

The Angry Sea

The god of the sea is angry and now a coastal town is paying the price. The heroes must appease the sea god or make him lose interest in punishing innocent fishermen. But is that all?

“Because there’s nothing more beautiful than the way the ocean refuses to stop kissing the shoreline, no matter how many times it’s sent away.”

Sarah Kay

The Angry Sea can be used with a coastal town in any fantasy or historical setting that allows for pantheistic religion, i.e. such a thing as a god of the sea actually exists. For settings with a monotheistic world view, a sea demon or ocean faerie can be substituted. For full effect of the sea god’s wrath, the story should be set in a town

or townlet on an island or otherwise cut off from the rest of the world if the sea routes are not available. In a city that cannot send for supplies over land, the ability to sail and fish the ocean means the very difference between life and death.

Cerul, god of the sea, and other NPCs may require rebranding to fit in with other game settings. The inspiration for Cerul draws on Poseidon of Greek mythology, a powerful sea deity for a violent temper and a taste for revenge.

Violence: Low, though final encounter is likely.

Sex: Low. Mention of rape and prostitution.

Plot nature: Investigation.

Primary skill set: Street lore, Charisma.



The setup

The daughter of a fisherman, Betha Lister grew up loving the sea. Playing on the shore, tending the nets, and bringing the catch to market in town—it's the only life she ever wanted. Every now and then she'd run down to the docks to talk to the sailors from far-off countries, wanting stories about life on the open ocean. But children grow into young women, and one day Betha didn't return to her parents' cottage on the outskirts of town.

Where did she go? Did she take off on a foreign ship to see new horizons? Was she lured away in the night by rowdy sailors and promises of pretty trinkets? The old man in the light house claims he saw a girl walking into the waves holding the hand of a man as green and blue as the ocean itself.

When a powerful storm batters the town and harbour, everyone forgets about Betha Lister. How to appease the angry god of the sea?

Behind the scenes

The only thing that set Betha Lister apart from other fishermen's daughters was her *Supernatural Affinity* quirk; the creatures of the sea loved her as much as she loved the ocean itself. The waters were always kind to her, and her parents' catches were rich. Life was easy for the child and her family—but then the child grew up. Eager for stories of the ocean and the sights beyond, Betha started hanging the city docks, talking to sailors. A group of drunk sailors mistook her for a prostitute, and, having had their way with her in spite of her protests, killed her and tossed the body into the waves, in order to hide their crime.

Betha's oceanic friends—fish, porpoises, and other maritime life—passed the tale on to their god, Cerul, the king of the oceans. Less than impressed, the temperamental sea god decided to teach these upstart humans a lesson about respecting those whom the ocean loves. As so typical for gods, he didn't send a cease and desist letter but a natural disaster, leaving it up to the mortals to figure out what they've done wrong.

The story is presented to the heroes through a timeline and a number of scenes which come into play if and when they talk to the right people at the right time.

The storm

Starting as a torrential rainfall and working its way up into a full-scale storm, the bad weather is Cerul's vengeance upon the town. He has no power on dry land, but weather patterns form at sea, where he directs them to batter the shore. Sailing becomes impossible. The town is cut off, the fishermen can't bring in food, the harbour is severely damaged, and commerce grinds to a halt.

There's no sign of the bad weather ending; in fact it keeps getting worse. As the story progresses, the weather grows increasingly worse day by day. Within 48 hours, rats and feral cats are fleeing the rain drenched, flooded streets, fishermen are pulling their boats up on dry land to avoid them being smashed against the moors, and people who live on the harbourfront and other exposed areas are packing up to go visit relatives on higher ground. If the story is not resolved within a day or two more, buildings begin to collapse, tall waves crash into the harbour, destroying ships and property, and the constant torrential rain causes mudslides all over the lower areas of the town. Leave the heroes in no doubt that this town is fighting for its very survival.

The storm will let up on a matter of hours, miraculously even, once Cerul feels that justice has been served. There are a number of ways to achieve this goal;

killing the offending sailors and tossing their bodies into the sea is the one Cerul himself has in mind. Depending on the setting, other sea gods may be appeased by sufficient sacrifice or seeing justice done in other ways.

