



A SINKING FEELING

THIS ADVENTURE IS DESIGNED FOR THREE TO SEVEN 4th- to 7th-level characters and is optimized for a group of five 5th-level characters. In this Iron Kingdoms adventure, set along the Broken Coast of Cygnar, players are brought into an adventure to resolve a hostage situation involving nobles from Cygnar's Royal Assembly.

Desperate pirates who had hoped for an easy score are trapped, having run into unexpected visitors to the island. The player characters are an unlikely team of mercenaries: convicts on their way to an island prison who are given a chance to earn their freedom by a calculating intelligence officer. Time is running out, though—the pirates threaten to kill the hostages if they don't get off the island. Complicating matters, the fighting has riled up some of the exotic game animals usually contained in the game preserve, and the spectral inhabitants of the island seem on edge.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Through spies in Mercir and Clockers Cove, Captain Mortaxus of the pirate ship *Resurrection* not only heard about the empty and largely unguarded estate on Raelthorne Island but also managed to secure the planned patrol routes for the Cygnaran Navy in the area for a month. His scheme was as simple as it was bold: slip in between the Navy ships, stage a lightning raid, and make off with as much treasure from the estate as his ship can carry. After taking on a few extra hands, he personally led a crew ashore ready for what he imagined to be the plunder of a lifetime. Unexpected resistance from a group of soldiers complicated matters, however, as did the *Resurrection* being chased away by a Cygnaran warship, the *HMS Dragonfish*. The pirates continued to Thornholme to find a small group of nobles from Cygnar's Royal Assembly debating a law, and the pirates have now taken them as hostages. A negotiator was dispatched to determine conditions of surrender but was given the ultimatum that until the pirates were delivered a ship, a noble would be killed every hour beginning at midnight—less than two hours away.

RAELTHORNE'S TREASURE

While Thornholme does not have the chests of gold and jewels that Mortaxus expected, it does have expensive fixtures, generations of the Raelthorne family heirlooms, portraits, fancy hunting rifles, and expensive silverware. There are also some small chests of crowns hidden throughout the house.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

"A Sinking Feeling" begins with the characters in chains on the *HMS Eye of Markus* bound for Bloodshore Island, a prison island, for crimes they may or may not have committed.

This adventure is divided into four chapters.

Chapter 1: Bound for Bloodshore. The characters are given little choice but to resolve a dangerous situation in exchange for their freedom.

Chapter 2: Shore Leave. The characters arrive on Raelthorne Island to find things are in bad shape—spirits are restless, and the roars of dangerous beasts can be heard.

Chapter 3: Den of Thieves. The characters must negotiate with Captain Mortaxus and his crew, who are desperate to get off the island. Will the cool heads prevail, or will they go in with guns blazing? Will they find common ground with the pirates? And how badly will the conniving nobles complicate matters?

Chapter 4: What the Tide Washes Away. The adventure concludes with the characters confronting Lt. Calvint, who may not be pleased by their choices. The lieutenant is not interested in excuses, and he is willing to sacrifice the characters to conceal his many missteps in handling this whole affair. If any pirates remain alive, Calvint will automatically be suspicious. But if the characters have played their cards right, they may have their very own ride.

ADVENTURE HOOK

This adventure is designed to give mainland characters a jumping-off point for adventures in the Scharde Islands and the Nightmare Empire. Chapter 1 establishes why a mixed party of mainlanders and Scharde characters could be driven to work together. Depending on their approach to resolving the conflicts throughout, they could also secure their place in the pirate crew of Captain Mortaxus on the *Resurrection* or even commandeer a Cygnaran naval vessel. The morally gray actions of the Cygnaran in charge, Lt. Burke Calvint, are meant to be a counterpoint to Cygnar's portrayal as the setting's "protagonist" nation by jailing the characters (potentially) unjustly, demanding they undertake a dangerous mission and, depending on the outcome, setting them up to take the fall for his choices—creating a plausible justification for characters without pirate backgrounds to hoist the black flag.

If the idea of the players starting as prisoners does not work, then have Lt. Calvint hire them from Mercir or from a passing ship. Player agency is important—it may be possible to establish trust and buy-in by asking them how it would be possible for their character to be accused of a serious crime, whether their character is guilty, and if they would be okay starting as a prisoner with the understanding that they are not sacrificing any belongings. If necessary, offer the reward of training in a skill or a tool to be chosen at the end of the adventure—after all, a ship's crewmembers need to earn their keep!

RAELTHORNE ISLAND

Perhaps the largest of the islands scattered along the Broken Coast, Raelthorne has long been the exclusive retreat of the Cygnaran monarchy. On the island's north side is a palatial stone manor built in the Mercarian style that looks out over the waves of the Gulf of Cygnar, while the rest of the island is home to manicured lawns, vibrant gardens, and rolling forests stocked with a variety of wild game, offering some of the best hunting in the nation.

