

PIRATES

OF THE DOMINIONS

UMBERTO PIGNATELLI



BEASTS & BARBARIANS

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A Sword and Sorcery Savage Worlds setting

BY UMBERTO PIGNATELLI

PIRATES OF THE DOMINIONS

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“On my command, board, you scurvy dogs!”

Are you tired of the forests and sun-scorched plains of the Dominions? Do you want to take ship and venture into the boundless blue?

Would you like to visit the dangerous Cove, where the worst scum of the Dread Sea gets drunk on Zalaska, telling stories of ancient treasures hidden in mysterious islands and cursing the name of the Corsairs of Caldeia?

Or maybe you'd prefer to sail the Brown Sea, and venture onto the dangerous docks of the City of Leaves, the main pirate port of the east, facing the enigmatic Yellow Masks?

Or join the forces of the Borderlands and Jalizar to stop the bloodthirsty Skull Raiders, coming in their gray ships to sack and pillage the cradle of civilization?

The choice is yours!

In this book you'll find everything you need to run a piratical campaign in the Beasts & Barbarians setting: an expanded Book of Lore detailing the Cove, the Finger Islands and various other piratical locations, new Edges, Hindrances, gear, and (obviously) ships, with expanded rules to handle them!

So, what are you waiting for? Catch the wind in your sails, and point your prow to the sea, where blood, glory and treasure await you!

INTRODUCTION

The drums thundered aboard, but Vashtana the Torturer is spasmodically, giving the rhythm to the rowers, punctuated by the occasional grunt and curse, but without the lashes of an overseer.

There was no overseer on the Blood Bride, and no lashes for the Free Brothers at the rows. These were the rules of the pirates.

Zandorra, standing on the prow like a living figurehead, her red mane like a flag in the wind, shouted an order, her eyes fixed on the black galley in front of her, the quarry they had sought since dawn.

"Faster, dogs! Faster! I have seen old whores row with more strength than you! Row faster and tonight we'll get drunk on Caldeian wine and gold!"

The men below deck grunted, but they redoubled their efforts.

"Make full sail!" thundered Shangor, at the helm, and in a few heartbeats the big sail, red as the mane of her captain, filled up with wind, giving extra speed to the pirate ship.

"Remember!" Zandorra said to the crew. "You can kill everyone else

aboard, but Vashtana the Torturer is mine!"

"Aye, captain!" the men shouted.

Only Shangor fell silent. He loved the piratical life: the sun, the salt smell, the fights and the enormous sense of freedom of the boundless sea. But since Zandorra had become the captain of the Blood Bride after killing the previous one, his old friend wasn't herself anymore; the thirst for Caldeian blood, the blood of those who'd killed her son, had driven her mad. She wasn't looking for loot and glory, only vengeance and death.

The massive barbarian, second in command, left the helm to Vaago, the lame pirate he trusted most with it, grabbed his axe and joined Zandorra near the prow.

In the meantime, the Blood Bride had devoured the small distance between ships, and he could already see the brown-dressed mariners aboard the Caldeian vessel, moving like busy ants, and behind them, the shimmering of the sun on the black oiled mail of Vashtana's bodyguards.

“It won’t be an easy fight,” the big barbarian frowned.

Zandorra shouted an order. “Board now, dogs! Death to Caldeia!”

“Death to Caldeia!” Shangor echoed.

And he jumped onto the enemy ship, his axe in his hand and a curse on his lips.

Welcome back to the Dominions! In this sourcebook you’ll find plenty of info on one of the biggest tropes of Sword and Sorcery: pirates!

Among these pages you’ll find stories ancient and new of sea and sail, freedom and betrayal, gold and curses, and booze, lots of booze, by Hordan’s bloody kiss!

In addition, you’ll find new rules to handle ships, crews and sea battles. If you like the idea of having your own crew of piratical scum and making yourself a name as the terror of the seas, continue reading...

A NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS

To save space, several abbreviations are used in this book to refer to other books of the *Beasts & Barbarians* line. They are listed below:

GE: Beasts & Barbarians Golden Edition

BOD: Beasts of the Dominions

JCT: Jalizar, City of Thieves

TB: Tattered Banners

GOD: Gladiators of the Dominions

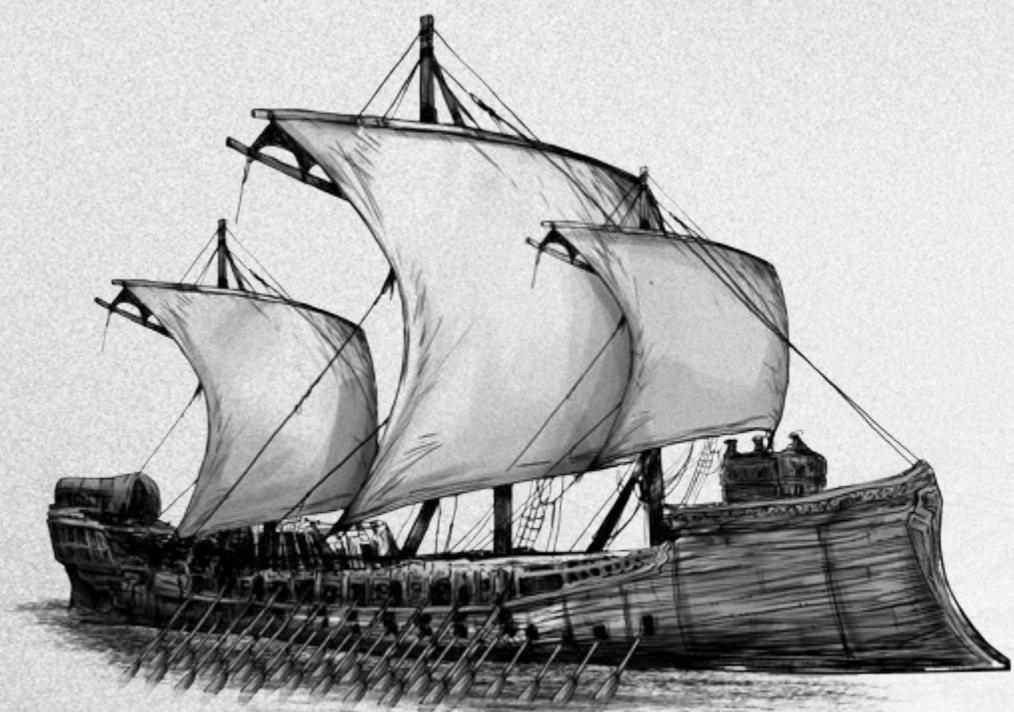
TLD: Tricornia, Land of Demons

DPD: Dark Places of the Dominions

Note: To make full use of this sourcebook, we strongly suggest you have a copy of *TB* handy.



PLAYER'S GUIDE



THE BOOK OF LORE

Velastios, my beloved master,

I hope this letter finds you well, in good health, and not too worried about my fate. Some time has passed since I last sent you a message, but the last few months are among the most incredible ones of my life. In the end, my friends and I managed to leave Tricarnia, that cursed land of demons, headed southward, but Hulian doesn't want our travels to be easy, and our ship was attacked by pirates.

We were captured, but the fighting skills of my companions, Shangor and Zandorra, gained us acceptance in the crew of these scum.

Today our ship, the Blood Bride, finally moored at the Cove, the secret pirate port of which you told me many stories when I was your pupil.

I eagerly visited the crowded and multicolored streets of the Cove, and among the naked courtesans and carousing pirates, I spotted the familiar red robe of a Sage of the Library. Puzzled, I watched him more closely and great was my surprise on recognizing our brother Fildago! I am sure you remember the wild stories circulating about a renegade Sage who joined the pirates... well, they seem to be true!

Cautiously I approached our former brother, not surprised to find him quite dirty and very drunk, and he recognized me. Despite his rough appearance he was friendly and chatty, and many were the things he asked me, about you and the Library, as many as were the stories he told me, sitting at a tavern's table, about his life with the pirates.