The scenes

After the first scene—*The sky is darkening*—scenes do not have to play out in order. Scenes are triggered by the actions of the heroes and come into play when they talk to the people involved.

Scene: The sky is darkening

As the townsfolk go about their trades the sky begins to darken and soon a torrential rainfall sends everybody scurrying for cover. The rain comes in unrelentingly from the sea, turning streets and roads into muddy chaos. As the day progresses the rains become worse. Rats are seen running up the streets towards higher ground, dogs howl and try to escape their chains to flee uphill, and birds and cats seem to flee towards safer ground.

Scene: The gods are angry!

When nature demonstrates its power and fury, man looks to his gods for explanations. The people of this town are no different; soon enough, the talk on street corners and under rain-drenched awnings revolve around why the gods of the sea and air are angry. Is this just a powerful storm, or should somebody be singing hymns and making sacrifices now? Sailors and fishermen in particular insist that a storm like this is the physical manifestation of the sea god's anger; if Cerul is not appeased it'll only get worse.

Frightened people make poor decisions, and there will be various suggestions among the idle as to how the sea god might be appeased. Some of them involve thoughts and prayers; more extreme—or drunk—faithful may talk about sacrifices. Everyone knows that when a ship is caught in a storm at sea, the sailors draw lots as to which of them should be tossed overboard as a sacrifice to the sea god. Right?

The heroes should be left with a feeling that things are bad and about to get worse. Whether it's the sea god who ups the scales or a terrified mob doing something stupid, things can only go downhill from here.

Scene: Talk in taverns and taprooms

Heroes who visit taverns, inns, and other public places will be left in no doubt that the townsfolk are afraid. Some are trying to be reasonable about it; storms happen, we'll pull through, we'll repair the damage, we'll weather this. Most, however, are only too happy to do what scared humans do best: Look for somebody to blame.

While blaming the gods is an obvious choice, this is also an opportunity for the enterprising game master who wants to throw in a few red herrings. Is there a suspected witch in town? It's her fault. Is there a cult or minority? They did it. Throwing the heroes off track at this point is fine; it'll force them to talk to more people, and to not jump to conclusions. They may even end up making a few friends and contacts to draw on some other time.

Scene: Talking to the clergy

The heroes may decide to go talk to the clergy of the town's patron deity, or to that of the sea god (the latter being a somewhat obvious choice). Unfortunately, gods

tend to neglect leaving detailed memos for their faithful, and the information that can be acquired is limited.

The town's patron deity—whomever befits the setting—has chosen to not act. Betha Lister's murder is offensive to this deity as well, Betha being a child of the city. The deity will not intervene with the sea god's demands for justice. The clergy has been able to determine that a grave injustice has happened, and that the sea god is punishing the town.

Cerul the sea god's own clergy can be of little more aid. Their god is furious, but they do not know the offense. The priests and priestesses are making sacrifices and trying to appease their god, but until the reason for the sea god's anger is determined, there's not much hope of the tempestuous god's anger relenting.

Scene: Talking to seers and mystics

Street savvy heroes probably know at least one or two people who usually know stuff. Whether these are mystics, seers, the local wizard in the tower, or others who tend to be mystically and/or magically well informed, talk of an angry sea god is likely to send the heroes right to their doorstep.

What exactly such a person knows depends on who they are. Somebody with clairvoyance or other forms of supernatural insight may have visions of a girl walking into the ocean with a blue- or green-skinned man. A sorcerer using divination spells may be able to conjure up Betha Lister's name, or perhaps one or more names of her killers. The village witch's familiar may have heard a rumour from the rats and gulls of the harbour, about a murdered girl. Those who control the elements may be able to coerce entities of water to reveal that the ocean's beloved Betha Lister was killed and dumped in the sea, angering the sea god.

It all comes down to whom the heroes ask, what they ask, and how well they motivate the seer in question (money is good; smashed kneecaps may return faulty or wrong information).