However, recent generations have seen the island estate fall into neglect, and none of the kings of Cygnar since Vinter Raelthorne IV have used the place much. Vinter IV had

little patience for such pleasant diversions, and while Leto enjoyed fond memories of his childhood days spent there, opportunities for return were few and far between during his tumultuous rule and were darkened by the memory of his late wife. Julius, meanwhile, has been far too busy for extended vacations since the Claiming as he struggles to rebuild Cygnar to the prominence it once enjoyed.

Despite this, a skeleton crew of caretakers lives on the island year-round, maintaining the house and grounds in preparation for the day when the Cygnaran nobility return. In the past, these caretakers have laughed off the claims that the manor and grounds were haunted, but the longer Raelthorne Island sits empty and untenanted, the more the caretakers begin to warm to the idea that there may be something less tangible occupying the island.

RAELTHORNE ISLAND



DEEP HISTORY OF RAEELTHORNE ISLAND

If the idea that a sizable island sporting hundreds of acres of arable land and game-filled forests was merely waiting to be claimed by Cygnar and named for a recent line of monarchs seems odd...that is because it is an erasure of its inconvenient history. This island had been continuously inhabited for thousands of years, and evidence of its former inhabitants still exists despite efforts at its removal.

The original inhabitants of the island were Dhunian tribes of waverider trollkin. Their name for the island is lost, though some Immorese krielstones can be found that refer to an island called Lasdun or Skollasdun as an origin for trollshen who had married into mainland coastal kriels. Evidence points to them being fisherfolk and agrarians, with some piracy in later centuries. Occasional stones found on the island have trollkin-carved runic script but rarely anything beyond a single word or name due to the near-complete annihilation they suffered at the hands of the Tharn.

After the coming of Toruk to the Scharde Isles, piracy increased and was increasingly committed by crews of the undead. Islander Tharn were being displaced; they sought areas less subject to the Dragonfather's forces. Amid this, a large Tharn tuath found the island they would later call Moleg'Rathuan ("Rathua's Heart"). Lurking in the waves, they scouted the island's defenses before attacking the night of Calder's new moon. Within a few days, all the island's inhabitants had been slaughtered or had fled. Within a few years, most of their stonework and krielstones had been destroyed, defaced, or sunk below the waves. For centuries, this tuath resided on Moleg'Rathuan, raiding, hunting, and observing the rites of the Devourer Wurm.

The island was long known as one to steer clear of, but in late 517 AR, a Cygnaran Navy clipper was attacked by Tharn from the island and barely escaped. The recently crowned King Vinter Raelthorne II found it embarrassing that savages nearly took a naval vessel and was spurred by a Menite advisor to eradicate this threat. Seeing an opportunity to appease the church of the Lawgiver, Raelthorne assembled a military force the following spring to purge the island of threats. Over the course of three bloody weeks, most Tharn on the island were slaughtered or driven into the sea, though enough remained in hiding that late-night raids were an ongoing problem.

As a matter of religious observance and expedience, the king entreated the Church of the Lawgiver to "cleanse" the island of the Devourer's influence. In the summer of 518 AR, a group of Menite priests and devotees landed and, with the assistance of the Cygnaran military, burned nearly the entirety of the island to the ground, destroyed all shrines to the Devourer, and consecrated many places in the name of Menoth. A lighthouse was commissioned the following year.

As the lighthouse was under construction, it was noted that the once-barren island was regrowing its vegetation and was awash in natural beauty. Upon surveying the island for himself, King Vinter Raelthorne II officially named the island Raelthorne Island and, in 521 AR, began construction

here of a vacation home. Subsequent monarchs have added gardens, a stocked wildlife preserve for hunting, and various additions to make the island a more desirable destination for the royal family.

Despite each group of occupants' efforts to erase the presence of their predecessors, their marks are still present. Caves can still be found with paintings and small shrines to either Dhunia or the Devourer Wurm. Small stone menofixes atop piles of burnt stone are occasionally found in the woods, as well as strings of teeth on crumbling sinew cords or a smoothly rounded piece of stone that was once a bowl. Sometimes, however, specters of previous inhabitants make their presence known.

Most hauntings encountered on Raelthorne Island are either benevolent or a minor annoyance. Over the years, some have even been named and considered welcome guests or just a quirk of the island or manor. Examples include "the stew lady," a translucent apparition of an aged female trollkin occasionally seen in the kitchen peering into stewpots or examining the contents of the root cellar; Private Jensen, a spectral Cygnaran soldier who patrols the road on some nights; and "horn head," who appears as the shadow of a thin young woman with deer antlers on her head in or near the game preserve.