I accurately wrote down all I could on the peculiar experiences of Fildago on these pieces of sail (sorry, but finding proper paper is almost impossible at the Cove), and I am sending them to you, because, as you said many times 'every type of knowledge is important, whatever the source it comes from'.

As always, I respectfully salute you, my master,

Justinus of Syranthia

From the Letters of Justinus of Syranthia

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PIRACY

For as long as mankind remembers, since the first scribes of the Library of Syranthia started taking notes of the passing of time, sea raiding and piracy have been common and widespread.

So it isn't possible (and would make no sense) to make a full and accurate report of piratical activities of the past, but what we'll do in the next few pages is recount the most (in)famous deeds of piracy.

A brief note before starting; many people, due to the sinister fame of the Cove, think that piracy is only common in the Dread Sea, but this is false. In the Brown Sea, raiders from the fabled City of Leaves terrorize ships on the Golden Route in the name of the Sea Tyrant, and the Gray Scoundrels of the Drowned Sea assault any ship not flying the flag of Jalizar...

These and many other tales await you in the following pages.

So, loyal reader, let's set sail into the Dominions!

ANCIENT HISTORY

A word of caution: the stories reported in this chapter are so old that their truthfulness is lost in the mists of time. We report them only because Velastios of Syranthia, venerable Sage of the Library, noted them in his diary.

THE BLACK SAILS OF TERROR

The first written traces of piratical acts in the history of the Dominions are in the

diaries of Giumaos the Guardian, keeper of the books of the Seatower of Maresa, a small town on the Syranthian coast. It was a detailed report of the severe losses suffered by the town due to the assault of "black ships coming from the north", manned by "a race of pale devils and their monstrous servants".

From the details of the text, this refers to the frequent raids made by Tricarnians on the southern lands, looking for new slaves for their cities and rice fields. Probably the report can be dated to around 900 AF and describes a very common habit of the Priest Princes of the era.

The so-called "pirates", in truth raiders, came from the north, sailing near the coast in their triremes to attack the poorly defended villages of Syranthia and northern Kyros (usually by night, hence the habit of dyeing the sails black to avoid being noticed).

Over the years this led to the construction of a series of Sea Towers on the coast, from Askerios to the Sword River, which still exist today, each of them fitted with a system of big signal mirrors and beacons to raise the alarm along the coast. Today nobody knows if this system really worked, but the expression "black sail of terror" still exists in the Syranthian language to indicate an impending and unavoidable doom, and no Syranthian crew would ever agree to man a ship with black sails, because of the bad luck they bring.

Today, black sails are commonly used by Caldeian Corsairs (see below), and this still causes some tension with Syranthian ships.

THE PIRATES' BROTHERHOOD AND HULIAN'S JUSTICE

The first real pirates, in the meaning we give the term today, were, ironically, Syranthian. Towards the end of the first millennium AF, Syranthia was a fully developed mercantile power; its broad, slow, ships, could be seen almost everywhere in Dread Sea ports, and some of the boldest captains pointed their prows toward the Endless Ocean and the Brown Sea.

But, although the country and the merchant princes were rich, the crews were made of poor men, often underpaid and mistreated, or, in the worst case, slaves. Crews started to rebel, and many of them found shelter in the Islands of the Maimed Ones, breeding with the depraved women of these old rocks and hiding in secret coves, concealed by permanent fog. They only left their new homes to attack and pillage their former masters' ships.

From the first isolated and rebellious crews, these pirates grew in number and become more organized. Under the command of Baruk the Goatfoot (see Sidebar on page 22), the most important captains gathered in a grotto in the islands, spilled their blood with a curved dagger, and drank it from a golden cup, a sip for each, sealing the start of the Free Mariners Brotherhood, later known as the Pirates' Brotherhood.

Baruk even founded a city in the Islands of the Maimed Ones, Boaraga, a piratical port with no law which quickly become a threat to all the ships and coasts of the Dread Sea. Stories say that Goatfoot and his captains sacrificed prisoners and girls to the deformed gods of the Islands and that in exchange they were taught secret spells to bring enemy ships into the shallows or to make the wind stop.

Whatever the truth of this story, the epilogue is even weirder and darker; in 1021 AF, a Faberterranean ship carrying twelve virgins destined to be the holy handmaidens of the Temple of Hulian was captured by the pirates, and Goatfoot himself defiled and sacrificed the maidens in an orgy in his palace in Boaraga.

When the report of such an act came to Fabron, first priest of Hulian, great was his rage: his prayers and the sound of his smith's hammer on the altar echoed for three days and three nights, before he fell on the ground, exhausted.

The same night an earthquake, followed by a volcanic eruption, devastated the Islands of the Maimed Ones, destroying Boaraga and its dwellers. The surviving pirates fled, like rats jumping off a sinking ship. They took shelter on the southern coasts of the Dominions, but many years would pass before they could be a threat again. Everywhere, kings and peasants alike were awed by the power of Hulian, and the cult of the Smith God acquired a number of followers after the story spread.

And what about Goatfoot? Stories say he died, beheaded by brimstone, but his many offspring survived: sages say that his evil blood still taints the world and that periodically a baby with a goat's foot is born, and he is always a bringer of woes.

HO JAN AND THE CITY OF LEAVES

Meantime, in the Brown Sea, a new threat was born, and his name was Ho Jan.

But before speaking of Ho Jan, some words must be allocated to the City of Leaves. It is a marvel very few westerners have ever seen.

In the southeast part of the Brown Sea, where the water is murky and warm, enormous waterlilies grow, some of them hundreds of yards wide, and with flowers tall as the tallest pines of the Caled Forest, populated by strange insects, enormous alligators and even stranger fauna. The very leaves of these plants are thick as a man standing, and they are almost eternal; continuously growing and dying, there is always a faint smell of decay around them.

Sages debate if the giant flowers are in truth a single enormous plant, mutated by Lotus, or if it is a colony of different plants growing together. Whatever the truth, the flower bed extends for hundreds of miles, creating a labyrinth of channels and floating islands similar to the Yathis of Tricarnia (see *TLD*, pag. 77), although much bigger and with a more stable position.

In the very heart of the archipelago of leaves there are several islands, upon which over the centuries a small settlement of fishermen grew up, the Village of Leaves. The Leaf People, as they were called, were an independent bunch, but, in 1111 AF, they were invaded by Ho Jan the Green Dragon.

Ho Jan was one of the Lords of Lhobanport, something between a merchant prince and a crime lord. A very ambitious man, he had attempted to seize absolute power over the city, but he was defeated and forced to flee on a small fleet of junks to escape death.

He found shelter in the islands among the leaves, where he took control of the Village of Leaves and built his base. From there, he brooded on his hate of the other lords, and started assaulting the ships on the Golden Route, bringing wares from Lhoban to Kyros.

In a few years, Ho Jan became the terror of the Brown Sea.

He had under his command a fleet of more than one hundred junks, and among his servants there were the members of the Yellow Masks, a secret sect of Lotusmasters, who found great applications for the strange Lotus growing among the water lilies.

This science led to the construction of the legendary capital ship of Ho Jan's fleet: the *Green Dragon*, an enormous junk manned by a fanatical crew and armed with a strange contraption capable of spouting Lotus fire against enemy ships, which Ho Jan enjoyed using himself to see his enemies die in flames.

Ho Jan's power over the Brown Sea became so absolute that he strangled all the commerce on the Golden Route. In 1124 AF the Lords of Lhobanport surrendered and offered him the crown of the city.

Ho Jan came back triumphantly to Lhobanport and, as sign of good will, he spared the lives of his old opponents, who in exchange gifted him So Pal, a marvelous concubine, "as beautiful as a secret mountain spring", the stories say.

Everything looked good; too good.

