

THE SUNKEN VAULT OF CORILE

THE QUEST FOR THE DEPTHSTONE

...The crew is asleep now, so I'll go check on the anchor beneath the news and see if I can solve the key's puzzle... the Sunken Vault.

As Lazitor, master and captain of the Rohazul put down his pen, he rose from his chair and exited his small, comfortable cabin. The air on the deck was cool and as he leaned over the bow of his caravel and sighed. The Depthstone. He had been searching for it his whole adult life and now, it was within his reach. He looked toward the east, at the sun, just now risen above the horizon. This would be the day. The day he had long sought. He would dock at Seafoam, unload his cargo, collect his pay and be back on the seas by nightfall; on his way to the legendary Coral Island, or Corile, as the seafarers had taken to calling it.

Well, time to go down and see if I can unravel that puzzle yet, he thought to himself as he turned and headed toward the chain locker.

At that moment, he heard a noise and turned to see a large Anguillian leaping out of the water and onto the deck of his ship! "Tell me where the Depthstone is!" he shouted in his awful Sahuagin dialect. But the captain couldn't speak, it seemed that he was suffocating. As his vision failed him, he heard several more Anguillians chanting. Something about the Blackwater curse... He coughed and the seawater that came out of his lungs confirmed his fear. As he passed out, he realized that it was possible to drown on the dry deck of his ship.

This adventure is written for a party of four characters between the levels of 3 and 5. While the initial encounter takes place in the floating ocean metropolis of Seafoam, it could just as easily be any other large coastal port. Given that most of this adventure takes place on the sea, it makes heavy use of the material presented in *Stormwrack*. DMs are encouraged to consult that manual, though all the requisite information is reprinted where necessary.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

While traveling over the seas in his merchant vessel, the Rohazul, captain Lazitor became enamored of the legends regarding the Depthstone; a powerful artifact said to have been used as one of the cornerstones of the Prime Material when it was first created. The legends tell that anyone who possesses the Depthstone would have complete control over the waters of the world. Dismissed by most as nothing more than legend, a few people believed it to have existed once, but to have been lost in the intervening eons. Lazitor thought differently and dedicated his adult life to researching the mystery and the legends of this great item.

He finally managed to discover that the Depthstone lay hidden in a vault, submerged beneath an island of coral and that the key was likewise hidden on an island called Shatterhull, a ship captain's suicide. Lazitor and his crew braved the dangers of Shatterhull island and recovered the key to the Sunken Vault. On his return to Seafoam, though, he was attacked by a band of Anguillians and his ship was converted into a weapon intended to sink the city. When the Anguillians who attacked him didn't find the key, they attacked the city and hoped to get it there, either by someone handing it to

them, or through the spreading of the Blackwater curse; a hex that causes men to drown on dry land.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

When the players get involved, the port is under attack and they notice that the Harbormaster, head of port security, is slinking away suspiciously. Once the port is secured, the PCs will need to find him and discover why he was running. When they catch him, he tells them the fate of the Rohazul.

On board the ship, the PCs discover the facts surrounding the Rohazul and its cargo and, if they pay attention, can solve Lazitor's clues regarding the key that he hid on the ship. However, with all of his other notes stolen, it is a pretty sure thing that the Anguillians are headed for Corile as well and will try to find the vault with or without the key. Knowing that, it is then a race for the prize before the evil Anguillians get it and take their vengeance on Seafoam.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The adventure begins when the players are caught up in the attack on the dock. From there, the players own curiosity or rage should get them involved. If those don't work, the DM could use some of the following ideas.

- Captain Lazitor is a relative of one of the PCs who, upon hearing that his ship was set alight and pointed for the dock, goes on board to investigate
- One of the players interested in the ancient myths could have been waiting for Lazitor to return to see what he knew about the Depthstone. When he never returns, the PC takes it on herself to find out the rest of the story.

RUNNING THE SUNKEN VAULT OF CORILE

This adventure is broken up into several parts. The first, the Prologue, is designed to get the characters interested and get the story moving. It could be substituted with any sequence of events that would get the players onboard the Rohazul. The second part, Aboard the Rohazul, gives the players a description of the problem, some treasure and most importantly, the key to the Sunken Vault. The other sections remain to be written.

