

MAGDA THE SEA-WITCH

A deformed but quite spry woman, Magda is actually in her early 30s, although her unappealing appearance (with one eye markedly higher than the other), the staff with which she walks, and something of the manner of a stereotypical crone, make her seem older. She wears fairly clean but ill-assorted garb, including useful amounts of leather and fur.

Equipment

Weapons: Dagger; Quarterstaff.

Armour: Leather Jacket; Fur Loincloth; Cloth Gloves; Shoes.

Carried: Small Backpack; Bandages; First Aid Kit; Personal Basics; Pouch; \$720 cash.

(*Note:* With her full load of equipment, Magda usually suffers Light encumbrance, which is factored into her listed Dodge. Her Move with this encumbrance is 4.)

History

Born in an outlying island of the Principality of Araterre, you show blatant signs of *strangeness* – a facial deformity that had you spurned and sometimes bullied until the local healer-woman recognized that you were also marked by magical talent. She trained you in useful spells and medicine, and you might have followed her into her trade, except that she already had an apprentice, who was older and more boring than you, and you had a yearning to see the world, study new things, and sample foreign delicacies. You're moderately interested in meeting new people, too, but most of them seem to be driven by crazy impulses or annoying habits. They never take it well when you point out how muddle-headed they're being, either, but you don't see why you should refrain from saying what you think, given how little most other people think at all.

Anyway – you left your home village to take up the life of a sea-witch, that is, a healer and weather-watcher on various ships trading around the isles. You did quite well at this trade, and did some good over the years. Then, one day, the ship that had hired you came to an island where smoking ruins showed evidence of a vicious pirate raid. The few maimed survivors spoke of numerous orcs and dark sorcery.

You found that one of these survivors wasn't as badly hurt as he looked. This big Northman, named Varlak, recovered his health in a few days with your aid, but it was obvious to you that his mind had been as battered as his body. So you suggested to him that his famous barbarian code should make him anxious to get up and about, to track down and deal with the raiders.

Well, that worked; Varlak has become quite the grim hunter of evil. But he's more clever than he looks; he understood when you pointed out that he needs more knowledge, and more skill, and friends at his back, if revenge is to be had. So he's gathering his little war-band, and selling his blade the meanwhile. It's interesting to watch, and you want to know how this story will end, so you're tagging along for now, patching these crazy swordsmen back together when they get hurt.

The Others

Varlak's still not entirely mended in spirit, of course; that'll take years. He's become quite the captain of men, though. Impressive fellow in his way. His hired swords are Gaspard, a brash Sauvons gutter-rat with pretensions who has somehow become a competent fencer, and Jared, a Cardien peasant who has the good luck to have an elf for a father (though he hates to talk about that), and who has mastered the longbow.

Varlak has also recruited that fellow Pierre – calls him the "bookman," it's the old barbarian superstitious awe at the idea of writing – who's not quite as clever as he thinks he is, but who does have a bit of book-knowledge (apparently he spent some time at the University of Sauvons), and even a touch of magical talent that has let him pick up a few spells. You're not sure what he's doing as a sell-sword, but you'd guess it might be something to do with his interest in every woman who wanders past – on some long voyages, you've even seen him looking at yourself. That kind of thing often gets scholars in trouble.