

QUEEN of the RED CITY

by J.C. Connors

ABOUT THE ADVENTURE

Queen of the Red City is a *D&D 5E* adventure set in Robert E. Howard's Hyboria, although it can be adapted to other savage fantasy worlds and game systems (*GURPS* and *Dungeon Crawl Classics* versions are available on www.1shotadventures.com). The adventure sets the heroes ashore a primitive, tropical island far to the south of the Black Kingdoms, where they are seeking fortune, fame, and a kidnapped relative.

Queen of the Red City is suitable for four-to-six 8th level characters. The end of this adventure includes pregenerated character backgrounds to help run the adventure as a standalone one-shot. There's also a bonus corsair character meant to replace a hero who dies along the way...

Characters introduced for the first time in the adventure are noted in ALL-CAPS. Ability checks are in SMALL-CAPS. Sections marked with a map icon are side-quests and adventure hooks, and not important to the overall plot of the adventure. Sections marked with a person icon are opportunities for specific PCs.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Queen of the Red City is an open-ended sandbox adventure set on an unnamed island located a hundred miles southwest of the Black Kingdoms. The PCs are all crew of the *Green Serpent*, a corsair ship that has sailed from Zabhela, the dangerous and bustling free port in Kush. Their captain is the beautiful and dangerous MARALA, THE CORSAIR QUEEN, famed for being fair to her friends and murderous to her foes.

The unnamed isle's first recorded visit was ten years ago when the pirate captain JAL Z'THNGORA landed upon its shores. Some say he heard the island's location in a dream, others say he paid his left ear to a seer in Stygia so that she would tell him the location of the greatest treasure of the Southern Isles. Either way, Jal Z'thngora discovered the isle and settled on its beaches in the hopes of finding its treasures.

A year later, Jal's brother HINO sailed to the island to bring additional men and supplies. Though it was clear his brother Jal had been to this island, there was no sign of the men. More ominously, Jal's ship, the *Firedancer*, was found destroyed in the island's inlet. Lacking the courage of his brother, Hino left the isle and told all that his brother had died at the hands of savages there.

Recently, while drunk and sharing a bed, Hino whispered the story and location of the island to Marala, the Corsair Queen of the *Green Serpent*. After hearing the story, she and her corsairs set out for the treacherous island.

Marala's goals are twofold. First, she wishes to relieve her lover's guilt by returning with the story of how Jal Z'thngora met his end. Second, if there is any great treasure on the isle, she plans to haul it back to the port in Zabhela.

Some of the crew seek an additional goal on the island. Jal Z'thngora sailed to the island with seven captive Stygian women. One of the women, FARIDA, was the sister to one of the crew. The crew has rallied around the idea of helping their crew mate recover their sister from the savage island.

All of these objectives can be completed on this faraway, jungle isle... if the PCs can survive its savage dangers. The island is inhabited by monstrous creatures, primitive ape men, and the ghosts of Z'thngora's original crew. But at the center of the island is the Red City, an ancient Zhemri citadel that holds the legendary treasure many have sought.

1 A BAY OF SUNDERED BONES

The adventure begins as the *Green Serpent* enters the Bay of Sundered Bones, so named by Hino Z'thngora because the eastern beach of the inlet is scattered with broken, sun-bleached bones. He told Captain Marala that he believed the bones were that of his brother's crew, though did not have the stomach to sort through them. As the PCs enter the inlet, they see several additional points of interest:

- On the western shore, several small wooden structures are visible, along with a stakewall that half-surrounds the settlement. There is no sign of life in this area.
- Near the northern beach, a half-submerged sloop is visible. It is obviously the wreck of the *Firedancer*, Captain Z'thngora's ship.
- Large birds circle above the jungle to the southeast of the bay, likely indicating a kill of some kind. A DC 20 WISDOM (PERCEPTION) check observes that they are strange creatures, possessing the scaly bodies of lizards but the green feathered wings of a bird.

Otherwise, it is impossible to peer past the beach into the dense, green jungle of the island.

Z'thngora's Half-Fort

Ten years ago, Captain Jal Z'thngora led an expedition to this island. Rather than use their small ship as shelter during their expedition, they constructed five small, one-story structures near a waterfall that fed into island's central inlet. An incomplete stakewall half surrounds the abandoned settlement.

Captain Z'thngora and his crew was killed on the island, but his shelters, along with the mostly submerged wreckage of his ship, are visible on the island to any ship that sails into the inlet. Crews that have explored the island since the initial voyage have often made use of the shelters, and explorers will find scattered tools, crates, and other supplies in the "fort". A DC 10 WISDOM (INVESTIGATION) check enables PCs to find specific, ordinary supplies they might be looking for here. The only weapons that can be found are rusted shortwords, arrows, and spearheads, which can be fashioned into spears or javelins.


A DC 10 WISDOM (PERCEPTION) check discovers that the structures were built by professional carpenters, and that there's evidence that one of the buildings has been maintained recently. *DM's Note: This recent work was done by the hand of COLBA, one of Captain Z'thngora's original crew, who still roams the island. He quietly retreated into the jungle when he saw the PCs' ship arrive.*

FARIDA, THE GIRL WHO BECAME QUEEN

Farida was nineteen when she was captured in a raid a few miles south of black-walled Khemi. The Stygian woman had set out with six friends to buy rare cloth from the nomads who had set up a small bazaar on the southern beach to avoid taxes and oversight. Although Farida and her friends paid two strong men to protect them during the short journey, the men were easily chased off when they stumbled upon Jal Z'thngora and his crew camped on the beach.

Jal Z'thngora intended to sail to Kush to sell the women as slaves, but changed his mind when the waters were rougher than expected. Instead, he decided to sail directly to the unnamed isle, taking the women with him. Without the gold from their sale, Jal was unable to fully stock his ship. He notified his brother Hino to follow him with fresh men and supplies – a trip something that would take inexperienced Hino a year to accomplish.

Weeks after landing on the isle, during the chaos of the first Ape Man attack, Farida and her friend VITH escaped into the jungle. She stumbled upon the Red City and the savage cleaver-men who lived there. After killing their elder Zhemri shaman, KOIPUR, Farida declared herself queen and subjugated the men of the city into her service. Lusty for revenge on Jal Z'thngora, she ordered the cleaver-men to destroy the crew. Unfortunately, Z'thngora's boat was destroyed in the attack's aftermath, and she was unable to return home (see Z'thngora's Fate, page 14).

 To add additional motivation to the adventure, it's suggested that the DM make Farida a long-lost sister, cousin, or lover of one of the PCs. (In the pregenerated PCs, she is the sister of Zacova the Panther.)

If any of the PCs makes a DC 20 WISDOM (RELIGION) check, they'll get a feeling that the camp is unsafe. This is because it is still haunted by the spirits of the dead (see sidebar)!

The Stakewall

The 10-foot high stakewall is obviously unfinished. It surrounds only half the campsite. An investigation of the outside of the wall finds large, spear heads lodged into the wall. If the PCs think to enlarge the stakewall, it will be slow-going, taking a skilled five-man team about a day to expand the wall by one yard.

