

Marooned

A Shard Yatra for 3-6 Talented level jánah,
by Joseph C. Wolf



A SHARD
Yatra

The Setup

While crossing one of Dárdünah's vast oceans a ferocious storm overtakes the PCs' airship forcing the jánah into the skyskiffs to avert disaster. After hours battling the wind and rain, the small craft loses altitude and collides with a mountainside, violently coming apart and dumping the PCs into the murky churning ocean below. The PCs awaken battered and weary the following morning on an unfamiliar stretch of beach. They're fortunate to be alive, but they are stranded on an uncharted island surrounded on all sides by violent swells and jagged reefs with no hope of rescue and few options for escape.

The wreckage of the skyskiff can be recovered and rebuilt, however nearly half of the vital skycrystals are lost. The skycrystals provide lift, allowing airships to fly and maneuver. The PCs may roll their WIT ranking, with the best among them recalling how, just before the crash, they desperately dampened the skycrystals' power to avoid a dangerous updraft, only to watch in horror as a suddenly-looming peak ripped

an entire bank of their precious crystals away. These precious stones, dampener sheaths and all, fell into the darkness far below. To escape the island, a majority of these skycrystals must be found. In the meantime, the PCs need food, water, and other essentials to survive, though empty bellies and parched throats are the least of their worries, as the island holds many dangers.

Background

The island is small but far from uninhabited. A tribe of primitive cassowaries has dwelt in the island's interior for centuries. The native Paksin survive by hunting and foraging among the lowland jungles. They engage in simple but practical crafts, have no industry or commerce, and practice rudimentary farming and suthra rearing.

The reefs prevent trade with other tribes living on neighboring islands. As a result of the isolation and cultural stagnation the cassowaries are highly territorial and superstitious. Their

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xenophobia has grown more extreme after falling under the influence of Güssedvi – a sinister sir'hibas matriarch who has allied herself with the Swirling Hells of Narákah. Decades ago the ambitious sir'hibas seized power by dethroning the rightful chieftain. She rules by fear, and the natives cater to the demented sir'hibas' every despotic whim. Any dissent is exposed and cruelly punished, those who displease her spend their last moments stretched across a bloody altar. She, along with her disciples, have turned their backs on the Devah; they now venerate the dark spirits of Narákah.

When the PCs' skyskiff broke apart, the bank of skycrystals on the port side was sheared off and fell into the river. During that initial impact with the mountainside, the dampening sheaths became stuck around the skycrystals, cancelling their gravity-defying properties. The following day, the sheathed skycrystals were found by cassowary hunters and presented to Güssedvi. The crafty sir'hibas identified the stones and after a display of their unique properties, declared the stones proof of the gods' divine favor.

NOTE: It is possible a crafty PC sir'hibas might attempt to employ the Dream to escape the island. As the point of this yatra is to explore and enjoy the perils of the situation, a premature escape would be anticlimactic to say the least! The narrator is encouraged to be creative in contriving ways of keeping the PCs on the island until they recover the sky crystals. It is possible key ritual materials were left behind when the airship was abandoned or lost when the lifeboat crashed. The sir'hibas' ritual could be foiled by a sudden attack by the natives. Alternatively strange and unpredictable spiritual turbulence in the Dream causes the ritual to fail with unexpected consequences.

The Forgotten Island

Scene 1: Washed Ashore

The PCs wash up on a brackish estuary near the outflow of a river originating from the nearby jungle. The river empties into a shallow rock-lined pool flanked by mangrove-like trees. The precious fluid tastes vaguely salty but it's safe to drink in the short term. While quenching their thirsts, alert PCs feel as though they're being watched noting nearby rocks have crept silently closer. The rocks are actually hungry Tatuurga on the prowl (see below).