PROLOGUE: GETTING STARTED

The next two sections are intended to introduce the characters to this story line. It is written as a Side Trek so that the DM could easily replace it with any other sequence that would result in the PCs arriving aboard the Rohazul.

ANGUILLIANS RAID THE DOCK

Encounter Level 6

SETUP

The encounter begins while the character is taking a nap under the noonday sun at the end of the dock in the city of Seafoam.

When the encounter begins and the character is woken up, read:

The sound of crashes and splintering wood awakens you from a deep sleep on the end of one of Seafoam's longer piers. Rubbing the sleep from your eyes, you see a strange sight. A small group of creatures, appearing as 6-foot long eels with hind legs and human-like arms ending in bony pincers, are shredding anything, and anyone, that gets in their way while they scream their awful dialect of Sahuagin.

If any of the PCs succeed on a Spot check (DC 11), they will notice the harbormaster slowly moving away down an alley. PCs should also be allowed a Knowledge (dungeoneering) check to identify the creatures as Anguillians.

4 Anguillians

hp 28 each (3d8+6 HD)

CR 5

Anguillian Captain

hp 35 (3d8+6 plus 1d10+2 HD)

CR 3

TACTICS

The Anguillian's tactics are really quite simple. They will make full attacks until they begin a round attached to their target. Once they begin draining blood, they will attempt a grapple and will try to pull the target into the water to drown it. During the fight, the Anguillians are screaming and yelling.

If any of the PCs understand Sahuagin, read:

One of the creatures is shouting as he wreaks havoc on the dock, "Give us the Depthstone or we will sink your city! This city stands in defiance of the Bitch Queen's authority over the ocean! You are mistaken if you think that your magic can protect you from the wrath of UMBERLEE! We bring the Blackair Curse in our wake and we come as the thunder, preceding the Great Storm! Behold: the Stormcall!"

And with that, all of the creatures begin to chant. Most of the words are obscure; but it doesn't sound good.

CONCLUSION

Once the PCs have driven off the Anguillian raiders, they find that other parts of the city have also been attacked; in fact, some few have fallen, the rafts have been cut loose and the city is literally drifting apart. If the PCs noticed the harbormaster, Nemerd slinking away from the site of the fight, they now see him running as fast as he can across one of the district bridges towards the shipyards.

The Anguillians are carrying the following in treasure: 100gp, a necklace with a small pendant made from dense coral depicting an eel wrapped around a drowning man (1900gp), a ring made of electrum and set with multi-colored pearls (500gp), and a blue *bag of tricks* (6,300).

<<TABLE 1-1: ANGUILLIAN LORE>>

Roll	Result
-------------	---------------

- | | |
|----|---|
| 12 | These creatures are Anguillians, Lawful Evil Abberations and reveals all properties of that type. |
| 17 | Anguillians are terribly strong creatures who use their large circular mouths to drain their opponent's blood |

<<END TABLE 1-1>>

<<SIDEBAR 1>>

BLUE BAG OF TRICKS

The Blue *Bag of Tricks* operates exactly as the Tan one except that the animals drawn may be any of the following:

D%	Result
-----------	---------------

- | | |
|--------|-----------------------|
| 00-20 | Large Water Elemental |
| 21-40 | Orca Whale |
| 41-60 | Sea Cat |
| 61-80 | Tojanda, Adult |
| 81-100 | Octopus, Giant |

<<END SIDEBAR>

INTERROGATING NEMERD

Encounter Level: 2

SETUP

Leaving the scene of the fight behind, the characters now attempt to track down the cowardly harbormaster. He has quite a lead on them (about 300ft.), but they can still catch him. During the chase, the PCs will need to succeed at a Spot check (DC 12) to keep him in sight as he turns corners and disappears into crowds. However, a short stop and a Gather Information check (DC 10) should reveal to the characters that one of the people he knocked over in his hurry overheard him mutter that he had to get to the shipyard's dry dock. If the PCs learn this and head directly there, then there is no need to keep track of the chase results; they will simply find him there.