Scene: Talking to people on the docks

Who knows the most about sea gods, legends of the ocean, and the weather of the ocean? That's right—the old guys at the tavern on the docks do. Smart heroes purchase a couple of pints for the town's old and retired fishermen and sailors, and listen to what they're talking about. Doing so will reveal important names.

Arthaud Reginet, the keeper of the lighthouse, there's a man who knows his ocean. Claims he sees the sea people sometimes, mostly when he's had a couple. If anyone knows what's up with the sea, Old Arthaud is the man to talk to. The heroes should go see him at the light house, and don't forget to bring a cask of good strong burn wine when they do. Arthaud is a loner, that's why he lives alone out there. The heroes are going to need to get him drunk to get him to talk.

Marica Lister, a fisherman's wife, has been asking around on the docks the last couple of days, looking for her runaway daughter, Betha. Might not be any correlation but it can't hurt to ask. She lives with her husband and other children just outside of town, not too far from the light house. The heroes can talk to her husband Renard as well, but he's just a big, drunk lug.

Scene: Talking to Arthaud Reginet, the light house keeper

Two days previous to the storm breaking, Reginet swears he saw a girl in a blue dress walk into the ocean, lead by a man whose skin was green or blue, he's not quite sure, the colour of sea water. The couple seemed friendly enough; the girl was not being forced or coerced, but nonetheless, she seemed sad. He's pretty sure he's seen

the girl before, somewhere, but can't quite place her. If prompted, he'll agree that yes, it was probably the Lister girl, but you know, the sprogs grow up so fast.

Reginet will confirm that Cerul is a temperamental god. Somebody did something to anger the sea god, and if the town is to survive, the heroes had better find out who and what, and do something about it. He'll suggest talking to Betha's parents if they haven't already.

Scene: Talking to Betha Lister

Heroes who are able to conjure up ghosts or otherwise communicate with the dead may try to summon Betha herself. This is a viable option, and if thus summoned or conjured, the girl's ghost will reveal her tale. She was assaulted by three drunk sailors, dragged into an alley, raped, attempted strangulated, and then tossed into the ocean to die by drowning. She 'woke up' in the arms of the sea god who allowed her one last visit to her family's house (this is when Arthaud saw her walk into the ocean on the arm of a blue or green-skinned man). She is happy now, but the heroes must find the three sailors and bring them to justice, otherwise Cerul will not relent.

Scene: Talking to Marica Lister

Betha's mother is a hard working and honest woman who lives with her fisherman husband and children near the docks. The family's little house has a warm and welcoming feel even if the occupants are clearly poor. Betha likely had a happy childhood here, and her family misses her greatly—most of all her father Renard who is hiding in his grief in a bottle.

Mrs. Lister will tell the heroes everything she knows, which is unfortunately very little. Her daughter Betha loved playing in the ocean, and the creatures of the ocean seemed to love her back. She sometimes argued with her father about the porpoises, refusing to help lure them into nets or shallows for slaughter. Apart from that, though, family life was quiet and happy, and Betha was a hard working girl who did not shy away from her chores. Mrs. Lister cannot think of any reason anyone would hold a grudge against her, or the family.

Lately, Betha started hanging around the docks, talking to sailors and travellers, and asking for tales of the lands beyond the ocean. Betha is growing into a beautiful young girl, and Mrs. Lister fears that something may have happened to her—or that she has let herself be talked into running away with some charming rogue. She has tried to talk to people around the harbour taverns and docks, but no one seemed to listen or care much, telling her to go home to her husband, the girl will show up again in a week or two.

Scene: The Tit and Anchor

Sporting a bright sign depicting a small bird alighting on a ship's anchor, this is a bawdy tavern. There are no rooms to be rented but you're welcome to drink until you pass out in a corner, then wake up in the gutter outside without your boots or your money purse. There are few regulars as the tavern caters most to rowdy sailors from abroad and the ladies who seek to entertain them. The Tit, as it's cordially referred to, is run by Ackley Cedarwood, a salty sea dog who retired from sailing when he lost a leg.

