



Freeport does not exist in a vacuum. Life (and death) in the Freebooter's City is defined in large part by its location. Perched on the shattered remains of Valossa, the citizens of Freeport contend not only with each other for survival, but with the natural (and unnatural) hazards of life on the tips of the Serpent's Teeth. While Freeport is the only city in the Serpent's Teeth, it shares the islands with a variety of smaller towns and outposts, and the pirates and traders that sail the sea. And in the jungles and caves of the islands, beneath the waves, and in the ruins of the serpent empire, there are legends, treasures, and horrors beyond human understanding, waiting to be discovered—or unleashed.

GEOGRAPHY

The Serpent's Teeth are a small group of four islands located some distance off the coast of the Continent. The largest of these is known as A'Val, which—roughly translated from the ancient serpent person tongue—means “Home.” Few humans know the origin of the island's name, but the ancient name still lives on. The city of Freeport sits huddled around a natural harbor on the southwestern end of the island.

The island directly to the west is known as Windward, while the one to the east is Leeward. These are both so named due to their relative location to A'Val. The smallest island lays to the south, and it's known as T'Wik (“little one”), although more and more of the locals refer to it now as “Lighthouse Island.”

Legend has it that the islands are actually the teeth of the Lost Serpent God. According to the myth, the Serpent God was killed during the Battle of the Old Gods that brought the last world to an end and gave this new one a fresh start. Its dismembered corpse was hurled across the newly made sea, its flesh creating new lands upon which the people would live. In the Battle, the Serpent God's fangs had been knocked loose, and all four of them (two upper and two lower) fell in a clump not far from the rest of the Old God's body, so large that they stuck straight out of the sea. Today, these form the Serpent's Teeth. Few people actually *believe* this legend, of course; it's just a convenient explanation for the region's name and geography.

A second, more obscure tale has it that the Serpent God is not dead but only sleeping. There will come a day at the twilight of the world in which the Serpent God will answer the clarion call to battle and meet with his mortal enemies once again. The loser of that battle shall have his corpse form the basis of the lands of the next world. This never-ending cycle of birth and rebirth is said to have gone on since the

Fighting for Freeport: A Privateer Speaks

~ *The Shipping News*

beginning of time. It will continue until the end of time. Only scholars, priests, and mystics generally know this legend, and most think the apocalyptic prophecy is no more than fiction. Among the priests in the city, only a handful believe they can predict when this doom will befall the world; few listen to them, and fewer still believe them.

The serpent people know that both halves of the legend are bunk—at least the select few of them with the sanity to recall the truth about Valossa's downfall. The Serpent's Teeth are really just the remnants of the magnificent land of their ancestors, a realm now buried beneath the silt of the surrounding seabed. As for sleeping gods waiting to rise from the depths and walk the world once more, well....

Myth aside, the Serpent's Teeth are basically the remnants of the volcanic rocks that once made up the much larger island of Valossa. The bits that still stand above the waves are the hardest kind of rock, mixed in with soft topsoil mostly composed of sand. The shores of the islands are generally wide and sandy beaches, although there are notable exceptions. The northern side of A'Val is composed of rocky cliffs that tumble straight into the sea. Also, Freeport Harbor has been built up enough over the years that the beach has been obliterated by the docks that hang out far into the waters. The interiors of the islands are largely undeveloped jungle, although some islands have more jungle than others.

The region of the Serpent's Teeth is just over five miles across from the westernmost point of Windward to the easternmost side of Leeward. Similarly, it's about five miles from the northernmost tip of A'Val to the southernmost bit of Windward, which juts out just a bit lower than the lowest part of T'Wik. The barrier reef stands roughly a mile off the coasts of the islands.

THE WEATHER

The climate of the Serpent's Teeth area is semi-tropical, with cool, pleasant winters and warm, somewhat humid summers; nights are always slightly cooler, although the warm trade winds blowing through the region keep things balmy.

The real troubles for the area come not from the heat or the cold, but the rain. As in most tropical areas, there is no real equivalent of the traditional four seasons. Instead, there are two: the dry season and the hurricane season.

The dry season begins during what would be the middle of fall/autumn and extends into what would be the middle of spring. During the dry season, there are still rains, but they tend to be gentle and easy. The weather is a bit cooler during this period, relatively speaking, but it's still pleasant.

