

The Nether-Beasts of Ruby Pearl Island

CARL NIBLAEUS of STOCKHOLM KARTELL

FAR OUT in the Moon Sea lies Ruby Pearl Island, famous for the ruby colored pearls that can be found there. Unbeknownst to the current occupants, the unique nature of the pearls is caused by an irregularity in the magical web, which winds around itself to form a knot precisely at the location of the island. The magical effect seeps bit by bit into the pearls as they slowly grow over the years.

Ambitious men from the Moon City conquered the island less than century ago to control the trade of the precious pearls, but the history of the island dates much further back. A species of fish men, resembling humanoid lion fish, colorfully striped with spindly fins, have lived in the area as far as anyone can remember. They were the ones who first met the Xua—extra-dimensional beings attracted to magical peculiarities among the planes—when they arrived at the island to study the knot in the web. The Xua studied the web for many years and learned many things, but in their studies, they accidentally attracted the cosmic gaze of the demonic god sultan Varhu who was hungry for more life to devour and interested in the magical abnormality. On the island, demonic *nether-beasts* started coming out of dark, fuming hell pits. Crawling on bony legs and arms, they slayed without remorse.

The Xua managed to fight the beasts back into their dark crevasses but when their sages discovered the responsible force they left the island in search of an easier location to study. Apart from the quiet life of the fish folk, the island was then calm until almost a century ago, when the Moon Men came. They quickly enslaved the fish folk and forced them to fish for pearls. But then one year ago the beasts returned from their dark holes and forced most of the pearl-traders to abandon the island, leaving behind a disgruntled governor, some soldiers and a few desperate colonists on the island along with the fish folk. The situation is today made more desperate by a band of fled slave revolutionaries.

Locations of Interest

A. NETHER-PITS. The fuming holes from whence the horrible beasts come crawling. Deep down, the dark tunnels lead to the Netherworld, a hell-plane containing only death and torment. A pillar of smoke rises from an active but slumbering volcano.

B. ANCIENT RUINS. This is where the Xua mainly resided on the island. Strange, alien ruins, since many years conquered by the jungle. Digging in the earth, one can find strange artefacts of unknown origin.

C. BOILING LAKE. Filled with oozing acid, it is best not to dip one's toes in this lake. In the rock under it, caves are carved out by the acid. In these a group of renegade slaves led by *Danh Lai* have taken refuge.

D. BARRIER. To protect from the *nether-beasts*, a barrier was hastily constructed some months ago. Slaves patrol it all the time and during the day the beasts' destruction is repaired, a losing battle.



E. THE SHRINE OF OUMA. On a small islet among the roaring waves is an ancient shrine of the fish folk. Here, the revolutionary *Danh Lai* has called for divine aid in the fight against the masters. This has accidentally attracted the attention of the *nether-beasts* and is the reason for their return to the island.

F. VILLAGE. Here, the fish folk live in small huts on the beach. All of them work for the governor, either as servants in the mansion, fishing for pearls, or

guarding or repairing the barrier. At all times, they are controlled by their guards, who live among a few other men in the village. There is a small tavern, open whenever food and drinks are available to sell. Several houses are abandoned. The village is the hub of the pearl-fishing activities.

G. GOVERNOR'S MANSION. Old ruins from the Xua have been converted into governor's residence. Here, the governor spends all her time. Ten soldiers have remained on the island since they drove back the beasts a year ago. Councillors and a few free colonists from the mainland live in buildings around the mansion. A number of houses stand empty.

ten. Older and more bitter she now cares only about riches, even dabbling in piracy. With her on the island are five loyal servants and ten soldiers. About ten colonists are also on the island who vary in their loyalty to the governor.

THE REVOLUTIONARIES. *Danh Lai* has had enough of slavery. When he found a *medallion of beast control* which exerted some control over the beasts, he fled his chains and started preparing for a revolt against the masters. He had heard the legends of the Xua and performed rituals at the SHRINE OF OUMA to summon their aid. Occasionally riding on the horrible beasts, he and his band of revolutionaries raid the governor's patrols and ships and have attained a mythical status among the fish folk. The band consists of about fifteen former slaves who hide in the caves below the BOILING LAKE.

Persons of Note

Uma Nem Lank, governor. Fake charm. Greedy.
Bardo Bel, governor's moon seer. Stabs innocents to foresee future in the convulsions of the dying.
Rinkel Wim, colonist. Afraid but desperate to stay.
Gruma Drewek, soldier. Scarred battle survivor.
Danh Lai, revolutionary. Idealistic but cruel.
Nam Le, conservative fish folk elder. Fears revolt will lead to horrible retributions.
Mankol Rym, barkeep. Fearless and jovial.
Nether-beasts. Bony, long claws, horned, huge jaws, glowing inside. From dog- to elephant-sized.

Suggested Events

- A ship from the Moon City arrives with supplies. Scheduled to leave with a shipment of pearls the next day.
- A group of *nether-beasts* brutally attack.
- *Danh Lai's* band raid a pearl fishing boat, a colonist's house or a trading ship.
- Pirates turn up to discuss a raid on the next pearl shipment with the governor.
- Thousands of dragon birds appear for their annual nesting on the southern cliffs.

Encounters in the Wild

- 1 - giant mantis on the hunt
- 2 - d6 pirates, hiding themselves or treasure
- 3 - soldier-led scouting expedition
- 4 - d3 desperate slaves, recently fled
- 5 - d10 dragon birds, territorial
- 6 - d3 *nether-beasts* in search of life to consume

Main Factions on the Island

THE GOVERNOR AND HER COMPANY. In a dilapidated mansion the governor sits in a velvet chair, gazing out over the emerald sea, pondering the troubling situation. She is a tall, thin woman with a dark past. When her secret torture dungeon was found in the basement of her townhouse she was sent to the island in the hope that the story would be quickly forgot-