Ho Jan, blinded by the apparent fulfillment of his dream, didn't see the danger and ignored the pleas of his son and first lieutenant Janhor for caution. Three days after being crowned, So Pal the concubine killed Ho Jan using a devious poison on her tongue, and the troops of the Lords, who had been hidden in the city, attacked and butchered Ho Jan's men.

Janhor managed to escape from the city with part of the fleet, and returned to the City of Leaves, where he continued the piratical activities of the past, starting a twenty-year-long war with Lhobanport, which ended with no winner.

The City of Leaves, as will be described later, still exists today, and is the main pirate base of the Brown Sea.

THE MARAUDER QUEENS

But let's return to the Dread Sea; to be accurate, to the Island of Ascaia.

In 1947 AF, a new pair of Sister Queens ascended to the throne of the Amazons' island: Shilaya and Valyana, and their names are still feared today.

Ascaia has always followed this tradition: when one of the Sister Queens dies, the surviving one retires, taking the title of Old Queen, to allow a new pair of Queens to rule without a struggle for the succession.

In this case, when Imara died, the other queen Zanda became Old Queen, allowing Imara's daughters Valyana and Shilaya, to take the throne.

Traditionally, to allow balance in government, one of the Queens is the Keeper of the Blade, an ancient Amazon blade, and is the warrior of the couple, while the other is the Bringer of



the Jewel, because she wears at her navel the Flower of Etu, a piece of jewellery which is a sign of peace and prosperity. Often the Bringer of the Jewel is also a priestess of Etu.

But this was not the case for Valyana and Shilaya. Both skilled mariners and warriors, they both ruled as Keeper of the Blade, forging a second sword, while the Flower of Etu laid, abandoned, in the temple of the acropolis.

In that period the Iron Empire, focused on expansion eastward, was showing its first signs of weakness.

Valyana and Shilaya exploited these, and started a campaign of ferocious aggression against their neighbors. In those years, the Hawk Ships plundered the rich Independent Cities of the south, the shores of Kyros, and even dared to assault Tricarnia, inflicting serious damage on the Land of the Priest Princes.

Hawk Ships were also sent into the Elephants' River, ransacking the present-day Borderlands, only avoiding attacks on Faberterra.

But what did the Empire do against such a threat?

Absolutely nothing.

This because the Marauder Queens had in their hands a very precious hostage: Valestan the Young, the heir of the Emperor, unfortunately captured by Amazons pirates in 1950 AF. With such a card in their hands, the Marauder Queens were confident they could do whatever they wanted, as long as they didn't attack the Empire directly.

In truth, it seems that Valestan's imprisonment wasn't so hard, and the man was on pretty good terms with the Queens. Rumors say that he even fathered a child with Valyana, which technically could have been both Queen of Ascaia and Empress of the Iron Empire.

But the Marauder Queens' reign was, luckily, brief: in 1947 AF Valyana died during an unfortunate sea raid against the Tricarnian city of Val Xartha (see *TLD* page 153). Exploiting the partial power vacuum, a rebellion, led by Zanda the Old Queen, deposed Shilaya.

The surviving queen was sentenced to life-long imprisonment: she was walled up alive under the Acropolis of Ascaia, condemned never to see the light again. She screamed and cursed for five years, before no sound was heard anymore and the food was returned intact. Probably she was dead, but the Old Queen forbade anyone to remove the wall, so nobody really knows.

What about Valestan? The imperial heir managed to avoid capture and escaped with the enormous treasure of the Marauder Queens, the fruit of ten years of plundering. The very day after his escape, a terrible storm swept the Dread Sea, and his ship, the *Silver Blade*, was never seen again. Some say he died at sea, while others claim he managed to take shelter from the storm and find a place to hide his fabled treasure.

The Emperor quickly declared Valestan dead (and replaced him in the line of succession with the more malleable Ornestan), and the Old Queen ruled the island for another thirty years, making hers the longest reign in all Ascaian history. She ruled till the Sisters Coming from the

Sea were chosen by Etu as Queens, but that is another story, for another day...

THE GRAY PRINCE OF JALIZAR

The Drowned King Sea too has its share of pirates and sea reavers.

For centuries pillagers and raiders have sailed from the Shallows Village of Jalizar (see JCT), making raids on the shores of present-day Valkheim and southern Gis. Everybody in the City of Thieves knows the name of Zoran, the Smuggler King and songs were composed about his deeds as a youth, along with those of his father, Chibbar.

But almost as famous as Zoran is Melian, known as the Gray Prince of Jalizar, the Scoundrel Pirate, the Stealer of Kisses and Strider of Rooftops, the Alchemists' Thief and another half-dozen titles the Jalizarans gave him.

Melian was born in 2238 AF, and a lot of stories are told about his origin. Some say he was the direct descendant of Emella, the last of the bloodline of the true kings of Jalizar, while others say he was the son of a tavern dancer and a priest of Ranikos Blindfolded.

Whatever the truth, Melian was charismatic and strong, admired by men and loved by women.

He easily rose through the ranks of the Seagulls, the navy of Jalizar, devoting the first half of his life to fighting the same smugglers and pirates that would have been his best friends and companions in the second half.

What ruined Melian (or, depending on your point of view, made him a hero) was his absolute passion for gambling and risk.

No bet was too high for him; no woman, married or not, was forbidden. This, in conjunction with his sharp wits, got him involved in numerous duels, which he always won, being an excellent swordsman.

It was during one of these that he killed the Archont of Talum, after being caught in bed with the Archont's wife.

Stripped of his rank, Melian was imprisoned in the dreaded Tower of Justice of Jalizar, sentenced to death.

Now, as the story says, nobody has ever escaped from that Dungeon except Ranikos Blindfolded, but the Gray Prince managed to escape during his own execution, in Victory Square. The details of his roguish escapade were lost, except that he also managed to free other prisoners, and that their escape involved running away over the rooftops of the city, before reaching the port and stealing a ship.

The legend says that during the escape the soot from the chimneys was smeared on Melian's clothes, and that from that day, as a sign of devotion to Ranikos, god of thieves, he has always dressed in gray (hence his name).

From that day on, Melian, the Gray Prince, became a pirate, devoting himself and his men to a life of raiding and adventures. He never had a fleet under his command, as other pirate lords did; he always commanded his own ship, the *Gray Pearl*, and with it brought ruin everywhere in the Drowned King Sea.

Always a gentleman, he was famous for never mistreating a woman in his power (but this didn't prevent him asking a fabulous ransom for Imperial Princess Valiana).

Many are the deeds attributed to him. Some of them are probably true, like the theft of the mask of the Second Alchemist of Gis and the raid on the Cairn of the Dead Waves; others are surely false, such as the legend that he found the Treasure of Queen Emella and that he kidnapped Isalya of Tricarnia, replacing her with a double, to make her his lover.

Whatever the truth, everybody knows how the legend of the Gray Prince ended; pursued by the combined fleets of Jalizar and Gis, he drove the *Gray Pearl* across the Mouths of Kargan, a maelstrom not far away the Cairnlands coast. He probably died, but nobody has seen the corpse, or even the wreckage of his ship, so who can say?

There is also a story, which was recently confirmed (see below), that the Gray Prince will return, to plunder all the riches of the world.

RECENT HISTORY

What's written in the pages above is ancient history and legend, but piracy is still alive and well today. In the following pages we'll describe recent facts and deeds linked to pirates.

THE COVE AND VERADO

After the death of Goatfoot, the pirates were scattered and divided for several centuries, making small bases in the Independent Cities. Then, with increasing commerce between Caldeia and the Dominions of the Dread Sea, they moved to the Finger Islands, which are in a strategic position to intercept and capture those rich cargos.

The Finger Islands are a perfect place for pirates: a labyrinth of islands, covered with lush vegetation, rich in coves and bays to hide and repair ships.

They aren't a safe place, especially because they are close, too close, to Keron; but at least there you can live free, if you have a strong sword arm.

