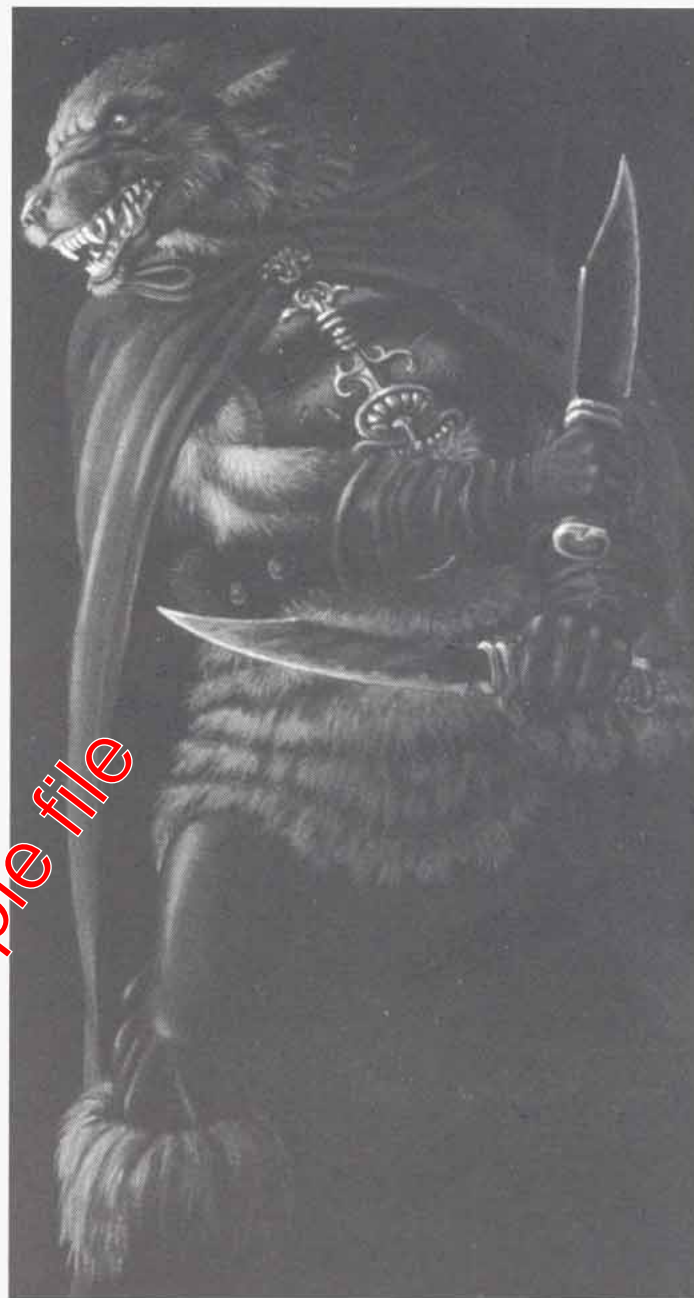


# NEITHER MAN NOR BEAST

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# INTRODUCTION



he question is," said the doctor, pursing his lips as he scanned the array of scalpels and surgical instruments, "What is a man?"

The captive struggled against its bonds, sensing the madness in the air. Yet they held secure. Across the room, the doctor's assistant licked his chops like a cat waiting for table scraps.

"Is it the mind?" continued the doctor, stroking the surgical steel,

"Is it the hand? The opposable thumb? The upright manner? Perhaps it's the spine, or forward-facing, predatory eyes. Something as simple as a communal nature or as mysterious and unknowable as the mythical soul."

He plucked a scalpel from the tray and held it up, the edge of the blade glittering in the light, highlighting the rust eating into the scalpel's handle. "This one will do," he said calmly.

The doctor turned to his experiment. The creature's eyes white with terror, "What is a man?" said the doctor, "That is precisely what we're about to find out."