The Eastern Beach

This beach is covered by hundreds of bones, most cracked and sun-bleached. A DC 10 WISDOM (NATURE) check identifies that the bones are from large fish, apes, and boar. The bones are brought here in the fall by the man-apes of the eastern part of the island as offerings to their water god, Kelvor-Kaiman, and its children, the fleshripper crocodiles.

A search of this area finds a partially obscured trail near this beach. It leads to the east, towards ape territory.

The Wreck of the *Firedancer*

The *Firedancer* was once Captain Z'thngora's ship. The vessels is now half-submerged fifty yards from the northern shore of the inlet. The water surrounding the vessel is fairly shallow, only about 15-20 feet deep. A DC 10 PERCEPTION check, however, spots large tiger sharks in the area around the boat (see p.16 for shark statistics).

Rowing out the inlet discovers that the vessel is missing half of its hull. It looks like the ship was snapped in half, with no sign of its forward hull. Its masts are snapped off and gone, its structure bleached and worn where the sun hits it, and gray and rotting in the sections that are underneath the water. A DC 10 INVESTIGATION check finds the wreckage unusual and unsettling. It looks like the ship's hull was ripped apart by sharp rocks, but the island's calm inlet has no such dangers.

Climbing atop the wreckage finds nothing especially helpful unless the PCs are looking for common nautical supplies, such as belaying pins or some small lengths of rope. A DC 10 WISDOM (PERCEPTION) check observes that one of the *Firedancer's* holds look dry and intact, but gaining access requires swimming into the underwater hull of the ship.

A DC 10 DEXTERITY (ATHLETICS) check allows someone to dive through the wreckage and into the intact hold, although the sharks will certainly take an interest in anyone diving into their territory! A failure results in 1d6 slashing damage from the sharp and broken timbers from the broken hull. A roll of '1' might cause the diver to become stuck!

NIGHT AT THE HALF-FORT

The shades of Z'thngora's murdered crew emerge at night, and they fiercely hate any living beings that were not once part of their crew. Shortly after midnight, the shades materialize around the settlement (between one and two per PC) and converge on those that rest inside the fort's structures.

The shades phase through the walls, then loom over their targets, taking the visage of a friend or loved one, then hideously transforming their face into something horrible. Once their prey is frightened, the shades materialize and try to rip their victim apart, all-out attacking like wild animals. While the shades can be attacked and even killed, their spirits will reform days later, as they are forever cursed to remain on this island while their captain still lives.

SHADES OF THE DEAD

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 85 (10d10+30)

Speed 30 ft., 60 ft. flying

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

Damage Resistances acid, bludgeoning, piercing, slashing from non-magical attacks

Damage Immunities fire, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses Darkvision 60', passive Perception 11

Languages Understands Common, can't speak

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Incorporeal Movement. The shade can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain.

Magic Resistance. The shade has advantage on saving throws against magic and magical effects.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 22 (4d8 + 4) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution save or its hp maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hp maximum to 0.



Once divers find their way through the wreckage, they'll emerge into the intact hold, its floor slanting towards the water. Inside the dim hold are several small sea chests. One still floats in the water and is filled with water-ruined clothes. The second contains well-crafted carpentry supplies, including an adze, a mallet, and a racing knife. A bag of 250 gp is also buried in this chest. The third chest contains rotting ship logs and journals. Any time spent with this material (at least an hour or two) discovers a description of the fate of some of Z'thngora's men (see [Handout A](#)).

Finally, hanging on the wall of the hold are two weapons, still in their scabbards. The first is a perfectly-balanced great-

MAP OF Z'THNGORA'S ISLE



- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Z'thngora's Half-fort | 6 Pirate Camp |
| 2 Colba's Skulls | 7 Vith's Grave |
| 3 The Raptor Skink Nest | 8 Bask of Crocodiles |
| 4 Yag-Dagoth's Chain | 9 The Red City |
| 5 The Old Dwellings | |

Ape Territory – see p.13.

sword, the second a *balanced* shortsword with a ruby-steaded pommel (treat these as +1 weapons). Both are covered in corrosion from the proximity to the seawater and do not get their bonuses unless restored by a someone with time, tools, and skill.

ENTERING THE JUNGLE

Searching the beaches finds a trail off the eastern side of the beach. A similar path can be found near the stakewall, but this trail is recently maintained. It was made by Colba, one of the surviving members of Z'thngora's crew. Tracking Colba himself requires a DC 20 WISDOM (TRACKING) check.

The PCs should make a DC 15 WISDOM (SURVIVAL) check for each full day they spend in the jungle. On a failure, they suffer 1d4 damage from twisted ankles, heat stroke, bug bites, and other tropical maladies.

Sleeping in the jungle is difficult for those not used to it. Anyone who fails their Wisdom check above is unable to use any Inspiration they may have during the next day. PCs do not have to make saves after three nights.

2 COLBA'S SKULLS

In a clearing in the jungle is a large, dead acacia tree. Hanging from its branches tree are six, man-sized crocodile skulls, each with a distinct, knobby overbite. The skulls are bone white and hang from the tree with a primitive fiber rope.

A DC 20 WISDOM (NATURE) check identifies that the skulls are from "fleshrippers," crocodilian monstrosities that can reach up to 40 feet in length and weigh up to ten tons. An DC 15 INTELLIGENCE (RELIGION) check recalls stories that the reptiles are the children of Kelvor-Kaiman, a minor god of the Black Coast.

If the PCs search near the tree, they'll find some recently-cut branches – suitable for spears – as well as razor sharp, obsidian rocks made to knap spear tips. Martial classes with a couple of hours can fashion a few obsidian-tipped spears. Treat these as *highly-breakable* spears doing +1 damage.

The skulls are the trophies of Colba, the last-surviving crewman from the *Firedancer*. Colba mistakenly believes these rare creatures – a few of which still roam the island – were the young of the horrible god-thing that he saw devour the *Firedancer*.

Colba uses this location as a camp when he sees that the *Green Serpent* has landed at Z'thngora's fort. While he is cunning and knows the island well, he can be taken by surprise here if the PCs are stealthy, or set up an ambush. Similarly, a DC 20 WISDOM (TRACKING) check can find his trail and find him in the jungle.

Colba hasn't seen men in years. He has seen horrible things and suffered from many bouts of jungle fever. One of his arms is shredded (bitten off by a fleshripper crocodile), and infected, emitting a putrid smell. While he was content to watch the PCs from afar, he will be hesitantly friendly if parleyed with.

On a neutral reaction or better, Colba tells the story of Z'thngora's fate (p.14), although he believes Captain Z'thngora died in the attack. However, he admits he has seen his old captain in his dreams, "...reeking rot and restless for vengeance against the queen who slew him."

He also does not know that it was Farida who became Queen of the Red City. He simply describes the final attack by the cleaver-men as led by a "shapely, black-haired queen in an Atlantean helm."

If prompted, Colba will also fearfully describe the destruction of the *Firedancer*, saying that a "restless harbinger of the deep gods – something born of ancient violence and bloodshed – whose only desire was the thundering demise of our ship." Though he does not know its name, he speaks of the great serpent Yag Dagotha, who he saw attack and destroy his ship.