Nobody remembers exactly when the port known as the Cove was built, but, as Fildago the Sage (see page 9) reported, the location, a hidden bay protected by insidious reef barriers, was discovered by Lorvakos the Lucky, a pirate who survived shipwreck, and probably the first port was built there many years later, around 1970 AF.

Stories say Lorvakos found shelter in an ancient temple in the jungle, which, strangely, was devoted to Rakua-Thara, the god of the sea, and that he survived only because he smeared the altar of the double god with the blood from his broken nose.

Whatever the truth of this legend, it is only three hundred years later that the Five Captains,, whose names are lost today, gathered at the Rude Wench, the main tavern of the Cove, and wrote the Pirate's Code on a piece of sail (see *BOD*, page 38). This document, as well as discussing very practical things like the division of loot, is probably the most egalitarian law code in the Dominions, asserting that all the Brothers, as the pirates of the Dread Sea call themselves, are free and equal.

So long as they are able to defend their freedom with a sharp blade, of course.

With the Cove and the Pirate's Code, another important factor appeared; the sea raiders changed from being a scattered and divided bunch, and became

an organization; and the Lords Captain of the Cove, at certain points in history, gathered their vessels into a single fleet, bringing ruin even to major cities.

Luckily for the Dominions, it's rare for the pirates of the Cove to unite under a single leader; the last time this happened was just seven years ago, when the Cove rallied under the command of Verado, a former Syranthian naval officer, who deserted, then raided and pillaged across all the Dread Sea.

But Verado's threat was short lived; two years ago the combined fleets of Faberterra and Syranthia caught Verado's fleet not far from Askerios, and, after a three-day battle, which is still remembered as the Battle of the Red Waters, they managed to defeat him.

Many bold warriors and scurvy pirates died that day, killed by the sword or by the bite of the Burning Lotus flaming on the waters. Verado was seen falling into the sea, but no-one ever found his body... or his famous treasure (see sidebar on page 23).

SKULL RAIDERS OF THE CAIRNS

In the meantime, a new threat has been born in the Drowned King Sea. Recently a powerful man has arisen among the coastal clans of the Cairnlands. His name is Broken Sail and he is both a warrior and a mariner, and, what it is most important, he is a Speaker for the Dead, one of the few able to speak with the spirits of the dead Ancestors.

Broken Sail said the Drowned King himself spoke to him, and ordered the sea to be turned red with blood. When this happens, the Drowned King will return with all his fleet and crush the south.

Broken Sail obviously has a number of Hull Breakers at his service.

Obeying the Drowned King's order, the coastal clans launched long, crude ships, adorned with the skulls of the ancient lizards of the north and the bones of their Ancestors, and sailed south, torching, looting and destroying the coasts around Jalizar and Valkheim, and even the Borderlands and Gis, as well as capturing any ship they can put their gray hands on.

Only a fool would mess with the Alchemists, but Broken Sail doesn't fear the power of the Twelve, as he fears no living man; a gifted sorcerer himself, people say he can command the mists of the Drowned King Sea to cover his attacks, and that he frequently makes human sacrifices to the sea, to appease the dark powers.

Whatever the truth on Broken Sail, the Skull Raiders represent a serious threat for everyone, especially for the Borderlands. If he wanted, he could mount an invasion of the Borderlands, without waiting for the Godaxe River to freeze. For this reason, the Duke of Felantium recently made an open call to captains and mariners of all nationalities and races to create a fleet capable of stopping Broken Sail.

So far, only the Amazons of Ascaia have answered, sending a token force, while neither Gis nor Jalizar have yet sent a single man.

This could be an opportunity for an independent captain to carve himself a future of glory and wealth.

HERO'S JOURNAL: SKULL ISLAND

Naanso of Jalizar, a famous Jalizaran smuggler, recently told a story that is circulating in the docks of the City of Thieves. In the northern part of the Drowned King Sea, shrouded in a permanent cloud of mists, there is an uncharted, rocky island resembling an enormous skull. Moored in a cove, Naanso spotted a long skull ship, decorated with dozens of human heads, which he instantly recognized as the Hellbringer, the ship of Broken Sail himself!

But what is even scarier is that the waters around the island are littered with dozens of sunken ships, some of them very ancient.

Could it be the legendary fleet of the Drowned King?

Naanso didn't stay to investigate: he hastily turned the prow of his Chibbar, and probably that is the only reason he is still alive and can tell the story.

THE SEA TYRANT OF THE CITY OF LEAVES

We left the City of Leaves in the hands of Janhor, who barely escaped from Lhobanport alive. Centuries passed, and the piratical city continued to expand and thrive, its rapacious junks bringing ruin all around the Brown Sea.

After Janhor's death the City of Leaves fell under the control of half a dozen families, the so-called Wise Six, each of them led by a Wise Captain, who are a sort of nobility. Pirates and merchants at the same time, some of them fell in disgrace and others ascended, but their number has always remained the same, ruling the city as a council.

But in recent years the situation has changed: the Sea Tyrant, a mysterious hooded figure, took power in the City of Leaves, backed by the Yellow Masks and their hirelings, the Daimaos, a sect of thugs made abnormally large by Lotus.

Nobody knows the real identity of the Sea Tyrant. Since he conquered the city he has dwelt, secluded, in the Palace of Sweetness and Darkness, an imposing structure in the middle of Lhobanport, from where he exerts his will through the Yellow Masks, who work as his attendants and accountants. According to his new laws, every pirate ship docking at the City of Leaves must pay a third of their loot to the Tyrant. Transgressors are thrown into the underground arena of the Palace, where they meet a horrible death for the amusement of the Tyrant, fighting against strange Lotus-twisted beasts.

Obviously, many pirate crews and in particular the Wise Ones aren't happy at all with this taxation, but if you are smart enough, there is always a way to grease



some wheels with the Yellow Masks, who aren't particularly honest.

The western Dominions didn't really understand the power of the Sea Tyrant until three years ago, during the infamous Night of Blue Lights.

An hour before dawn, a strange bank of thick fog appeared outside Kenaton, absolutely natural except for a couple of flickering blue lights wandering in it. The city guards paid it no heed, apart from one – Jazeros Two-Tankards, a sentinel notorious for being a drunkard.

Jazeros, lazily drinking a bottle of cheap wine on duty on the battlements, saw, in the fog, the masts of the entire Sea Tyrant's fleet, come to assault and plunder the second-biggest port of Kyros!

Initially the guard thought it was only a vision caused by the piss he was drinking, but after a while he convinced himself it was real and gave the alarm, regardless of the risk of a public flogging for a false alarm.

The bells of the twin guard towers of the port rang just in time; the Sea Tyrant pirates managed to attack the city, but, without the advantage of surprise, the fleet of Kenaton could maneuver and face them at sea, in one of the hardest sea battles of the last few years, with many deaths on both sides.

In the end the pirates were repelled and fled, protected again by the Lotus-conjured fog.

And what about Jazeros? Well, if nothing has changed from the last time we checked, he is still Lord Guardian of the Port, and he is spending his rich salary on

wine, this time the good stuff, and pretty courtesans.

THE COBSAIRS OF CALDAIOS

As said above, the main prey of the pirates of the Cove has been, for centuries, rich Caldeian ships full of precious Khav and slaves from the Ivory Savannah.

Caldeia has always been a strong, militarized country, and the Caldeian navy constantly patrols the trade routes, but it isn't enough; the pirate vessels are too fast and well-manned, so are capable of avoiding conflict with the heavily-armed warships.

Then, ten years ago, the Caldeian navy managed to capture Karvas Shim, a famous pirate, well-known throughout the Endless Ocean.

Karvas, a scoundrel and a rogue if one ever walked the deck of a ship, was the bastard son of a Caldeian lord.

Technically a nobleman, he deserved a trial, so was brought to Caldeia City to be judged by the King's Priests, the council actually ruling the country.

