

## From the Office Exploration Age Book:

### The South Pole

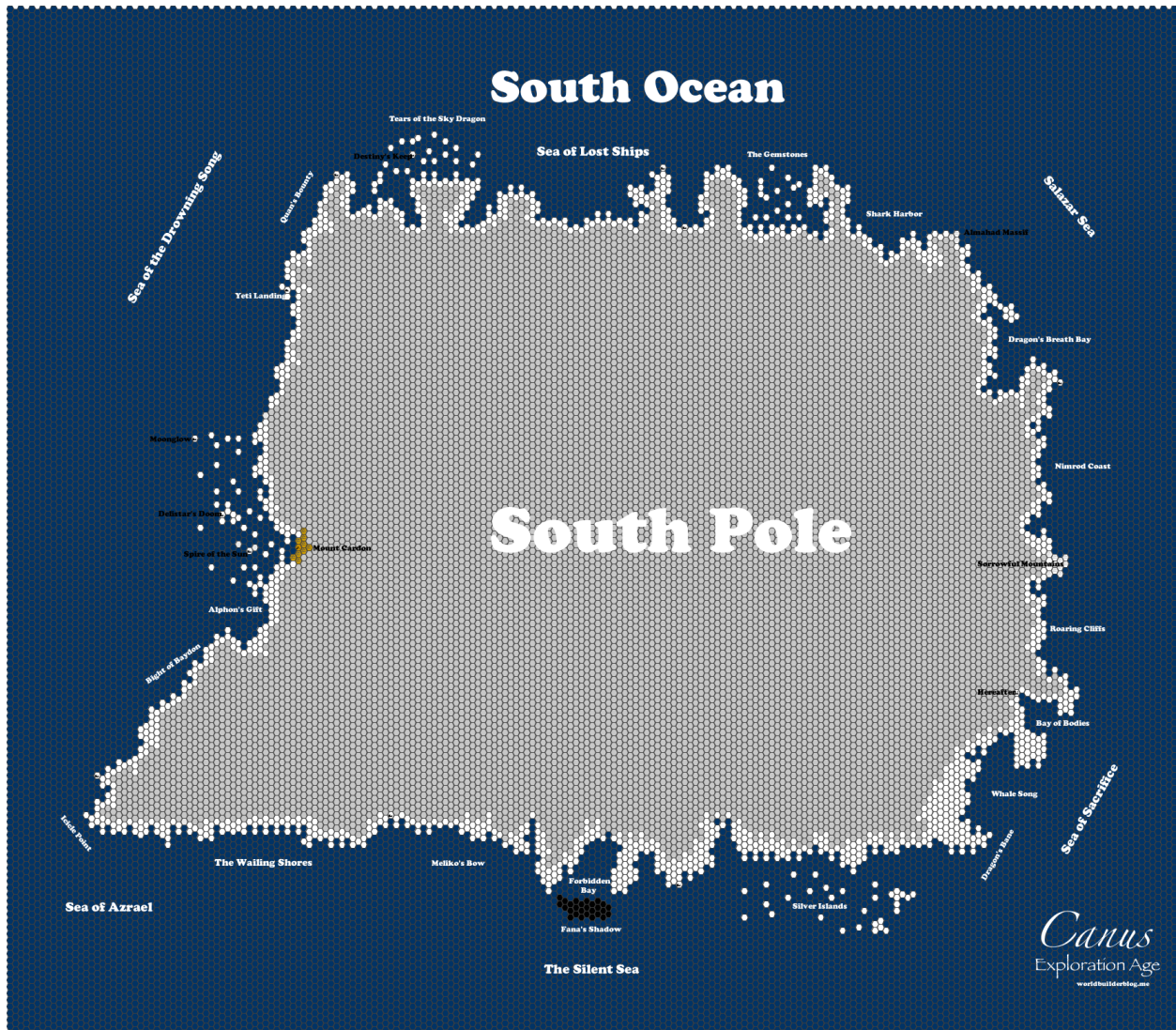
The South Pole is just as deadly as the North Pole. Winds are not as fierce, however the snow falls so heavily here it forms massive dunes that are treacherous to climb. The snow is uneven and could collapse at any moment, burying a traveler. As if the snow and weather weren't enough, earthquakes constantly shake The South Pole, threatening to level and reform new snow dunes constantly, not to mention bury and knock adventurers off their feet. But the worst of the worst hazards in The South Pole is The Lingering Havoc.