Nemerd, Harbormaster, Fighter 2 CR 2

hp 17 (2d10-2); Str 13, Dex 10, Con 8, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 12; Jump +6, Swim +6; F/R/W +4/+1/+0;

TACTICS

This encounter is likely to run very differently from most. There are so many things that the players might come up with and try, suffice it to say that determining exactly *how* the PCs catch Nemerd is left to the DM's improvisational skills. He will try to throw them by running in circuitous routes, throwing hazards in their way and maybe hiding and hoping that they pass him by if he gets too tired.

DEVELOPMENT

Regardless of how Nemerd is caught, when they do finally stop him, he is quite willing to talk, though he hedges around the subject of the Depthstone saying only that he was afraid of the Anguillians and fled. Treat Nemerd as unfriendly for the purposes of NPC attitudes.

In the end, once the PCs have reduced Nemerd to 7 or fewer hit points, dealt more than 10 points of subdual damage, or altered his attitude to that of friendly, he will tell the PCs the truth.

If the PCs manage to get Nemerd to talk, read:

“All right, all right! I’ll tell ya! Early this mornin’, a ship was seen just outside o’ the ci’y’s break waters. It was smoking up a storm cloud and seemed to be makin’ direc’y fo’ the dock so we sent a couple o’ port wizards out to stop ‘er and t’ see what it was we were-a dealin’ wit’, Turns out we ne’er got a chance to investergate as them filthy Anguills attacked just then.

Long story short, when them filthy eelies jumpd out o’ the water and start screamin’ ‘bout the Depthstone and the Blackwater curse I puts two and two together, ya see. I figur’ they think that the Depthstone and that ship where some’ow connected so I headed back her’ so as to figure it out. Only, you started to chase me and as I didn’t want anyone else to learn ‘bout this, I just thought I’d try’n outrun yer. But since ya caught me, I guess you’re gonna wanna see the Rohazul now.”

He then leads them into a small row boat and shows them to the merchant vessel, the Rohazul.

CHAPTER 1: ABOARD THE ROHAZUL

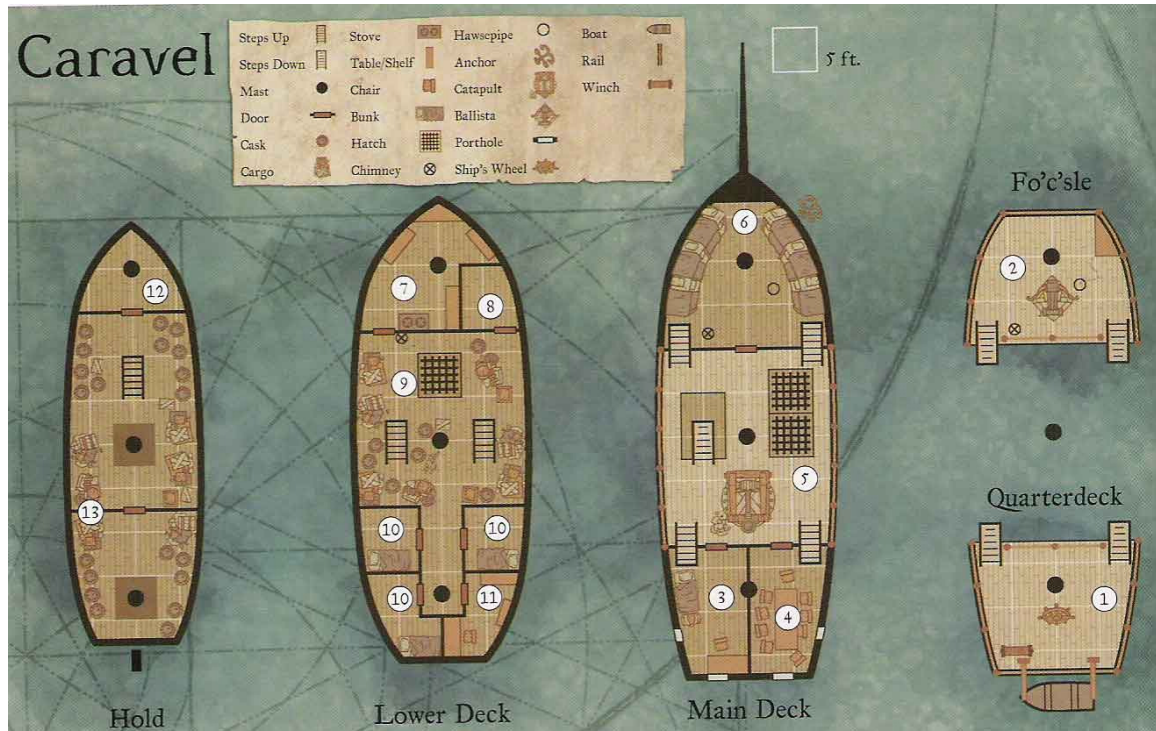
As Nemerd leads the players toward the ship in his small rowboat, read:

“We saw the ship as soon as we saw it pass the breakwaters. It was barreling towards the city at full mast. Our security wizards topped it and put the fire out, but whole front of the ship was alight, but none of our men have been aboard yet. We were assembling a search crew when the eelies attacked,” Nemerd explains.

As you approach, you see a black mist pouring over the rails of the ship and spreading outward from the place where it is magically moored. “That mist has been spreading further and further out from the ship all day.” The carcasses of dead fish float on the waves and a putrid smell of rotting sea-flesh fills the air.

“I knew her master you see,” the harbormaster says. “He was obsessed with the legends of the Depthstone and has spent the last several years searching for it. Before he set out for this merchant run, just to fund his explorations, Lazitor said he was getting close and thought he knew where it was, though he wouldn’t tell anybody; not even his crew.”

For the rest of this scene, refer to the map and key below. The characters climb aboard into area 5, the Main Deck.



AREA 1: THE QUARTERDECK

Encounter Level: 3

SETUP

There is a good chance that these zombies joined the fight on the main deck below (area 5). If so, then they are not here when the PCs arrive.

As the characters step onto the Quarterdeck, read:

The mist is much thinner here, appearing as a grey shade instead of black observed below. This portion of the ship seems to have been nearly unaffected by the fire in the front and the ship's wheel appears undamaged, the bodies of several Anguillians lie here along with their weapons, their blood forms slippery grayish pools around them. There are no bodies of the crew however.

A Spot check, DC 5, reveals that the helm has been tied here to keep the ship on its collision course for Seafoam.

2 Blackwater Zombies

hp: 16 (2d12+3 HD); **DR** 5/slashing

AREA 2: THE FO'C'SLE DECK

Encounter Level: 3

SETUP

As in Area 1: The Quarterdeck, above, if the zombies here participated in the fight on the main deck (area 5), then they are not here once the players arrive.

Once the Players step onto this deck, read:

As you step onto what is left of this deck, you notice a large hole in it around the mast where the fire burned through. The large ballista mounted here appears to have been fired, but it is now damaged beyond repair.

A Spot check, DC 10, will reveal that the anchor chain here has been disabled.

2 Blackwater Zombies

hp: 16 (2d12+3 HD); **DR** 5/slashing

AREA 3: THE MASTER'S CABIN

Encounter Level: none

SETUP

The Master's Cabin is pretty small, only 15'x10', but is still the largest and most comfortable room on the ship. This encounter hinges on the PCs finding Lazitor's journal, which the Anguillians missed as they ransacked the room.

As the PCs step into this small cabin, read:

Stepping into the 'spacious' master cabin, you are instantly struck by the severe disarray it is in. It appears that this room was ripped apart. The bed is overturned and the small writing desk has been turned out and reduced to splinters. Papers and personal items litter the floor while a single candle still burns in front of a small, shattered grooming mirror.

If the PCs search the room, DC 15, they will find a tiny, pocket-sized journal. It is locked but the lock is weak (Open Lock DC 15, or Strength check DC 10, to break). A quick read soon reveals Lazitor's obsession with the legends surrounding the Depthstone.