The screams from the hut pealed out across the jungle like church bells, causing flights of brightly colored birds to take wing in panic and animals to head for their burrows. Former experiments of the doctor nodded their head in fear and respect—the Giver of Pain was performing his grisly work.

Yet was the fear they felt in empathy for the poor brute who was the Doctor's subject, or was it in the growing horror that the screams seemed to form words, and that the voice of the doctor's victim was neither man nor beast?

## Welcome to the Horror

**N**either *Man Nor Beast* is set in the RAVENLOFT® campaign setting, on the island of Markovia. It recounts a tale in which the heroes encounter all manner of beasts—some wearing human form, some animal, and many somewhere in-between.

The adventure begins at a seaport. For adventurers already trapped in Ravenloft, any of the ports along the Sea of Sorrows—Leudendorf, Port-a-Lucine, or Mordentshire—will do. For adventurers who are just arriving in Ravenloft from other lands, such ports as Waterdeep and Marsember in the Forgotten Realms or the Imperial City of Anuire in Cerilia would be suitable. *Neither Man Nor Beast* is designed to function both for long-time denizens of the Mists and for newcomers who suddenly find themselves in a world beyond their ken.

The heroes book passage on the good ship *Sunset Empires*, a solid vessel with a harsh, drunken master. Several days out of port, they run afoul of the weather and are driven by a titanic storm into the Mists of Ravenloft. Here, the *Sunset Empires* is attacked by a ghostly monster of huge dimensions and then runs aground on an unmarked island. The island was until recently the land-locked nation of Markovia, now translated into a island retreat.

The survivors of the wreck must fight to survive, struggling both against the elements and the twisted animal-men which seem to be the island's only inhabitants. They are befriended by an old man, who lives in an estate within a palisade. The old man says he is a castaway, like themselves, and has devoted his life to studying the odd nature, and hopefully effecting a cure for, the warped inhabitants of the land. The kindly old man, named Dr. Fran, is accompanied only by his aide, Felix; his manservant, Orson; and his beautiful ward, Delphi. Dr. Fran opens his house and offers his hospitality to the heroes, appearing as nothing more than a kindly, fuzzy-minded researcher.

Dr. Fran is in reality Frantisek Markov, the darklord of Markovia. He has been cursed to wear a human's face and an animal's body, and far from wishing to cure the twisted, broken beings of Markovia, he created them. The other members of his household are the most successful of his spawn, but the jungles beyond are filled with his rejects, the

## INTRODUCTION

Broken Ones who both worship and hate the being they call *Diosamblet*, the Giver of Pain.

Dr. Fran is very interested in the heroes, both as future raw material for his experiments and as agents to recover a great artifact that would aid him in his research. This artifact, called the *Table of Life*, keeps any body placed upon it alive regardless of the tortures and pain inflicted; it will increase the survival rate for Dr. Fran's patients. This includes, of course, the player characters, after they recover the table.

The *Table of Life* is hidden away in a mountain monastery to the south, jealously guarded by a group of monks whose order has taken the task of protecting the world from such dangerous devices. The *Table* has had its effect on these monks, for they have been transformed into the Ancient Dead (mummies) by the power of the *Table* itself. The heroes, should they choose to recover the *Table*, must do so by slaying the monks or stealing the artifact, escaping with the monks in hot pursuit.

Should they return with the *Table*, Dr. Fran will make plans for making the adventurers his next subjects. However, at this point another force on the island violently intervenes. One of Dr. Fran's experiments, Akanga the Lion Man, long ago escaped his bondage and is now preaching a new tale—that Dr. Fran is a mortal and may be slain, and that only by slaying him will the Broken Ones be granted their eternal release.

Against a backdrop of revolution and battle, the heroes must make their escape, both from the diabolic Markov and the rebellious Broken Ones. Should they fall into the hands of either side, they will never leave Markovia alive, being condemned to spending their remaining existence as neither man nor beast.