Colba will respond well to any treatment of his maladies. On a Good reaction or better:

- Colba will sketch out what he knows of the island (see [Handout B](#)). Colba will agree to guide the PCs to some locations, but will not go near the Red City or Ape Territory, which he describes as "occupied by wild tribes of man-apes, who hate, lust, and make mockery of civilized men."
- Colba will agree to return with the PCs on the *Green Serpent*. He will not, however, go anywhere near the ship until they have departed the inlet. He still dreads the creature that destroyed the *Firedancer* and believes that it is inevitable that it will destroy the *Green Serpent*.
- If asked about the pirates on the northwest tip of the island, he knows nothing of them.

NEST MOTHER

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 97 (13d8+39)

Speed 20 ft., 50 ft. flying



STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	17 (+3)	17 (+3)	2 (-5)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Resistances piercing

Damage Immunities fire, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages -

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Razor Plumage. At the start of each of its turns, the bird deals 5 (1d10) piercing damage to any creature grappling it.

Multitattack. The bird makes three melee attacks: one with its beak and two with its claws

Beak. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

A nest mother may try to drag a foe to its nest. On a hit with both claws, it attempts to lift its prey into the air; the subject may make a DC 16 Strength save to resist each turn and not be *restrained*. Otherwise, the nest mother flies away with its prey at Speed 40.

RAPTOR SKINK FLOCK

Medium swarm of small beasts, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 36 (8d6)

Speed 20 ft., 60 ft. flying

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	2 (-5)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Resistances piercing

Damage Immunities fire, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages -

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Flock. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a small bird. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the flock's space. Hit: 7 (2d6) piercing damage, or 3 (1d6) piercing damage if the flock has half of its hit points or fewer. The target must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

3 THE RAPTOR SKINK NEST

A trail twists through tall banyan trees in this part of the jungle. Wild howls and screeches are louder here than anywhere else on the island.


A DC 15 PERCEPTION check spots something shiny in the brush just off the path. A closer look discovers a weathered pot helm, seemingly undamaged but from the elements. Nearby, a curved rigging knife can be found... along with the mostly-rotted remnants of a leather boot.

High above this spot is the massive nest of a flock of raptor skinks, venomous birds with red feathered wings and bright blue-green scaled bodies. While most raptor skinks are only the size of hawks, the massive nest mother has a wingspan of 50 feet, and can awkwardly carry humans and ape-men up to its nest so that it can tear them to pieces for its young.

Climbing up to the nest requires a DC 10 DEXTERITY (ATHLETICS) check; the nest is 90 feet above the ground. Falling from that height would do 5d6 damage (lessened due to the soft mud of the jungle floor). The real danger is the raptor skinks themselves. Anything that comes within 15 feet of their nest draws the attention of the flock. At least five swarms of young raptors will swoop down and attack. If the disturbance lasts more than a few moments, the nest mother emerges to defend her nest (although she prefers to wait until her young's venom takes effect, then swooping down to pick up any paralyzed bodies to return as food for her young).

If the PCs make it up to the giant nest, which is 25 feet in diameter, they find the old remains of at least eight men – though it will take some effort to figure out the exact number. All that is left of the men are old bones and bits of metal and cloth that did not rot away in the humidity. Scrounging through the nest finds some items of value:

- A gold snake medallion worth at least 500 gp. A DC 15 INTELLIGENCE (HISTORY) check identifies its three-headed snake symbol as that of a noble house from the city of Khemi in Stygia. *DM's Note: This was owned by MAHTA, one of the Stygian women captured by Z'thngora, and a servant of the Khemi house. It was taken from her and worn by one of his pirates when he was killed by the raptor skinks.*
- Three more bronze pothelms, worth 25 gp each, alongside a rotted leather cap.
- A fine Aquilonian shortsword, still preserved in its well-oiled leather scabbard.
- A rusted and cheap cutlass.
- A boarding axe. Until its rotted wood handle is replaced, it will easily break.

- Scattered coins worth 300 gp.
- Hardened leather bracers (*Bracers of Defense*).
-  A woman's silver chain necklace, worth 200 gp. A DC 10 INTELLIGENCE (HISTORY) check reveals it as Stygian-made. Anyone who knew Farida would recognize this as hers, given to her by her father when she turned thirteen.

4 YAG DAGOTHA'S CHAIN

A heavy, rusted iron chain is fallen in the jungle through this area. Each link is the size of a horse head. Following the chain to the northwest finds that it is broken a hundred yards from the water. A few scattered, shattered links can be found buried in the sand not too far from the beach.

Following the chain to the east finds it attached to a huge, two-story anchor stone that juts from the jungle floor. The massive rock is made from polished agate, swirling in grays and blacks. The chain is fastened around the stone and hammered into place by ornate, iron pitons.

An examination of the anchor stone finds an inscription written on it. A DC 20 INTELLIGENCE (HISTORY) check identifies the language as *Zhemri*, a long-dead version of Zamoran. Anyone who knows Zamoran can make a DC 20 INTELLIGENCE check to identify a few basic words from the inscription:

Yag Dagotha
Immortal... Devil-Serpent... Cruel and Fitful

DM's Note: This mighty chain once held Yag Dagotha, the great demon serpent that was a bane to the nearby shipping lanes. Millennia ago, it was chained to this island by the Atlanteans and the ancient Zhemri, and freed by the shaman of the Red City Koipur upon his death at the hands of Farida, Queen of the Red City.

A DC 15 HISTORY check recalls vague, old stories of great serpents chained to rocks by the ancient cultures of Atlantis and Zhemri. The monsters are often referred to as *Yag Dagotha*.

5 THE OLD DWELLINGS

Against the sharp cliffs of the central island are primitive, mud buildings built up the side of scree slope. The structures are blackened with soot and old earth, and a few have dead vines that ominously envelop them. A DC 20 INTELLIGENCE (HISTORY) check identifies the abodes as those of ancient Zhemri, the ancestors of modern Zamora, and as old as the remnants of Atlantis.

Z'THNGORA'S VENGEANCE

His consciousness possessed and warped by the shaman Koipur, Z'thngora's motivations are those of two vile men. Koipur drives him to kill the Red Queen and re-ascend as leader of the Red City. Z'thngora himself wishes to escape the island. None of those goals were possible until the *Green Serpent* arrived.

As the PCs venture near the island's hills, Z'thngora takes notice of them. He will skulk and observe them for a few days (using his stealth and his ability to turn into air) and assess their motivations and abilities. If he thinks the PCs mean to kill the Red Queen, he lets that play out. If not, he tries to converse with the PCs, convincing them that he is indeed the long-lost captain, driven mad from the jungle's fevers for ten years. He will play up the evil of the Red Queen, saying that she is a sorceress who can charm men and conjure demon serpents from the deep, like the one that destroyed his ship. Similarly, he casts her clevermen guardians as sadistic brutes.

Z'thngora will not try to talk with the PCs if Colba is with them, who he fears will contradict his story, or recognize him as not himself. He may even try to lure Colba away to kill him before he approaches the PCs!

