throat led me down into her body. I felt the slight pinch and gently bite of her teeth and mouth as her jaws stretched and occasionally bit down on my body to hold me steady in between gulps.

It had been a long time since I had been swallowed by someone. No one had bested me in combat to earn it and none like Nyxie had come along to earn my consent since before my navy days either.

She was a gentle enough consumer, taking her time to let her body encompass mine. But no matter how gentle she'd try to be, it was an unavoidably slightly uncomfortable experience to be squashed down into her stomach.

With my arms pinned to my sides and my hindquarters raised off the ground, I had to first squeeze down the very cramped wet passage before my snout entered her stomach and pushed against its elastic walls to expand it as my body followed.

I let out a bit of a wince and involuntary squirming buck as the stomach enfolded me tightly and I felt her mouth slurp around my legs and feet. She purred at this, the very world around me vibrating softly. I could not blame her for taking a little pleasure out stomaching me. In fact, her purr reminded me that it was all alright. It was Nyxie who's belly I was filling.

Soon enough she gulped audibly around feet and I came to rest inside her stretched furred stomach.

One could never call a stomach spacious, as the stomach-walls wrapped around my form snugly. But there was a certain kind of comfort in laying so deep inside another Awe, at the core of her body. Warm, dark and noisy as it was inside.

I felt the pressure of her paw as she rubbed me over and then a rumbling wet 'gleeerk' as she belched proudly, I imagined it sounded different from outside.

I was in Nyxies belly now, a bulging round lump on her abdomen. Her stomach gave a soft gurgle as muscles shifted with her movements and kneaded in against me softly. I could imagine her take a seat by the charts and continuing her work, a very pleased infectious smile on her lips.

Digested or released by Nyxie

Time passed in its own pace down in Nyxies belly. The sounds of her body, the occasional glern and groan of the stomach surrounding me. It was strangely peaceful all things considered.

Even though my fur was soaked with wet fluids and some limbs of mine were uncomfortably squashed against my body with my tail asleep, I found I could just let time and thoughts drift away.

But its like from a deep dream that I feel myself being jostled around, shook and prodded. A muffled distant voice beckons for me come out of my deep reveries and back to reality. I'm in Nyxies stomach. Already the chamber is wrapped tighter then before, pressing in and rhythmically churning slightly.

“Alright Avolc, my captain. Its time.” She cooed softly, jostling me again.

It struck me quite firmly that she did not specifically say what it was time for. I felt a surge of affectionate bemusement toward that. She had left my options open for me on how to let my time come to an end.

Digest.

I suppose my hesitation is a telling sign enough of what direction I wish for our evening to proceed.

Turn down.