Over the years, there have been a few malevolent entities. These manifestations typically result in evacuation followed by contracting a group of specialists—often including a priest, an arcanist, or both—to handle the issue. So far, two staff members have perished due to these events, as have almost a dozen specialists. Dangerous haunts that have been cleansed included specters of trenchers who died fighting Tharn, Tharn warriors and shamans, and "Bloody Blue," the specter of a female trollkin with a hook for a hand who has found her way into folklore and is a recurring character in penny dreadfuls across Cygnar.

The island's lack of use in recent decades has allowed less powerful and more benign haunts to manifest, most barely visible and with little or no ability to affect the mortal world. The downside is that their presence is somewhat of an agitation to haunts of greater power, shades scratching at the veil in the void who can sense them. These entities who met their deaths on this island need only a little help to get through—a violent death or a bit of necromantic magic could provide that. Or perhaps all they need is the shedding of a little blood...



PART ONE: BOUND FOR BLOODSHORE

Captain Mortaxus of the pirate ship *Resurrection* has followed through on his plan to raid the unguarded Raelthorne Island. The Cygnaran Navy patrols were as expected, and he landed with dinghies on the beach with two dozen raiders ready to loot. Barely over the sea wall, they came under fire from Cygnaran commandos—an unexpected number of defenders. Though they dispatched the defenders easily, the commandos managed to fire signal flares before perishing. The navy responded, and Mortaxus' ship took flight... leaving the captain and his raiders trapped on the island. They came upon the estate occupied by a dozen vulnerable nobles debating some new law. Now, the pirates control that estate, have the nobles as hostages, and will kill one of them every hour starting at midnight. It's a stealthy race against the clock across a luxurious island full of gardens, tunnels, and history. The fighting has also stirred some of the island's spectral inhabitants.

This is where the characters are introduced. They find themselves in chains, prisoners on a Cygnaran Navy vessel destined for Bloodshore Island, a prison. How they arrived at this point isn't important—whether they are guilty or innocent, detained from a ship hauling contraband, or having endured a legal trial and sentenced to hard time, and whether the characters knew one another beforehand is all irrelevant. All that matters is that they are here now, and there is pressure on them to do what is asked of them.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Detained by the Cygnaran Navy, you are all in trouble. What the charges were doesn't really matter, but you're on a ship and have heard Bloodshore Prison mentioned as its destination. You've been stopped for half an hour, though, and briefly heard the gunwales of your prison ship scrape another vessel, knocking together with the waves. The hatch opens, and a man with lieutenant's bars and a Cygnaran Reconnaissance Service insignia climbs down.

"All right, you lot. Change of plans. We're anchored off Raelthorne Island, the king's empty vacation home. Problem

is, Scharde pirates decided to loot the place the one damn time it was being used. There are a dozen nobles there held hostage. Important folks. Royal Assembly. The negotiator I sent out says the pirates are asking for a ship and passage out, leaving half the hostages, then dropping off the rest later. Pretty sure that's a lie. So, we need an unorthodox engagement team to get in, get the hostages, and get out. We'll pay you and wipe the slate clean. Unless, of course, you just want to go on to Bloodshore. Takers?"

The man is Lt. Burke Calvint, a human male **CRS field officer** (of the Cygnaran Reconnaissance Service). As a CRS spy, he keeps an eye on the noble Lady Morna Talbot. Calvint arranged this "special committee retreat" hoping to get her to communicate with the Five Star Syndicate more frequently. He believes that Captain Mortaxus works for the Syndicate and that Talbot is behind this attack. From aboard HMS Lantern Bearer, he hailed the HMS Eye of Markus to commandeer troops for the operation, but after a discussion of the cargo—prisoners bound for Bloodshore Island—he hatched a new plan. Sending a group of convicts is less risky for him since he does not need to lead the team, and such an act professionally distances him from the consequences of failure should the convicts botch things. He's not interested in negotiating with the characters and will offer 100 gp each—an amount he notes that, along with their freedom, constitutes "a fresh start." He notes that the ship's captain has their gear, which will be returned to them once they agree. When they do, they are brought to the top deck and into the moonless night; soon, canvas bags of their gear, labeled with their names, are brought to them. As they don their gear, Calvint and a dozen grim-faced marines watch them.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Lt. Calvint points to a large island with an unlit lighthouse. "There it is—Raelthorne Island. From the beach there, a road goes straight north to Thornholme, the house. Big damn house. That's where they all are. I suggest you do your damnedest to bring all those important folk back out alive. They said they start shooting in just over an hour, and I suggest you convince them not to do that any way you know how. Make good on that, and I'll see you taken care of."

The characters are directed to a dinghy and lowered into the black waves of the Meridius.