STORMY WEATHER

The weather may be pleasant for a good part of the year, but the rest of the time sure makes up for it. Hurricane season lasts the other half of the year. During a standard hurricane season, up to ten major storms might lash the region. The chance of any single hurricane actually tearing through Freeport itself, much less the Serpent's Teeth is fairly small, but it happens from time to time.

The old-timers around the place always talk about how one storm or another ripped through so many years past. Twenty years back, Freeport got hit hard enough that the streets of Scurvytown were under three feet of water for more than a week, and waves smashed a good portion of the piers on the waterfront to waterlogged kindling. However, no

storm has ever irreparably damaged Freeport. It's certainly a looming possibility every storm season—one that the sailors moving in and out of town are very conscious of—but so far the residents of the Serpent's Teeth have been lucky.

Superstitious people claim the God of Storms does not wish to awaken the slumbering Serpent God. It's more likely, though, the area has simply been fortunate thus far. Every hurricane season finds the places of worship in the Temple District packed with citizens and sailors praying Freeport's luck holds out.

THE SEA

The sea around the Serpent's Teeth is generally calm, with an occasional bit of rough surf. The barrier reef that surrounds a good portion of the area, with the notable exception of the western coast of Windward and the area leading into Freeport's harbor, provides a measure of protection from the wildness of the open sea.

The reef actually grew up around the rubble left over from the destruction of Valossa over two thousand years ago. Underneath the living coral, there may still be bits and pieces of that ancient civilization just waiting to be discovered by some brave (and water-breathing) adventurers.

The main barrier reef itself may be static, but a shifting network of sandbars and smaller reefs also exists around the shores of the islands, making navigation problematic for inexperienced sailors. The currents swirling around the Serpent's Teeth keep these submerged hazards moving like the snakes so venerated in ancient Valossa. The problem is bad enough around A'Val that a society of professional navigators does a brisk business in Freeport keeping ships from running aground. But sometimes their maps are inaccurate, a captain uses an out-of-date chart, or a stubborn sailor refuses to pay for information. Ships are occasionally wrecked on a reef or becalmed on a sandbar, and then the sailors of Freeport scramble to their ships—not to rescue their stranded fellows, but to take their pick of the salvage before the sea claims the rest.

WHAT LURKS BELOW

While all sailors believe in sea monsters (and many have encountered such creatures), everyone acknowledges that the seas around the Serpent's Teeth are largely free of huge monsters like kraken or giant sea serpents. This is one of the reasons for the place's popularity over the centuries. For some reason, monstrous sea beasts give the place a wide berth, preferring to stick to deeper waters.

There are many theories about this. Perhaps over the years the creatures have learned that the ships entering Freeport are not to be trifled with. A number of historic battles between ships and monsters occurred within a day's sail of Freeport. In nearly every documented case, the creatures were killed or severely mauled, discouraging future attacks. Others argue these creatures remember the might of the serpent people or they sense the old power that still lies beneath the waves. So they stay away from the Serpent's Teeth, lest they awaken that sleeping might. Both these theories assume a certain intelligence on the part of these monsters, which not everyone accepts (or likes to think about). More mundanely, the coral reef itself presents a significant obstacle to any large creatures (one reason why there are few whales found in the region). They could manage to get through the reef by following a ship in, but risk being trapped in shallow waters, easy prey for hunters.

THE SERPENT'S TEETH



DALLOS OCEAN

GORAL REEF

A'DAL

GORAL REEF

LEEWARD

WINDWARD

T'WIK

GORAL REEF

TO THE CONTINENT

GORAL REEF

ISLAND KEY

- 1 - FREEPORT
- 2 - BLACK DOG'S GAMES
- 3 - GABBAGE CRACK
- 4 - THE CREMATORIUM
- 5 - THE HULK
- 6 - MOUNT A'DAL
- 7 - LIBERTYVILLE
- 8 - FELIX'S RUIN
- 9 - MILTON'S FOLLY



SETTLEMENT KEY

- GABBAGE CRACK**
- 1 - FORD
 - 2 - WAREHOUSE
 - 3 - GENERAL STORE
 - 4 - INN
- LIBERTYVILLE**
- 5 - WALLACES'
 - 6 - INN
 - 7 - GENERAL STORE
 - 8 - GUARD TOWER
 - 9 - T'GIRI'S SHIPYARD
 - 10 - LIBERTYVILLE HARBOUR
 - 11 - FLEAGLE'S WEAPON SHOP
 - 12 - FRANCISCO'S