No one is sure of The Havoc's origin. Some say it is an ancient remnant of aberrant societies, some say it migrated from The Damned Lands or mysterious parts of Verda, and others believe there is a darker force somewhere deep within the South Pole controlling it. Few have seen The Lingering Havoc and lived to tell of it. Those who have had their minds permanently warped. Yet all those who describe The Havoc have a similar story to tell: a massive creature, more than 500 feet tall by many accounts, either coming out of the snowy depths or rising through the broken ice. The Lingering Havoc is a hulking mass of bones and corpses of various humanoids, animals, and monsters that have somehow formed together into one colossal engine of destruction.

# T H E S O U T H P O L E

## A PRIMER

Prepared for the Society of Seekers by Edgeworth Sylvain, Historian & Cartographer



Far beyond the edges of civilization there is a hostile land that seems to revel in swallowing up even the most intrepid explorers. The Southern Pole of Canus is a wild and dangerous place with very little to recommend it. Indeed, the very fact that it is so wild and unknown is what draws many to her shores and, we assume, leads to their ultimate demise. Although Glacius and the Northern Pole are formidable in their own right, they do not seem to possess the extreme oddities

and bizarre occurrences that have been encountered to the south. It is truly an unknown place, and what is known is...horrifying to say the least. A continent ravaged by earthquakes, snow dunes, and rumors of a horrific creature that is, frankly, impossible to comprehend. Who knows what is true and what is false, for those who survive this place return with broken minds and spirits, or they appear to be a dark and twisted version of who they once were.

The small amount that is known is primarily thanks to the efforts of the Society of Seekers. They should be commended for their admirable quests to chart what appears to be an unchartable land. I have been tasked with compiling the information brought back from their many expeditions. As more explorers discover more about this strange land, it can be added to this primer to help future adventurers understand what they are up against. I will start with the information that is definitively true, what is an absolute certitude about the South Pole. After that I will touch on the rumors and stories that have crept to my ears about this place that, in my opinion, seems beyond redemption.

The South Pole's coasts are truly the only areas that have been charted in depth, and what is known about this unforgiving and harsh land does not go far beyond her shores. There are not many creatures native to the continent, and certainly not any humanoid creatures. The animals that originate there are wild and fierce - polar bears and wolves that seem to be even more vicious than their counterparts in other areas of the world. There is only one major active settlement, which I will describe in the coming pages. In addition, there are a few outposts and other small pockets of people, but otherwise the South Pole is an uninhabited place. This has been one of the challenges in discovering all of her secrets. There are not any native people to help provide information and guidance.

Finally, before we begin to delve into the world of the South Pole, I have a note on naming. The names of the places and features of this area of the world reflect the views, culture, and backgrounds of the various explorers who made the discoveries. They were given the names by these adventurers, and in no way reflect the true origins of this continent. As an historian, I felt this needed to be pointed out.

## **Terrain of the South Pole**

From what is known of the South Pole, it appears to be a vast landscape of snow dunes, which are one of her most dangerous features. We do not have a true concept of the terrain, nor the depth of the snow in some areas. The fairly frequent earthquakes are constantly shifting the terrain, which makes even basic travel difficult. There are not many known physical features, but for all we know, the mysteries of this place are buried deep beneath the snow. Below I shall highlight some of the physical features of the South Pole.

**The Roaring Cliffs** - This stretch of the coast earned its name as massive waterfalls pour off the coastal cliffs and into the ocean below. As ships pass by, the sound of the descending water roars in their ears, hence the name.

**Dragon's Bane** - Atop a large outcropping, there appears to be some kind of physical feature, perhaps a small mountain. It is mostly snow covered, but what can be seen appears to resemble a massive dragon wing. It has proven too challenging to get close to this area to determine what it actually is, but it fuels the perception that even the most powerful creatures cannot survive in that place.

**Silver Islands** - As the water washes up on the shores, it takes on a distinct silver sheen. No matter the time of day, the water is silver. A sufficient explanation has not yet been found.

