



SWURPG ADVENTURE

The Sable Wake

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This is the GM document for *The Sable Wake* — a five-session horror adventure for a party of four at level 3 (scales 2–6). It runs a dead ship, a slow dread, and a hard choice about what to do with the thing that killed her crew. Everything here is GM-facing; the players get the spoiler-free landing on the [Adventures hub](#). Read the **Real Story** and the **Manifestation scaling table** before session zero, then run the acts in order. General "how the party met" framings live on the [hub](#); the three entry hooks below plug into any of them.

Synopsis

The survey tender *Sable Wake* went quiet on a travel lane weeks ago and now drifts, dark and cold, answering no hails. The party boards her — to claim the salvage, to answer a distress beacon, or on a broker's quiet contract, whichever hook you choose. Inside, the crew is dead and the ship is *wrong*: the lights breathe, the cold has weight, and a whisper moves through the dark that Force-sensitives feel like a hand on the back of the neck. The survey's last dig recovered a dark-side reliquary — a fist-sized idol of fused black stone and bone — and over eleven days it whispered the crew into suspicion, then murder, feeding on the killing until it turned the whole vessel into a Force-nexus that now replays the death. It has puppeted a handful of corpses, twisted the live specimens in the hold into something worse than they were, and it does not want anyone to leave. The party works deck by deck toward the reliquary's chamber, past the dead and the dread, and reaches a choice at the heart of the ship: destroy the idol, take it, seal it and walk away, or make a bargain with the thing that's been whispering their names.

The Real Story

What the players *think* they're doing (salvage, rescue, or a retrieval job) is not what's happening. Here is what actually happened aboard the *Sable Wake*, in order:

The *Sable Wake* is a **deep-space survey and salvage tender** — a working ship that catalogues wrecks and old sites, sells artifacts to collectors, and runs a small **live-specimen hold** for the exotic-creature trade on the side.

Her last job was a **tomb-world dig** (call it Veranthe; move it to fit your era and galaxy). The survey lead, **Dr. Ysanne Corr**, pulled a sealed **reliquary** out of the deepest chamber — a black idol of fused stone and bone that reads cold to the touch and colder to the Force. The same haul filled the specimen hold with a small pack of caged **vornskrs** — Myrkr predators that hunt by sensing the Force.

Scanning the idol woke it. It is a dark-side nexus, and it feeds on death. It could not act on its own — so it *whispered*. Over eleven days (the logs degrade as it worked) it turned the crew's ordinary frictions into certainty: that someone was stealing, that someone had turned, that the only safe move was the first move. Suspicion became a knife in the dark, then several.

The **massacre fed it**. Each death made it stronger, until it could reach past the crew — into the ship's systems, and into the caged vornskrs, warping them into savage, dark-drawn things straining at failing containment.

Bex Talvor, the ship's engineer, was the last one standing and the only one who understood. He spaced the bodies he could reach, sealed the reliquary behind the engineering bulkhead, scrawled warnings on the walls, and set the beacon. Then the ship — or the idol — took him too. (Whether Bex is *dead*, or alive-but-hollowed and waiting, is a GM choice in Act II.)

What's left is **the haunt**: cold, whispers, echoes of the crew's last days that replay for anyone who walks the decks, a handful of relic-puppeted corpses (**the Hollowed**), the twisted vornskrs loose below, and — at the center — the reliquary and the death-echo it has grown into: **the Keening**.

GM The crucial GM call

Play the dread as *doubt*, not jump-scares. The reliquary's power is that it makes ordinary things read as threats — a closing door, a crewmate's silence, a shape at the edge of the light. Never tell the players "you feel evil." Show them a cold spot, a whisper that uses a real name, a log that ends mid-sentence, and let them decide it's nothing. It is never nothing. The horror lands when the party turns on *each other* — so hand the whispers real, specific, private temptations (see the Dread rules below) and let paranoia do the work the monsters can't.

The Dread (how the haunt touches the party)

The *Sable Wake* is a dark-side nexus, so proximity and its echoes press on the living. This uses existing SWURPG rules — no new mechanics:

The save. When the ship reaches for someone (entering a haunted space, touching a marked object, an echo naming them), call a **Wisdom saving throw** against the ship's dread DC, which escalates by act: **DC 12 in Act I, DC 14 in Act II, DC 16 in Act III.**

On a failure, the target gains the **Frightened** condition until the end of their next turn (or the scene, GM's call) — *or* takes a GM-chosen compulsion in its place: drop a held item, refuse to enter a space, turn on the nearest ally with a harsh word. Keep it small and personal.

Force-users feel it worst. A character using the Force (or with the **Use the Force** skill) rolls their Dread saves at **disadvantage** while the reliquary is active, and hears the whispers *clearly* — the idol wants them most. In return, **Use the Force** checks reveal far more of the Real Story (see the echoes throughout), and a Force-user who **succeeds** on a Dread save senses a true, useful thing about the space they're in. The gift and the danger are the same sense.