The final entry in the journal reads:

As we near Seafoam, and we'll be docked by morning, my heart races. The goods I have on board should be sufficient to fund my next journey. I will finally be able to head for Corile. Damn these crewmen though. I'd have gone immediately after my last expedition to Shatterhull island where I traced the key to the vault, except that they demanded extra pay for the extra danger. Cowards. Anyway, once I find the Sunken Vault, I'll possess the greatest power on the seas, and now that I have recovered the key, my success is inevitable. The crew has gone to bed now, so I'll go check on the anchor beneath the news and see if I can solve the key's puzzle... the Sunken Vault.

The key that Master Lazitor speaks of is hidden in a secret compartment in the ship's chain locker (area 8).

AREA 4: THE WARDROOM

Encounter Level: none

SETUP

The Wardroom, or general dining room, is in serious disarray, but there is nothing else here.

As the players enter this room, read:

This room, the wardroom, serves as the ship's main dining hall. It is small and could really only serve the Master, captain, and ranking crew of the ship. However, the table has been smashed and most of the chairs are broken to pieces. The remains of an untouched meal are scattered across the floor.

AREA 5: THE MAIN DECK

Encounter Level: varies

SETUP

The players climb aboard the ship onto this deck. There is evidence of a fight here as the bodies of Anguillians and the blood of humans have made a macabre ruin of the deck.

As the players climb aboard, read:

Nemerd may have been right. The carcasses of many slain Anguillians litter the main deck here and that black mist seems to rise out of the bowels of the ship, forming heavy drifts in the corners on this level. Strangely enough, while there are several Anguillian corpses to be seen here, there are no crewmembers and the ship is completely silent save for the creaking of the wood.

DMs should take note that this fight is likely to spread to other areas of the ship so while there may be many creatures involved, only the ones already on this deck are shown.

5 Blackwater Zombies

hp: 16 (2d12+3 HD); **DR** 5/slashing

TACTICS

Zombies are generally not smart enough to have complex tactics, however, these ones are at least smart enough to know that they can wait one round before entering combat, hoping to see who is most affected by their Drowning Aura. The zombies do not, as a rule, use the terrain to their advantage, but they will likely try to herd the PCs toward the rails or holes in the deck.

DEVELOPMENT

Since there are more zombies in several of the adjacent areas, namely areas 1, 2, 6, and area 9 below deck, each round the DM should make Listen checks (DC 8) for the zombies in each area. If those zombies hear the fight, they will begin to make their way onto the main deck.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

The Main Deck has the following features:

Weakened Hatches: The two hatches in area 5 have been affected to some level by the previous fire and are weakened. Any creature stepping onto one of those hatches directly falls through to area 9 below and suffers 1d6 points of falling damage. A creature moving into one of the squares partially occupied risks tripping onto the hatch (Reflex save DC 12) and suffering the same fate.

Catapult Shot: The shot for the catapult is located directly behind it and can be used as a thrown weapon with a -4 penalty that deals 1d8 points of bludgeoning damage and has a range increment of 5ft.

AREA 6: THE FORECASTLE

Encounter Level: 3

SETUP

The forecandle of the ship is where the crew sleeps in a dozen cramped bunks.

As the players enter this room, read:

This small bunkroom, measuring only 20'x20', houses 12 cramped bunks, most of which are destroyed. The center of this room has been burned out by the fire that took most of the front of the ship and now the mast simply protrudes through a gaping hole in the floor. However, the planks that form the outside of the room are still in tact, though barely navigable.

2 Blackwater Zombies

hp: 16 (2d12+2 HD); **DR** 5/slashing

FEATURES OF THIS AREA

This area contains the following features.

Narrow Floorspace: Any fight that breaks out here is likely to end up in the galley below due to the large hole in the floor. Any creature attempting more than a 5' step will need to succeed on a Balance check (DC 10) or fall to the deck below suffering 1d6 points of falling damage.

Treasure: Characters searching this room will find a dozen footlockers, all broken open, but otherwise left in tact. The total sum of valuables comes to: 4,800gp in coin, a polished brass mug with jade inlays (500gp), a gold and topaz bottle stopper (1,700gp), and a masterwork flute (100gp); total treasure value of 7,100gp.