DMs should be aware that a key element in this adventure is misdirection. Players are adept at putting together clues and solving riddles once they get a feel for an adventure's main focus. *Neither Man Nor Beast* attempts to maintain the mystery as long as possible by shifting the ground under the adventurers' feet with every new chapter. Red herrings abound: what seems to be a straightforward courier mission involving a cursed statuette quickly turns into a seagoing adventure, then a shipwreck/castaway survival adventure. New goals arise to replace the ones the characters started out with, only to be replaced in their turn.

## Maintaining the Mystery

One of the delights of dropping a Ravenloft adventure into a traditional AD&D® campaign is the growing sense of horror and urgency engendered in players as they realize that they have fallen into one of the most deadly campaign settings yet created (DMs have reportedly caused scores of adventuring parties to flee from foggy days, for fear of being transported here). No player character in his right mind will wish to sup, or even stand in the presence of, a darklord of Ravenloft. Therefore, some subterfuge is needed to maintain the mystery. Such a deception is particular entertaining once the players realize exactly where their characters are.

For this reason, this adventure refers to Frantisek Markov primarily as "Dr. Fran." This is intentional, to reinforce to the DM that the players should be dealing with kindly Dr. Fran, not the monstrous Markov, despite the fact that the two are secretly one and the same. Thinking of this character as Dr. Fran has the added advantage of preventing awkward slips of the tongue—accidentally referring to the old Doctor as "Markov" might very well give the game away. Similarly, the island is referred to as "The Island" or "Dr. Fran's Island" rather than "Markovia" on maps as well as in larger headings in this book to avoid errant eyes from seeing it.

Therefore, always refer to Dr. Fran by that name, never as Markov, and the island as The Island, never as Markovia. Read the sections on Markov in the RAVENLOFT Campaign setting box to familiarize yourself with his history and personality, as well as the section on Dr. Fran and his household in this adventure. Note that Dr. Fran is a clever, plausible fellow who has a few alibis ready for when the players begin to realize that All Is Not Well.

This is not to say that the player characters will never discover the enormity of their possible fate, or the DM should continue to play coy once all the heroes realize where they are. However, the revelation of their location and situation (They are in Ravenloft—in Markovia—hanging out with a darklord—he dissects people—and *they're next*) should be played out for all it's worth. Ideally, if the DM can get shouts of fear and looks of panic from his or her players, then he or she should be congratulated on a job well-done.

## THE GOOD SHIP *SUNSET EMPIRES*



The adventurers enter *Neither Man Nor Beast* through a sea voyage fated to end in disaster. The DM has several options regarding how to get the heroes on the good ship *Sunset Empires*. The following scene is offered as a sample rationale for the heroes' taking a sea trip: the DM should read the box below aloud to his or her players.

Most of the old man's story is true. There is, however, no curse, only an old man plagued by disease and guilt of actions long-ago. The wizard is real, and the casque does contain an item stolen from him, a figurine of a raven. This statuette has no value, but it does radiates faint magic (the result of a permanent *Nystul's magical aura*); this should give the players something to think about should they open the casque and check its contents.

The patron was well-dressed, wealthy, and most of all, scared. In the dim, smoky light of the common room you and your mates could see the haggard look in his eyes, the look of a man who jumps at every shadow.

"A long time ago," he began, his voice weak and wheezy, "I and a group of fellow adventurers liberated—well, robbed, really—a wizard of his trove. We made the mistake of leaving him alive, and the bigger mistake of thinking he would not find us. He placed a curse on those who stole from him. Now I am the last of my party, and my health is failing. I want to make amends, for fear that the wizard's curse could follow me after my death."

He heaved a small casque onto the table. "The wizard's most prized treasure is within this chest. As long as it remains shut, and does not see the daylight, all should be fine. I want you and your

DMs with players interested in wheedling and negotiating should omit the last two paragraphs of the boxed text. Checking around confirms that old Maxis was quite an adventurer in his day, before he settled down and turned merchant. He is known for being honorable and honest in his dealings. In addition to paying for their passage, Maxis is willing to offer the heroes 500 gold apiece for their trouble.