The Tit is where Betha met her murderers, but finding that out will take a bit of diplomatic effort for the heroes. The tavern's patrons are there to drink hard, not to talk to investigators, and the prostitutes don't much care what happened to some girl who was probably competition.

With a bit of tact and a generous supply of beer, the heroes will manage to piece together that a girl matching

Betha's description came in a few nights ago, with three sailors. Asking around, and keeping the beer flowing, they will learn that the sailors are part of the crew of the *Nightingale*, a grain transport from overseas. One of the three sailors had a distinctive scar running down his face, shouldn't be too hard to find someone like that.

Alternatively, heroes of a brawling disposition may just beat up the patrons until they learn what they need to know. Nothing wrong with a good bar brawl!

Scene: The *Nightingale*

The *Nightingale* is a small grain transport docked in the harbour. It should have left on the tide the day after Betha's demise, but Captain Igrene Beck is not up for braving the powerful storm (nor would any other sane sea captain). The ship has a crew of eight sailors plus its captain; three of these are the men who killed Betha Lister. One is easily recognised on the scar cutting across his face.

Captain Beck is not interested in answering questions from random landlubbers, but she will change her mind if told the full story. The idea that some of her crew may have harmed an innocent girl upsets her greatly, and she will give the heroes her full cooperation in bringing the culprits to justice.

The people

Betha Lister (fisherman's daughter, deceased)

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|------------|---|--------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Presence | 8 | Appearance Charisma Authority | 16 16 9 | # MS | 2 2% |
| Physique | 4 | Agility Strength | 14 13 | AR DMG | n/a n/a |
| Psyche | 10 | Intelligence Memory Discipline | 13 14 11 | HP PP | 16 n/a |
| Potential | 1 | Power Control | 5 8 | DEF | (82) 82/82/82 |
| Technology | 5 | Operation Construction | 11 10 | Luck ALT INTU | 3 41% 48% |
| Vitals: | Human girl in her late teens, auburn-haired, brown-eyed, freckled. Wore a blue dress. | | | | |
| Quirks: | <i>Supernatural Affinity</i> (loved by sea creatures) | | | | |

Betha Lister was an appealing young girl with her whole life ahead of her. Born to poor but honest parents she likely would have married a fisherman or dockworker and gone on to raise a family—if fate had not cut her life so short. The only thing unusual about Betha was that the ocean and its wildlife loved her. Betha often found pretty shells and bits of amber when walking the shore, and she was often seen playing with porpoises in the surf on summer evenings (and refused to help lure the porpoises in for slaughter).

Igrene Beck (Captain of the *Nightingale*)

| | | | | | |
|-----------|---|--------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|------------------|
| Presence | 4 | Appearance Charisma Authority | 11 16 11 | # MS | 4 1% |
| Physique | 8 | Agility Strength | 15 15 | AR DMG | n/a n/a |
| Psyche | 5 | Intelligence Memory Discipline | 13 10 9 | HP PP | 20 n/a |
| Potential | 3 | Power Control | 4 4 | DEF | (77) 77/57/77 |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|--|---------------------------|---------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Technology | 3 | Operation Construction | 12 8 | Luck ALT INTU | 5 47% 29% |
| Vitals: | Dark-haired human female, stout, in her 40s. | | | | |
| Quirks: | <i>Generous, Odd-fashioned, Wanderer.</i> | | | | |
| | Dressing in men's clothing (though to be fair, this is practical at sea), Captain Beck is a tall, no-nonsense woman with a generous heart. She's been sailing all her life and meets familiar faces everywhere she goes. | | | | |
| Skills of note: | Navigation (65%), Street Lore (38%), Vessel (63%). | | | | |
| Items of note: | Leather cuirass (D/A 4, Penalty 2) Sailor's knife (Dmg d3, Penalty 1) | | | | |
| | A rough naval map of a coastline. Marked with 'here be dragons'. Sports a drawing of a sea serpent. | | | | |

Igrene Beck is a sailor through and through but she is also a woman, and far from blind to the threats that women fear. She runs a tight ship and the idea that men in her employ have assaulted and killed a girl is abhorrent to her. If convinced that this is indeed the case, she will give the heroes and authorities her full cooperation in bringing the culprits to justice—regardless of whether justice means handing them over to the town authorities, or tossing them overboard to drown as Betha was.