In truth, the Priests planned to have a quick trial and publically execute the pirate in a very gruesome way to make an example of him, but things went differently than planned.

Traditionally, noblemen's trials are held in the Pomegranate Garden of the King's Palace, so that even if Caldaios isn't present, he can hear the process from the windows of his secluded rooms. During Karvas' trial, immediately before the sentence, a bell sounded in the Tower of Whispers, where it is said that Caldaios lives, and three hooded servants, a tall

one and a two short ones, came out from the building, to escort the pirate captain inside.

The nobleman paled, because everybody in Caldeia knows that anyone who enters the Tower never returns.

But in this case, a couple of hours later, still shaking and pale, Karvas Shim returned, and spoke in front of the King's Priests, his former judges and accusers.

"Today I'll visit the prisons of Caldeia and I'll take out every pirate and scoundrel in them, to make them this offer.

'King Caldaios pardons you, and lets you sail the sea as a pirate again, under my command, but this time at the service of Caldeia, hunting our former comrades, and taking gold from the crown, plus all the loot you can find.

Refuse the offer and you'll be beheaded at dusk.'

Today, the Corsairs of Caldeia are born, to protect our ships from the rapacity of lesser men.

This is the word of Caldaios."

And he bowed his head.

As to punctuate his words, the bell rang again, somewhere in the Tower of Whispers.

"This is the word of Caldaios," the King's Priests murmured, and bowed too.

On that day, the Corsairs of Caldeia were born, under Karvas Shim, who is their commander. Formally a sea protection force, in truth, the Corsairs depend on pirates to earn a living, because Caldeia

pays them a bounty for each pirate captured or killed, but their main source of income is the loot they take from the sea raiders' ships.

So it is common for the Corsairs to wait for pirates to attack merchant ships, then to raise their distinctive black sails and intervene, in this manner getting both the bounty and the loot.

And, if nobody is in sight, Karvas's men aren't shy about attacking isolated ships, either, leaving no survivors.

For this reason, other countries don't love the Corsairs, but they do reluctantly respect them, because they are after all managing to keep the pirates at bay.

One-eyed Karvas Shim, despite now being in his fifties, is still a bold captain and a dashing swordsman. Venerated by his men, he is always looking for new recruits; the Corsairs accept anyone, regardless of his past, if the recruit swears fealty to Karvas Shim.

The Corsairs have various bases on the islands around Caldeia, but their main port is Caldeia City, where Karvas goes to report to the King's Priests.

DJALLAH AND THE EATERS OF THE LIVING

Of all the tales of piracy told, none is more disturbing than that of Djallah and her Eaters: Caldeian mothers tell it to their sons and daughters to scare them, but probably the truth is even darker than the fable.

The Cannibals of the Cannibal Islands have always been a threat in the southern

dominions, but their raids are rare, only once or twice a year, to fill their larders.

But in the last few seasons things have changed: there is a long, red-colored vessel sailing the Endless Ocean. It is a fast Corsair Ship, which doesn't belong to Karvas Shim: the *Vengeance*, a stolen ship, now the property of the black-skinned devil known as Djallah.

“Panther”, as this name means in the cannibal tongue, is the most bloodthirsty pirate of the Endless Ocean, worshipped as a goddess by her savage crew.

Her ship is manned by cannibals – former slaves the Ivory Savannah woman freed from their chains on the rowers' benches; and the *Vengeance* has bathed the coast in blood all the way from Caldeia to the Lush Jungle.

Djallah doesn't seem interested in loot, but only in killing Caldeians, and she lets

her man-eating crew dispose of the bodies of the dead as they see fit.

Djallah holds a deep hatred for Caldaios in particular, and recently she had delivered to the Royal Palace a casket containing the hands of Vasarios, a nobleman and probably the offspring of the king himself.

The Corsairs hunt the *Vengeance* mercilessly, but to date nobody has found its hideout. Rumors say Djallah is connected to the mythical Djallana, an ancient holy place in the Cannibal Islands, about which stories and ballads are told (see box).

THE RETURN OF THE GRAY PRINCE

We'll close this brief discussion of modern-day pirates of the Dominions with a creepy tale.

There are rumors that a gray-sailed ship has been spotted in the Drowned King Sea

HERO'S JOURNAL: THE BALLAD OF DJALLANA

This song is known in all the southern Dominions, in many versions, and is song in rowdy taverns and at the courts of princes alike. Nobody knows its true meaning, but Sages think it refers to an ancient mystery better left undisturbed. Below we report a couple of verses as recorded by Justinus of Syranthia in one of his travel logs, but probably more exist. According to the current rumors Djallah, the pirate queen terrorizing the southern Dominions, is “The Maiden from the Blue”, whatever that might mean.

*Came the Maiden from the Blue
To Appease the Thing-Who-Sees-True
In Djallana will shimmer bright
The Lady who brings blight
Djanga djanga djanga ob!
Lapis lazuli its roof
Silver and gold inlaid the hoof
Of the Beast guarding the hue
Of the Thing-Who-Sees-True
Djanga djanga djanga ob!
In Djallana will shimmer bright
The Lady who brings blight
Gem and jewels are its eyes
[continues...]*

PIRATES OF THE DOMINIONS

It shimmers with spectral lights and appears only on nights of the full moon.

Mariners swear it is the *Gray Pearl*, the ship of the fabulous Gray Prince, returned to avenge some evil.

One of them, Maateso of Jalizar, swears to have seen the Grey Prince himself on

deck, with a long, dusk-colored cloak on his shoulders and a sword in his hand.

The *Gray Pearl*, if it is really her, always appears near the Shallows (the village of smugglers and petty pirates near Jalizar, see *JCT* page 43), and disappears at dawn...

FAMOUS AND INFAMOUS

PIRATES OF THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

Below are briefly described the most famous pirates; some of them existed historically, while others are little more than a legend. The GM can use their stories as seeds for interesting adventures.

Baruk the Goatfoot. *A half-breed born to a Syranthian deserter and a witch from the Islands of the Maimed Ones, Baruk Goatfoot is the most feared pirate in the Dominions' history. Deformed (with a goat's foot), he was said to be a warlock, a cannibal and many other evil things, but probably his greatest crime was creating the Pirate Brotherhood, which still exists today. Baruk accumulated a vast treasure, which was never found. Stories say it rests "in the eye of the fire dragon", whatever that means. Baruk's blood was strong, and still manifests today: when a baby is born with a goat foot he is called "Baruk's son" and it is certain he will be a warlock and an evil-doer.*

Broken Sail. *"Broken Sail was born dead from the sea" is the common saying. The past of the leader of the Skulls is shrouded in mystery: some say he was an amnesiac shipwreck survivor, found on the sea by a crew of raiders, while others say he is a powerful Ancestor, found sleeping in a Cairn on an island and incautiously awakened by a lost fisherman. Finally, other rumors say he is one of the damned souls serving the Drowned King underwater, sent to the Dominions to prepare for his return. Whatever the truth "Broken Sail" isn't his real name; the true name of the pirate lord is secret, and if you pay heed to the words of White Eyes (see B&B #5 - *The Amulet of Dogskull*), a wandering blind prophet famous both in the Borderlands and Northeim, "The Name of the Terror Which Comes from the Waves, will Destroy Him", whatever that means.*

Djallah. *The pirate queen of the Cannibals is a strange woman at least: black-skinned, tall and willowy, she is clearly a woman of the Savannah, gifted with impressive lapis lazuli-blue eyes. Probably enslaved by the Caldeians during one of their raids, she escaped somehow and joined the Cannibals. The few who have met her and survived*

the event report a peaceful woman with a great affinity for the sea, which she cannot explain. Nobody knows the origin of her deep hatred for Caldaios.