The whispers are a roleplay tool, not damage. Hand each player a private, true-to-their-character temptation — the salvage is worth more if you cut the others out; the survivor knows something you could take; you were always the strongest one here. The whispers never lie outright; they *aim* true things at the worst target. There is no corruption score to track — this is theater. (An anti-TPK release valve, modeled on the "dramatic save" pattern, lives in Act III.)

How the Party Met

The Sable Wake is built to drop into any campaign, so the reason the party boards a dead ship is left to the GM. Pick one of the three hooks below at session zero — the haunt is identical once they're aboard, and each hook only changes who sent them and what they think they're walking into. Use whichever fits your table (and pair it with the general framings on the [Adventures hub](#)). The adventure assumes a party of level 3; the six pre-made bank characters are level 1, so run them leveled to 3 if you want ready-made PCs, or bring your own.

⚡ **DECISION POINT PICK THE ENTRY HOOK (GM CHOOSES AT SESSION ZERO)**

- A Salvage.** The *Sable Wake* pinged an open salvage registry as an unclaimed derelict. The party are the salvagers — and they are not the only crew who saw the ping. A **rival crew** is inbound or already aboard (see Scene 2.2). The moral squeeze: the ship is worth a fortune, and every hour spent stripping her is an hour closer to waking what's below.
- B Rescue.** A weak, looping distress beacon carries a partial crew manifest and one live word: "*—still here—*". The survey company, or a crewmember's family, hires the party to find survivors. The squeeze: someone may still be alive aboard, and finding out whether they're still *themselves* is the whole job.
- C Contract.** A neutral broker, **Sethra Iaan**, pays well to retrieve the *Sable Wake*'s "recovered find" and her data cores — and won't say why the find matters or how she knew where the ship was. The squeeze: the party is being paid to carry the reliquary *out*, and the broker never mentions it's dangerous.

GM Keep the hook light

Don't over-invest the hook. Whoever sent them, the beacon, the registry ping, or the broker's cred-stick gets the party to the airlock in the first ten minutes — then the ship takes over the storytelling. The salvage hook is the richest (it hands you the rival crew as a live wildcard); the rescue hook is the most personal (it makes the survivor question matter most); the contract hook is the cleanest drop-in and sets up the strongest Act III temptation (they were *hired* to take the idol). If your table wants the reliquary's origin to hit harder, seed the broker (contract hook) as someone who has done this before.

The Manifestation scaling table (read before session zero)

The **Keening** is the Act III boss — the reliquary's accreted death-echo, given form. Set its tier by party size **before session 1** and hold that tier for the whole finale; don't shift mid-fight. All other combats scale by the per-encounter notes in each **<Encounter>**; the Keening gets its own table because it is the spine the climax is built on.

PARTY SIZE	KEENING TIER	TR	HP	AC	FORCE DC	HOLLOWED IT RAISES EACH ROUND
2 PCs	Echo	3	70	15	14	1
3 PCs	Echo	4	90	16	15	1
4 PCs (default)	Keening	5	120	16	15	2
5 PCs	Keening	5	120	17	16	2
6 PCs	Choir	6	150	17	16	3

Constant across tiers: Speed 0 ft (it hangs in the air; it *reaches* rather than moves), it is **incorporeal** — resistant to Energy and Kinetic damage, immune to being grappled, shoved, or knocked prone. **Attacks:** *Grave-cold Reach* (melee, Force DC or the target takes 2d8 Cold + is Frightened) and *Wail* (all living creatures in the chamber, WIS save vs Force DC or Frightened for 1 round; recharge each time the party has NOT damaged the reliquary that round). It cannot leave the nexus chamber, and **its HP is tied to the reliquary** — see Act III for the "hit the idol, not the ghost" objective that makes the fight winnable at level 3.

Act I – Boarding the Silence

Estimated length: 1 session, roughly 3 to 4 hours. **What it teaches:** initiative and cover (the droid), ranged vs. mobile-melee tactics (the vornskrs), and the Dread save — the first Wisdom saves against DC 12, and the first whisper that uses a player's name.

The *Sable Wake* hangs dead in space: a mid-bulk survey tender, hull scarred with old salvage cuts, running lights dark, one docking ring lit by a single failing strip of emergency amber. She is not answering. Act I is the boarding and the first two decks — the party learns the ship is dead, then learns the ship is *wrong*, then meets the first two things aboard that will try to kill them: one mundane, one very much not.

Scene 1.1 – The Approach & the Hook

READ ALOUD

*The *Sable Wake* grows in the viewport from a speck to a wall of dark hull. She's a working ship — a survey tender, blunt and functional, her flanks stitched with the scars of a hundred salvage cuts. No running lights. No transponder. One docking ring wears a thin band of failing amber, the only lit thing on her, blinking at an interval a half-second too slow to be a heartbeat. Your comms carry nothing back but your own hail, and under it, faint, a sound like wind — except there is no wind in vacuum.*

Open with the hook you chose (Salvage / Rescue / Contract). Whatever the framing, the party has to get *aboard*, and how they board sets the tone. The airlocks are unpowered; the ship has minimal drifting rotation.