He fears the Red City and will not enter it. However, if Farida leaves the Red City, Z'thngora will absolutely attempt a desperate assassination of the Queen.

Captain Z'thngora makes his home here. The man, however, is now possessed by the insidious and vengeful spirit of a dead shaman – KOIPUR. (Koipur once led the Red City, but was slain by Farida when she declared herself queen... see p.14 for her story). The spirit possessed captain is too wily to be caught unawares here. If he detects anyone approaching, he will slip into the jungle and use his magic to spy upon them.

Most of the dozen or so deserted structures are empty, their valuables lost over a millennia ago when the Zhemri people came here to build the chain that would hold the demon serpent, Yag Dogotha. A few valuables and interesting findings remain amidst the old dwellings:

- A handful of iron ingots can be found hidden in the scree around the buildings. They require a DC 20 WISDOM (PERCEPTION) check to find. A DC 10 INTELLIGENCE (NATURE) check identifies this iron as the same iron from the great chain of Yag Dagotha.

- An unusual rock, similar to the agate that held Yag Dagotha's chain, is half-buried just outside one of the abodes. Looking carefully at the rock identifies it as a gravestone, and indeed, faint Atlantean markings can barely be seen etched on to its surface. If the grave is dug up, the PCs find the sarcophagus of a mighty Atlantean warrior. Inside the sarcophagus are the skeletal remains of the warrior, buried with an impressive mallet, crafted from an unusual and unidentifiable metal, along with his weapon, a Atlantean greatsword +2. A great saw-toothed fang can also be found embedded in the man's ribs, easily the size of a shortsword.
- One of the buildings is trapped, heavy rubble set over the door frame ready to crush whoever walks across the threshold. A DC 20 WISDOM (PERCEPTION) check identifies the simple tripwire mechanism. A failure does 8d6 damage to the hapless victim, and anyone within one yard of the door. Damage can be avoided with a great dodge; a DC 12 DEXTERITY saving throw will avoid damage.
- Inside the trapped building are some of Captain Jal Z'thngora's trappings, stored inside baskets stolen from the man-apes. One basket has dried meat, another has three skulls of the large-headed, cleaver-men, the third has a hundred or so Stygian coins and a fine dagger with his name etched on its blade.

6 THE PIRATE CAMP

Over a dozen pirates were stranded on this island after a failed mutiny aboard their ship, the *Swift Talon*. The men were dumped into the sea, but miraculously swept on to the beaches of Z'thngora's island. Led by a ruthless cutthroat named K'GARI TIBUR, the pirates have established a makeshift camp on the northwestern point of the island. They have not explored the interior of the island much, and have survived for a few weeks on fish and wild boar. They believe themselves to be the only inhabitants of this island (although K'Gari found a valuable Atlantean helm in the jungle, which leads him to believe there is more treasure to be found here).

The PCs may stumble upon their camp, or, as they get closer to it, one of the pirate hunting parties.

The pirates will be overjoyed to find out that the *Green Serpent* can help them escape the island. Many of the men will happily swear allegiance to a new captain, though they will keep the fact that they nearly murdered their previous captain as secret as possible. Instead, they will describe themselves as victims of a cruel captain, who threw them overboard rather than give them a share of their gold.

K'GARI TIBUR

Medium human, chaotic evil



Armor Class 16 (studded leather, shield)

Hit Points 112 (15d6+45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +7, Dex +5, Con +6

Skills Athletics +10, Intimidation +5

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Zamoran

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Bloodthirsty. The pirate has advantage on saving throws against being frightened. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when he hits with it (included below).

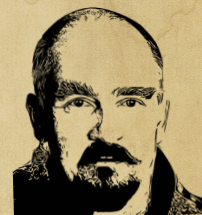
Multiattack. The pirate makes three melee attacks.

Barbed Spear. Melee Weapon Attack. +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Sand in Face. The pirate adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the pirate must see the attacker.

MUTINOUS PIRATES

Medium human, chaotic neutral



Armor Class 12 (leather)

Hit Points 36 (8d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+4)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +5, Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Zamoran

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Multiattack. The pirate makes two broadsword attacks and one knife attack (if drawn).

Broadsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Knife. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

K'gari Tibur has no desire to swear allegiance to another captain. Ambitious and bloodthirsty, he'll look for any opportunity to seize control of the *Green Serpent*. The DM can be flexible in how the PCs relationship with the pirates evolves. Some suggestions include:

- K'gari Tibur may order his men to try to capture or kill the PCs, hoping to track them back to their ship and conquer it.

- If K'gari feels outmatched, he'll pretend to swear allegiance to the crew, but look for an opportunity to assassinate Marala, the captain of the *Green Serpent*, and declare the ship as his own.
- If K'gari is dealt with swiftly, good social skills and role-playing can authentically convince the men of the *Swift Talon* to join up with the crew of the *Green Serpent*.
- If the PCs loiter too long with the pirates, the encounter will catch the attention of Z'thngora. Realizing that the pirates can be allies in his quest for revenge on Farida, the Queen of the Red City, he'll use his sorcery and wits to recruit K'gari and his men to his cause. He will strike with his men when he believes the time is right.

The Jungle Pox

If the PCs earn the trust of the pirates, one of the men, an old sailor named KLAY confides that two of their number caught a jungle pox that made blue boils appear on their bodies. The infected men died three days later, vomiting up worm-ridden. Klay believes that it is a curse sent on them by their ship's captain, who was thought to dabble in dark sorcery. It is up to the DM whether this is a tropical infection or a curse sent to kill the traitorous pirates.

If the malady *is* a contagious infection, anyone with open wounds near the pirates has a chance of catching the pox. 1d6 days after exposure, make a DC 15 CONSTITUTION save. On a failure, blue boils appear on the victim. They suffer disadvantage on all physical checks! Each day thereafter, the victim must make another CONSTITUTION save or suffer a severe fever which causes 1d8 necrotic damage. This continues until the roll is made and the victim recovers, or the victim perishes.

VITH'S GRAVE

Vith was the best friend of Farida, captured and kidnapped at the same time in Stygia she was by the Z'thngora's pirates. She managed to escape with Farida and made it to the Red City. It was Vith that overheard that the shaman Koipur was planning to sacrifice them to the Cleaver-men's god. Vith warned Farida, but was struck down by one of Koipur's spells before Farida slew the shaman.

Sorrowful for her friend's death, Farida's first act as Queen of the Red City was to order the cleaver-man to take her body to the cliffs overlooking the sunrise and to bury her there.

The grave is marked by a large Stygian-style statue of Vith, her arms outstretched towards the sea and Stygia. Without skilled artisans on the island, the cleaver-men did a poor job of capturing Vith's likeness, but the 10-foot statue is majestic nonetheless. Two banners are set on poles next to the statue,

each made from the tattered red sails of the *Firedancer*.

The base of the statue simply reads "Vith" in the Stygian script.

This place is protected by Ibis, the weak but omniscient Stygian god of knowledge, who took notice of Vith's sacrifice. The man-apes fear the place as unnatural and Jal Z'thngora suffers painful headaches when he is within sight of the grave.