Arthaud Reginet (keeper of the light house)

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|--|--------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Presence | 7 | Appearance Charisma Authority | 13 16 9 | # MS | 4 1% |
| Physique | 8 | Agility Strength | 10 14 | AR DMG | n/a n/a |
| Psyche | 9 | Intelligence Memory Discipline | 12 16 11 | HP PP | 32 n/a |
| Potential | 3 | Power Control | 4 13 | DEF | (82) 82/82/82 |
| Technology | 8 | Operation Construction | 16 10 | Luck ALT INTU | 4 50% 40% |
| Vitals: | Human male in his 60s, white-haired, grey-eyed, olive skin. Walks with a limp from an old injury that forced him to retire from being a sailor. | | | | |
| Quirks: | <i>Absent-minded, Chill, Jinx, Naturally Resistant.</i> | | | | |
| | Arthaud Reginet is an old man with an old man's memory: He vividly remembers things that happened forty years ago, but last week is a challenge. He's chronically unimpressed with any person or idea less than forty years old, and to top it off, he's a jinx. On the up side, he's got an impressive tolerance towards alcohol and bribing him with burn wine will get you far. | | | | |
| Skills of note: | Folklore (32%), History (48%), Street Lore (31%). | | | | |
| Items of note: | A lucky rabbit's foot. | | | | |

The keeper of the light house, Reginet lives alone and only ventures into town to shop and get drunk, preferring to keep the company of seagulls and porpoises on his lonely vigil. Nonetheless, he is one of those people who knows every ship and every tale of the sea. Depending on the setting and what other people the heroes know or inquire about on the docks and harbour, Reginet is a reliable source in all matters naval.

Raccoon Oldford (sailor)

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|------------|---|--------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Presence | 6 | Appearance Charisma Authority | 14 14 15 | # MS | 8 n/a |
| Physique | 9 | Agility Strength | 19 18 | AR DMG | -4 +2 |
| Psyche | 7 | Intelligence Memory Discipline | 14 15 11 | HP PP | 36 n/a |
| Potential | 3 | Power Control | 4 4 | DEF | (72) 72/72/72 |
| Technology | 6 | Operation Construction | 9 8 | Luck ALT INTU | 5 50% 29% |

Vitals: Human male, mid-20s, brawny, red hair and stubble, pale skin, freckled, hazel eyes, prominent facial scar.

Quirks: *Absent-minded, Ambitious, Impulsive, Well, Actually.*

Eager to rise through the ranks and become a sea captain in his own right, Raccoon Oldford nonetheless tends to lose focus and have his attention grabbed by any pretty face nearby. He acts on his romantic notions without thinking of the consequences. At least he can always tell you why you are wrong and he is not.

Skills of note: Brawling (32%), Coolness (26%), Craft, Sailor (47%), Weapon, Knife (35%)

Items of note: Sailor's knife (Dmg d3, Penalty 1)

A printed magazine of naughty copperplate prints.

A brawny and mean-spirited man of much ambition and little responsibility or thought for consequences, Oldford has been on a one-way track to self-destruction for a while now. He's the leader of the little group of three sailors that attacked and murdered Betha Lister. Nothing can be said or done to convince this man that he's done anything wrong. If she didn't want it, she shouldn't have walked the docks after dark.

Oldford is armed with a sharp knife and a strong temper. In combat he tries to intimidate opponents that appear weaker than himself. A stronger opponent is better dealt with by shoving one of his companions in front and then relying on his own speed. Oldford is not afraid of a fight but has no intention of getting injured if someone else can take the blow in his place.

Avon Porter (sailor)

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|------------|---|--------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Presence | 9 | Appearance Charisma Authority | 11 12 11 | # MS | 2 n/a |
| Physique | 4 | Agility Strength | 13 11 | AR DMG | n/a n/a |
| Psyche | 7 | Intelligence Memory Discipline | 11 10 10 | HP PP | 16 n/a |
| Potential | 1 | Power Control | 8 8 | DEF | (83) 83/83/83 |
| Technology | 4 | Operation Construction | 11 9 | Luck ALT INTU | 3 52% 33% |

Vitals: Human male in his late 30s, going bald, brown hair, beard and eyes. Lanky build.