⚡ DECISION POINT HOW DOES THE PARTY BOARD?

- A Dock at the ring.** The obvious way. Matching the *Sable Wake*'s slow drift is a **PILOT • DC 13**; on a failure the hard-dock jars the ship and *something* shifts deep inside — the party enters knowing they've announced themselves. Fastest route in, opens at the cargo deck (Scene 1.2).
- B Cut through the hull.** Slower, quieter. A **MECHANICS • DC 14** to open a clean breach at the specimen hold or cargo deck (GM's choice of entry point). Skips the ring's failing lock but bleeds heat and time.
- C EVA to an outer hatch.** Suit up and cross the gap by hand. **ACROBATICS • DC 12** to cross cleanly (a failure is not fatal — it's a tense recovery and a used nerve). Lands the party wherever the GM wants them, and starts the adventure already outside their comfort zone.

GM

However they board, the ship is under power just enough to be uncanny: gravity holds at about three-quarters, atmosphere is thin but breathable and cold enough to fog breath, and the lights run at a failing amber that *dims when no one is looking at it*. Establish these three facts in the first scene and never explain them. The first **Dread save (WIS DC 12)** comes the moment the inner airlock seals behind them and the outside goes away — a small, involuntary WIS save that teaches the mechanic before it matters. On a failure, the character simply *doesn't want to be here*, and knows it in their spine.

Scene 1.2 – The Dead Decks

READ ALOUD

The airlock cycles you into a cargo deck the size of a small hangar, and the smell reaches you first — cold, and under the cold, something older. The amber emergency strips throw more shadow than light. There are bodies. Not many, not here — two, near the far bulkhead, curled the way people curl when they've decided the corner is safer than the room. Frost has grown on them like fur. The manifest crates are half-strapped, mid-job, as if the crew stopped loading between one breath and the next. And somewhere past the bulkhead, patient and unhurried, something is moving on servos.

This is the establishing deck: the crew is dead, the job was abandoned mid-motion, and the first thing that still **works** aboard is hostile. Let the party investigate — the bodies (a **Treat Injury** or **Perception** look reads knife and blaster wounds, **crew-on-crew**, not an outside attacker — the first clue that the killer came from inside), the abandoned crates (party-tier salvage), a wall-mounted deck terminal. A **Use Computer** check (DC 13) pulls the first, cleanest log entry before the record degrades:

Day 3. Corr says the find's inert — just old stone. Captain wants it crated for the buyer. Morale's fine. Everyone's a little on edge since Veranthe but that's just deep-space nerves. — Talvor, Eng.

Then the droid finds them.

✂ COMBAT CORRUPTED LOADER DROID (1, +1 SENTRY FOR 5-6 PCS)

→ *Stats, tactics, scaling, and loot: see the Stat Reference PDF (grouped by scene).*

GM

This is the **teaching combat** — initiative, cover, and the split between melee reach and ranged. Don't crit; let every player take a turn and see the math work. The thematic job of this fight is the **fake-out**: the party braces for the supernatural and gets a malfunctioning machine instead. Play it straight and let the relief land — then take it away in the next scene, when the thing in the hold is very much not a machine. If the party shut the droid down without a fight, good — give them the loot anyway and let them feel clever; they'll need the confidence.

→ Tactical map — The Dead Decks — Cargo Bay: see the Maps PDF (grouped by scene).

Scene 1.3 – The Specimen Hold

READ ALOUD

*The corridor past the cargo deck ends in a blast door already half-open and stuck, scored along its edge by something that was very determined to get out. Beyond it: the specimen hold. Rows of containment cells line both walls, most of them dark, a few of them **open** — doors bent outward, transparisteel starred and broken from the inside. The floor is slick with spilled feed and something darker. The cold in here has a texture. And from the dark at the far end of the rows comes a sound you feel in your teeth before you hear it — a low, questing keen, and then the scrabble of claws finding purchase, moving fast, and moving toward the one of you who touches the Force.*

The survey's live specimens were a small pack of **vornskrs** — predators from Myrkr that hunt by sensing the Force. The reliquary warped them: they were dangerous before, and now they're savage, fast, and *drawn to Force-users* like iron to a lodestone. This is the Act I climax and the "living things are wrong here too" turn. The hold is a mobile fight — broken cells for cover, spilled feed as difficult terrain, and blast doors the party can try to seal to split the pack.

⚔ **COMBAT** TWISTED VORNSKRS (PACK OF 3 + 1 ALPHA FOR 4 PCS — SEE SCALING)

→ *Stats, tactics, scaling, and loot: see the Stat Reference PDF (grouped by scene).*

GM

Teach the **screen-the-Force-user** puzzle here without saying it aloud: describe the pack *flowing past* the front-line fighter to get at the Jedi, and let the players work out that they have to body-block, use difficult terrain, and seal doors to protect their most vulnerable member. It's the first time the adventure's central idea — *the Force is what's in danger here* — becomes a tactics problem. This is also the scene where a Force-user first hears the whispers clearly (Dread save at disadvantage): as the alpha dies, a voice that is not the vornskr's says the Force-user's name, kindly, from the dark at the end of the hold. Don't explain it. End the session on it if the pacing lands there.

