

Drip.

It's cold.

Drop.

It's dark.

Whoops!

You nearly slip on the slick as the ground slithers away beneath your feet. Something squirms out from underneath and rushes toward the black horizon. A faint

Plop.

As it disappears beneath the black veneer.

Drip.

The ripples remain.

Drop.

Separating charcoal sea from pitch-black sky.

Then.

Light.

Sickly pale and neon green. Rising slowly from beneath the black, supported by a delicate metal canvas and moving with a terrifying silence. A door opens. A ramp unfurls. A lone hand beckons from inside.

"All aboard."

THE OBSIDIAN SEA

When the world tumbled to a halt and forced us below, we found beauty in all the most terrifying places.

Fendar Fizzbottle, Mayor of The Menagerie

Hidden hundreds of miles beneath the now frozen surface, the Obsidian Sea is the last great body of water known to exist. Covered in a thick black veneer, no sight can penetrate the depths below without the aid of the moonlight brought by the Glass Titan.

The Obsidian Sea is fraught with risk and reward. For merchants it offers the quickest means of transport between major surviving cities, for fishermen it offers plentiful bounty, and for tourists it offers the magnificence of moonlight descending from the Glass Titan, a glacier that hangs above The Menagerie, a ramshackle island city in the middle of the sea.

BENEATH THE BLACK

Stare too long and something will stare back. You just won't see it.

Fisherman's Tale

Tales of the terrors below are all too common for denizens of the Obsidian Sea. Although they seem mostly abated by moonlight, amidst the inevitable darkness creatures do make their way to the surface.

Hungry Sahuagin with razor sharp teeth and Kuo-Toa in search of sacrifice are also refugees from a dead surface, much the same as their prey. Some claim that even further below await a more silent terror, one less afraid of patience. When residents of The Menagerie go missing with no sign of a struggle, the words "Mind Flayer" unfailingly find themselves on people's lips.

THE GLASS TITAN

Even without its light show, the Titan is a magnificent sight. A glacier hanging directly over The Menagerie, it stretches hundreds of miles to a now inhospitable surface. Here it has hung for millennia, long before these most recent residents. Without it, life in The Menagerie would likely be impossible, as the refraction of moonlight it provides makes travel, hunting and survival a possibility. While the moon hangs above the titan, The Menagerie remains safe from those below The Obsidian Sea.

Without the moonlight, colloquially known as Glasslight, the world becomes infinitely more dangerous. Ships stand still, doors stay locked, and voices stay silent. It's by no means a perfect life, but those were left behind on the surface.

A HISTORY ALL ITS OWN

The Menagerie has never been religious, but their Titan may as well be God.
Salazar, Local Disgruntled Cleric

Local reliance on the Titan has lent it an aura of respect. While there are, indeed, known caverns that lead up into the Titan, their exploration is considered distasteful. For some this comes from a sense of superstition, that disturbing the Titan might affect its capacity to protect the city below. For others this tradition is something to overcome, and for those that do venture into the Titan, curiosities abound.

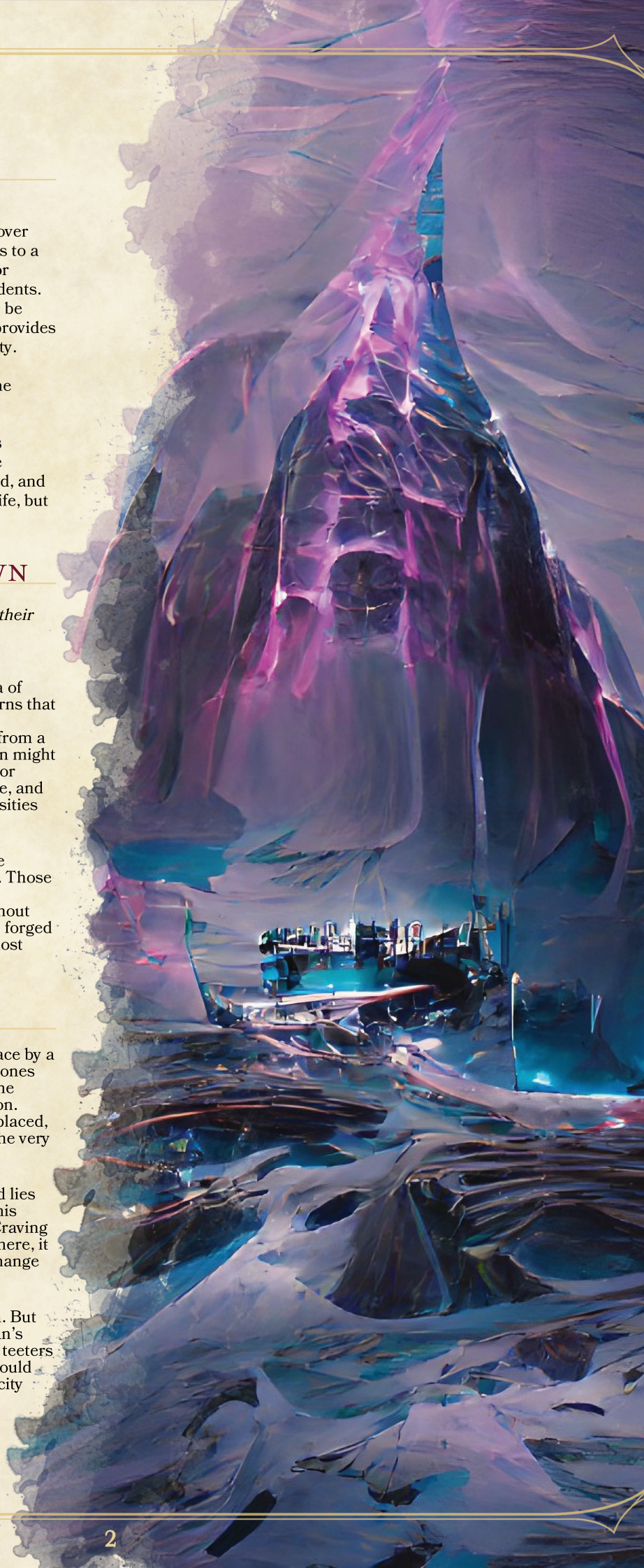
Frozen deep within the glacier seem to be the remnants of hundreds of broken civilizations. Those that venture even further might find archives detailing the end of cities and nations throughout the calamity two-hundred years ago. But who forged these records, and why, remain the Titan's most well kept secret.