The Gray Prince. *Countless are the stories about the legendary Scoundrel of Jalizar, and the deeds many he has accomplished, both true and false. The Gray Prince has won, and squandered, more treasure than a king, but he never lost the Eye of Isalya, an ancient Tricarnian jewel, given him by his greatest love, Princess Isalya of Tricarnia, before she died of an incurable illness. The Eye is an ancient Keronian relic, and legends say it was the real source of the Gray Prince's legendary luck. Maybe is it also the cause of his return after many centuries?*

Ho Jan. *The most famous and feared pirate of the Brown Sea, Ho Jan was famous as a great leader, but also a madman with a penchant for burning people alive. Murdered at Lhobanport by his concubine, his head was impaled on a pike in Market Square, but his great ship the Green Dragon was never found; stories say his fanatical crew hid it somewhere, filled with gold and treasure, and killed themselves to become eternal guards for it. Apart from the treasure, the Green Dragon was an instrument of death so powerful that every sea nation would pay a king's ransom for it.*

Karvas Shim. *The Commander of the Corsairs, a former pirate himself, is today the worst enemy of the Free Brothers of the sea and a faithful servant of Caldeia. But there are rumors that his fidelity is more due to fear of Caldaios than real love for his country. Karvas Shim recently sent a secret messenger to the Cove, with a proposal of some sort for the Council of Five Captains (see page 57). Is it a trap of some sort or is the Corsair preparing to betray the most ancient king of the Dominions?*

Marauder Queens. *Valyana and Shilaya were among the most infamous queens of the Amazons. Stories say the spirit of Shilaya, buried alive in the Acropolis of Ascaia, still haunts the vaults and underground corridors of the ancient palace. But there are also rumors that the surviving Marauder Queen escaped from her prison, finding a tunnel which led her outside. Whatever the truth, the greatest mystery is the location of her treasure, which was taken by Valestan, the former Emperor's heir. It was never found, but some say that in the Great Library of Syranthia there is an old diary, belonging to Valestan himself. Probably it is a fake, but if not, it would lead to one of the greatest treasures of the Dominions...*

Sea Tyrant. *Not many have seen the Sea Tyrant of the City of Leaves in person and survived the experience. The few ones who have report a very tall person, with a strange, musical voice, always wearing an elaborate robe, with an always-raised hood, from which shine a pair of green, unnaturally bright eyes. Nobody, apart from his closest followers, has ever seen his face. There are wild speculations on the exact identity of the Sea Tyrant. Some say he is a prince of a faraway country, others that he is a fallen monk of Lhoban, but the most disturbing hint to his real nature is given by the title that the Yellow Masks use when addressing him: Vantarasa, which means, in Lhobanese, "embodiment" or "personification". Personification of what is unknown.*

Verado. *The Thief of Thieves, the last great leader of the Pirates of the Cove, was a Syranthian officer before deserting. His last mission was escorting Baroness Valiana of Askerios to marry the Archmerchant of Hiliias, sanctioning with a political marriage the end of a century-long commercial war. As well as the girl, he took a lavish dowry: a crate full of black emeralds. Neither the girl nor the dowry ever came to Hillias, and, a couple of years ago, Verado appeared as the chief of the Coves' pirates. What happened in those two years? And in particular, what happened to the black emeralds?*

THE PIRATE LIFE

The following section describes the life of a pirate in the Dominions, and should be useful for playing characters in this dangerous line of work.

RACE AND SEX

The choice of becoming a pirate is rarely a free one; more frequently, a person finds himself forced to join a crew of sea rascals or die.

Most of the pirates of the Dominions are in fact former slaves, who escaped in some way from the chains binding them, or simple mariners captured on a plundered ship and given a choice: join the pirates or be slaughtered on the spot. The latter is an option very few even consider. After joining a band of marauders and surviving a battle or two, the share of gold, wine and women is often enough to transform a previously honest sailor into a sea dog without any morals.

This is obviously a generalization; pirate ships are also manned by those who actively sought to join them.

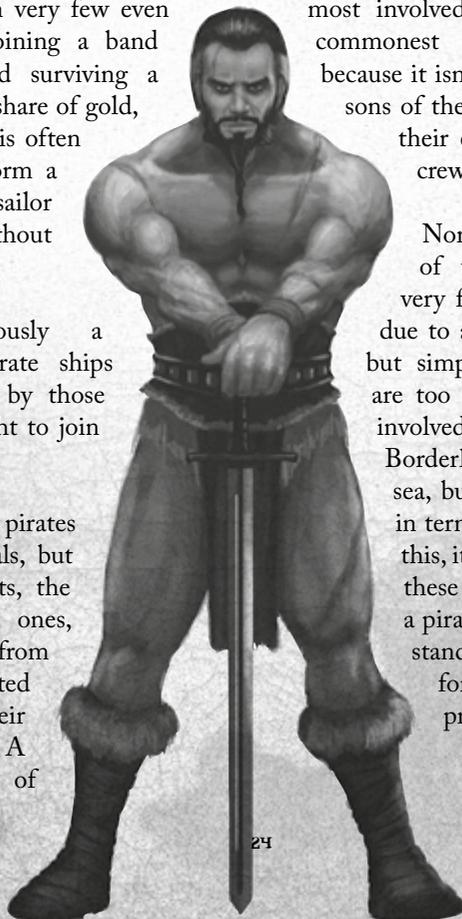
The two types of pirates above are criminals, but a third type exists, the legally sanctioned ones, people who raid from the sea as an accepted way of life in their home culture. A typical example of

these are the Cannibals of the Islands, for whom piracy is a common way to find human flesh for their tribe, or the Skull Raiders of the Cairns, who carry out clan-sanctioned raids against foreign ships and lands.

But let's see in detail how the major cultures of the Dominions cope with piracy.

Imperials are by far the most common race of the Dominions and are those most frequently involved in piracy. If you pass a night in the taverns of the Cove, Syranthian, bastardized with words of a dozen other languages, is the commonest tongue you hear. Despite the prejudiced saying "all Jalizarans are pirates or thieves", the majority of Imperial pirates are from Syranthia or the Independent Cities, because these are the two countries most involved in sea trade. Second commonest are the Faberterrans, because it isn't rare for the privileged sons of the Empire to throw away their elegant tunics to join a crew of sea raiders.

Northlanders and the people of the Borderlands aren't very familiar with piracy, not due to a lack of predisposition, but simply because their lands are too far from the sea to be involved in such a trade (the Borderlands have access to the sea, but are very undeveloped in terms of sea trade). Despite this, it can happen that one of these imposing warriors joins a pirate crew, and they always stand out from the crowd for their savage combat prowess and ferocity.



The same thing can be said of the Ivory Savannah Tribes, which have no access to the sea.

Amazons are a sea culture by definition, additionally their system of reproduction is mainly based on the use of male slaves, so piracy has always been fairly common among them, depending on the will of the current Sister Queens. At the moment the rulers are officially against piracy, and actively employing the Ascaian fleet against sea raiders, but this doesn't prevent an enterprising sea captain testing her luck by raiding the rich, fat vessels crossing the Dread Sea.

Cairnlanders aren't traditionally very fond of the sea. To tell the truth, their myths and legends, starting from those about the Drowned King Sea, often depict the sea as a dangerous monster to be avoided. Only recently, under the orders of Broken Sail, have they started scourging the sea, and are revealing themselves to be quite skilled.

Tricornia's great age of piracy, when they raided the southern, uncivilized, lands to find slaves for their pits, ended millennia ago and today the Sons of Keron are too focused on themselves to truly consider foreign lands. That said, two groups of pirates exist in Tricornia today; the first is the fleet of Drakovor of Ral Vastara, (see *TLD* page 61), who is a friend of the Cove, and the second is the mysterious ravagers raiding the slave villages on the coast north of the Brokenchain Mountains, which don't mix with the Cove.