→ Tactical map — The Specimen Hold — Containment Bay: see the Maps PDF (grouped by scene).

Act I ends with the party two decks in, bloodied, and no longer able to pretend the *Sable Wake* is just a dead ship. They've met the mundane threat (the droid) and the twisted-living threat (the vornskrs). They have not yet met the dead — that's Act II — and they have not yet heard the ship *remember*. Pause here.

Act II – The Ship Remembers

Estimated length: 2 sessions, roughly 6 to 8 hours total. **What it teaches:** Heroic Surge (the hazard crawl), Force use and Expertise (reading echoes, the survivor), and the group skill challenge (the sealed bulkhead). The Dread DC rises to **14**, and this is where the ship stops being a place and starts being a *memory* — the echoes replay the eleven days, the first Hollowed rise, and the party meets the only other thing still moving with a will of its own.

The crew deck is where the *Sable Wake* died — quarters, medbay, the mess, the little rooms where eleven days of whispers turned people who trusted each other into people who didn't. It is also failing: hull breaches, a scrubber fire, grav-plating that can't decide which way is down. The party has to cross it to reach the engineering bulkhead and the sealed heart of the ship — and the ship does not want them to.

Scene 2.1 – The Crew Deck

READ ALOUD

*The crew deck is a ring of small rooms around a central mess, and it is where the ship stopped pretending. The walls are marked — not with the ship's stenciling, but by hand: a word repeated, **DON'T LISTEN**, scratched into the paint outside three different cabins by three different hands. The mess table is set for a meal no one ate; the chairs are pushed back, all of them, at once. A cold draft pulls toward a section of corridor where the amber light gives way to the hard black of a hull breach and the stars beyond. And on the deck, in the frost, are drag-marks — something was moved through here, recently, and moved *itself*.*

This is a **hazard crawl** — the party has to work through three failing systems to cross the deck. Each is optional to engage directly (there are always slower ways around), but engaging teaches a mechanic and pulls a piece of the Real Story. Interleave the hazards with **echoes**: when the party enters a marked cabin, a **Use the Force** check (DC 13) or an **Insight** read of the room replays a fragment of the eleven days — a crewmember barricading a door, a whispered argument, the captain crating the idol against Corr's objection. Feed the paranoia arc in order.

Hazard A – The Breach

READ ALOUD

The corridor ahead opens to space. A meteoroid or a weapon — impossible to say — punched a hole the size of a speeder through the outer hull and the section beyond, and the emergency field that should have sealed it is failing, flickering, holding maybe six seconds in ten. On the far side, past the stars, is the passage you need. The frost on the deck says the field has failed before.

Crossing the breach section means timing the failing containment field. **Athletics** or **Acrobatics** (DC 14) to cross in one field-cycle; on a failure, the character is caught at the edge of a decompression pulse — a **Strength save** (DC 13) to brace and avoid being dragged toward the black (no fall damage, but a hard, frightening recovery, and a used nerve). A **Mechanics** check (DC 15) stabilizes the field for everyone, turning the hazard off — the clean solution. This is a good **Heroic Surge** moment: a player who spends it to make the impossible cross looks like a hero, which is exactly the fantasy horror keeps trying to take away.

Hazard B – The Scrubber Fire

READ ALOUD

The medbay hatch is warm to the touch. Inside, an electrical fire has been burning low and starved in the sealed room for who knows how long, feeding on the air, filling it with acrid smoke — and the medbay is where the ship's spare medical supplies are, and where one more log entry waits on a scorched datapad.

The medbay holds **party-tier medical loot** (2× Medpac II) and a log, but the air is a hazard. **Endurance** or a **Constitution save** (DC 13) to work in the smoke without choking; **Mechanics** (DC 14) vents the compartment and kills the fire; a Force-user can smother it with an appropriate power. The scorched datapad (Use Computer DC 12) gives a middle-arc log:

Day 7. Kesh is dead. They're saying I did it. I found him — I FOUND him, I didn't — the vornskrs are screaming in the hold and nobody will go down there and Corr won't look at the idol and I can hear it now too, I can hear it when it's quiet — Talvor

Hazard C – The Turning Deck

READ ALOUD

*The last stretch of corridor before the mess is wrong in a way that takes a moment to name: the grav-plating is failing in patches, and **down** keeps changing. A section of floor is suddenly a wall; a body drifts a foot off the deck in a dead zone, turning slowly, and settles the wrong way as gravity catches it again.*

Acrobatics (DC 13) to move cleanly through the shifting gravity; a failure isn't damage, it's a disorienting tumble that costs position and dignity. The body in the dead zone is a crewmember — and when the party gets close, it opens its eyes.