Suspicious players may decide to forgo passage on the *Sunset Empires*. In this case, they can leave on another ship due to sail a few days later which plans to follow a similar course. This ship, the *Unlamented Cry*, is identical to the *Sunset Empires*.

Alternatively, a DM involved in an ongoing campaign could wait until the player characters determine to take ship for purposes of their own, so long as their planned travel involves sailing beyond the sight of land. Then give the *Sunset Empires* as their ship, and spring the adventure on them.

Be sure to introduce the heroes to Captain Stewart first, then to Mr. Monterey and Old Singe once they get on board. On land Captain Stewart will be a polite, friendly old captain, glad to have the heroes on board. That will change.

party to return this to its rightful owner." He trails off into a hacking wheeze.

"I've booked passage on a sturdy ship due to pass near the wizard's tower, which overlooks the coast. I have sent word by messenger bird that the casque will be arriving, and he expects you and the package, though he will not reverse the curse until he receives it."

"I ask you, by what is right and proper, if you will do me this favor?"

That was last night. Now, in the light of day, standing before the *Sunset Empires*, you see it is a sturdy craft, more than suitable for the short voyage. You remember the old man's last warning:

"You should be safe, as long as you do not let sunlight into the box. Otherwise the curse will affect you as well."

Sample file

# THE GOOD SHIP SUNSET EMPIRES

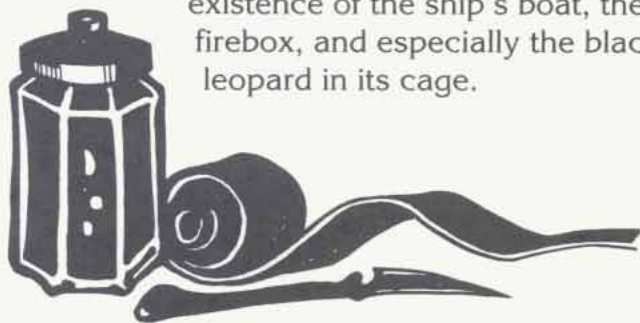
## The Good Ship Sunset Empires

**T**he *Sunset Empires* out of Leudendorf is a caravel—a sturdy, quick ship suitable for long ocean voyages.

It is 70 feet long, with a 24 foot beam, and holds 50 tons of cargo. Her hull planking is made of oak 2½ inches thick. It has two masts, lateen-rigged, and a crew of twenty men, but the ship can function on a fraction of that number.

The *Sunset Empires* has been making its run under Captain Stewart regularly for ten years without serious incident and has a reputation as a safe and sound ship. The ship is currently carrying bulk cargo—rice, grain, fabric, and tools, along with the odd specialty shipment.

Captain Stewart will assign Mr. Monterey to give the heroes a brief tour of the ship. Use the following key as a guide, making sure the players know of the existence of the ship's boat, the firebox, and especially the black leopard in its cage.



## Key to the Sunset Empires

**1. Foredeck.** The forecastle of the ship is little more than a foot-high rise at the bow, with the anchor cables stored immediately beneath the deck. The *Sunset Empires* has a pair of cast iron anchors, one to each side.

