GREAT WHALES

BY VAIDENON OF HUSTAN, WARDEN OF THE INKHORN FELLOWSHIP

Bowhead, Humpback, Gray, and Finback

> "I have seen a whale once, from the deck of a Thay cog, and I was sick over the rail the whole time. What I know of the four great whales I owe to Ivinian whalers in Tashal's taverns, who are the finest liars I have met and, on whales, entirely honest."
>
> — Vaidenon of Hustan, Warden of the Inkhorn Fellowship, Tashal, Morgat 720 TR

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Whales are the largest beasts in the oceans. There are many kinds, and Columbia Games' *Bestiary* gives three in full: the sperm, killer and right whale (Aquatics 5). Ivinian whalers know more, as *Ivinia* records: they hunt the right whale, the Itikirian bowhead and the humpback most, though the humpback sinks when killed and is their last choice, and they leave the sperm, finback and gray whales alone as rare in the north or too fast to catch (Ivinia: Whaling). The maritime encounter tables name "Gray/finback/sperm whale" and "Humpback/bowhead whale" among their results (Pilots' Almanac). I give those four great whales here on Columbia's model.

THE WARDEN'S NOTE

The Ivinians I spoke with were particular about one thing above all: a great gray whale may be Njehu himself, or one of his get, and a man who harpoons one should expect a hard winter. I record this as they told it, and I record that the harpooner of the tale below was, when I met him, a quiet man who kept very few nets.

BOWHEAD

The Itikirian bowhead is a great black whale with a huge, arched head and a white chin, as heavy as the right whale and longer. It lives at the edge of the ice in the Sea of Itikir and the North Pergen Sea all year, coming south only in the hardest winters. Its head is so massive that it breaks through new ice to breathe. It is slow and floats when dead, and its blubber is thicker than any other whale's. Its baleen is the longest. Menglanan and Orbaalese whalers hunt it in summer from their northern stations (Ivinia; Menglana).

HUMPBACK

The humpback is a knobbly, black-and-white whale with wing-like flippers a third of its length. It leaps clear of the water, slaps the sea with its flippers and flukes, and sings: long moaning songs that sailors hear through their hulls at night and take for ghosts or Njehu's voice. Humpbacks feed in the north in summer and go south in winter to the warm Gulf of Ederwyn and the coasts of Shorkyne and Trierzon to calve. *(Inkhorn)* A humpback sinks when killed, so it is the last choice of Ivinian whalers (Ivinia). It drives killer whales away from seals and from other whales, which the whalers say is a kindness and I say is a mystery. *(Inkhorn)*

GRAY WHALE

The gray whale is mottled grey and white, crusted with barnacles and scarred, and it feeds close inshore, rooting in the mud of bays for shellfish. It follows the coasts on long spring and autumn journeys and calves in sheltered lagoons. On Hârn it is rare, a visitor to the Gulf of Ederwyn and the west coast in passage (Inkhorn). Gray mothers defend their calves savagely and have smashed many boats. Most of all, the gray whale is sacred. Njehu, Lord of Whales, has the shape of a great gray whale, and his progeny may be mistaken for him. Some pious whalers are therefore reluctant to hunt large gray whales (Ivinia: Njehu).

FINBACK

The finback is the second-largest creature in the sea: a long, sleek, slate-grey whale up to 70 feet long, with a tall, hooked back fin. It is the fastest of the great whales and keeps to deep water in every sea. A harpooned finback tows a boat for leagues and then either breaks the line or dies far out of sight of land. Ivinians call it too fast to hunt (Ivinia). Its spout is a tall, narrow column seen from a long way off, and sailors use it as a sign of deep water.

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SEASONS IN HÂRNIC WATERS (INKHORN)

Summer (Nolus–Agrazhar): right whales, bowheads, and humpbacks feed in the north (the Sea of Ivae, the Gulf of Njehu, the Itikir); it is the whaling season (Menglana). **Autumn (Azura–Savor):** humpbacks and gray whales pass southwards along the west coast of Hârn and the Orbaal coast. **Winter (Ilvin–Morgat):** humpbacks calve in the Gulf of Ederwyn and off Shorkyne and Trierzon, and right whales come to the Gulf of Ederwyn (Aquatics 5). **Spring (Nuzyael–Kelen):** the gray whales and humpbacks come north again. Finbacks are in deep water at all seasons. Sperm whales keep to the Haonic Ocean (Aquatics 5).

WHALING

Ivinian whaling is usually a sideline of fishing and farming clans, mostly in western Ivae (Ivinia: Whaling). The usual method is to attack a pod that has come close inshore and harpoon one, or drive it, into shallow water, then cut it up and render the blubber on the beach. A few clans go far out to sea in ships, lowering small boats when a whale is sighted. The harpoon is thrown, the whale dives, and when it tires and resurfaces it is killed with more harpoons and towed to the ship (Ivinia: Whaling). On Hârn, a manor fishing fleet may catch a small right whale and tow it ashore (Melderyn), and Rethemi, Peran tribesmen, and the Orbaalese whale too (Fishing 2). Of the Kubora, only the Nolgind hunt whales at sea (Kubora).