⚔ COMBAT THE HOLLOWED (3 HUSKS FOR 4 PCS — SEE SCALING)

→ *Stats, tactics, scaling, and loot: see the Stat Reference PDF (grouped by scene).*

GM

The Hollowed are the adventure's **atmosphere engine**, not its damage engine — they're TR 1 and individually weak on purpose. Their job is **dread**, not lethality: they wear faces, they speak in the dead crew's voices, and they never stop coming, which teaches the party that fighting the symptom is a losing game. Lean into the horror of it — a player realizing the husk swinging at them is the crewmember whose distress beacon they're answering is worth more than any amount of HP. Teach the **retreat-breaks-them** lever by showing it: if a scared party falls back toward the airlock, let the Hollowed slow and stop, and let the players feel the pull between **safe** (leave) and **the job** (go deeper).

→ Tactical map — The Crew Deck — Mess, Cabins & the Breach: see the Maps PDF (grouped by scene).

Scene 2.2 – The Other Presence

Not everything still moving aboard the **Sable Wake** is dead or twisted. There is one more will here — and who it is depends on the hook you chose. Run **one** of the two versions below. Both deliver the same beats: a living person the reliquary is working on, a choice about whether to trust them, and the last, worst pieces of the Real Story.

Version A – The Survivor (default; strongest with the Rescue hook)

READ ALOUD

There is a light on behind the engineering sub-bay hatch — a real light, warm and white, the only honest light on the ship. Inside, wedged into a maintenance alcove behind a barricade of hull plating and cabling, is a man. Alive. Thin, grey-faced, a welder's torch in one hand and a hydrospanner in the other, and he does not point either at you — he just looks, for a long moment, at your eyes, checking something. Then, quietly: "You're breathing. You're actually breathing. Good. That's good. Are you real, or is it doing you too?"

NPC BEX TALVOR — Sole survivor — ship's engineer

Voice: Exhausted, over-controlled, fast when frightened. Checks people's eyes before he trusts them. Talks about the ship like it's a person that's ill, because to him it is.

Motivation: Wants off the ship, and wants the reliquary sealed or destroyed — he's the one who understood it. But eleven days of whispers have left a crack in him the idol is still working, and part of him wants the party to just *take it and go* so the whispers stop.

Bex is the closest thing the adventure has to a guide and the closest thing it has to a ticking bomb. He sealed the reliquary, spaced the bodies he could, and has survived by staying near his honest white light and never, ever listening. He knows the whole Real Story and will give it up in pieces as trust builds — but he is **relic-touched**, and if the party leans on him or the whispers spike, the crack shows.

READ ALOUD

*"I'm Talvor. Bex. Engineer. There were nine of us." He says the number like it costs him. "Corr pulled a **thing** out of that dig — a little black idol, cold, wrong — and the captain crated it and it started **talking**. Not out loud. Underneath. It tells you the true thing that hurts the most and it lets you decide to do something about it. By day seven we were killing each other. I put it behind the engineering bulkhead. I welded it shut. And it's **still talking**, so either I go through that door and end it, or you help me, or —" he stops, and his eyes go somewhere for a second, and come back — "or you take it off my ship and it becomes someone else's problem and I sleep for the first time in a week. That's — sorry. That's the idol talking. Ignore that. Mostly."*

Building trust with Bex is the roleplay heart of Act II. He gives up the Real Story in stages as the party earns it: **Insight** (DC 13) reads that he's telling the truth **and** that something's wrong with him; **Persuasion** (DC 14) or genuine roleplay opens him up; **Treat Injury** (DC 12) both heals him and buys enormous trust. What he reveals, in order: the idol whispers **true** temptations; it fed on the killing; it puppets the dead within its reach; it can't leave the nexus chamber but it **reaches**; and — the crucial tactical intel — **the reliquary is the source of everything, and if it's destroyed, the Hollowed drop and the Keening unravels**. He does not know about the Keening's full form; nobody who saw it lived.

GM Bex's crack (the tragedy lever)

Bex is not a villain, and he is not safe. He genuinely wants the party to succeed — but the idol has a hook in him, and under pressure (a spiked Dread save, a harsh word, the party threatening to take the relic *for* profit) the crack widens: he'll argue for the wrong choice with real conviction, or freeze at the worst moment, or — if the party is cruel or greedy — quietly unlock a door for the whispers. Play his fight against himself as the human mirror of the party's own Dread saves. If he lives to Act III, he can be the **anti-TPK dramatic save** (see Act III): the one clean, honest thing on the ship spending the last of himself to buy the party a round. If he dies, make it *mean* something — never a cheap shock.

Version B – The Rival Crew (default with the Salvage hook)

If the party came for salvage, they are not alone. Another crew — the **Velloc outfit** — beat them aboard or landed minutes behind, and eleven hours in the ship's dark has already started to work on them. Where Bex is one cracked-but-honest survivor, the Velloc crew is a live, armed, *deteriorating* problem: paranoid, greedy, and being turned in real time.