Quirks: *Neat, Open-minded, Wanderer.*

Good-natured and well travelled, Porter is not the kind of man one would associate with violent crime. A restless soul, he's visited most ports worthy of mention, always earning praise from his superiors for his work ethics and neatness. This time, however, his open mind got the better of him, allowing Oldford to lead him into a situation he's come to regret.

Skills of note: Brawling (36%), Coolness (28%), Craft, Sailor (56%).

Items of note: An indulgence from the church, granting its owner absolution from one instance of petty theft. Probably isn't transferable to a new owner but the name has not yet been filled in.

Porter has a forgettable face and an easy-going nature. Until Betha Lister's murder he was no criminal, and he is not happy about the situation—but too frightened of Oldford to tattle. If separated from his companions and treated with a modicum of respect (or for that matter, threatened or beaten into a state of terror), he'll offer a full confession and appear relieved to be able to rid himself of the burden of secrecy. He'll plead for his life but not be surprised to learn that he's destined for the gallows (or the sea).

He's no brawler and will fight unenthusiastically while looking for a way to escape the combat situation altogether. In this, Porter will have few qualms about leaving his companions in trouble; he reasons that they're the reason he's in this mess to begin with.

Druet "Baby" Chandler (sailor)

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|------------|---|--------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Presence | 6 | Appearance Charisma Authority | 14 13 14 | # MS | 4 n/a |
| Physique | 9 | Agility Strength | 15 19 | AR DMG | n/a +4 |
| Psyche | 7 | Intelligence Memory Discipline | 8 11 12 | HP PP | 36 n/a |
| Potential | 2 | Power Control | 7 11 | DEF | (76) 76/71/76 |
| Technology | 5 | Operation Construction | 12 11 | Luck ALT INTU | 5 54% 35% |

Vitals:

Quirks: *Annoying Habit, Naturally Resistant, Overconfident.*

Chandler is a large man of small intelligence. He can drink most men under the table, and likes to boast about it—and gods help anyone who comments on his habit of burping loudly after each draught, then banging the mug on the table until the hapless bar wench runs up with a refill. He's not a pleasant person and he never backs down from a challenge—Baby gets what Baby wants. For reasons unknown, Chandler obeys Oldford without question. Also, don't call him Baby unless he told you that you can.

Skills of note: Brawling (53%), Coolness (47%), Craft, Sailor (37%).

Items of note: Leather gorget (Penalty 1)
Knuckles (Dmg d4+1, Penalty 1)

A lucky piece of turquoise no larger than a small coin. Not very valuable but engraved with bogus magic runes.

A brawler turned sailor, Chandler is a brute of limited intelligence who's all too happy to follow Oldford's lead without worrying about the consequences. He firmly believes that might makes right and does not feel that he's done wrong. Besides, the world is full of girls, it's not like one more or less really matters. Chandler will not confess, not even in the face of hard evidence, unless Oldford directly tells him to do so—which is not very likely, unless Oldford spots a chance to make Chandler confess in order for himself to go free.

In a combat situation Chandler relies on brute strength; his impressive stature tends to intimidate opponents and he'll roar and posture to this effect. He's likely to end up as a meat shield to Oldford who has no qualms about hiding behind Chandler to save his own behind.

Conclusion: The sea is calm

The heroes may appease the sea god by any means satisfactory to gods in the setting used. Some gods can be bribed with sacrifices, others will want dead sailor bodies. The intention is for the heroes to have to take the three sailors down by force and kill them, but other roads can certainly be taken.

Once achieved, various storylines may open to the heroes. Will they assist with repairing the damage done

by the storm? Will they help convince townsfolk and gentry with money to aid those rendered homeless and destitute by the raging waters? Will they simply collect a reward from some grateful city official, then ride off into the sunset?

Credits

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