AREA 7: GALLEY

Encounter Level: none

SETUP

The galley, or kitchen, is where the fire started that left the better portion of this ship damaged.

As the players enter this room, read:

The ship's galley is small and cramped; what's left of it anyway. All of the ship's extra cooking wood is piled around the mast (most of it is ash by now) and several smashed barrels of oil suggest that this is how they started the fire on the ship.

AREA 8: THE CHAIN LOCKER

Encounter Level: none

SETUP

This is where the anchor is stored when the ship is underway and it is also the hiding place of Lazitor's Key.

As the players enter this room, read:

The chain locker is a small room, not even 10' square where the chain for the anchor is rolled up when the ship is in motion. This room appears to be untouched by the fight, though there is some damage from the fire and much of the wall leading to the galley next door is missing.

Characters attempting to search this room find, after succeeding at a DC 15 Search check, a loose floorboard under the under the chain's winch. Under the floorboard is a small compartment with a stone box in it.

If the characters find the floorboard, read:

While searching the room, you notice floorboard that appears to be loose underneath the chain's winch. Looking more closely at it, you see that it has the word, 'NEWS' carved onto it.

OPENING LAZITOR'S BOX OF KEEPING

Anyone who finds this box will quickly discover that it has no seam, no lock, and no latch. A *detect magic* spell reveals both a faint Abjuration and Universal aura, but also the symbol shown below, a short puzzle ensuring that person opening the box knows both what is in it and what it is good for. Since the content of the box is the key, the answer to the clue should be read *North, East, West, and South* and the resulting phrase is, "what key am I." The answer, as found in Lazitor's journal is, "the Sunken Vault."

Inside the box, the players find a pendant. It hangs on a golden chain and is made of three consecutive circles that spin freely. The outer ring shows twelve phases of the moon, the second ring shows the sun, a cloud, a water drop, and the cloud with the moon, and the last, inner, ring simply shows twenty-four rays extending from the central sun.

<<SIDEBAR: BOX OF KEEPING>>

A *box of keeping* is a specially enchanted box that makes opening it without the right password extremely difficult. Essentially, it is a small box, usually made of steel or stone, but any other hard material can work that is enchanted with spells that serve as the lock and only when the correct activation word is spoken will the box open. Once it is open, the lock may be changed to anything the user wishes provided it meets the requirements of the *arcane mark* spell.

Stone Box of Keeping: 1 in. thick; hardness 8; hp 90; Break DC 45; Faint Abjuration and Universal; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *arcane lock*, *arcane mark*, *open/close*; Price 10,000gp.

<<END SIDEBAR>>



AREA 9: THE LOWER DECK

Encounter Level: 6

SETUP

The ship's lower deck is where the captain stored the cargo he was carrying, and hoping to sell once he returned to Seafoam, to fund his next expedition. There are more zombies down here and little else of value since most of the cargo was damaged in the Anguillian raid.

When the players enter this area, read:

The ship's lower deck is a real mess. It seems that of all the places that the Anguillians searched, they trashed this room the most. The hold, measuring 20'x20', is littered with the splintered remains of crates and barrels, their goods strewn across the floor.

4 Blackwater Zombies

hp: 16 (2d12+3 HD); **DR** 5/slashing

TACTICS

These zombies, assuming they didn't join the fight on the main deck, are still searching through the remains of the ship's cargo and attack the PCs on sight.

AREA 10: OFFICER'S CABINS

Encounter Level: none

SETUP

There is really nothing in these rooms. They are trashed and ruined and empty.

AREA 11: THE SHIP'S OFFICE

Encounter Level: none

SETUP

This room is where the captain kept all of his records on the journey. It is a mess, just like the rest of the ship, but observant players will notice (Spot check, DC 15) that all of the ship's logs and maps are missing. Those should have been the main items in here.

As the players enter this room, read:

This ship's office is in total disarray. All of the papers are thrown about and the navigational tools have been destroyed and lie in pieces scattered around the room.

AREA 12: THE SAIL LOCKER

Encounter Level: none

SETUP

Other than the fact that the extra sails are missing, probably used as kindling in the Galley fire, this room is completely empty. A hole in the ceiling indicates where that fire burned back into this room.

