

Roaring plenty

"Look out!" screamed the bosun, desperately pointing. Ines spun on her heel, her eyes widening as she saw the huge tentacle hurtling directly towards her. Time seemed to slow down for a moment, and she found herself staring at the thick blue-green arm as it arced through the air. It seemed as thick as a barrel, and lined with ugly bowl like suckers the side of dinner plates. Frantically she threw herself to the deck, just in time for the arm to scythe through the air above her. A moment later and she would have been fish food.

"Fire those damn ballistae!" she screamed at the crew, as she scrambled back to her feet. "Aim for the eyes" she ordered. It was the one spot on the monster that was said to be vulnerable. They needed to drive this monster off now, otherwise they would all be fish food.

Another pair of tentacle like arms emerged from the dark waters, curling up sinuously over the sides of the Dawntreader. Most of her crew were able to dive out of the way, but young Carlos was paralysed with fear as the tentacle swooped down and sucked him up in its foul embrace. He let out a short desperate scream for help, and then he was yanked unceremoniously over the side, to disappear beneath the raging waters.

Two of her crew raced to the side, as if they were thinking of jumping over the rail to try to rescue the deckhand. "Forget him" she barked at them, "he's dead already. Get back to your station now - or we'll all join him."

"Zemress" she whispered to herself, "if you're listening right now... we could really use some help."

"Captain..." stammered the bosun his face blanched white, his

hand raised, the finger pointing away to port. She followed the line of his finger until her eyes alighted on the shape of something massive speeding through the water towards the 'Treader. Something had broken the surface, something indescribably huge, so big she would have thought it an island, but for the way it was knifing through the waves towards the helpless caravel.

"Lingbacker" the bosun mouthed, the name of the infamous and entirely mythical sea monster said to hunt the Sea of Steel falling from his fearful lips.

At that very moment the dark, brooding skies were lit up by a crack of lightning. A moment later there was a rumble of Thunder and then the the wind exploded with rain as the storm that had been threatening all day leapt into existence.

Overview

Last season Rhianos, the Regent of the Eternal Sea, announced the beginning of a great race - to visit the four corners of the known world. Having been challenged by the Summer Archmage, the Lightning Fish agreed to hold a contest, a race, but one unlike any other. Rhianos has no interest in seeing who can be the fastest, so this race is one filled with peril and calamity where nobody know where they are going, how they are going to get there, or even if they will survive.

Hundreds of fleets from across the Empire have taken part in the first leg of the race, titled "Into the Unknown". Following directions provided by heralds of Waverider, they have set sail on a perilous journey into the unknown. Oddly, for a race, it seems no two fleets have been sent the same way. Some report sailing beyond the lands of the Jarmish princes in the Sea of Steel, while another found themselves adrift in an ocean

clogged with seaweed far to the south.

The heralds confirm this is nothing to worry about - after-all you can't all race to the same place because then everyone would just do what the other people did and where would the adventure in that be? What has been a little more worrying for some captains has been the dramatic encounters with dread sea monsters, desperate pirates, devastating storms, and deadly whirlpools. Thus far nobody has reported that their fleet has been lost with all hands, but given how dangerous the journey into the unknown has been, it is surely only a matter of time.

With the first leg complete, it is time for those captains brave enough to dare the second leg to make a choice.

From There To Here

- Thus far there has been precious little reward and very little sign that Rhianos is actually timing anything

A few captains have grumbled to heralds of Waverider that they were promised that the race would be dangerous and lucrative in equal measure. While there has been no shortage of the former, the latter has been in short supply. In reply, the heralds say their master, the Lord of the Rolling Waves promised no such thing, but he assures them that there will be a chance to profit from the race if that is their choice.

Others are concerned that the heralds don't seem very interested in how quickly anyone has managed to complete their leg of the race. How will Rhianos know who has won the race if he doesn't know how fast anyone has gone? The heralds appear equally bemused by these questions. Lightning Fish said "The winner will be the captain whose crew have the best time over the four legs of the race. Why in the seven seas would it matter in the slightest how fast you were going?"

However, now that the second leg is about to begin, each captain who remains committed to the race must make a choice. Turn to starboard, where treasure lies. Turn to port, where the great unknown will reveal itself. Or sail straight on for fame and glory!

From Here to There

- Participants continuing in the Great Race must choose one of three destinations
- Now that the race has begun, it is not possible for other participants to join

This season, each captain taking part in the race will have a choice of destinations. The location they choose will determine the outcome of the race - at least for them. There are three possible expeditions captains can choose between.

Widdershins By Riches

- Captains sailing Widdershins By Riches will benefit from Sular's Promise

Thus far, the race has offered little in the way of opportunities to profit. Most vessels have been focussed on trying to follow the heralds instructions as quickly as possible, which means sailing lightly. There have been chances to trade, but the damage from the storm and sea monsters they have faced has taken whatever money they have earned from the trip. Can they afford to keep sailing they ask? The heralds of Quicksilver are inscrutable, saying only that the adventure is its own reward.

But Rhianos understands the lure of fabulous wealth, the excitement of claiming an incredible treasure, the awe of running your hands through jewels the size of mussel shells. Of

digging up buried treasure - or better still, burying your ill-gotten gains! The lust for riches is at the heart of many a great adventure.