Caldeians, on the other hand, are deeply involved in piracy; at the moment, they are one of the major trading powers of the Dominions, and their ships are those with the longest routes, so are more exposed to the threat of attacks, especially from the

pirates of the Cove. In their homeland, they must face the raids of the Cannibals, making the Sons of Caldaios very familiar with piracy. It is also worth saying that the Corsairs, officially created to protect Caldeia from piracy, are often even worse than the sea scum they fight, ready to plunder foreign ships when they are sure they won't be spotted.

The Lhobanese have a long tradition of piracy, which is strongly rooted in the City of Leaves. The Pirates of the Leaves, as they are sometimes called, are very organized, a real seafaring culture, divided into families based on pillaging, and at the moment a great threat in the Brown Sea. The "true" Lhobanese, the dwellers of the mountains and of Lhobanport, greatly despise the Pirates of the Leaves, in particular the monks are very worried about the souls of these fallen men, and periodically try to reach the City and proselytize, but they are ruthlessly hunted down and killed by the Yellow Masks and the Sea Tyrant.

APPEARANCE AND GEAR

Pirates of the Cove are a very mixed bunch of races, so a clear definition of their physical appearance cannot be given. Instead, they are easily distinguishable by their tanned complexion and their dress.

They use pantaloons, bandanas, and, rarely, kilts. Boots and shoes are almost unknown among them, because it is more practical to be barefoot on a ships' deck.

Captains are an exception. They must distinguish themselves from the rest of the crew, and often they wear gaudy and rich garments, probably looted from some unfortunate merchant captain. Many of them also wear hats and boots.

PIRATES OF THE DOMINIONS

Typical pirate weapons are swords, both long and short, daggers and grappling hooks, or the ever-popular mariner's axe. Many sailors are also quite skilled with a bow, even if shooting arrows from the deck of a ship is a tricky thing, because you need to compensate constantly for the waves' effect. In particular, the Amazons train the best marine archers of the Dominions.

Pirates of the Brown Sea are more defined by appearance than dress. They are usually of the Lhobanese race, even if their features are somewhat softened by centuries of interbreeding with the people of the Islands of Leaves and the other cultures on the Brown Sea, especially Kyrosians and Ekulians.

They are quite tall, and, especially among males, they tend to be plump. Among the people of the Island of Leaves, in fact, being fat means being rich, so it is a distinctive sign of social importance.

Pirates of the Brown Sea dress in multicolored silk, especially captains and the Yellow Masks, while common mariners are often wear only a loincloth.

Tattoos are very popular among them, in particular the Daimaos, in the service of the Sea Tyrant, have a particular body decoration resembling the shell of a tortoise, covering the right arm from shoulder to hand.

They are armed with a variety of weapons, in particular long-bladed spears and the famous butterfly swords, commonly used in pairs, which they wield with deadly skill.

The Skull Raiders of the Cairnlands are another important group of pirates. They are typical tomb-dwellers: tall and pale,

and dressed in furs, as the weather in the north is much cooler than in the southern seas. Many of them sport long, dirty beards, which they smear with pig dung and tomb earth, because they think this will protect them from drowning; this is the main fear of any Skull Raider, because a man who dies in this way will join the court of the Drowned King forever. When accepted into the fleet of Broken Sail, Skull Raiders receive a special helmet, made from the skull of large beast, usually a walrus; stories say that the Death Bringers of Broken Sail, his elite bodyguards, wear the skulls of ancient beasts found in a mysterious graveyard on Skull Island. Skull Raiders are armed with customary Cairnlander weapons; swords, maces, axes and the traditional severed heads. Skull Raider ships are powered by oarsmen, and the rhythm is given by the Drums of Doom, made with the skins of fallen enemies, whose sound scares even the strongest warrior and galvanizes the Raiders' drummers.

Of Jalizaran pirates, not much can be said; they are typical mariners of Jalizar, not too different from the smugglers of the City of Thieves (many of them, as a matter of fact, follow both professions), and their crews tend to be multicultural, composed of the worst scum of the Dominions.

The Caldeian Corsairs, on the other hand, are a different case.

Despite including persons of all races, they are a military organization, with a strong sense of hierarchy, and this is reflected in their dress and weapons. They tend to wear black or brown breeches and light armor, usually a leather jerkin paired with a conical helm.

They use a variety of bows and short blades, plus a particularly wicked sword,

long, thin and slightly curved, called a Corsair sword.

Unlike other pirates, Corsairs are well versed in the use of siege weapons, and almost all their ships are fitted with a couple of scorpions, medium sized ballistae charged with hundreds of bolts, which they fire at close range, immediately before boarding.

Caldeian Corsairs are clean-shaven, apart from long mustaches and, rarely, a goatee.

CUSTOMS AND SOCIETY

Pirates are a very diverse bunch, coming from many different races and cultures, different individuals forced to cooperate for two main reasons: survival and loot.

Laws of the Pirates. Piratical societies, strangely, are very egalitarian. Ships are commanded by a captain, chosen in various ways (see sidebar); under him there is the First Mate, and, occasionally another figure of prominence (which can be a surgeon, a Wind Caller, or – rarely – a priest of Rakua-Thara).

At sea, the captain decides everything about navigation, routes and the division of loot, but many other decisions are voted for by the whole crew. The captain can always impose his will, but if he does it too frequently, and doesn't manage to keep his men under control with charisma or fear, he will be soon removed from command.

Apart from this, all the pirates are equal, evaluated only for their experience, courage, and, often, for their ruthlessness.

Almost all pirate groups have a pirate code they obey. The most famous one, the

Code of the Pirates of the Cove, exists in written form (see page 56).

The cores of these codes are always the same: all Brothers (another term to indicate pirates) are equal, must be treated with respect and must not betray each other – this includes stealing and cheating.

A pirate who feels he has been disrespected or betrayed can ask for redress in the form of a duel, usually barehanded for minor offenses, or with knives or swords for major ones.

Backstabbing and murder are forbidden by the code, but actually happen quite frequently.

Other forms of justice exist on a pirate ship, and they are more or less the same ones employed by the navies of the Dominions: flogging for minor crimes or “walking the plank” for major ones.

This last punishment is almost always a death sentence; the victim walks along a plank to fall overboard, where he is eaten by sharks or drowns.

In dubious cases, criminals are put on a small boat or raft and abandoned on the open sea. This may seem a merciful solution, but it isn't; food and water for only three days only is given to those punished, who, if they don't starve or die of thirst, often kill and eat each other to survive one day more.

Recruiting. Another key point of the piratical way of life is the offer of enlisting: raiders' crews often suffer a high number of losses, so it is necessary for them to find replacements. After conquering a ship, if there are any survivors among the losers, the pirates offer them the chance to join their crew. The offer is usually made

to sailors, very rarely to passengers and almost never to officers and captains (the risk of them leading a mutiny is too high).

If the sailors accept (and they usually do, because the other options are being killed or sold as slaves), they join the pirates, but are kept under discreet vigilance until after the first battle, when the new recruits are put in the front rank, to show their skill and to force them into some illegal act; when you fight alongside pirates, you became a pirate too, and so there is no way back.

Some smartass always tries to play the hero and betray his new crew, but in this case the Code is applied in the most direct way and he is knifed and gutted on the spot.

Women. Pirate crews are almost wholly composed of men. Apart from Amazons, in fact, women in the Dominions are rarely sailors, but pirates are quite open-minded and let females join their crews, if they are skilled and tough enough. The few who do, you can bet they are.

Apart from pirate-women, who are indeed rare, women are rarely present aboard (unless part of the loot). In pirate ports, though, women abound, often those of ill repute.

Pirates very rarely marry, although captains or priests of Rakua-Thara may do so, and they are very open in their relationships. This works both ways; a woman in a pirate city, like the Cove, is free to have any number of lovers she wants, and no pirate will ever reproach her.

HERO'S JOURNAL: TAKING COMMAND... AND KEEPING IT!

According to the Pirate's Code there are basically two ways to get command of a ship: by acclamation or by challenge.

