The Hatbury Deeps

THE DOOMQUILL TALES · BOOK IV

The Hatbury Deeps

Kidaneland: Laomera and the Hatbury waters, Republic of Merland, year 834



PENNED BY KIDANELAND PROJECT

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Set in Kidaneland, Bretbury Era 834.

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Rules of Play

Your Hero's Scores

Roll one six-sided die and add 6 for your **SKILL**. Roll two dice and add 12 for your **STAMINA**. Roll one die and add 6 for your **LUCK**. Record these scores on your Adventure Sheet.

Combat Sequence

In battle, roll two dice and add your current SKILL for your Attack Strength. Roll two dice and add the opponent's SKILL for their Attack Strength. The higher blows strikes the lower for weapon damage (default 2 points). If you wear armour, roll one die: if equal to or under your armour tier, reduce the wound by 1.

Testing Your Luck

When instructed to Test your Luck, roll two dice: if the roll is equal to or under your current LUCK score, you are Lucky. If higher, you are Unlucky. *Deduct 1 point from your LUCK score every time you test it.*

Provisions & Healing

Each meal of provisions restores 4 STAMINA points up to your initial score. You may only eat when resting or permitted by the text.

ADVENTURE SHEET

Hero Name: **People / Origin:**

SKILL	STAMINA	LUCK

Purse & Provisions:

Crowns & Shillings: Provisions (Meals):

Equipment & Weapons:

PROLOGUE

Eight months ago the pay-ship Gilded Hind left Shifton with a season's wages for the Merlish crossbow companies in her hold. Off the fishing village of Laomera something came up under her keel, and she went down on the Thrum Bank with her topmasts still showing at low water. Nobody has gone near her since. The fishermen say the Hatbury monster keeps those waters, and that it does not want the sailors. It wants the ships.

The Moot has posted a warrant: a tenth of whatever is recovered to whoever brings it up. You have the warrant in your coat, a sword at your side and three crowns to hire a boat with. This is a short sample of a Kidaneland gamebook. Roll your scores and begin at 1.

Turn to Section 1 to begin your quest.

1

Laomera is one crooked street of whitewashed houses running down to a stone mole, and the whole of it smells of tar and gutted fish. The boats are drawn up on the shingle. Nobody is mending nets. At the head of the mole a little shrine stands open to the wind, with a clay bowl in it stained purple by years of poured wine.

The chandler's door is open. Inside, under hanging lanterns and coils of rope, an old Elladan woman sells hard bread, cheap wine in stoppered jars and, from a rack on the wall, a whaler's harpoon with a barbed iron head as long as your forearm.

Across the street a sign creaks: a lamp drawn under a wavy blue line. *The Drowned Lamp*. That is where the skippers drink when they are not sailing.

- → Buy two days' bread and cheese for 1 shilling
- → Buy a jar of wine for 2 shillings
- → Buy the whaler's harpoon for 1 crown
- → Cross the street to the Drowned Lamp TURN TO 37

37

The Drowned Lamp is low and smoky, and every face in it turns to you when the door opens. At the corner table sits the only skipper in Laomera with a boat fit for open water: Dorea Kallis of the cutter *Saltwife*, a broad woman with grey braids and a pipe she does not light. Four of her crew sit with her, drinking slowly, the way men drink when they have no money coming.

You put the Moot's warrant on the table. Dorea reads it without touching it.

"The Thrum Bank," she says. "No. The *Hind* went down in a flat calm with every lamp lit. Nothing on the bank but the thing that sank her." The biggest of her crew, a bosun with a broken nose, laughs into his cup.

- → Promise her an honest share and argue the case
- → Go out to the shrine, pour your wine for the harbour spirit, and come back to ask again
- → Put two crowns on the table **TURN TO 150**
- → Tell them a Kushi warship killed the monster last spring
- → Lean over the table and tell them what cowards they are

44

The monster draws its head back and slides under with hardly a ripple, and for a moment there is only the sound of the crew panting and the sea pouring off the deck. Then Dorea says, very quietly, "Under."

You feel it before you see it: a shadow spreading beneath the hull, wider than the boat, rising. Every hand aboard grabs for something to hold.

> TEST OF LUCK:
> Test your LUCK to see whether the keel holds.

61

Toward midnight the sea begins to glow. Every wave that breaks against the hull leaves a smear of cold green fire, and far off to starboard a long curve of the same light lifts out of the water and goes down again without a sound. The crew watch it in silence.

Then Iannis, leaning too far out to see, goes over the side.

You hear the splash and his one cry. In the glowing water you can see him thrashing ten yards astern, already falling behind, and the *Saltwife* is running fast before the wind. "Leave him," says Stavros hoarsely. "It's down there. Leave him."