Those captains who joined the race seeking to make their fortune should set their course, Widdershins By Riches. Doing so will categorically ensure that they will not receive the fame and glory of being crowned the winner of the race, nor will they experience the thrill of discovery. But what it will mean is they return home richer than they left. Where other ships may come home battered by storms with masts shattered, sails torn, and hulls holed, those who turn widdershins by riches will find that every leg of the race from here on brings them gold in abundance.

Captains who chose to sail widdershins by riches will find their rewards are even greater if they benefit from the Sular's Promise ritual enchantment.

Deosil To Mystery

- Captains sailing Deosil To Mystery will benefit from the Lure of Distant Shores

Those who have completed the first leg of the grand race have completed a dangerous journey to far off lands, but none have yet gone where no sailor has gone before. The lands your fleet has visited have been well known to Imperial captains, the course you plotted is on the charts, a part of the known sea lanes. There have been plenty of opportunities to take the road less travelled, but each time Rhianos' heralds have urged your fleet to stay the course. Will the other legs follow the same course? The heralds of the Dancing Merlin are ineffable, saying only that the nature of the race itself is the mystery.

But a truly exciting journey is one that takes you into the

unknown. The lure of the open sea, of wondering what strange lands lie beyond the horizon. Is the real lure of distant shores the burning desire to know what is out there? The thrill of discovery - the excitement of the unknown - to journey in hope that you may find something no vessel has found before?

Those captains who joined the race seeking to discover new lands, to explore the world and fill in the details of those ominously blank charts should set their course, Deosil To Mystery. Doing so will categorically ensure that they will not receive the fame and glory of being crowned the winner of the race, nor will they return laden with riches. It will be an arduous race, but those who sail in search of mystery will eventually return with something no Imperial sailor has had before. A chance encounter with the inhabitants of a strange land. A map of parts of the world never seen before. A meeting with a strange new herald. When their ship finally limps back to port, they will not be the first, nor the richest, but those who turned Deosil To Mystery will return with a true treasure - a piece of the unknown.

This option is not profitable, but captains who chose to sail deosil by mystery will find their meagre rewards are supplemented if they benefit from the Lure of Distant Shores ritual enchantment.

Straight On For Glory

- Captains sailing Straight On For Glory will benefit from Winds of Fortune

It is not yet clear who is ahead in the grand race, nor who is falling behind. It is hard to tell who is winning when every fleet is going in different directions. Almost no fleet returns swiftly, but some arrive back at port a day or two before the other competitors. Are they winning? The heralds of the Azure

Seabird give no answer, saying only that glory and renown are the two faces of adventure.

The eternal knows that to race is to dream of being first, to don the victors laurels, to mount the winner's rostrum. To achieve fame and glory as you stand above all others. Every captain has piled on the sail, hoping to make the best time, but who knows how Rhianos is judging the race? How to know if you are going to come first?

Those captains who joined the race dreaming of the glory and renown that will come to the winners should sail, Straight On For Glory. Doing so will be the only way to have a chance of being crowned the winner of the race, and claiming the glory associated with the triumph. They will return poorer than they set off they will not have explored the unknown, but those who sailed straight on for glory can dream that the victor's laurels may yet be theirs.

This option is not lucrative, but captains who chose to sail straight on for glory will find their ship makes better time if they benefit from Winds of Fortune ritual enchantment.

Funny Things Are Everywhere (Participation)

- Every fleet that completed the expedition Into The Unknown receives a single windborn pearl
- The pearl is a single use magical item that allows you to pick one powerful boon from Rhianos on activation

Everyone who took the downtime option "Into the Unknown" will find a phys-rep and a ribbon for a windborn pearl in their pack. This is a single use magical item that contains a powerful Summer magic boon. Any character who carries a pearl can call

on Rhianos by any of his many names to invoke the boon to receive one of the following effects. Each windward pearl can only ever be used once - it is consumed once activated.

- If you have one or more hero points, you can regain all your spent hero points, and gain one additional temporary hero point. This temporary point is the first one spent when you spend hero points.
- If you have one or more personal mana, you can regain all your spent personal mana, and gain two additional temporary personal mana. These temporary points are the first to be spent when you spend personal mana.
- If you have one or more hits remaining, you can regain all lost hits, and gain one additional temporary hit. This temporary hit is the first to be spent when you lose a hit for any reason.
- If you possess the Summer lore skill then you gain two additional ranks to the next Summer ritual that you perform within ten minutes, subject to the normal rules for effective skill.

If you have not used this temporary additional benefits of the pearl within half an hour, then the temporary benefits (bonus hero points, mana or body hits) are lost.

We encourage you to make up tall tales of the extraordinary journey you have been on. Rhianos heralds will have led you to one of Jarm, Summaah, the Commonwealth, the Sarcophan Delves or Asavea, but the route will have been tortuous and plagued with dangers. You may have encountered and fought legendary beasts, risked death as you sailed past whirlpools or been boarded by pirates. Whatever excitements the journey has brought, the weather will have been tumultuous - the storms, gales, and hurricanes have not been constant, but

almost nobody who undertook the journey has sailed on calm waters.

Every player who picked the option will have a traumatic wound in their pack, reflecting the dangers of the journey. If you wish to have had this healed before the event begins, you may return it to GOD unopened, but otherwise you will need to get the injuries you suffered at sea treated at the event.