NPC TARN VELLOC — Rival salvage boss

Voice: Loud, jovial, and a half-second behind his own smile. Calls the party 'partners' and means 'obstacles.' Getting worse by the hour — the whispers are telling him the party is here to cut him out, and he's starting to believe it.

Motivation: Claim the *Sable Wake* and her cargo. Under the idol's influence, that hardens into certainty that the party (and, soon, his own crew) mean to rob him. Wants the black idol specifically — a voice has told him it's the real prize.

Tarn leads two others — **Daccess** (heavy; TR 2, HP 26, AC 15, vibro-axe +5 for 1d10+2 kinetic) and **Nyle** (slicer/tech; TR 2, HP 18, AC 14, blaster pistol +4 for 1d10 energy, Use Computer +6). When the party meets them, the crew is armed, twitchy, and one bad beat from turning — on the party, or on each other.

 READ ALOUD

"Well — partners." The big man spreads his hands, rifle still slung but his fingers near it. "Didn't expect company on a dead boat. Plenty of ship to go around, I'm sure. My associate here" — he doesn't look at the tech, whose hands are shaking — "was just saying how it'd be a shame if anybody got *greedy*. This far out. Where nobody's watching." His smile holds a half-second too long. "You didn't come for the little black one, did you? The idol. Because that one's spoken for."

 DECISION POINT THE VELLOC CREW

- A Parley.** The crew can be talked down — for now. **PERSUASION · DC 15** or **INSIGHT · DC 13** to read that they're being *worked on* and name it. Success buys an uneasy alliance to reach the bulkhead together — but the whispers keep pulling, and the crew may turn in Act III at the worst moment.
- B Fight.** If it goes loud, run it as a real fight (stats above) — but the *ship* is a third combatant: Dread saves fire mid-fight, and a Hollowed or two may rise and attack *both* sides. The tragedy is that this fight is exactly what the idol wants.
- C Let them take it.** The cynical path: step back and let the Velloc crew push for the reliquary themselves. They'll reach the nexus, and the idol will use them — turning Act III into a rescue-or-cleanup, with the crew as the first Hollowed the party's own size.

GM

Whichever version you run, the point of Scene 2.2 is the same: **the party watches the ship do to someone else exactly what it's trying to do to them**. Bex is the tragedy of it (a good person cracked); the Velloc crew is the warning of it (greed the idol sharpens into murder). Either way, the party should leave this scene understanding that the whispers are real, that they work, and that no one is immune — which is the fear they carry into the sealed bulkhead and the choice beyond it.

Scene 2.3 – The Sealed Bulkhead

 READ ALOUD

*The engineering bulkhead is a slab of blast-door steel, and someone has been at it from this side with a welder — beads of hardened slag seal the seams, and across the middle, in the same hand as the cabin walls, three words: **IT'S STILL AWAKE**. Behind the door, the cold is a physical pressure, a headache with a shape. And the moment your hands touch the steel, the ship notices. The lights die to black. The whispers, for the first time, speak **together** — a chorus, and every one of them is saying a different one of your names.*

Getting through the bulkhead is a **group skill challenge** — the ship is actively resisting, and the party has to work the problem together while the Dread presses and the dark closes in. Require **3 successes before 2 failures**, each PC contributing an action against **DC 14**:

Mechanics or **Use Computer** — cut Bex's welds / override the door's dark-fouled controls.

Athletics — force the failing door on its track once the seals are cut.

Use the Force — hold the pressure back, or read the lock's dark-side "wound" to find its weak seam (a Force-user's save is at disadvantage here, but success counts double toward the challenge — the gift and the danger again).

Treat Injury / Persuasion — steady a cracking teammate (or Bex) so they can keep working; a success here also **prevents** the next failure.

Perception / Insight — spot the pattern in the chorus, or the physical tell (a maintenance panel, a pressure valve) that opens the way.

On **3 successes**, the seals give and the door grinds open onto the dark beyond. On **2 failures**, the ship wins the round: the lights stay dead, a Hollowed rises in the black (run a quick TR 1 husk), and the party has to steady itself and try again — no permanent failure state, just cost and dread. Each PC should roll something; the challenge is designed so a party that **cooperates** clears it and a party that lets one hero solo it struggles.

GM

This is the mechanical centerpiece of Act II and the last beat before the finale, so make it **loud**: the black, the chorus of names, the pressure. Every failed check should hand a player a private whisper (the true, aimed temptation from the Dread rules) — this is the moment paranoia peaks, right before the door opens. If Bex is with the party, this is where his crack is most dangerous: on a failure, he might be the one who falters. When the door finally opens, drop the temperature of your own voice and end the session on the threshold — the party staring into the nexus chamber, the reliquary a cold point of black at its center, and something vast and grieving beginning to turn toward the light they've let in.

Scene 2.4 – The Threshold (cliffhanger)

Hold this beat for the top of the final session. The bulkhead is open; the nexus chamber breathes cold beyond it; and as the party's lights find the reliquary on its plinth, the accreted dead of the *Sable Wake* — every death the idol has fed on — begin to rise from the dark of the chamber and gather into a single shape. The whispers stop. In the silence, the reliquary speaks once, clearly, in a voice the whole party hears, and it offers them — each of them — the one thing they most want, if they will only leave the door open. Then Act III begins.

