

Siakha's Maw (Madruga)

Free Landing has been wrestled from the clutches of the Grendel, that much is certain, but that outcome is far from desirable for the Empire. The Freeborn islands are now firmly under the control of Siakha's cultists, led by High Priestess Shivaarn.

The Salt Lords have renounced Siakha and those who follow her. Hundreds and hundreds of orcs - Grendel soldiers, pirates, and reavers - along with human mercenaries from across Attar, have now banded together as the Mother of Wrecks calls her followers to Siakha's Maw in Free Landing. This disparate force presents a significant and ongoing threat to Madruga that is made more troubling by the roiling waters and swirling maelstrom that surround the former location of the Shining Pillar. The monstrous heralds of Siakha that now patrol the coastal islands already make a direct assault a difficult proposition, and it seems that Shivaarn plans to make any attempted crossing even harder yet by unleashing dozens of kraken eggs into the waters as a further deterrent.

Much of the latest information on Shivaarn has come from a troubling source. A Grendel going under the epithet the Sea-Wraith has been passing intelligence to Imperial forces. The Sea-Wraith professes to have a shared interest in seeing the Siakha cultists stopped, and claims to be supplying this information because they believe the Empire can act upon it using the Sentinel Gate. This individual is making some fairly extraordinary claims, but the prognosticators have looked into every scrap of information they have received and it all checks out... so far.

Objective: Prevent the Cult Releasing Their Kraken

- **Stop cultists from moving their kraken eggs to the coast**
- **Destroying at least 13 eggs would stop the threat to the crossing**
- **If 12 or more eggs survive it will prevent army movements between Free Landing and the rest of Madruga**

The Cult of Siakha plans to isolate Free Landing from Madruga by making the coastal straits impassable to inshore craft. Information shared by Sea-Wraith reveals that the cult plans to release a number of kraken's eggs into the straits between Freelanding and Lightsea. Not native to the Bay of Catazar, kraken can grow to be fearsome ocean predators capable of killing whales and sinking ships. It is understood that kraken young normally grow slowly in the cold ocean, but can rapidly reach maturity in warmer, shallow seas where food is plentiful. If the kraken were released, Imperial, (or Grendel), armies attempting to storm Free Landing would be set upon by the voracious juveniles, a problem that would only compound as the kraken grew in size and became capable of snatching soldiers right off the deck of a boat.

Without access to a navy, it would not be possible to move an army across the narrow waters to the region's many islands. Small fishing boats, costal traders, and ferries - all of which commonly travelled to Free Landing under the watchful light of the Shining Pillar - would be easily picked off and sunk by the predatory beasts. Young kraken would be no match for the kind of fighting vessels that make up a navy, but that wouldn't help the Empire.

The Empire must destroy 13 - more than half - of Shivarrens eggs being moved across the island during the conjunction. The kraken spawn are large rubbery sacs containing small gestating kraken. Easily destroyed, the eggs will be under guard and moved by skilled handlers drawn from former Kraken's Jaw moridun forces. Sources indicate that the cult will be wary in how they transport the creatures, using distractions to avoid detection, and avoiding gathering them all together in a single place. Imperial heroes will need to scour the entire area to seek out any hidden egg caches or track down orcs attempting to conceal one. A battlefield is a large place, so any attempt to locate the eggs will need to be thorough and it will be essential to communicate how many have been destroyed, less a withdrawal is made before the objective is complete.

Objective: Prevent the Spring Rituals

- **Stop the cultists from casting Thunderous Deluge and Foam and Spittle of the Furious Sea by any means**
- **Shivarrn's ritualists can only cast one ritual at each of the two regio**

It would appear that the Empress of Sharks has also offered her destructive boons to Shivarrn and her cultists. Unsurprisingly, the priests have leapt at the chance to spread chaos and destruction and thereby win the Maelstrom's favour. However they lack the magical strength to create such powerful ritual effects, so Siakha has provided them with a pair of boons that will allow them to boost the power of their ritual, but which will consume the power of the regio for a season once used. That will give the priests enough strength to cast the ritual - but it means they need two regio to perform them both.

To solve that problem, the cult have come here to use the twins - a pair of weak Spring regio, located a short distance apart. Having two regio in close proximity will allow the Siakha worshippers to perform both rituals, provided they can access them. The cult will have to deploy their ritualists carefully as a single regio will no longer function once they complete one of their rituals there so they will need to relocate to the other.

