

Other Crossings

The Moon-facing Ford was lost behind the grass-knit dunes. Poncho shivered, the wan purple light of the sun behind the haze layer no consolation in this desolate land under the gaze of the Near Moon.

“We don’t want to cross there,” said Demiwarlock.

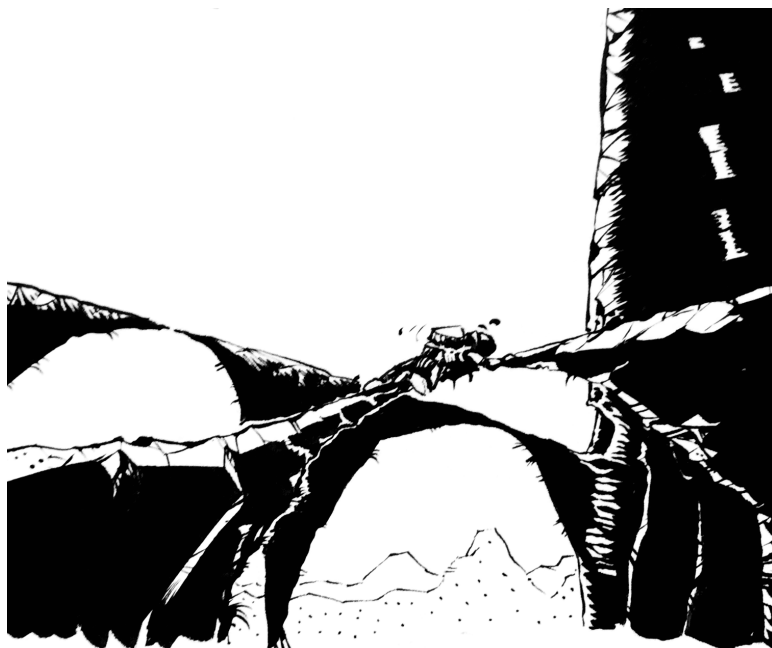
The emphasis was hardly necessary. The shallows were slathered to a foam by a frenzy of blue-flecked crocodilians.

“How much further, then?” asked Poncho.

“As far as it takes for someone to avoid a fine,” deadpanned Demiwarlock. Pointyhelmet whistled a jaunty tune.

THE NEXT CROSSING IS A FEW DAYS AWAY (ROLL D6):

1. The Fishbladder clan of river quarterlings under the brood dominion of the Six Siblings operates the Reliable Ferry, an old livingwood lug painted livid lilac and ruby red. The fee is a reasonable 10 cash per head. They also dabble in occasional murder, theft, and sale of body parts for the Near Moon bodychoppers.
2. The Solipsistic Narwhal cabal of deep-thinkers trapped a part of their unified personality structure in the school of blue-flecked crocodilians (AC 16, HD 3) that make the Slathered Shallows such a deathtrap. Know to few, quoting the rainbow analects or the monochrome koans (Int DC 2d6), stops the crocodilians in their tracks. Occasionally (30%) the old eunuch Pepeidoleia is on hand in his little lean-to, ready to declaim the tracts across the ford for a symbolic fee.
3. The Olive Jerah is a series of three ridiculously rickety rope bridges of calcified sinews, bundled reeds and woven leather cordes that stretch between the two banks and the Rock of the Rising Sun and the Stone of the White Room. Monks and nuns of the crumbling Order of the Tritone reside in the tunneled rocks, like maggots trying to recall the glories of a more musical age.
4. Half-sentient rafts of matted reeds grafted with river shrimp paddle along the slow waters of this marshy area. Local river folk use them for fishing, and in a pinch, and with a bit of empathic guidance (Wis DC 2d6) they could paddle a caravan across the turquoise waters, too. Slowly. Couldn’t be any danger in accepting a reed-shrimp hybrid into one’s mind, could there?



5. The Banks of the Bug are a series of shifting sandbars, quicksand, and log footbridges linked through the reedy Bug Swamp. Avoiding the worst parts is not too hard (Int DC 1d8+1), getting lost adds an extra 1d4 days to the crossing. The worst part is the Swarm of the Bug. A biomechanically reprogrammed collective of cat-sized water cockroaches slaved to the engorged biofab unit Gamma (B.U.G.). The B.U.G. continuously reprocesses organic matter into potato-sized brown ration pellets wrapped in water-resistant papery cocoons emblazoned with the yellow and green livery of some long-gone food wizard. There is a 20% chance of encountering the swarm on any given day.
6. The Glass Bridge is long gone, but some helpful souls have stretched nets and ropes between the translucent supports to help swimming and wading across. This is a little risky most days (Dex DC 1d6+1) but absolute madness after heavy rains (Dex DC 20). On moonlit days, when the True Moon's light illumines the Near Moon, souls from some Long Long Ago spirit caravan crawl along the nets and try to find an audience for their pitiful laments. Listening to enough laments, some have been lost in the mad possession of these souls.