Tatuurga (tah-too-UR-gah) - An ill-tempered ambush suthra called a razor-crab due to the lethality of the claws. The suthra's armored back is arched and rock-like in texture. Three stalked compound eyes are concealed among the cracks and crevices of the back, allowing

the beast to see while the rest of it remains buried in sand. Driftwood, rocks and other seashore debris are affixed to the suthra's back with a secreted resin enhancing the camouflage. The suthra possesses a pair of powerful serrated claws easily capable of pulping or severing a limb. The beast's flesh is edible but bland and must be consumed quickly as it becomes unpalatable within an hour of the suthra's demise. The suthra's exoskeleton is a poor choice for the manufacture of goods but a reservoir along the ventral abdomen can be extracted, yielding a pint or more of a high quality blue-hued resin useful for lacquer and glue.

STAMINA: 12-16 levels

ARMOR: 4 points shell, 2 points limbs and underside.

NORMAL ACTION DICE:

Standard movement, General Attacks, Standard Sensory Rolls etc. : 4

SPECIAL ACTIONS:

Grab/Crush Limb: 7 (claws deal Subdue damage during the grab but once a hold has been established deal Subdue/Fatal damage).

Rock camouflage : 6

Scene 2: Exploration

Once the PCs have determined the dire nature of their predicament, they will need to explore the island in search of the lost skycrystals they watched plummet down within their dampener sheaths. Though quite a few of the loose ones must have been lost to the angry skies, if luck is on their side, they'll find enough crystals to allow their skyskiff the lift it needs to limp back into the more heavily-travelled distant trade winds.

In addition, characters with survival skills and appropriate lore might recognize the urgency to locate fresher water, food, and perhaps other provisions that could be found in the nearby environments. Characters with the necessary Skills will recognize the variety of places they might begin their search.

Beaches

Sandy beaches are numerous across the island, but are intermittent; cut off from the rest of the island by steep crumbling sheer cliffs and rocky coves, making it difficult to walk around the island along the coast. Wading along the shoals is an option but at the risk of injury and death from violent waves and unpredictable currents, while hungry predators are known to hunt along the shorelines.



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Reefs & Shipwrecks

The reefs surrounding the island are numerous and no navigable path threads its way through the maze of razor sharp coral as evidenced by the wrecked hulls of countless vessels. Any attempt to cross the reefs on a makeshift water vessel to get to open ocean is futile.

Resourceful PCs may conclude the wrecks of airships could contain skycrystals. Unfortunately for them that is not the case, but they needn't know that before they embark on a venture to explore the wreckage. What they might discover is the fact that others have come before them (the native islanders), and have already stripped some of the least dangerous wrecks of items that might be of interest to a more primitive mind-set, thus giving the PCs clues about the existence of the local inhabitants.

Over time, the wrecks collapse and are ground into driftwood. The flotsam washes to shore or sinks. The ocean floor and reefs are littered with the decaying bits and pieces of ships and cargo. A vast fortune in the form of resin goods and jewels can be recovered by enterprising and very daring divers willing to brave powerful currents and ever-hungry predators lurking below.

During low tide, narrow stretches of coral are exposed revealing a vast maze of coral surrounding the island to a distance of a half mile. These treacherous footpaths can be traversed to reach the shipwrecks and the salvage they contain, provided the searchers avoid being washed off the paths by the crashing waves and onto razor-sharp coral. This also assumes some hungry predator hasn't taken up residence among the wreckage. Narrators are encouraged to stock the wreckage with goods of sufficient value to justify the PCs' risky explorations.

Rivers

Countless streams and rivers flow from the mountains into the jungle valleys forming many pools, waterfalls, and rapids along the way. Several of these feed into the lagoon at the heart of the island. Rivers additionally flow to the island's outer shoreline, the waters mixing with the ocean creating brackish estuaries.

Following the river north from the estuary on which they arrived, the PCs find a partially-sheathed sky crystal hovering under a fallen tree not far from where the other sky crystals fell to earth. A half dozen or so cassowary tracks are found around where the shattered bank of sky crystals apparently landed during the storm. PCs with tracking abilities would be able to follow these tracks easily further inland through the lowland jungle.

Upland Forests

The island interior is heavily forested. Lowlands are marshy and damp and the highlands are frequently shrouded in clouds. The air is warm and humid at all times, and the local flora and fauna thrive in the climate.

The cassowaries do not venture far up the forested hills at the base of the mountains. They fear the cliff-side ruins glimpsed through the enshrouding clouds, and for good reason. See Further Adventures - Ancient Ruins below.