Anyone sleeping in this vicinity will receive either receive strange, prophetic dreams (if they are unwounded), or terrifying images from the past, such as Vith's murder, the attack on the *Firedancer* by Yag Dagotha, or even the cruel pirate K'gari Tibur gasping for breath under the ocean's waves before being washed ashore. Those receiving an unsettling vision suffer from disadvantage on Wisdom checks that day.

BASK OF CROCODILES

Two points in the island mark the territory of the *sarcosuchus* "fleshripper" crocodiles – horrifying predators that are at twice the size of normal crocodiles.

The ape-men of the island believe that these creatures are the children of the god Kelvor-Kaiman. As such, they leave the creatures alone, though leave red meat to the creatures in the fall when the fleshrippers travel to the Bay of Sundered Bones for mating season.

FLESHRIPPER

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 110 (13d10+52)

Speed 30 ft. (50 ft. swimming)

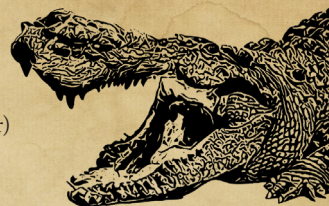
STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25 (+7)	10 (+0)	19 (+4)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Skills Perception +4

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages -

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)



Multiattack. The crocodile makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its tail. It cannot make both attacks against the same target.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 33 (4d12+6) slashing damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 17). Until the grapple ends, the target is *restrained*, and the fleshripper can't bite another target.

Tail Whip. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 20 (3d8 + 20) bludgeoning damage.

Typically, a bask of fleshrippers has only one or two creatures sunning themselves in the sand by the water. The creatures are fierce, however, and will lurch towards any prey they see or smell.

9 THE RED CITY

Eventually, the PCs' journey will take them to the Red City. The Red City is a fortified settlement built eons ago by the ancient Zhemri. Its walls are made from porous, blood-red volcanic rock, an unusual material that the Zhemri pulled from deep under the island's soil.

Before Jal Z'thngora's ship arrived to the island, the Red City was occupied by a single Zhemri shaman, a man named Koipur. Seemingly unaging, Koipur spent most of the last millenia deep in trance, only awakening a few times a year to give orders to the cleaver-men, misshapen, mute servants of the of the ancient Zhemri that originally built the city.

When Koipur was slain by Farida, the cleaver-men became utterly loyal to her. They now guard her city, keeping unwavering watch over the jungle for any that want to do their queen harm.

The Red City holds about two dozen oddly-angled buildings. Each building is made from soft, volcanic stone similar to the walls of city itself. The architecture of the city is exotic, with tall, irregular doorways, conical pillars, and pyramidal roofs. The red angles of the city are contrasted by smooth, weathered, gray statues that seem to depict the princes and laborers of old. A DC 20 INTELLIGENCE (HISTORY) check identifies the city as built by the Zhemri, ancient Zamorans.

The Red City borders a crescent-shaped chasm that plummets deep into the volcanic rock foundations of the island. It is possible to sneak into the city via the cliffside, but climbing across the sheer canyon walls and into the city would take about 10 minutes and require at least three DC 10 ATHLETICS checks. Failure indicates a horrific plunge into the canyon.

Otherwise, entrance into the Red City requires entering through one of its two gates. Both gates are eternally guarded by two cleaver-men, who do not seem to sleep or need much sustenance.

If the PCs approach the city in the open, they will be blocked entry by the cleaver-men, who mutely prevent the PCs from entering. Only if the PCs ask to speak to the Queen of the



Red City, or ask by Farida by name, will the cleaver-men escort the PCs into the city and towards the palace.

A. The Zhemri Palace

The Zhemri palace is located to the south of the main city square. A freshwater fountain in the square provides cool sustenance for any who enter the Red City. In fact, the cleaver-men will motion to the PCs to wash themselves well before being presented to the queen.

Audience with the Red Queen

The old Zhemri palace is lonely and abandoned. It lacks any kind of comforting decor. Dull-eyed statues stare at the PCs as they enter, though a few wear worn cloaks obviously made from the red sails of Z'thngora's old ship.

Cold and beautiful Farida lounges on a bronze throne in the largest hall of the palace. Two cleaver-men stand at her side, ready to die in her service. A bowl of fresh, half-eaten tropical fruit is at her side. She'll wear her Atlantean helm to shield her appearance from visitors; her razor sharp khopesh sword is on her lap.

Farida demands to know why the PCs have come to her city. She suspects them to be pirates, perhaps even friends of Z'thngora himself, so at first she shows them little respect or patience. While Farida would love to return to civilization, she has grown comfortable here, and has zero desire to subject herself to a pirate crew again.

Farida will only spare a few minutes with the PCs on a good reaction, or if she somehow recognizes one of the PCs from her old life (e.g., her brother, Zacova the Panther from the pregenerated characters).

- If asked about how she came to be Queen of the Red City, Farida will tell her tale, spending extra time to point out that as awful as Z'thngora was as a captive, the shaman Koipur planned much worse things for her. "Foolish Koipur never suspected a mere girl would slash his throat open with one of their great weapons," she boasts, as she points to her cleaver-men bodyguards.
- If asked about the massive cleaver-men guards, she shrugs. "They were here when I arrived. They seem ageless and emotionless, but they serve me with grace." A DC 15 INTELLIGENCE (ARCANA) check may provide the insight that these men have been experimented on by ancient Zhemri magic. Farida is hesitant to say how many cleaver-men exist in the city, but with good roleplaying, she may admit that there are about a dozen.
- Farida does not know what happened to Z'thngora or his ship. Last she saw, Z'thngora was badly wounded by her cleaver-men and disappeared into the jungle. She assumes he died of fever. "Sick and weak things do not last long here." While she heard that the *Firedancer* was destroyed by a sea devil, she never saw it with her own eyes, but admits it probably happened. "The walls of the Zhemri are filled with depictions of old terror-gods, walking and slithering both."
- If asked about the Z'thngora's treasure, Farida laughs and says that there are two locked vaults in the city. She has been unable to open either one in her ten years.

CLEAVER-MEN

Medium humanoid, lawful neutral

Armor Class 14 (studded leather)

Hit Points 112 (15d6+45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)

Damage Resistances piercing, slashing, bludgeoning

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Saving Throws Str +7, Dex +5, Con +6

Skills Athletics +5, Intimidation +5

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Understands Zamoran, cannot speak

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Stoic and Fierce. The cleaver man has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Multiattack. The cleaver-man makes three melee attacks.

Khopesh Sword. Melee Weapon Attack. +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (1d8 + 5) piercing damage.



- If asked about the man-apes, Farida simply explains that they stay far away from her. "The man-apes fight and bicker amongst themselves. They have no desire or reason to irritate me."
- Farida tells what she knows about any of the island's natural hazards, including the fleshripper crocodiles and the raptor skinks.
- On a very good reaction, Farida can be convinced to return with the PCs on the Green Serpent. However, she will want to meet their captain herself, and demands that they dine together. While Farida prefers meeting Captain Marala in the Red City, she may agree to meet on the Green Serpent or elsewhere. Regardless, this meeting may be an critical opportunity for Z'thngora to strike at Farida, or the pirate K'gari Tibur to try to assassinate Marala and take over the *Green Serpent*.