- → Throw him a line
- → Dive in after him TURN TO 140
- → Leave him to the sea TURN TO 118

77

You go down hand over hand on a weighted line. At four fathoms the light is green and tired, and the *Hind*'s deck is furred with weed. The great cabin's windows are gone. Inside, the strongroom door hangs from one hinge, and the iron chest lies tipped on its side among drifts of sand, a ring-bolt at each end.

Your chest is already burning. You can hold your breath for as many heartbeats as your SKILL, and no longer. You get the line through one ring-bolt and fumble for the knot.

> TEST OF SKILL:
> Test your SKILL to make the line fast before your breath gives out.

89

The bosun puts down his cup and stands, and goes on standing for a while, because there is a great deal of him. "Stavros," Dorea says, without much hope. He does not hear her. He wipes his mouth on his wrist and comes round the table at you with his fists up, and the drinkers of the Drowned Lamp shove the benches back to give him room.

Nobody draws a blade. In Laomera, it seems, that would be bad manners.

> COMBAT ENCOUNTER:
> **STAVROS THE BOSUN** · SKILL 7 · STAMINA 8

95

Iannis grins for the first time since he went over the side. He strips, ties the weighted line round his wrist and goes down like a seal, his pale back shrinking into the green until you can barely see it.

He is gone a long time. Stavros begins to count under his breath, and stops at a number nobody wants to hear. Then the line jerks three times, and Iannis bursts up beside the hull, blowing like a whale, and the crew haul. The iron chest of the *Gilded Hind* comes up out of the sea and thuds onto the deck in a gush of water and sand. The Moot's seal is still on the hasp.

→ Get the chest under a tarpaulin and make sail TURN TO 210

118

Dawn comes up grey over the Thrum Bank. The water here is a paler green, shoaling over sand, and at low tide two topmasts stand out of it at a drunken angle, rimed white with gull droppings. The *Gilded Hind*.

Dorea heaves to fifty yards off and will not go nearer. "Four fathoms to her deck," she says, looking over the side. "Her strongroom is aft, under the great cabin." Through the clear water you can see the ghost of the hull below, and the black square of an open hatch.

The sea is very calm. Something has left a wide, slow swirl on the surface a cable's length to the east.

→ Strip off your jack and dive to the wreck yourself TURN TO 77

→ Ask Iannis to dive for you TURN TO 95

132

Your breath goes before the knot is tied. You let go of everything and claw for the surface, and break it with a howl, and hang on the *Saltwife*'s side with your heart going like a drum. Every breath hurts. Four fathoms below, the line drifts loose beside the chest.

Dorea is watching the swirl to the east. It is nearer now. "Once more, or not at all," she says.

- → Dive once more
- → Leave the Moot's gold to the sea TURN TO 210

140

The water closes over you and the cold drives the air out of your chest. Green fire streams from your hands with every stroke. Below you there is nothing at all: no bottom, no light, only a darkness that seems to be very slowly rising.

You can hold your breath for as many strokes as your SKILL, and no more. Iannis has gone under. You see his pale shirt, a fathom down and sinking, and you dive for it.

> TEST OF SKILL:
> Test your SKILL to reach him before your breath runs out.

150

However it was settled at the Drowned Lamp, the *Saltwife* slips her moorings on the evening tide with you aboard: a black-hulled cutter with a patched brown mainsail, Dorea at the tiller, Stavros in the bows and three hands between. The youngest of them, a thin lad called Iannis, dives for sponges in summer and talks about nothing else.

As the cutter clears the mole, every man aboard looks up at the little shrine with its purple bowl. Nobody spits over the side. Out past the point the swell lifts under you, long and slow and green, and the coast goes blue behind.

- Pour your wine into the harbour as you pass the shrine
- Share out your bread and cheese among the crew
- Stand out to sea TURN TO 61

166

The *Saltwife* is sinking. Water is knee-deep in the hold and rising, the bow is sprung, and the crew are already looking at the little boat lashed amidships. There is one pump and one set of buckets, and with every man bailing she might stay up long enough to reach the shallows of Laomera point. Without them, she will be under in an hour.

Stavros has a hand on the boat's lashings. Dorea is looking at you.

- Rally the crew to the pump
- Remind them who fed them on the way out
- Drive them to the buckets at swordpoint
- Take to the boat with the crew TURN TO 188
- Take to the boat, and leave the pay-chest to go down with her TURN TO 188

176

Stavros goes down across a bench and the bench goes down with him. He lies among the splinters, blinking at the smoke-black beams, and tries twice to get up and cannot. The room has gone very quiet.