Act III – What the Dark Keeps

Estimated length: 1 to 2 sessions, roughly 3 to 6 hours total. **What it teaches:** the branching choice, an objective-based climax (the "hit the idol, not the ghost" math), and leveling. The Dread DC is at its peak — **16** — and the party finally sees the whole shape of what killed the *Sable Wake* and has to decide what to do with it.

Scene 3.1 – The Nexus Chamber

READ ALOUD

*The engineering core has become a shrine to nothing. The reactor still turns, somewhere below, throwing a red half-light up through the deck grating, but the center of the chamber belongs to a plinth of welded scrap the crew built in their last days, and on it sits the idol — a fist of black stone and bone, no bigger than a clenched hand, and it is the coldest thing you have ever stood near. Around it, the air is full of the dead. They rise from the deck and the shadows and the drifting dark and they **fold together**, upward, into a single grieving shape three times the height of a person — a wail given a body, every face of the crew surfacing in it and sinking again. It does not roar. It **keens**, and the sound is grief and hunger at once, and it turns the whole of its attention on the warmth of you.*

This is the finale. The **Keening** is the reliquary's accreted death-echo (stats from the Manifestation scaling table). The crucial tactical truth — which Bex told them, or which a **Use the Force** check (DC 14) reveals in the moment — is that **the Keening cannot be killed directly**. It is incorporeal and reforms; while the reliquary is intact, damage to the Keening does nothing lasting. **The reliquary is the source, and the reliquary is the target**. Break the idol and the Keening comes apart and the dead lie down.

⚔ COMBAT THE KEENING (ACT III BOSS – STATS SHOWN FOR THE DEFAULT PARTY OF 4)

→ Stats, tactics, scaling, and loot: see the Stat Reference PDF (grouped by scene).

⚔ COMBAT THE RELIQUARY (THE OBJECTIVE) – PROTECT YOUR DAMAGE, BREAK THE IDOL

→ Stats, tactics, scaling, and loot: see the Stat Reference PDF (grouped by scene).

GM The dramatic save (anti-TPK release valve)

If the party is genuinely about to wipe — two PCs down, the idol still above half — spend the ship's one honest thing to buy them a round. If **Bex** is alive, this is his moment: he throws himself between the Keening and a downed PC, or jams his welder into the plinth's base, and the last clean act of the *Sable Wake*'s crew staggers the idol (Keening loses its next Wail; the reliquary drops to half if it was above it) at the cost of Bex's life. If Bex is dead, use the reliquary's **overreach** — it tries to seize the strongest Force-user entirely, and in that moment of grasping is exposed (the same effect). Use this **once**, and make it cost something. Horror earns its wins; it doesn't gift them.

At the moment the Keening is fully manifest and the party understands the stakes, present the choice. It can be made **before** the fight (a party that decides fast) or **during** it (most tables) — the branches below fold into or replace the combat above.

⚡ DECISION POINT WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THE RELIQUARY?

- A Destroy it.** Break the idol (the Encounter above). The hard, clean path — the Keening unravels, the dead lie down, the *Sable Wake* goes quiet. Costs the party the salvage value of the find and, maybe, Bex. Go to 3.2A.
- B Take it.** Carry the idol off the ship intact — the contract payoff, or greed, or the whisper winning. The idol *wants* to leave; taking it is easier than breaking it. But it comes with you. Go to 3.2B.
- C Seal it and leave.** Reseal the bulkhead, mark the wreck, and go. The idol stays; the *Sable Wake* stays haunted; the threat is someone else's, later. Go to 3.2C.
- D Bargain with it.** Take the deal — the one thing each of them most wants, for a price the idol names. The dark path. Go to 3.2D.

Scene 3.2A – Destroy It

Run the Reliquary Encounter to its end. When the idol's HP hits 0:

📖 READ ALOUD

*The idol cracks — a sound less like stone breaking than like a held breath finally let go — and the Keening comes apart from the inside, every surfacing face going slack and grateful at once, unwinding upward into nothing. The cold lifts so suddenly your ears pop. The Hollowed fold to the deck, just bodies now, just the crew, finally still. And for one moment, before the emergency lights stutter back to honest white, the *Sable Wake* is only a ship again — a quiet, wounded, ordinary ship, and the loudest thing aboard is your own breathing.*

The dead are laid to rest, the ship is salvageable (its *hull* and systems are worth real money; the idol is gone), and the party leaves having done the hard, right thing. If Bex survived to here and didn't spend himself on the dramatic save, he gets out with them — changed, quiet, but free of the whispers for the first time in eleven days. Go to Scene 3.3.

Scene 3.2B – Take It

The idol permits this — it *wants* off the ship, and a hand willing to carry it is a hand it can keep working. The Keening does not fight to the death; it subsides as the party lifts the reliquary from the plinth, the cold folding down into a patient, waiting quiet. The Hollowed drop. The party walks off the *Sable Wake* carrying the thing that killed her crew.