PCs daring these misty heights, with their craggy obsidian peaks, might possibly catch a glimpse of the interior of the island with its hidden lagoon village. Likewise, PCs with wings might also brave the turbulent skies near the mountains for a closer look, with the same chance of seeing evidence of the distant islanders with some form of keen eyesight.

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Lowland Jungle

The island interior is dense tropical jungles with clouds of stinging suthra, troupes of screeching bandar call from the shadowed canopies, and the heat and humidity are oppressive. Small herds of sukara (see below) wander the forest. These beasts are common in the lowlands and are hunted by the island natives.

Sukara (soo-KA-ra) - A rooting wart-hog like suthra with pronounced "tusks" on either side of the mouth mandibles. Heavy armored plates and a length of spines extends from the crown of its head carapace to the base of the short tail. A heavy cowl of armored hide allows the head to be withdrawn and aligned with the spine when charging and goring. The gaps between the beast's armored plates attract parasites, to dissuade the pests the suthra takes frequent mud baths. The sukara is an opportunistic omnivore found in lowland tropical forests where it feeds mostly on roots, fallen fruit, and carrion. The beasts are very fond of fermenting fruit and are sometimes encountered staggering drunkenly around the undergrowth. The meat of the suthra is musky and flavorful and its carapace makes fine armor.

STAMINA: 15-20 levels

ARMOR: 4 points

NORMAL ACTION DICE:

Standard Movement, General Attacks, Foraging, General Perception, etc. : 3

SPECIAL ACTIONS:

Gore with Tusks : 5

Keen Scent: 4

Poor Eyesight: 2

Once the PCs enter the jungles, it's inevitable they'll cross paths with the island natives. They speak a guttural tongue utterly foreign to the PCs. The cassowaries are already nervous since the discovery of the skycrystals, and will attack with little provocation. Provided the PCs agree to relinquish their weapons, they're escorted to the Lagoon Village to meet Güssedvi.

If the PCs manage to elude the natives with opposed Survival or Stealth rolls, a tough feat considering this is the cassowaries' hunting grounds, the PCs can either shadow or track the Paksin back to their lagoon home where they discover the hovering skycrystals tethered over the tribal altar in the center of the village.

Scene 3: Lagoon Village

A humble village of a half-dozen thatch and reed huts constructed beside a freshwater lagoon fed by swift-moving rapids and awe-inspiring waterfalls. The natives

scour the shorelines for flotsam and bring what they find to the lagoon where it's sorted for anything useful. Valuable goods recovered from shipwrecks have been incorporated into a huge, crude, jánah-shaped totem of lashed-together detritus behind a gruesome stone altar. As the most grievous insult to the Devah, the corpses of hapless sailors are also present in the totem. Sharp-eyed PCs may spot a useful piece of salvage, the very goal of their search, within the ghoulish religious icon.

It is here, at the center of the village, that the PCs will encounter the ancient and withered shaman of the tribe, Güssedvi. A dozen fanatical cassowary warriors enforce the sir'hibas' will. Easily four times that number, of various ages, live in the village under the sir'hibas' withered thumb.

Güssedvi (female cassowary, over 100 years old, withered and somewhat insane) - Though kept alive by dark magic, she is physically weak and frail. Due to her corruption by malevolent forces, her egotistical hunger for power is matched only by her vile disregard for innocent lives.

NOTE: This ancient sir'hibas has been given no Attribute rankings since it will not be necessary to make rolls for her during the course of this adventure. Either her minions or her summoned elemental demon spirit will do everything for her, but once she is physically challenged she should be considered Subdued for the sake of game-play. Once her servants are dealt with, PCs merely need to succeed at their own rolls when attempting anything against her directly.

Cassowary Warriors (12 total) - (strong, agile, mid to late 20's) Fearsome members of the local native tribe. They use obsidian spears and crystal daggers as primary weapons.

Stamina Levels: 14-18

Armor: 2

Normal Action Dice: 5 - Standard Movement, General Attacks, Foraging, General Perception, etc.

