

BILLY CROSS

Undying Legend of the Dreaded Seas



A SEABORNE GHOST STORY

No sailor alive doesn't know the legend of Captain Billy Cross and the Duke's Forlorn. A plague upon the seas, a sighting of the ghost ship is an ill omen to all who sail these treacherous seas. Billy and his crew appear to those dying at sea, seeking new souls to crew their wretched vessel, as well as to any that discover the lost treasures of the Duke himself. His legend has made him the boogiemer of sailors, a tale told to keep one vigilant while at sea. But he is real, and he seeks to reclaim all that he has lost, and to recruit more souls to crew his decrepit ship for all eternity.

Those who crew the Duke's Forlorn are drained by the ship's spiritual energy, losing themselves as their souls are pulled from their bodies. The ship and Billy are symbiotic in nature, with Billy feeding the ship souls who pledge themselves to crew it. In return, Billy is granted more power while sailing the Forlorn, as well as an innate command of the vessel itself.

Though formidable, the ship and its crew only exist when the sun has set. When dawn breaks, Billy, the crew, and the Forlorn itself disappear into The Locker, a domain that exists on the fringes of the material plane, where the lost souls of dead sailors find themselves adrift or trapped. Billy can communicate with these souls and those of the recently deceased and will often offer these souls an opportunity to sail with him.

Billy Cross

Medium Undead (Warlock), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (18d8 + 54)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws STR +8, CHA +8

Damage Resistances Necrotic; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks that aren't Silvered

Condition Immunities Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Paralyzed, Poisoned

Skills Athletics +8, Insight +5, Intimidation +8

Senses Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Thieves' Cant

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

Soul Thirst. When Billy reduces a creature to 0 hit points, he can gain temporary hit points equal to half the creature's hit point maximum. While Billy has temporary hit points from this trait, he has advantage on attack rolls.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Billy has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Terrorize. Billy has advantage on attack rolls against frightened creatures.

Turn Resistance. Billy has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns Undead.

Unusual Nature. Billy doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Billy fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Spellcasting. Billy can cast one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 16):

At will: *speak with dead*, *false life*,

locate object (Billy's possessions only)

2/day each: *arms of hadar*, *misty step*

1/day: *spirit shroud* (necrotic only)

Actions

Multiattack. Billy makes three attacks, either with his scimitar or pistol.

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage, plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage.

Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/90 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage.

Menace (Recharge 5-6). Each non-undead creature within 20 feet of Billy must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the target takes 18 (4d8) psychic damage and becomes frightened of Billy for 1 minute. On a successful save it only takes half damage and suffers no additional effects. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with disadvantage if Billy is within line of sight, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Reactions

Privateer Swordplay. In response to a creature entering a space within 5 feet of Billy, he can make one Scimitar attack against that creature.

Legendary Actions

Billy can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Billy regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Scimitar. Billy makes one scimitar attack.

Pistol. Billy makes one pistol attack.

BILLY'S LAIR: THE DUKE'S FORLORN

Billy is never to be seen apart from his ship, The Duke's Forlorn. Over time, his command over its inner workings as well as the seas that he calls home has grown, allowing him to turn the battlefield to his advantage.

The Duke's Forlorn is an entity unto itself, following Billy's every order and beguiling any who step upon it in pursuit of its master. Any who find themselves in the sights of Billy and The Duke's Forlorn ought to remain at full speed if they wish to live another day.

Billy's challenge rating increases by 1 when he fights atop The Duke's Forlorn.

Lair Actions.

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Billy can take one of the following lair actions; Billy can't take the same lair action two rounds in a row:

Cannonade. Billy can order a round of cannon fire from his ship upon another seafaring vessel. The cannons aboard The Duke's Forlorn have a +6 bonus to hit and a range of 600/2,400 and deal 88 (16d10) bludgeoning damage on a hit. Each creature within 10 feet of the point of impact must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or take 18 (3d10) bludgeoning damage.

Grave Step. Billy, along with any objects he is wearing or carrying, teleports to an unoccupied space he can see on The Duke's Forlorn. When he appears, each creature within 5 feet of Billy takes 20 (3d10) necrotic damage.