PRODUCTS

Whales are hunted chiefly for oil, sold as lamp oil and to perfumers. Bones and baleen go into tools, bows, and carving (Ivinia). Whale oil sells at 12d a gallon and whalebone at 6d a pound (Pricelist; Ivinia). Ambergris, at 180d an ounce, comes only from sperm whales (Ivinia). Whale meat, raw or smoked, is a common Ivinian winter dish (Ivinia). Wulfenheim's craftsmen are famed for scrimshaw (Menglana). A right whale yields several tons of meat, 4,000 gallons of oil, and 1,500 lb of baleen (Manor); the Fellowship yields for the other whales are given in Economic Data.

SPECIAL RULES

SIZE

All great whales are Gargantuan (d20; Bestiary 1, "leviathans"). Men strike them with large size penalties, and they strike men with large bonuses. In practice, a whale's blow on a man in the water is usually fatal, and a man's blow on a whale matters only with a harpoon.

ATTACKS ON SHIPS

How a whale damages a vessel is given in Columbia Games' *Bestiary* (Bestiary 2; Aquatics 1). The Fellowship adds only that small boats (pinda, dory, whaleboat) are capsized instead on an MS or CS. *(Inkhorn)*

HARPOON LINE (INKHORN)

A harpooned whale either runs or sounds. **Running:** it tows the boat at its Swim speed. Each 10 minutes the boat makes a Hull roll (Pilots' Almanac) at −10 per 5 points of Swim over 10, and the whale tests END to keep running. **Sounding:** it dives. The line-tender must cut the line within 1d3 rounds (an Axe or Dagger roll at +20), or the boat is pulled under and its crew are in the water (Skills 10). Anyone standing in the coils when the line runs makes an AGL × 3 roll or is dragged overboard.

MOTHERS AND CALVES (INKHORN)

A whale with a calf attacks any boat that harms or nears the calf: gray whales always, humpbacks and right whales on 1d6 1–3. Gray whales are "devil-fish" to the whalers who know them.

RELIGIOUS VIEWS

- Sarajin: whales belong to Njehu; fishermen sacrifice a portion of their catch to him (Menglana). Pious whalers are reluctant to hunt large gray whales, which may be his progeny (Ivinia: Njehu).
- Kubora: the Nolgind hunt whales at sea by the leave of Grandfather Whale (Kubora).
- Peoni and Larani: the beached whale is a royal fish (Fish).

FOLK TALES

The Singing Ship

A Melderyni cog becalmed in the Gulf of Ederwyn heard singing under the keel all night, low and sad. The crew prayed, wept, and threw a sailor's Agrikan amulet overboard to stop it. At dawn a dozen humpbacks rose around the ship, blew, and went south. The amulet's owner was never trusted again.

Njehu's Calf

A Menglanan whaling crew harpooned a great gray whale with a calf. The mother smashed two boats, and the line held the third until the steersman cut it. That winter, the clan's fjord froze early and no fish came into it. The valhakar sent the harpooner to Ilbengaad to make amends (Inkhorn tale).

The Finback's Ride

Ivinians say of a fool's errand that it is "a finback ride": fast, long, cold, and ending a long way from home with nothing to show for it.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- A Menglanan whaling expedition needs extra hands for a summer at the Itikir ice.

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- A gray whale and calf are trapped in a fjord behind a sandbar. The clan wants to kill them, and the priest of Sarajin says no.
- A whale has stranded on a manor's beach. Who owns it: the lord, the crown, or the fishermen who found it?

ENCOUNTERS

Pilots' Almanac maritime table: "Gray/finback/sperm Whale" and "Humpback/bowhead Whale" results (and Pilot 13 "Whales, Dolphins, etc."). The Fellowship proposes that a result of "Whale results by water" be resolved on this table:

D100	RESULT
01–30	Gray/finback/sperm: in the north, a finback; in the Gulf of Ederwyn and the west coast in autumn or spring, a gray (1d3); else a sperm whale
31–60	Humpback/bowhead: north of Hârn in summer or in the Itikir, a bowhead pod (2–5); else humpbacks (1d3)
61–80	Humpbacks singing or breaching (1d6)
81–95	A finback passing (Swim 18, no interest in ships)
96–00	A mother and calf: gray in the Gulf of Ederwyn, else humpback

The Aquatics table (Aquatics 1) keeps its Columbia whales (killer, right, sperm). These results apply only where the maritime tables name the four great whales.