In order to stop the cultists, Imperial forces have several options open to them:

- Kill enough ritualists from the Spring coven to make casting impossible
- Hold one or both regios against the cult until they run out of time
- Locate the cult's quartermaster and relieve them of the mana, paraphernalia, and the precious ilium needed to cast the rituals
- Find a way to make it impossible to use one or both regio

The cultists have a spring coven converging on the maw, desperate to perform their deity's bloody rites. The biggest weakness faced by the cult is that they have little skill, instead relying on potions, and foci to make up their shortfall. If the Empire can capture the orc tasked with overseeing the cult's ritual resources they could claim the treasure and stop the rituals. There is certain to be at least two rings of ilium, either with their quartermaster or the ritualists.

Objective: Free Mohrain Luain

- **Mohrain Luain, a scion of a wealthy merchant family has been captured by the Cultists**
- **Return them to Anvil to obtain a reward of 15 thrones**

It seems that the payment to the Red Ibis last season has already born surprise fruit. A missive sent by the scoundrel arrives in Anvil shortly before the equinox, with an unusual request for aid...

The Luain family are a rich merchant dynasty in Dubtraigh that has old ties to the Salt Lords, providing equipment, clothing, supplies, and foodstuffs to the Grendel's armies and navies when on campaign. Their lucrative contracts have led to the family living pampered lives, isolated from the gruelling wars they enable. The youngest child of the Luain's has, in an act of rebellion and boredom of a life behind a merchant's desk joined the fighting in Madruga, leading a unit of Stone Born. Inept, ignorant, and excited in trying to prove themselves, the young Mohrain was quickly captured during the upheaval on Free Landing and is now being held by cultists of the Mother of Wrecks.

The youth's family are understandably shocked at this turn of events, desperate to see their child safe; so much so that they have contracted the Red Ibis to assist. Red Ibis has in turn approached the Empire to see if they are willing to help. Simply, rescue Mohrain and return them to Dubtraigh, then payment will be sent as recompense. If Mohrain can be freed from the cultists, then it should be easy to convince them to accept a casting of The Cuckoo's Egg, enabling their extraction back to Anvil.

Once they are back in Anvil, they will effectively be a prisoner. The Red Ibis says that Mohrain has a necklace with the family crest on it. A reward of 15 thrones will be sent to any Imperial citizen who offers the necklace - and a rune of Lann in a casting of Ephesis' Scale. The civil service can then arrange the prisoner's safe return to his family.

Objective: Protect Sea-Wraith's Informant

- **Ensure Sea-Wraith's informant survives the battle**
- **If the Empire ensure that Sea-Wraith's informant survives, he will arrange a chance for the Empire to assassinate Governor Rahab**

The civil service have carefully checked all of the information provided by the Grendel who calls themselves "Sea-Wraith" and have been able to confirm all the details... bar this one. There is no reason to think the Grendel is lying, and every reason to think they are telling the truth (the Grendel place great store by Fidelity). But the sheer Audacity of the offer and the depths of the betrayal involved, mean that the prognosticators are advising the Military Council to treat this offer with caution.

Sea-Wraith claims to have an informant in Shivarrn's ranks. Sea Mage Tuairisc is a powerful Sea ritualist operating in a unit of Storm Born. They remain loyal to the Salt Lords and are operating under-cover at great risk to themselves to pass information back to Sea-Wraith and the Council. The magician is carefully playing along with the cult's scheming and ritual preparations and his unit is unaware of his true loyalties. He can be easily recognised by his ritual regalia, a headpiece shaped from a shark's jaw bones.

Sea-Wraith expresses the hope that the Empire will kill as many of the Siakha cultists as possible, but they are adamant that Tuairisc must survive the battle. If the Empire don't take the battle, then the spy should be fine, but if they do attack the cultists, then Sea-Wraith has asked the Military Council to do everything possible to ensure that the Sea Mage escapes unharmed and is not revealed to the enemy.

In return, Sea-Wraith claims they will give the Empire Rahab. To be precise, they claim to be able to arrange a way for the Empire to attack and kill Rahab. The Grendel has provided no information on how this might be achieved, but presumably it would involve supplying the Empire with information on the governor's whereabouts. It is likely that if the Empire knows the location of Rahab then a conjunction of the Sentinel Gate might allow an opportunity to reach him.

Sea-Wraith is very explicit - they will only betray Rahab to the Empire if the Empire attempts to stop the Siakha cultists and only if Tuairisc survives with his cover intact.