

The Scuttling

by Todd A. Woods & Kevin A. Ross

*"The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea."*

— Samuel Taylor Coleridge,
"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

THIS SCENARIO IS SET aboard a sailing ship during a voyage to America. While nominally set in the 1890s, ships such as this were used throughout the Victorian era and even into the early 20th century.

The investigators are assumed to be able to spend a lengthy period of time away from England, as the trip to and from America takes roughly two months. Alternately, if some investigators are unable to take such a leave, the keeper may allow them to take the roles of additional crewmen aboard the ship. Using this same tack, a keeper could run this scenario as a one-off adventure.

Keeper's Information

Nigel Stander, a London shipping and railroad tycoon and a collector of antiquities, has arranged the purchase of an antique bust from a dealer in New York City. Though of relatively plain design, Stander believes the bust depicts young Lady Jane Grey, the short-reigned first queen of England. Stander hires or otherwise entreats the investigators to conclude the transaction for him, requiring that they sail to New York City aboard his ship the *Christabel*. This voyage and the transaction itself are carried out with little incident.

But as the ship sails out of New York it runs aground on a mudbank brought up from the sea bottom by a recent underwater earthquake. Here it picks up an unexpected passenger — a giant prehistoric arthropod called a eurypterid. This lobster- or scorpion-like creature attaches itself to the *Christabel*'s hull, where it gives birth to a horde of larva, which in turn begin looking for food aboard the ship. The infestation of eurypterids gets worse as the voyage progresses, and the crew fall prey to the voracious

creatures. Eventually the mother creature herself comes aboard looking for food.

In addition to fighting for survival, the investigators must decide whether or not to risk bringing these ancient horrors to civilized shores for further infestations.

Involving the Investigators

Nigel Stander wishes to hire the services of a historian, antiquarian, or art dealer to authenticate the statue. He might also contact a lawyer, solicitor, consulting detective, or inquiry agent to facilitate the legal aspects of the transaction. The investigators may also be friends, business associates, or relatives of Stander. One or more of the investigators may be an employee of Stander's: clerk, accountant, solicitor, or sales representative. Finally, cultured investigators are possibly above the vulgar need for money, and instead may wish to accompany the journey to see first hand this rare bust of Lady Jane Grey.

Stander is known throughout London as a fabulously wealthy man with considerable holdings in British railroads and shipping lines; he is also a well-known collector of art and antiquities. Stander, in his mid 60s, has no surviving family and lives on a fine estate in Elstree, north of London. The investigators are summoned to Stander's office near St. Paul's



Nigel Stander