Special Action Dice: 7 - Leaping Feats, Sharp Eyesight, Pursuing Prey

In a broken but common trade tongue, Güssedvi will demand to know why the PCs have dared to tread on the holy sands of the island of Durgati. No answer will truly please her, but any PC with decent navigational or cartography lore might recognize the name from sailors' tales, and piece together what route they might take to hopefully leave the island and seek rescue.

Under the supervision of the ancient sir'hibas, most captives eventually wind up

ritually sacrificed to a demon associated with the ocean's fury and shipwrecks. She sees any newcomer as a threat to her rule. As such she is likely to order the PCs' executions once she grows bored or threatened. The sir'hibas is very old and shriveled, she resembles a vulture more than she does a cassowary. The PCs should quickly conclude she's a mad, cackling mummy under the influence of some insane otherworldly devil. She will not relinquish the skycrystals under any circumstances.

Physically, the sir'hibas is no threat but she is protected by a dozen of her most devoted followers who gladly sacrifice themselves to protect her. The rest of the villagers flee to their huts at the first sign of violence. Once her bodyguards are disabled or killed, the sir'hibas has one more trick up her sleeve. The totem behind the blood-stained altar shifts and heaves to life as she spitefully tasks the Atanka with the extermination of all life on the island, starting with the PCs.

Atanka (ah-TAHN-kah) - A horrid golem-like conglomeration of shipwreckage summoned by a dark sir'hibas with the purpose of sowing terror and death. The construct's shifting bulk is comprised of shattered masts and bent planks, torn rigging, smashed casks and crates, wicker lanterns swing and glow with ghostly flame, and tattered scraps of sail held gruesomely together by the reanimated rotting remains of countless drowned sailors whose gurgling cries, moans, and shrieks can be heard from 100 feet away. The Atanka isn't a true demon, as such damage from its attacks cause one half the attacking die pool.

STAMINA: 36-48 levels (42 levels)

ARMOR: 4-6 points (5 points)

NORMAL ACTION DICE:

Standard Movement, General Attacks, General Perception, etc. : 4-6 (5)

SPECIAL ACTIONS:

Grab, entangle and thrash with rigging : 8-12 (10)

Conclusions

Once the Atanka is defeated and sir'hibas has been dealt with, any surviving cassowary flee into the jungle allowing the PCs to loot the village and recover the skycrystals. Once installed, the small airship can be launched. The morning before the PCs depart, they find fruits, vegetables, and freshly killed game piled at the edge of the

campsite, tribute from grateful natives watching from the forest.

The PCs cast off, catching a tailwind and making for skies above the deeper ocean, where after a week at sea they encounter a trade ship and are brought aboard. They should have a fair amount of loot taken from the Lagoon Village, so arranging passage anywhere shouldn't be difficult.



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Further Adventures

Haunted Shipwreck - One of the shipwrecks is investigated and contains a vast treasure in the hold. Unfortunately for the PCs the ancient pirate ship is haunted by the bloated, reanimated corpses of the ship's crew who resent the interruption of their rest and the taking of their booty. The PCs are vigorously encouraged to join the undying crew.

Ancient Ruins - The vratha spider-haunted ruins of an ancient extinct civilization is built into the cliffs overlooking the lagoon valley. Gloomy passages and chambers contain thick nets of webbing, shriveled skeletons, and according to legend, the degenerate descendants of an intelligent race of spiders. The ruins are filled with fiendish booby-traps, ancient curses, indecipherable glyphs, and the promise of fabulous wealth and lost lore.

Slavers - After a week at sea, the PCs are taken aboard a passing ship only to discover they've been rescued by slavers. The PCs are promptly clapped in crystal chains and their loot taken. But all is not lost! The cutthroat crewmen are restless and mutiny is in the air.

Cursed - As the wicked sir'hibas breathes her last breath, she curses one of the PCs. The PC must seek lost lore possessed only by an ancient, legendary mage to break the curse before it reaches full potency.

THE FORGOTTEN ISLAND

-  RAINFOREST
-  TROPICAL FOREST
-  SANDY BEACH
-  CRYSTAL MOUNTAINS
-  SHRUB DESERT



1 HOUR'S
trek on foot