AREA 13: THE LOWER HOLD

Encounter Level: none

SETUP

There is nothing of real value here either. Most of the ship's stores of food and water were used up. The ship was only a couple of hours from port when it was attacked.

APPENDIX A: MONSTERS AND NPCS

Anguillian

CR 2

LE Medium Aberration (Aquatic)

Init: +6 **Senses:** Darkvision 90ft., Light Blindness; Listen +2, Spot +10

Languages: Sahuagin

AC: 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 28 (3d8+6 HD)

Fort: +6, **Ref:** +6, **Will:** +5

Weakness: Vulnerability to fire

Speed: 20ft. (4 squares), swim 40ft.

Melee 2 Pincer +4 (1d4+2) or

Melee spear +4 (1d8+3, x3) and

Melee Bite +2 (1d4+1)

Base Atk: +2 **Grp:** +4

Atk Options: Attach

Special Actions: Blood drain

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 6

SQ: Landwalking, Speak with eels

Feats: Improved Initiative, Multiattack

Skills: Hide +10 (+14 in coral, rock, or kelp), Listen +2, Spot +10, Survival +6, Swim +10

Attach (Ex): If an anguillian hits with its bite attack, it uses its powerful jaws to latch onto the opponent's body and automatically deals bite damage each round it remains attached. An attached anguillian loses its Dexterity bonus to AC and has an AC of 14.

An attached anguillian can be struck with a weapon or grappled itself. To remove an attached anguillian through grappling, the opponent must achieve a pin against the anguillian.

Blood Drain (Ex): An anguillian that begins its turn attached to an opponent bores into its opponent's body and begins to drain fluids. It deals 1d4 points of Constitution damage each round it remains attached.

Landwalking (Ex): Anguillians can survive out of water for 1 hour per 3 points of Constitution (after that, refer to the drowning rules on page 304 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Light Blindness (Ex): Abrupt exposure to bright light blinds anguillians for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled while operating in bright light.

Speak with Eels (Ex): Anguillians can communicate with eels and dire eels up to 150 feet away. The communication is limited to fairly simple concepts such as "food," "danger," and "enemy." Anguillians can use the Handle Animal skill to befriend and train eels, even if untrained.

Anguillian Captain

CR 3

As above except as below.

hp 35 (3d8+6 plus 1d10+2)

Fort:+8

Melee 2 Pincer +5 (1d4+2) or

Melee Spear +5 (1d8+3, x3) and

Melee Bite +3 (1d4+1)

Base Atk: +3 **Grp:** +5

Atk Options: Power Attack

Feats: Power Attack

Skills: Swim +12

Blackwater Zombie

CR 2

NE Medium Undead

Init: -1 **Senses:** Darkvision 60ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

Aura: Drowning Aura (30ft.)

Languages: None

AC: 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11 (-1 Dex, +2 natural)

hp: 16 (2d12+3 HD)

DR: 5/slashing

Fort: +0, **Ref:** -1, **Will:** +3

Speed: 30ft. (6 squares; can't run)

Melee +2 Slam (1d6+1) or

Melee +2 Club (1d6+1)

Space: 5ft. **Reach:** 5ft.

Base Atk: +1 **Grp:** +2

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 8, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1

SQ: Undead Traits, Single actions only.

Feats: Toughness

Skills: none

Drowning Aura (Su): A Blackwater Zombie gives off a 30-foot radius emanation of suffocating drowning, imbuing its surroundings with a watery glint and deadly threat for creatures that breathe. All breathing creatures within 30 feet of a blackwater zombie are treated as if beneath water in terms of being able to breathe. The drowning aura accelerates the process of drowning.

Normally, a creature can hold its breath for a number of rounds equal to twice its Constitution score before it begins to drown. Within the drowning aura, a creature can only hold its breath if it makes a DC 5 Constitution check every round. Each round, the DC increases by 1. When the character finally fails its Constitution check, it begins to drown. In the first round, it is staggered. In the next round, it falls unconscious (0 hit points). In the following round, it drops to -1 hit points and is dying. In the fourth round, if still in the drowning aura, it drowns.