**Fana's Shadow** - An area that seems to be completely shrouded in darkness. A ship tried to reach it once. The crew was never heard from again. It is a challenging place to get to due to the Sea of Silence, which is described in another section. Generally, explorers stay far away from this place.

**Meliko's Bow** - One of the best shorelines on the South Pole. The sea floor seems to gently grade upwards, making a ship's approach less challenging, and the terrain at the shore is generally flat. One of the better approach areas for ships, although the proximity to Fana's Shadow makes many travelers somewhat skittish.

**The Wailing Shores** - A stretch of land where the sounds of wailing and crying can be heard. It is likely the result of winds traveling through many openings in the various formations. The sailors who have heard the cries, however, are left shaken. They claim the noises seem to make the world a little dimmer and a sense of hopelessness descends upon the listener. This is all likely in their heads, but worth noting nonetheless.

**Icicle Point** - An area that appears to be encased in ice, rather than snow.

**Bight of Baydon** - A particularly rough stretch of coastal waters and land.

**Alphon's Gift** - Similar to Meliko's Bow, one of the few areas that is easy for the approach of ships and provides easy terrain to traverse near the water.

**Mount Cardon** - One of the few areas where there is not any snow on the ground. The mountain appears to have cracked open and the land around it is completely ravaged and destroyed. Although this area is just as cold as any other, the snow does not stick. The rock and lava flows are exposed and forbidding.

**Tears of the Sky Dragon** - A grouping of islands off the coast. One contains a ruin, described later.

**The Gemstones** - When the sun strikes the islands, they seem to glow in brilliant colors of blue, red, and green, just to name a few. They earned their name as they resemble gems rising out of the sea. Why the islands seem to glow has yet to be sufficiently explained.

**Almahad Massif** - A large mountain on the northeastern coast. None have been able to reach its summit, although many have tried.

**Sorrowful Mountains** - A small mountain range near the settlement of Hereafter.

## Water Features of the South Pole

**The Bay of Bodies** - A relatively well protected area with high cliffs that seem to keep the wind out. It provides the calmest waters anywhere around the continent, and it is no surprise that if a settlement were to spring up, it would be here.

**Whale Song** - A whale breeding ground where the sound of their commingled voices brings light to the heart of sailors. Some sailors have noted that although the songs are beautiful, there is a touch of sadness and loss in them as well.

**The Silent Sea** - A strange section of the ocean surrounding the South Pole. The water is completely becalmed. There are not any waves nor wind. Ships that accidentally sail within the boundaries have to take extraordinary efforts to get out. Explorers note how unnerving it is so suddenly find themselves on a silent stretch of the ocean. No wind ruffling their sails. No water lapping up against the ship. Just stillness. For this reason, along with that lost expedition, exploration of Fana's Shadow has not been a priority.

**Forbidden Bay** - The bay behind Fana's Shadow. No ship has entered it due to the perceived dangers of the area shrouded in darkness and the nature of the Silent Sea.

**Sea of Lost Ships** - An especially rough stretch of water that seems to have many unseen rocks and dangers below the surface. The vast majority of ships that have sunk during attempted explorations are at the bottom of this sea.

**Shark Harbor** - A hostile area full of sharks.

**Dragon's Breath Bay** - An area where the wind seems to come hard off of the land. It has pushed ships backward and, in the scariest of conditions, frozen parts of ships caught in the wind. Many have likened it to the breath of a dragon, and the name has remained.

## **Settlements and Ruins**

Before I begin describing the settlements and ruins, I should note that not much is known about these places. Their true exploration is minimal, and it is hard to determine if they are a remnant of another civilization, or simply colonization attempts of the past that have simply been forgotten. There are ruins that have been noted and marked down by the Society of Seekers and other adventurers, but these locations have not yet been named. One important thing to note is that there has yet to be a single aberrant ruin discovered on this continent. Although the exploration is by no means extensive, it is still odd to not have any sign of the aberrants who seem to have permeated all other aspects of this world.

**Yeti Landing** - A small deserted village of simple buildings. It was not very large and not much was found inside. It earned its name because of the many perceived yeti footprints that seemed to be in and around the village. This is the most explored of the South Pole ruins.