B. Barracks of the Cleaver-men

This large, plain structure is where the cleaver-men rest and eat, something they do not do very often. There are simple accommodations for a hundred cleaver-men, although today in the Red City, only fifteen remain. At any given point, four cleaver-men will be here; the others guard and serve Farida in the palace.

A small armoury in this building stores the weapons and armor of the long-fallen cleaver-men – falchions, collars, exotic Zhemri flails, and heavy throwing spears.

C. The Red Vault

This locked chamber holds the treasure of the Red City. A massive stone door, decorated with two-headed lions guards the vault.

The door can only be opened by speaking the Zhemri inscription on the back of Koipur's bronze, two-headed lion medallion, which the possessed Z'thngora recovered when Farida unceremoniously tossed the shaman's body into the Red City's chasm. Once the Zhemri phrase "Bagra Ghai" is spoken, the heavy doors open.

DM Note: While irrelevant to the adventure, a curious PC who speaks Zamoran can make a DC 20 INTELLIGENCE check to translate the Zhemri phrase "Bagra Ghai" as simply "Push".

Inside the vault is a magnificent, gold statue of a winged, two-headed lion. Its four eyes are made from yellow sapphires, each worth 4,000 gp. The heavy statue, easily the size of a cow, weighs over a ton. It would be worth over 100,000 gp – if it can be dragged back through the jungle and returned to civilization. PCs with appropriate backgrounds find enough material to build a clumsy construct a cart or wagon.

While this treasure is meaningless to Farida and her clever-men, the Red Queen will not allow it dragged from her city unless she herself plans to leave, or some other bargain is struck. For example, if she discovers that Z'thngora still lives, she will demand his death in exchange; or, if she knows about the pirate camp, she will ask the PCs remove them from the island.

D. The Vault of Prince Orynkus

This locked chamber was once the quarters of a Zhemri prince. It was locked and sealed upon his death in the quarries deep below the city. The vault is nearly impossible to open, resists magic, and would require an extraordinary lockpicking attempt to pull off. The key that opens the vault hangs on the neck of the man-ape chief Thoff, whose ancestors killed the Zhemri man who held the key as he fled the island eons ago.

Inside the vault is a chamber is both exotic and exquisite. The walls of covered in depictions of Zhemri princes and kings, their bright colors long-faded. A reed carpet covers the floor, now dry and brittle. Finally, a bed is the centerpiece of the room, and on the bed lies a dry skeleton, its skull missing entirely. It is impossible to tell whether this skeleton is that of the prince who once lived here, or perhaps a consort of his who was ceremonially executed upon his death.

The prince's golden khopesh is set above the bed, hanging on wooden pegs. Treat this as a fine, balanced khopesh +2. Made from an unusual golden metal, the weapon is especially dangerous to ghosts and other incorporeal creatures (treat as having the Ghost Weapon enhancement). DMs running magic-rich campaigns can add additional enchantments to the blade. A *Sword of Lifestealing* would be particular appropriate to a Zhemri prince.

CONCLUSION

The adventure concludes with the PCs leaving the island. With luck and skill, the PCs will depart with Farida and the island's treasures, having dispatched the possessed Z'thngora – and even the great serpent god Yag Dogotha. Of course, it's also possible that the PCs will be stranded on the island, their captain dead, their ship destroyed, and the man-apes surrounding them...

For completing the adventure, surviving PCs should receive the typical amount of XP, increased for great roleplaying and excellent performance (e.g., returning with Farida and some of the island's great treasures).

YAG DAGOETHA AWAKENS

Z'thngora's ancient, shamanic Zhemri medallion holds an ancient curse. When its wearer is slain, the dark magic of the island summons the serpent god Yag Dogotha to wreak vengeance upon the enemies of the island. As Z'thngora makes a desperate attempt to kill Farida and her allies, it's very likely Yag Dogotha will awaken once more. The creature rises up from the Bay of Sundered Bones and immediately attacks any vessels there, along with her defenders.

YAG DAGOETHA

Large abomination, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 152 (16d10+64)

Speed 40 ft., 80 ft. swimming

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	10 (+0)	19 (+4)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +8, Wis +5, Cha +7

Damage Immunities cold

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages -

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Boiling Waters. At the start of each of its turns, the monster deals 5 (1d10) fire damage to anyone in the water within 15 ft. of it.

Multiattack. Yag Dogotha makes three melee attacks: one with its bite and two with its tentacles

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (2d10+5) piercing damage plus 5 (1d10) cold damage.

Tentacle. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Unearthly Roar (Recharge 5-6). A deafening roar explodes outward, doing 55 (10d10) thunder damage to anyone within 30 ft. A DC 16 Constitution save will halve damage.



EXTENDING THE ADVENTURE

The Treachery of Vakk

While the man-apes of the island are currently at peace, old rivalries still burn. In particular, Vakk, the charismatic tribal leader who portrays himself as a weak and willing vassal of Thoff, is secretly planning an assassination. He has built a secret fort on the island just off the west coast of the island, and has hoarded Z'thngora's old weapons and armor and has trained a handful of his man-apes to wield them. With Aquilonian swords and chain armor, Vakk believes he can overthrow Thoff, kill his dumb rival Kulk, and become the unopposed chief of the man-apes on the island.

Still, Vakk has hesitated because he knows he only has one chance to kill Thoff. However, when the PCs show up on the island, he realizes that he might be able to get them to help.

If the PCs wander into ape territory, they will be first approached by Vakk and his minions. Vakk will use broken Zamoran (learned years ago when Z'thngora's men took him captive) to tell the PCs that his tribe will help them. He is somewhat sincere.

If Vakk can make peace with the PCs, he invites them to his private island, where he shows them his squad of armored man-apes. He offers the PCs a reward of their choosing if they agree to lead the man-apes to assassinate Thoff. This reward could be a skilled guide on the island, supplies, or even the key around Thoff's neck.

If the PCs pull off the attack on Thoff and his forces, Vakk will follow through with his promised reward. However, he'll soon grow threatened by the humans' presence on his island. Within a few days, man-apes will attempt to drive them off, first by raiding (which Vakk will blame on Thoff loyalists), then by cold-blooded assaults on any men still near the Bay of Sundered Bones.

Quarries of the Red City

While the Red City is abandoned but for its queen and her cleaver-men, she may mention that she knows of an underground section of the city that she ordered sealed. She explains that shortly after Koipur's death, unnatural *terrors* emerged to kill her and her men.

Farida believes that the tunnels lead to the quarries where the porous red rock of the city was taken from the earth. She also believes that the tunnels under the city was where a historic Zhemri prince was slain, a tragedy that may have led to the Zhemri abandoning the site. She volunteers to show the PCs a wall in the palace that shows the ancient Zhemri fighting

twisted, skin-and-bones creatures in such tunnels. Another carving shows a Zhemri prince, Orynkus, wielding a golden falchion and holding a mysterious glowing silver skull, becoming overwhelmed by the terrors.

