# The Cobalt Sky Runner

by Noah Lloyd and Matt Ryan

A cruise liner, the *Cobalt Sky Runner*, is leaving port this morning out of Long Beach, Los Angeles, bound for Maui and Oahu. The round trip is a full 14 days, with four days at sea on either end and three days at each of the two islands. The investigators play two couples, friends who have set out together on their first vacation in years. All four of them are writers, variously of mystery novels or investigative journalism. The couples have side-by-side balcony cabins that look out over the water. Shortly after arriving onboard, a steward delivers tickets to each couple: they have all won seats at the "Captain's Breakfast," a luxury meal on the first morning (tomorrow) at sea. Only four other guests will be in attendance—along with the Captain, of course.

Keeper's Background: Captain Reginald Barclay, of Saint John in the Virgin Islands, is an insane cultist. The *Sky Runner* is a doomed vessel. Barclay intends to sacrifice everyone aboard the *Sky Runner*, over 7,500 people, along with the vessel herself, to **Shub-Niggurath**. Several gruesome steps are necessary to accomplish this summoning. Barclay must murder one passenger each night of the voyage, picking the victim at random. He must also sacrifice two abnormally large goats (the size of donkeys), which he has secreted away in the vessel's storage hold, sometime on or around day 5. Closer inspection of the goats, or by trying to feed them some of the hay stored nearby, reveals that they have several rows of pointed, serrated teeth, in place of the usual incisors and molars (**SAN** 0/1D4). When the goats are brought on board their fur is a deep, midnight black. Depending on what day the investigators discover them, they slowly lose pigmentation, until, the morning of day 5, as the *Sky Runner* should pull into Maui, they are a cream white (**SAN** 0/1D4). Bar-clay is paying one of the stewards, **Roopa Laghari** (of New Delhi, India), money on the side to take care of the goats precisely at dawn and dusk. Laghari doesn't know why, nor knows of the Captain's plans.
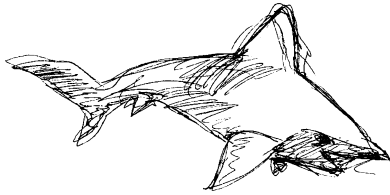
Four Days at Sea: The Captain's Breakfast is held in one of the three gourmet (and gigantic) restaurants. Captain Barclay is pleasant, friendly, and even likable. After a lovely breakfast, a flustered steward (Laghari) runs to the Captain and announces, loudly, that someone has been found murdered. **Psychology** rolls can tell that the Captain is terrified (which is true, Barclay has never killed before, and he is terrified of being caught). He seems adamant in his orders and, after learning of their occupations, requests the investigators' input on what he should do. He would likely lose his job if the cruiser returned to port, he tells them, and no one would receive refunds.

How the investigators react to the murders is up to them. The bodies are found in different locations, each murdered differently (a two-hole golf course stretches around the Leto Deck where someone was clubbed to death, while the Promenade boasts its own outdoor iMax theater, where someone was strangled). The only commonality between the bodies is a ritualistic symbol carved into the flesh, which **Cthulhu Mythos** or a Hard **Occult** roll ascertains to be a ram's horn. The investigators slowly build their suspicions, search for the killer, and get drunk on fruity cocktails. If the investigators return to the bodies (which are stored in an unused freezer on a lower deck) they quickly realize that the bodies are going missing. Another steward, **Patricia Swift** (of Ireland), feels compelled to dump the bodies overboard. She does this task almost in her sleep, muscling a corpse onto her shoulder and lugging it to a quiet area near the port propeller. Tossing it overboard, anyone watching witnesses dark shapes under the water, drawing the body under (**SAN** 1/1D4).

The Morning of Day Five, when the investigators should wake up to their first port of call, Maui, they are greeted with more endless oceanic horizons. Everyone aboard talks quietly about the event: "where are we?" and "shouldn't we be there by now?" The navigator of the vessel is utterly mystified; all his instruments read that they should have arrived by now, and now, mysteriously, none of their communication devices work. At midnight, Barclay stabs the goats, hangs them (with difficulty) from a horizontal flagpole off the rear of the ship, and drains their blood, retaining it in several large milk jugs. He douses the bodies with diesel and burns them, and in the morning, screams of other passengers lead the investigators to the swinging corpses.

The Voyage ends abruptly on day 6. The vessel is over 1,200 miles from land in any direction. Captain Barclay has been noticeably depressed since leaving Maui: lacking any sign from his god, he believes that all his hard work was in vain. At sunset, however, his sacrifices are answered by thick storm clouds that swirl toward the vessel in all directions (**SAN** 0/1D3). **Spot Hidden** notices a figure that's climbed to the top of one of the conning towers, throwing its arms upwards in exultation. Hard or Extreme **Spot Hidden**—or if the characters procure binoculars—makes out that this is Steward Swift. As the clouds close in, she's struck by one of the first bolts of lightning, and dies instantly, never to look on the form of Barclay's god, which arrives…now. Something falls from the sky into the waters before the *Sky Runner*, something that looks like a huge blackened tower (**Spot Hidden** or **Natural World** notices… fur?). A few moments later, and another pillar crashes out of the sky onto the main deck of the cruise ship. Everyone can tell that its base is a great cloven hoof…and in the sky, a thousand hideous mouths chomp and smack in the swirling chaos of clouds and lightning (**SAN** 1/1D100). Lightning plays across the decks, the ship groans as the propellers strain against the new, phenomenal weight, and the leg that now pins the *Sky Runner* in place pushes down hard, causing thousands of gallons of water to spill over the gunwales of the lower decks. The investigators make for the nearest lifeboats to escape, as nature itself turns against them, fleeing for their lives.

Once in the water, the investigators quickly realize that only a few other lifeboats seem to have made it, while the wails of thousands in the water berate their ears. Dark shapes move below the water's surface, gently hunting the screaming survivors treading water. It's up to you if these sharks are tainted by Shub-Niggurath, multi-eyed behemoths of the sea with row after row of jagged teeth (**SAN** 1D3/1D8), or are simply nature's perfect killers. Either way, the three-day experience of witnessing so much carnage takes its toll on the surviving investigators (**SAN** 4/1D20+4). As an optional final scene, Captain Barclay arrives in his own lifeboat, with no one else inside. He invites the survivors to join him in waiting for rescue: "There's safety in numbers," he tells them.

Contingency Plans. If the investigators are extraordinarily cagey, and dive into the mystery of the murdered passengers, it is entirely feasible that they discover Barclay's plan and either stop him or kill him. Depending on when they achieve this, the summoning of Shub-Niggurath to the Pacific Ocean is still likely not avertable. Steward Swift still has fitful waking dreams, and can accomplish Barclay's work for him in his absence. Additionally, massive 25 foot-long sharks, tainted by Shub-Niggurath into resembling lamprey-like creatures, slowly eat away at the ship's hull, hungry for the feast awaiting them inside.

RECKONING OF THE DEAD CHARACTER SHEET

Name: _____ Gender: _____
Occupation: _____ Age: _____

CHARACTERISTICS

STR ⊟ DEX ⊟ INT ⊟ HP ☐
CON ⊟ APP ⊟ POW ⊟ MP ☐
SIZ ⊟ EDU ⊟ Luck ☐ Sanity ☐

SKILLS

_____ ⊟ _____ ⊟
_____ ⊟ _____ ⊟
_____ ⊟ _____ ⊟
_____ ⊟ _____ ⊟
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BACKGROUND & EQUIPMENT

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