Dorea Kallis takes her unlit pipe out of her mouth. "Well," she says. "If you can do that to Stavros, perhaps you can do it to the other thing." She stands and buttons her coat. "We sail on the evening tide. All of us."

Stavros is looking up at you from the floor, waiting to see what kind of person you are.

- → Offer him your hand and haul him up TURN TO 150
- → Step over him and follow Dorea out TURN TO 150

188

You come back into Laomera wet, cold and alive, without the Moot's gold. Dorea Kallis says nothing on the long pull in, and nothing when you reach the shingle, and the crew go up the street to their houses without looking back. The fishermen on the mole watch you pass and make the sign against bad water.

The warrant is still in your coat. The ink has run. Out on the Thrum Bank the topmasts of the *Gilded Hind* still lean in the tide, and whatever is down there with her has lost nothing at all.

You are alive. That will have to do. Your adventure ends here.

† YOUR ADVENTURE ENDS IN DEATH †

199

The green closes over you. You kick and the water does not care, and the light overhead goes from green to grey to a slow brown dark, and the cold that was in your chest is everywhere now, and quite comfortable.

Far below, something enormous turns over in its sleep. It does not notice you at all. It never wanted you. It only ever wanted the ships.

Your adventure ends on the Thrum Bank, beside the *Gilded Hind*.

† YOUR ADVENTURE ENDS IN DEATH †

210

The sea stands up.

A hump of grey-green hide, barnacled like a hull, slides up out of the water twenty yards off the bow and keeps on coming. There is an eye in it the size of a cartwheel, and the eye is not looking at you. It is looking at the *Saltwife*. The cutter heels as the swell of it passes under her, and somebody screams, and Dorea shouts for every hand to the sheets.

The Hatbury monster does not want you. It wants the ship, and in a moment it is going to take her.

- → Hurl the harpoon at its eye
- → Stand at the rail between the monster and the crew TURN TO 300
- → Call on the harbour spirit you poured wine for
- → Heave the pay-chest overboard to lighten ship and run for home TURN TO 188

230

The *Saltwife* comes into Laomera on the evening tide with a sprung bow, a hold full of seawater and the pay-chest of the *Gilded Hind* lashed to her mast. The whole village is on the mole. Somebody has lit the lamps in the little shrine, and the purple bowl is full.

The Moot's agent rides in from Thasia two days later, counts the chest twice, breaks the seal and finds it to the penny. A tenth of a season's wages for the crossbow companies is a great deal of money. You pay Dorea her share before you count your own.

That night, in the Drowned Lamp, Stavros buys the first round. The fishermen are mending their nets again. Out on the Thrum Bank the topmasts of the *Hind* stand in the moonlight, and something very large lies under them, and waits, and remembers your face.

★ VICTORY ACHIEVED ★

260

The sea goes flat. A long swirl spreads where the monster went down, and then nothing, and then the gulls come back. The crew stand about the deck as if they have forgotten what decks are for, until Dorea starts swearing at them in Elladan and they remember.

The *Saltwife* is battered but afloat, and the wind is fair for Laomera. If the pay-chest is aboard, it sits by the mast under its tarpaulin, and the Moot's seal on the hasp has been eight months in the sea. Nobody would know if it had been opened. Stavros, coiling a line, glances at it, and then at you.

- Sit on the chest all the way home and let no one touch it **TURN TO 230**
- Prise the hasp and fill your pockets before you reach harbour **TURN TO 271**
- Sail home with nothing but your life **TURN TO 188**

271

The *Saltwife* limps into Laomera with the pay-chest lashed to her mast, and the village cheers you up the mole. The Moot's agent rides in from Thasia two days later and counts the chest twice. On the second count his mouth goes thin.

"The sea is a thief," he says at last, writing in his ledger. "It takes a little of everything." He pays your tenth, less five crowns, and looks at you the whole time he does it. Your name will be in that ledger in Shifton by the end of the month.

In the Drowned Lamp, Stavros does not buy the first round. Nobody does. You drink alone, and the five crowns in your coat feel heavier than the chest did.

† YOUR ADVENTURE ENDS IN DEATH †

300

You plant your feet at the rail with your sword in both hands. The head comes down on the bow like a falling house. Timber shrieks. You hack at the hide, and it is like hacking at a wet barrel, and every blow it lands on the *Saltwife* throws you across the deck.

It is not fighting you. It is breaking the ship, and you are only in the way. Every wound you take below is a plank stove in. You have three rounds before it goes down to come up under the keel.

COMBAT ENCOUNTER:
HATBURY SEA MONSTER · SKILL 10 · STAMINA 20

The Doomquill Tales

"Your fate is written in ink."

❖

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