While the existence of tunnels under the Red City is outside the scope of this adventure, DMs can design a "dungeon" that leads the PCs to the treasure of the fallen prince and his men.

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks hafizaprilio on Fiverr.com for his drawing of the Hyborian man-apes and Yag Dagotha. Thanks also to thispersondoesnotexist.com for helping create illustrations of the various human characters, www.myfreetextures.com for some textures used herein, and the fantastic watabou.itch.io/medieval-fantasy-city-generator for the generation of the Red City.

If you enjoyed this adventure, or ran it for a group, all the author asks is that you give a shout out and let me know how it went. Send a note to @SageThalcos on Twitter or post a comment on 1shotadventures.com

THE GREEN SERPENT

HP 150*

Movement: 4 mph

Constitution 12

Weight: 85 tons Crew: 20

Load: 60 tons Draft: 13 feet

* Resistant to piercing, bludgeoning, and slashing.

A fine single-masted cog, the *Green Serpent* has carried Captain Marala on many successful voyages. Only Captain Marala has quarters on this ship, a small, cramped room under the deck. The others sleep on the deck or in the cargo hold.

The pride of the *Green Serpent* is its single, 15-lb ballista, which was stolen from an Aquilonian vessel early in Marala's career (+6 to hit, 3d10 piercing damage, range 120/480, 2,000 lbs., requires 1 crew to fire - every other turn).



THE FATE OF Z'THNGORA

Captain Jal Z'thngora, his Khitan lieutenant Colba, and forty crew from the *Firedancer* spent four months on the isle. Three events led to their doom.

First, a few weeks after their arrival, a band of savage man-apes, led by a young warrior named KULK, attacked the settlement. Ten men were lost, and three of the slave women, including Farida, escaped into the jungle. Z'thngora ordered his men to begin building the stake wall in anticipation of another attack.

A month later, while exploring the jungle, Colba and a band of the pirates were attacked by a flock of young raptor skinks. While most of the men survived without serious injury, the venom overcame and paralyzed them and they collapsed in the jungle. The raptor skink nest mother claimed their bodies and carried them to her nest, food for her young. Only Colba escaped back to the half-fort.

At this point, Captain Z'thngora was giving serious thought to fleeing the island. He decided to make one last expedition towards the center of the island, in the hopes of finding the treasure of the Red City. By this time, Farida had become the city's queen, and she led the cleaver-men of the city to ambush Z'thngora. Only Z'thngora and Colba survived the attack. Both men escaped separately into the jungle.

Colba fled back to Z'thngora's fort, only to witness the monstrous YAG-DAGOTH, awakened by the blood spilled by the cleaver-men, coil itself around the Fire-dancer and split its hull in two. The sight shredded Colba's sanity, and he fled into the island's hills.

Z'thngora wandered the jungle for a week, lost and nursing a severed hand. While he escaped the wrath of Farida, his anguish and weakened attracted the spirit of KOIPUR, the elder shaman of the Cleaver-men, who was slain by Farida as she declared herself Queen of the Red City. The spirit possessed Z'thngora, turning him into a ghastly shell of the man he once was. After recovering Koipur's magical medallion, Z'thngora summoned the spirits of his dead crew to get revenge on Farida... but found them unable to move far from their graves and wreak the vengeance he wished.

Now, Z'thngora wanders the island, the consciousness of two men inside his skull, each overcome with rage and thoughts of revenge. His motivation is to kill Farida and escape the island, but until the PCs showed up at the island, he had no way to get close to Farida, and no way to escape the island. See p.7 for ways the DM can use Z'thngora as a foil for the PCs.

Z'THNGORA (POSSESSED)

Medium human, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 13 (leather)

Hit Points 59 (9d8+18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws: Dex +5, Int +6

Skills Arcane +6, Athletics +5, Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Zamoran, Stygian, Khitan

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Vengeful Fury. Z'thngora makes two melee attacks. Z'thngora's melee weapon attacks deal one extra die of its damage when he hits (included below).

Axe. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d8+3) piercing damage.

Long Knife. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (2d4+3) piercing damage.



Koipur's Two-headed Lion Medallion: Requires attunement. The medallion has 6 charges, and regains 1d3 expended charges each day at dawn. This amulet allows the user to use an action to cast Gaseous Form (3 charges), Dominate Beast (reptiles only; 2 charges), and Suggestion (beasts only; 1 charge). It can also summon ghosts, but Z'thngora has not mastered this ability; it is only known to the ancient Zhemri. A Zhemri inscription on the back of the medallion, "Bagra Ghai," will also open the Red Vault. The medallion has two limitations. One, if it is removed from the island, the Gaseous Form enchantment ceases to function. Two, if the wearer of the amulet is slain, the dark energy created awakens the monstrous serpent Yag Dagotha, who slumbers deep under the Bay of Sundered Bones.

Ritual Magic: In addition to his medallion, Z'thngora possesses some ritual magic abilities leftover from the shaman Koipur's knowledge. Treat him having the following spells: Cantrip (Mage Hand, Light); 1st level (4 slots): Mage Armor, Shield, Detect Magic; 2nd level (3 slots): Misty Step, Suggestion; 3rd level (3 slots): Counterspell; 4th level (3 slots): Confusion, Blight, Stoneskin; 5th level (1 slot); Insect Plague.

APE TERRITORY

About two hundred man-apes live in the southeastern part of the island. They were originally brought to the island as slaves for the ancient Zhemri, and helped build the Red City, but the man-apes have long forgotten that part of their history.

Now, three tribes compete for resources. The largest tribe is led by the man-ape THOFF, the strongest of the tribal leaders. The other tribes are led by the man-apes VAKK, who is charismatic but obsequious, and KULK, who is strong, bad tempered, and dumb. Both the tribes of Vakk and Kulk are much smaller than Thoff's tribe, numbering only a couple dozen man-apes.

Thoff beat the both smaller tribes in a great tribal war about five years ago. Now, he peacefully tolerates the other tribes' freedom of movement in Ape Territory as long as they bring him annual gifts of food and jewelry (usually looted from the remains of Z'thngora's crew). See *Extending the Adventure* for ways the DM can make use of the man-ape rivalries.

The man-apes are nosy but distractible. If they detect men coming into their territory, they quickly plan an ambush on the intruders, attempting to capture them, strip of them their valuables, and drag them before Thoff (even if Vakk or Kulk's tribe caught them). Thoff lives at the center of ape territory,

in a primitive but large hut built from trees and washed-up remains of the *Firedancer*.

Thoff is capricious, strong, and bright (Str 21, Int 13). He wears thousands of coins worth of jewelry, which he loves dearly. A DC 10 WISDOM (PERCEPTION) check spots that he wears a large, **bronze key** around his neck, clearly old from the encrustation of verdigris covering it. This key is the Key to the Red Vault, one of the locations in the Red City – a place that his ancestors helped build, and something that has been passed down from leader to leader for generations. Thoff has no knowledge of the vault, and he and his people fear the cleaver-men of the Red City, and its new queen.