GM Carrying the idol

There is no immediate punishment — that's the trap. The reliquary is inert-seeming in the party's hold, worth a fortune to the contract buyer (Sethra Iaan pays, and doesn't ask how) or to any collector of dangerous things. But the whispers don't stop, they just get *patient*, and the GM now has a slow-burn sequel engine: hand a carrier private Dread saves (DC 12, rare, at stressful moments) in later sessions; let the idol nudge the party toward the choices it feeds on. It is not a curse with a timer — it's a passenger with an agenda. If the party sold it to Sethra, she is the one carrying it now, and the party may someday learn what she wanted it *for*. This is the most story-generative ending; make it feel like a win the party will spend a long time re-examining.

Go to Scene 3.3.

Scene 3.2C – Seal It and Leave

The party rewelds the bulkhead, restores the beacon to a warning instead of a call, and burns for open space. The *Sable Wake* keeps her idol and her dead. But the ship does not want to let warmth leave — the run back to the airlock is a **fighting withdrawal**: Dread saves at DC 16, Hollowed rising in the dark to bar the way (run 2–3 TR 1 husks as a moving

obstacle, not a stand-and-fight), and the corridors themselves resisting (a quick reprise of the Act II hazards). It's a chase, not a boss fight — get out before the ship closes around them.

GM

This ending costs the least blood and the most conscience. The party lives, keeps the salvage they've already grabbed, and *knows* they left a loaded weapon drifting on a travel lane for the next crew to find. Let that sit. It's a legitimate, even wise choice (the idol is genuinely dangerous to move or break), but it's not a clean one — and the beacon they leave is the exact beacon that brought them here, now aimed at someone else. Prime sequel fuel; the *Sable Wake* can drift back into the campaign whenever you want it.

Go to Scene 3.3.

Scene 3.2D – Bargain (the dark path)

If a party — or a cracked Bex, or a turning Velloc — takes the idol's deal, the reliquary delivers, and the price is always the same currency: it feeds on death, so it asks for one. The specific bargain is a GM/player negotiation, but it is never free and never clean: the "one thing you most want" arrives twisted just enough to teach the lesson, and the idol takes its due (an ally, a piece of the bargainer's self, a door left open that lets it *out* into the wider galaxy). This is the darkest ending and the one most likely to fracture a party — run it only if the players reach for it, and make the consequences land in the campaign, not just in a paragraph. Go to Scene 3.3, adjusting the outcome to what was traded.

Scene 3.3 – The Return

However it ends, close on the airlock and the cold at their backs. The *Sable Wake* falls away behind them — destroyed-idol-quiet, or carrying-something-new, or still-drifting-and-still-hungry. Pay off the hook (the salvage claim, the survivors found or not, the broker's cred-stick and her too-knowing smile), settle the loot and the consequences, and let the party breathe.

Then advance them. Completing *The Sable Wake* takes the party from **level 3 to level 4** by milestone — they've crossed a dead ship, protected their own from a thing that hunts the Force, and made a hard call at the heart of it. Have each player update to level 4 before the next session (see Conclusion + Leveling below). Whatever they chose, they carry it out with them — which is, in the end, what the *Sable Wake* was always about.

→ Tactical map — The Nexus Chamber — Engineering Core: see the Maps PDF (grouped by scene).

Conclusion + Leveling

Outcomes summary

BRANCH	THE SHIP AFTER	THE PARTY CARRIES OUT	BEST SEQUEL FUEL
Destroy	Quiet — dead laid to rest, hull salvageable	The hard-won right thing; maybe Bex, maybe grief	A collector who wanted the idol comes asking what happened to it
Take	Emptied of its haunt, worth real salvage	The reliquary — a patient passenger with an agenda	The idol works on the carrier over future sessions; who is Sethra, really?
Seal & leave	Still haunted, still hungry, still drifting	Their lives, their conscience, and the salvage they grabbed	The <i>Sable Wake</i> — or its beacon — finds the next crew, or the campaign
Bargain	Whatever the deal cost it	The one thing they wanted, twisted — and a door left open	The idol's reach now extends past the ship; the price comes due

Sequel hooks

Sethra laan paid to have the idol delivered and never said why. If the party sold it or destroyed it, she has opinions — and a history with objects like it.

The beacon. However it ends, the *Sable Wake*'s distress signal is the same one that brought the party. Aim it at someone else and you have your next session.

The carrier. If anyone took the reliquary, it is not done. It is patient. Use the slow-burn Dread saves (Scene 3.2B) to let it earn its place in the campaign.

Leveling: L3 → L4 (milestone)

Completing the adventure advances the party from **level 3 to level 4** — no XP tally required. Each player: add their class's level-4 features and any subclass trait, recompute HP (add a hit die + CON), update proficiency bonus if it changes at 4, and take their **ability score improvement or a Trait** if their class grants one at this level. Do this between sessions so the next game starts at level 4.