RUMOURS

RUMOUR	TRUTH	WHERE
A great gray whale was seen in the fjord; the whalers will not touch it.	true	Ivinia, Orbaal
The whales sing at night in the Gulf of Ederwyn; the dead are calling.	partly	Rethem, Melderyn, Kanday ports
A whaling crew out of Wulfenheim came home with ambergris worth a manor.	open	Menglana

ECONOMIC DATA

ITEM	PRICE	SOURCE
Whale oil	12d/gallon	Pricelist; Ivinia
Whalebone (baleen)	6d/lb	Pricelist; Ivinia
Ambergris (sperm whale only)	180d/oz	Pricelist; Ivinia
Bowhead: oil 5,000 gal; baleen 2,000 lb	about 72,000d	Inkhorn
Humpback: oil 1,500 gal; baleen 600 lb (if it does not sink)	about 21,600d	Inkhorn
Gray: oil 1,000 gal; baleen 300 lb	about 13,800d	Inkhorn
Finback: oil 2,500 gal; baleen 800 lb	about 34,800d	Inkhorn
Right whale (Columbia yield, Manor): 4,000 gal; 1,500 lb	about 57,000d	Manor; Pricelist

THE FELLOWSHIP'S ADDITIONS

- Stats for the bowhead, humpback, gray, and finback on the Columbia whale model
- Seasons and distribution in Hârnic and Lythian waters
- Harpoon Line, Mothers and Calves, and small-boat capsizing
- Yields and values
- Encounter resolution

Everything else follows HârnMaster 3 and the Columbia Games articles cited, which the Fellowship commends to every reader.

CREDITS

Writer: Vaidenon of Hustan. Set down by Lesli of Bifel and his homunculus, Claudin.

Sources cited: Columbia Games' *Bestiary* (Aquatics 1, 5–6: sperm, killer and right whales; Bestiary 2: attacks on ships), *Ivinia* (whaling; Njehu; prices), *Menglana*, *Fishing* (#4842), *Manor*, *Pilots' Almanac* (Pilot 13; maritime encounters) and *Religion* (#4401: Sarajin); the fan price list by Fenhorn (the whaler); Fish, in this Physiologus (dolphins, narwhal).

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STAT BLOCKS

BOWHEAD WHALE

Habitat: Ice edge, Itikir
Height: 55′ (length)
Weight: 60 tons
Diet: Filter feeder
Lifespan: 100–200 years
Group: Pods of 2–5
Size: Gargantuan/d20

ATTRIBUTES

98 Str	06 Eye	08 Int	49 End
40 Sta	10 Hrg	07 Aur	06 Swim
• Dex	08 Sml	10 Wil	
05 Agl			

SKILLS

35 Initiative	25 Dodge
36 Awareness	95 Swimming

30 Flukes 16b
25 Ram 14b *(head; breaks ice)*

ARMOUR

B9 E6 P5 F8 GAC 2

STRIKE LOCATIONS

01–25 Head	39–56 Thorax
26–30 Neck	57–75 Abdomen
31–38 •Flipper	76–00 Tail

• Odd = Left, Even = Right. As cetacean (as the Sperm Whale, Aquatics 5).

- Floats when dead; the thickest blubber (Ivinia).
- Slow; the whalers' favourite after the right whale.

HUMPBACK WHALE

Habitat: Coastal and open sea
Height: 45′ (length)
Weight: 35 tons
Diet: Krill, herring
Lifespan: 50–80 years
Group: 1–3
Size: Gargantuan/d20

ATTRIBUTES

88 Str	08 Eye	12 Int	48 End
45 Sta	16 Hrg	10 Aur	09 Swim
• Dex	08 Sml	12 Wil	
09 Agl			

SKILLS

45 Initiative	35 Dodge
50 Awareness	95 Swimming
60 Singing[1]	

35 Flipper 14b
35 Flukes 18b
[1] Singing: heard through hulls

ARMOUR

B7 E5 P4 F5 GAC 2

STRIKE LOCATIONS

As the Bowhead Whale.

- Sinks when killed (Ivinia).
- Drives off killer whales (Inkhorn).

GRAY WHALE

Habitat: Coasts, lagoons (in passage)
Height: 45′ (length)
Weight: 30 tons
Diet: Bottom feeder
Lifespan: 50–70 years
Group: 1–3 (mother and calf)
Size: Gargantuan/d20

ATTRIBUTES

85 Str	08 Eye	12 Int	48 End
45 Sta	12 Hrg	12 Aur	08 Swim
• Dex	08 Sml	15 Wil	
08 Agl			

SKILLS

45 Initiative	30 Dodge
45 Awareness	95 Swimming

40 Flukes 18b
35 Ram 15b *(when defending a calf)*

ARMOUR

B8 E6 P4 F5 GAC 2

STRIKE LOCATIONS

As the Bowhead Whale.

- Njehu's shape: pious whalers will not hunt large grays (Ivinia).
- A mother always attacks boats near her calf (Inkhorn).

FINBACK WHALE

Habitat: Deep sea, all waters
Height: 70′ (length)
Weight: 50 tons
Diet: Krill, herring
Lifespan: 80–90 years
Group: 1–6
Size: Gargantuan/d20

ATTRIBUTES

100 Str	08 Eye	10 Int	54 End
50 Sta	14 Hrg	09 Aur	18 Swim
• Dex	08 Sml	13 Wil	
10 Agl			

SKILLS

50 Initiative	40 Dodge
45 Awareness	95 Swimming

30 Flukes 20b

ARMOUR

B8 E6 P4 F5 GAC 2

STRIKE LOCATIONS

As the Bowhead Whale.

- Too fast to hunt with success (Ivinia); a harpooned finback tows a boat for leagues.

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