Thoff, likely unable to communicate with humans, will quickly become bored with any kind of audience and order his man-apes to take the captives to the nearby bask of fleshripper crocodiles. Thoff believes that their god, Kelvor-Kaiman, appreciates such offerings to his children.

If the attempt basic communication (perhaps by gesturing), they may escape with their lives if they gift the leader generously, or promise to lead him to great wealth somewhere else on the island. Thoff is not a fool, however, and will not fall for an obvious ruse.

MAN-APES

Medium humanoid, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 112 (15d8+45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	9 (-1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +9, Perception +4

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Ape tongue; occasionally, broken Zamoran

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Multiattack. The man-ape makes two attacks, a club swipe and a bite.

Club. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (3d6+4) bludgeoning damage.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (1d8+4) bludgeoning damage.

Rock Throw. Ranged Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, range 50/100 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (3d6+4) bludgeoning damage.



NOTABLE NPCs

(AND ONE SHARK!)

QUEEN FARIDA

Medium human, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)
Hit Points 78 (12d8+45)
Speed 30 ft.



STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	15 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Int +6
Skills Athletics +5, Deception +3, Perception +3
Damage Resistances poison
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages Stygian, Zamoran
Challenge 6 (1,200 XP)

Combat Reflexes. During her first turn, Farida advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit she scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Evasion. If Farida is subjected to an effect that allows her to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, she instead takes no damage if she succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Multiattack. Farida makes four melee attacks.

Zhemri Khopesh +2. Melee Weapon Attack. +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage.

CAPTAIN MARALA

Medium human, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)
Hit Points 112 (15d6+45)
Speed 30 ft.



STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +6, Dex +6, Con +6
Skills Athletics +5, Intimidation +5
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Zamoran, Khitan
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Deadly Blows. Her melee weapons deal one extra die of damage when she hits (included below).

Multiattack. Marala makes three melee attacks.

Jeweled Longsword +1. Melee Weapon Attack. +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.

COLBA OF KHITAI

Medium human, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 13 (crocodile leather)
Hit Points 36 (8d6)
Speed 30 ft.



STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +5, Perception +2
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Zamoran
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Multiattack. Colba makes two one-handed spear attacks (he lost his left arm to a crocodile attack).

Obsidian-Tipped Spear. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Knife. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

TIGER SHARK

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 105 (11d10+44)
Speed 0 ft. (50 ft. swimming)



STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +3
Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages -
Challenge 4 (1,200 XP)

Bloodfrenzy. The shark has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 21 (3d10 + 5) piercing damage.

HANDOUTS

9 men lost today - all east of the bay. Colba was the only survivor. Said the men fell senseless on the dirt floor. We went back, but found no bodies, just blood flecked on the huge pale leaves. Colba blames the shrieking devil birds, but they are too small to have devoured the crew in mere hours. Morale is low, but our stakewall is nearly finished.

Handout A - Journal Entry Found in the *Firedancer*

HANDOUTS



Handout B - Colba's Island Sketch

PLAYER-SAFE MAP



You grew up in the great Stygian port city of Khemi. As a teen, you apprenticed under the carpenters building the third great statue of Set. But soon tragedy befell your family - your sister Farida was kidnapped outside the city and borne off by pirates.

You gave up carpentry to join the city's elite soldiers, hoping the position would give you the means to find Farida. Although the guard trained you well, you knew they had no means to help you. So you quit the military and signed on to the first corsair ship you saw. Ten years later, you've earned a reputation as one of the fiercest warriors of the Black Coast. Just a few months ago, you joined up with Captain Marala of the Green Serpent.

ZACOVA

"The Panther"



This is your fourth year sailing with Marala, the Corsair Queen, and captain of the Green Serpent. While you looked up to her at first, her devil-may-care attitude lately has grated on you. And then she almost got you and the whole crew killed when she refused to listen to you when you said you were camping in a ruin that still showed sign of life. You lost half the crew when serpent men attacked you in the middle of the night. Two of your best friends' lungs were liquified by their venom.

After that, the crew of the Serpent swore loyalty to you. But you resolved to give Marala one more chance before setting out on your own.

DACANA

First Officer of the Green Serpent



You were raised in the chaotic city of Shadizar. When you were thirteen, your father sold you to a man called Hazold. Hazold told your father he was going to train you as a priestess, but that story was just a cover for the gang of assassins he ran for petty nobles.

When you refused Hazold's demand to drown the new wife of a merchant, he attacked you. You thrust a spear through Hazold's belly and fled the city. To this day, you do not know if he died of his wounds. You fled to the nearest port city, where you were invited to join the crew of the Green Serpent as Captain Marala's bodyguard.

YEMGA

The Corsair Queen's Bodyguard



Three times you tried to steal the great Architect Stone from the Citrine Tower in Argos. Each time you were caught, beaten within an inch of your life, and thrown into the great dungeons of Messantia. The dungeons, however, were ill-made and filled with tunnels burrowed by large rats. It was no matter to escape.

However, the third time you escaped, you were disowned by your father, who then dropped dead from a seizure minutes later. Broke and realizing Argos had lost its appeal, you set out to work with the smugglers at the nearby port. From there, you were welcomed onboard the Green Serpent, a corsair ship of some renown.

VICTEPIUS

Son of Victepy



Captain Marala only invites you along on "special" voyages, but she don't rarely tell you exactly why. But when you saw her with Hino, you knew it had to do with the man's brother, Z'ningora. You knew Z'ningora when he was young. An arrogant, idiot bastard was he... made more money selling slaves than he did being a pirate or a corsair. But you heard the stories a decade ago, of Z'ningora lost on an unnamed island, and his brother only findin' his bones on the beach. At least, that's what you heard. And if there's bones on a beach, then there's no doubt angry spirits lookin' to make men scream. That's the cold truth, you think.

THE HARPOONER

Mysterious Scavenger



You are lucky to be traveling with the Corsair Queen, Marala! Your last three voyages were all dismal failures. The first ended with your vessel sunk by flaming arrows. On the second, half your crew was horribly beheaded by cannibals off the Black Coast - something that you'll never forgive yourself for. The last voyage found great wealth... pilfered at the last minute by an untrustworthy lieutenant. But you feel Queen Marala is different - skilled, beautiful, and lucky. It feels as if she belongs at your side. Furthermore, she promised she would help you find the lost City of the Phantom Dead... which is said to be close this island chain you travel to!

RASTUS

Guilt-ridden Old Explorer



When her last carpenter was blinded by flaming Kushite oil, Captain Marala asked you to take over the job. The man was useless anyway, he had incredible physique and remarkable endurance... but completely useless in his nautical job.

Unfortunately, at the last port, you ran into your old crew. They blamed you for their mast crashing over, killing a deckhand. Sure enough, you realized you had made the boneheaded mistake of using the wrong nails on that mast. While you could have just spit in their faces and walked away, that crew was dear to you, and your professional pride was singed. You promised them money to repair the mast.

KÊLIT

Ship's Carpenter



You've served on the Green Serpent for over a year now, and have earned trust from the captain and its most veteran crew...

Crew of the Green Serpent