Rock the Boat. Billy uses his command of the seas to violently shake The Duke's Forlorn. Each hostile creature standing on the ship must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The Duke's Forlorn has an eerie effect upon a 1 mile radius around itself, creating one or more of the following effects:

Deathly Shroud. The Duke's Forlorn is always surrounded by an unnatural fog cloud. While in combat, The Duke's Forlorn and the character's vessel are heavily obscured from viewers outside the cloud as the fog enshrouds them, preventing unwanted interference.

Still Water. The ocean currents within 1 mile of The Duke's Forlorn stop dead, slowing all seafaring vessels movement by 10 feet while in the area.

ROLEPLAYING BILLY CROSS

Billy, Duke of the Waves, was once a respected sailor, exploring the vast oceans and adventuring across the world with his loyal and trusty crew. But that man has long been lost to the terrible seas, and all that remains is but an echo of what he once was. One terrible night, Billy and his crew were sunk to the abyss, but their will to continue on and their reverence for their ship caused both crew and vessel to linger at the fringes of the mortal plane. Each night, they return, Billy commanding the husks of his former crew to sail the seas eternally.

Courteous and respectful to begin with, Billy's gentlemanly persona belies a quick temper and ruthless nature. He embodies the role of nobility when first encountering individuals, but when they fail to return his kindness by submitting to his will, his anger

bubbles to the surface. In either case, he tends to keep an elegant quality to his speech.

When his demands are met, Billy maintains his polite demeanor. Though he tends to depart quickly, he may be inclined to escort friendly sailors through the night. With enough rum, he may reminisce about the old days, even revealing the location of some sought-after treasure.

To the dead, Billy can be a means of resurrection. When Billy comes across a recently-deceased corpse and casts speak with dead, he can ask the lost soul of the corpse to return and to take the Vow of the Forlorn:

"Do your swear to sail across the seas, and never see the shore;

To join the Forlorn's dreaded crew, and sail forevermore?"

If the soul answer's "yes" it returns to its body as an undead, cursed to sail on the Duke's Forlorn just as Billy and his crew. They cannot step foot on land, and disappear to The Locker when the sun rises. Over time, the undead's soul is pulled from its body, reduced to a ghoul under the command of Billy, with the Specter of its soul controlled and eventually consumed by the Duke's Forlorn itself. Billy continues to "recruit" crewmates this way, satisfying his obligation to the ship that tethers him to the material realm, forestalling his judgment by the powers that be.

THE ENCOUNTER

Character Level: 12-14 **Environment:** Ocean

Billy and his crew begin to search for the player characters if they have at least one item previously owned by Billy Cross and his crew in their possession (items in The Curse of Billy Cross set). Every 24 hours they are at sea, there is a 5% chance per item on board for Billy to track down the characters and their ship.

When triggered, the encounter begins in the dead of night with Billy's ship in pursuit of the character's ship, shrouded in an eerie fog. Characters that are awake can make either a DC 12 Nature check or DC 14 Perception check. On a successful Nature check, the character becomes aware of the unnaturally silent seas, as well as the absence of any form of wildlife in the area. On a successful Perception check, the character notices a small fog cloud in the distance that seems to creep ever closer regardless of any contradictory weather patterns.

If the characters become aware of their pursuer, they can choose to flee or stand and wait. If the characters elect to elude Billy, The Duke's Forlorn will attempt to sink the ship the characters are on with its arsenal of cannon fire while in pursuit.

Read Out: The dark night sky stretches above your vessel. Everything is peaceful and calm and quiet. Too quiet. Suddenly, you notice the abnormal stillness of the waves, or lack thereof below you. You realize you haven't seen a single fish, bird, or any other animal in quite some time. The silence is deafening.

And then, you see it. A single, solitary cloud of fog in the distance. And it's coming closer..

If the characters manage to stay ahead of The Duke's Forlorn until dawn, the encounter is successfully avoided as Billy and his crew

fade into non-existence as they can only exist under the dark of night.

If The Duke's Forlorn manages to catch up to the characters, Billy will appear alone on the deck and address the characters, demanding they hand over all items that rightfully belong to him, as well as any and all treasure on board for his troubles.