**Destiny's Keep** - This appears to be a large castle on one of the islands that are part of the Tears of the Sky Dragon archipelago. It has only been viewed at a distance from ships. The island rises high out of the sea, and not even the most expert seamen have figured out how to

approach with a ship and get up to the castle. Whatever docking area existed seems to have been lost to time.

**Spire of the Sun** - An incredibly tall, well-made tower. The large door at the base has yet to be breached.

**Moonglow** - A keep that appears to glow with the light of the moon when there is a new moon.

**Delistar's Doom** - The spires of a castle or some kind of building rise of the water, surrounded by a half moon of land. The rest is submerged beneath the waves.

**Hereafter** - This is the only permanent settlement on the South Pole. There is as much rumor and innuendo surrounding this place as there are facts. I will transcribe what I know, but it should be noted that this place is not particularly welcoming to outsiders. Other than the few who are chosen to return to Findalay, Parian, and Verda to preach the good word of the people of Hereafter, if you enter the Bay of Bodies it is unlikely that you will be heard from again.

For those few who have seen this place, this describe a veritable city of ships. As new individuals and groups come to join the denizens of this place, their ship or ships is added to the growing population.

By all accounts, the citizens of Hereafter are members of a cult that worship a creature that might not even exist. From the missionaries sent back to the civilized world, it would appear that they all worship the Lingering Havoc (more on that below) and believe it to essentially be the embodiment of the afterlife. They think that we are all meant to become a part of this...thing. Every single citizen of Hereafter has sacrificed a part of their body in worship of the Lingering Havoc. They are led by the enigmatic Maledictus. Not much is known about him, other than the



fact that he is an elf. Or possibly a drow. Or, even more bizarrely, a half-elf half-drow. His followers speak of him with the fervor of zealots...

## Unsubstantiated Claims and the Strange Nature of the Continent

The truth of the matter is that many within the Society feel that the extent of what we will ever know about the South Pole is already known. Those that travel inland are either never heard or seen again, or they return broken and mad, muttering about things that cannot possibly be true. As a result, those who do not wish to risk madness or death, are limited in what they can see or do at this Pole. The only thing that keeps adventurers coming is the fact that any new discovery or information comes with a hefty payout. Although it is a forbidding place, many still wish to know as much as they can about it.

The largest rumor to come out of the South Pole is that of the Lingering Havoc, a 500+ foot tall creature comprised of corpses and detritus. It stretches the imagination the believed that this creature could possibly exist. Those that claim to have seen it have broken minds and spirits, so their word carries very little. The cult-like nature of the people of Hereafter make them unreliable as well. If some kind of undead creature does exist at the South Pole, I imagine that the other challenges and stresses that exploration of the continent provides has led those individuals to exaggerate what they have seen.

Finally, there have been reports that at times, magic seems to be warped at the South Pole. Areas seem to be infused with magic in some places, and in others even the most basic spells prove ineffective. There is no explanation for this, and some of it just might be in the head of an adventurer who was simply nervous or scared. These reports have not been consistent and we have no reason to believe that some of the more fantastical elements of the South Pole are true. In my humble opinion, because there is only a small amount known, the imagination of

many has run wild. They have allowed fantasy to take hold, and now many believe it is a nexus of wild magic and warped reality, a place where humanoids cannot hope to survive and towering corpse creatures reign supreme. There is no truth to this, but that is what happens when there is so much undiscovered country left to explore. Perhaps the Society of Seekers shall be the ones who will completely chart this land, and prove it to simply be a harsh, wintry landscape.

Respectfully submitted by Edgewood Sylvain, 406 FF

## **Updates & Addendums**

**408 FF** - A Society of Seekers ship was blown off course and almost ran aground along Quan's Bounty near an unnamed and unexplored ruin. Since they were nearby and the ship required a few minor repairs, the captain and some other senior members of the crew decided to explore the ruin. What they discovered appeared to be a fairly extensive town, or at least what remained of it. By their best guess, it appeared to be laid out in the form of a wheel with 12 spokes. At what they believed to be the center of town, they found a fairly large monolith that was mostly shattered to pieces. One very large chunk remained, and part of a symbol that was carved deeply into the rock. I have attempted to draw the portion of the symbol they could make out below. It

should be noted that as of this writing, no one has been able to identify what the symbol might be nor its origin.



Updated by W.G. 408 FF