FROZEN IN TIME

Unbeknownst to most, the Titan is held in place by a series of chronurgical enchantments. Wardstones scattered through the glacier prevent it and the earth surrounding it from an inevitable erosion. Were they to be dismantled, dispelled, or displaced, the Titan would no doubt collapse on top of the very city it has nurtured for the last two centuries.

Even deeper within the Titan, a would be God lies trapped within the ice. Its name, forgotten, this Aboleth cries out to those venturing within. Craving vengeance against the Illithid that trapped it here, it offers knowledge, power, and alliance in exchange for its freedom.

For now blissful ignorance remains the norm. But as more and more adventurers brave the Titan's endless archives, the secret that surrounds it teeters closer to the edge of common knowledge. Should the Titan fall collapse and descend upon the city below, there's no telling just how chaotic the Obsidian Sea might become.



THE MENAGERIE

A city of fishers and sinners, disregarding the Glass Titan, The Menagerie's most defining trait is its isolation. Beyond tourist trips and merchant pit stops, few have cause to visit The Menagerie. As a result, it's become somewhat of a haven for fugitives and runaways. Black market dealings are known to take place here and there, but the powers that be have managed to prevent The Menagerie from becoming a hotspot, so far at least.

The city is, on the whole, welcoming of those in need. Most that come to stay do so because there is nowhere else to go. Larger cities can be difficult for folk to find a foothold in, and The Menagerie has always been full of societal debris. There's a true sense of community for those desperate enough to seek it under the Titan.

MOVING FORWARD

*Don't care what you've done. Care what you do.
Fendar Fizzbottle, Mayor of The Menagerie*

Where larger cities remained fixated on the world that was. Most in The Menagerie have been granted an easier life below the surface. There's a philosophy of moving forward that seems ubiquitous in the community. Dwelling on the world gone by is seen by most as waste of time.

The idea itself has bled into much of society, and plays a part into the relative ease with which most "questionable" folk are welcomed. Their actions before The Menagerie are never poked or prodded, but should they revert to such a path after having already arrived, the island is quick to rescind their favor.

THE GLASSLIGHT

The Menagerie's existence relies entirely on the presence of the Titan and its Glasslight. Their days are scheduled precisely around its comings and goings. The "daytimes" are filled with a relentless rambunctiousness. Socializing, working, drinking, dancing, fishing, farming, schooling, and every other little thing is done with an understanding of the quiet that is to come.

When the Glasslight finally disappears, The Menagerie shifts with it. The only sound the faint lapping of waves on rocky shores. There is no light, no fire lest it draw the attention of would-be assailants from below the sea. What remains is a relentless sense of being watched amidst the dark, and a tireless pursuit of morning.

CREDITS

Artwork - Created using WomboDream
Location Design - William Hinz

www.william-hinz.com

As the first victorious strands of moonlight fly free from the glass titan, you see streaks of purple and red grazing the black surface surrounding you. As purple and red are joined by blue and white, the dark veneer of the Obsidian Sea gives way to a remarkable luminosity.

Once faint crystals surrounding the outskirts of the city now twist tiny strands of light into streetlamps and spotlights, as the entire cavern finds itself transformed in the mere seconds that follow.

The speed of it all seems so impossible that your senses take a moment longer than reality to catch up to the world around you.

Perhaps you never will.