"A pleasure and honor to meet such wonderful company, my fellow seafaring friends. I do hope you find yourselves well on this beautiful evening. It pains me to put a damper upon our newly blossoming friendship, yet I must ask, for I find myself in an unfortunate predicament. I believe you to be in possession of an item that is of sentimental value to my poor, weary soul. I wish not for violence this fair night, yet I must ask that you return me baubles and trinkets, plus some coin for my troubles. Acquiesce to my demands, and I swear upon my life that my crew and I shall leave you on your merry way. Do we have an accord?"

Characters with a passive perception of 13 or higher can notice that the deck of The Duke's Forlorn is littered with 1d6 + 2 lifeless bodies, and a character that wishes to can make a DC 16 Insight check. On a success, they realize that all of the bodies are in fact Ghouls playing dead.

If the characters delay, Billy will pressure them.

"Do not mistake my civility for patience. I'll be leaving this vessel with what is mine, whether it be with us going our separate ways or with you sinking to the depths below. What say ye?"

If the characters agree to his demands, Billy will depart in peace until they come in possession of another item of his.

"It is refreshing to encounter such agreeable company on these seas. I bid you fine folk farewell. May you find your way to the nearest port unscathed. And let all know that the Duke of the Waves is not without mercy."

If negotiations go south the encounter properly begins, the Ghouls stand upright and 1d6 +2 Specters will ascend from the floorboards, and initiative is rolled. Billy will sic his undead minions upon the characters as he seeks to send them and their ship to a watery grave.

"That is unfortunate. It seems there be no recourse but to TAKE what is mine, and condemn you all to the crushing embrace of oblivion."

If the characters triumph over Billy or reduce The Duke's Forlorn's hull to 0 hit points, both captain and ship vanish into nothingness. Billy reappears 1d10 + 10 days later, still seeking out any who have hold of his possessions adrift the seas.

The Duke's Forlorn

Gargantuan Vehicle (100 ft. by 20 ft.)

Creature Capacity 30 crew, 20 passengers

Cargo Capacity 100 tons

Travel Pace 5 miles per hour (120 miles per day)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (0)	18 (+4)	0	0	18 (+4)

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, stunned, unconscious

Actions

On its turn, the ship can take 3 actions, choosing from the options below. It can take only 2 actions if it has fewer than twenty crew and only 1 action if it has fewer than ten. It can't take these actions if it has fewer than three crew.

Fire Cannons. The ship can fire its cannons.

Move. The ship can use its helm to move with its sails.

Hull

Armor Class 16

Hit Points 300 (damage threshold 15)

When the hull reaches 0 hit points, the ship and crew disappear to The Locker, returning to the material plane in 1d10 + 10 days.

Control: Helm

Armor Class 18

Hit Points 50

Move up to the speed of one of the ship's sails, with one 90-degree turn. If the helm is destroyed, the ship can't turn.

Movement: Sails

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 100; -5 ft. speed per 25 damage taken

Speed (water) 60 ft. The Duke's Forlorn always sails as though it has favorable winds and ignores the effects of extreme weather.

Weapon: Cannons

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 50

Ranged Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, range 600/2,400 ft., one target. Hit: 88 (16d10) bludgeoning damage. Each creature within 10 feet of the point of impact must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or take 18 (3d10) bludgeoning damage.

*“I sailed, I sailed across the sea, To trade from shore to shore.
Till ghastly fog devoured us, and sail we could no more.
I spied, I spied a pale green light, Atop the yonder waves.
A longboat carried on a man, As chilling as the grave.
I heard, I heard a tolling bell, And then it’s sister’s call.
We spied a ship within the mist, And terror filled us all.
Its hull, its hull was rotten through, Its sails a tattered shawl.
A crew with sunken eyes, they stared, And terror filled us all.
My soul, my soul, my sorry soul, That was the price to pay
To spare me from the Locker’s call, I’d shun the light of day.
We sail, We sail across the sea, But never see the shore.
Our bones now creak, our souls now seek, To sail forevermore...”*

- Sea shanty of the Duke’s Forlorn (Unknown Author)