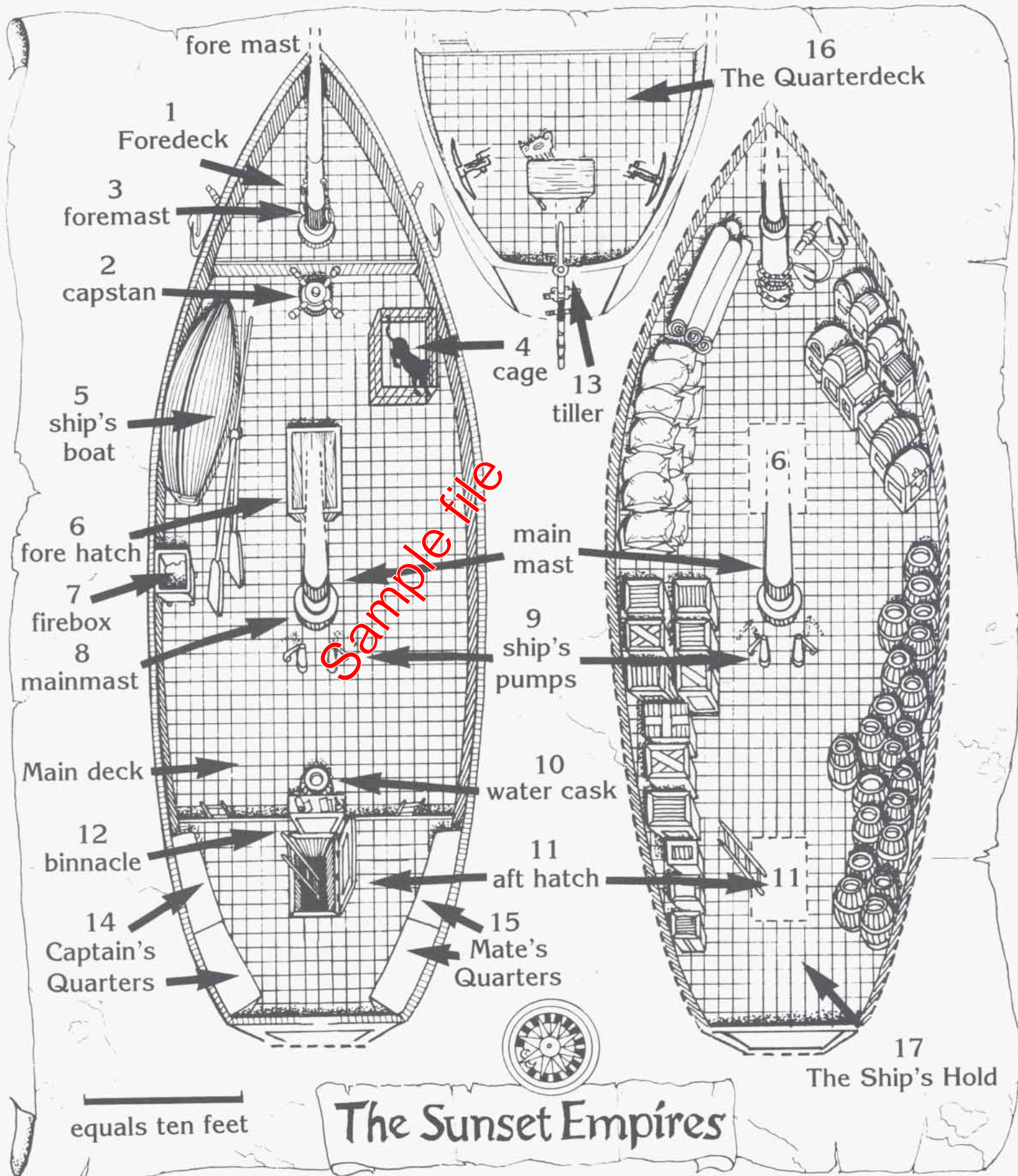
**2. Capstan.** This rotating pole is used by the sailors to wind the anchor cables around, raising the anchor. The transverse poles are removable and are usually stored beneath the foredeck until needed. It requires four men to raise anchor, and only one anchor may be raised at a time.

**3. Foremast.** This is the most forward of the two masts. Like all the masts upon the *Sunset Empires*, it is a lateen rig (triangular sails as

opposed to square sails). A set of iron manacles, used for disciplining recalcitrant crewmen, is mounted around waist level.



# THE GOOD SHIP SUNSET EMPIRES



The Sunset Empires