Acclamation occurs when, for some reason, the previous captain is missing or dead. In this case the aspiring commanders make a very brief speech, and the crew cheers them. Whoever receives the loudest cheer wins. Obviously, this is not a perfect system, and often disputes over who is acclaimed more are decided by the blades of the contenders.

When this doesn't happen the former captain simply returns to being a crewman. A captain can be challenged openly for his command by any member of the crew in a duel – which is usually to the death. There are only two times when this cannot be done: during a battle or during a storm.

This option is less common than one might think, because being a captain requires more than being a good sword. If you want to stay in charge you need the consent (or the fear) of the rest of the crew, and this depends on how much loot you have acquired for the crew and how popular you are.

A captain can freely demote the current First Mate and choose a new one.

Acclamation in Game. *Ruleswise an acclamation is simply a Social Conflict, pitting the Persuasion, Taunt or Intimidate of the two opponents (it isn't necessary for both to use the same Skill).*

If one of the opponents is the captain currently in charge, he receives +2 to the rolls. The GM should also give a modifier ranging from -4 to +4 according to the deeds and reputation of the contenders.

The opponent winning the Social Conflict is awarded the Captain Edge for free.

HERO'S JOURNAL: LOOT SHARING

Beasts & Barbarians isn't a game of precise accounting, so we don't usually encourage precise, coin-splitting loot division; but for pirates this is a vital part of the business. Tradition dictates that loot is divided in equal shares among the pirates, with the captain taking three to five shares, the First Mate, the healer or other relevant figures two, and the other pirates one.

Two shares are also reserved "for the ship", set aside against costs for repairs and maintenance.

Loot is claimed in order of rank, but wise captains will leave some highly sought after loot such as women for their crew, to avoid grudges later.

Naturally, the above is only a guideline, and greedy captains can take much more if they want; but the risk of a mutiny is always present...

is a smiling woman, with fair, almost transparent hair, of great beauty.

Rakua is the dangerous and spooky side of the sea: the lord of sharks, of shipwreck, drowning and disasters. Rakua is also the god of the pirates and carnage: many pirate crews make offerings to Rakua to find good loot. Rakua only accepts blood sacrifices, especially human ones. The typical rite consists of cutting the throat of the victim, and pouring the blood, still warm, into the sea, calling the sharks. When the man-eating beasts come, the body of the victim is also thrown into the water, to be consumed.

The most important known temple of Rakua-Thara is probably that of the Cove, whose high priest is called the Voice of the Deep, and exerts great influence on the piratical city.

Rakua is also the god of those who die at sea: it comes out from the dark depths where it lurks to take the corpse and devour it, forever enslaving the soul of the dead man. The only way to prevent this fate is putting a white seashell on the corpse's neck: in this case Rakua cannot touch the body, which will float to the enchanted underwater palace of Thara, his sister-aspect.

Thara represents the positive and merciful side of the sea: the bringer of food, the maker of commerce and the savior from shipwrecks.

When a fisherman is lost at sea, his family makes an offering to Thara. In extreme cases, wives promise a future son to the goddess, if Thara returns their lost husbands. These children, called the Sons of Thara, make up the bulk of the clergy of the goddess.

BELIGION

Pirates often worship the gods of their culture of origin, but, as all mariners do, they pay respect to sea deities.

In the Dominions there are a number of these, but the most important one is surely **Rakua-Thara**. Differently from other gods of the Dominions, whose aspect varies depending on the local culture, Rakua-Thara's appearance is well defined and common in all the lands.

It is a monstrous creature, with a long fish-like tail and two different torsos connected to the tail: Rakua is a horrible monster, nose-less, with scaly skin and a fearful mouth full of teeth, while Thara

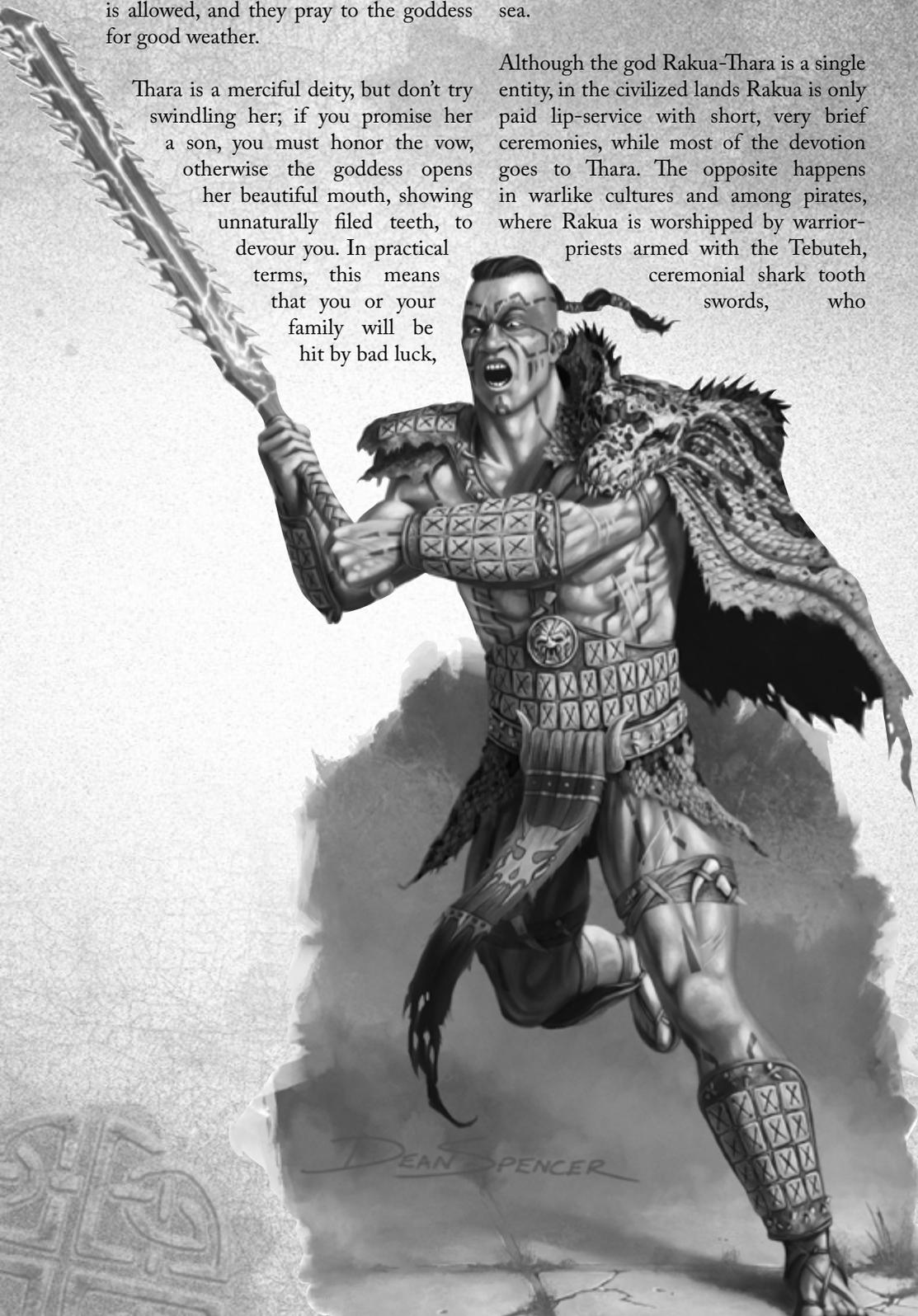
PIRATES OF THE DOMINIONS

Priests of Thara also decide when fishing is allowed, and they pray to the goddess for good weather.

Thara is a merciful deity, but don't try swindling her; if you promise her a son, you must honor the vow, otherwise the goddess opens her beautiful mouth, showing unnaturally filed teeth, to devour you. In practical terms, this means that you or your family will be hit by bad luck,

which is a terrible thing if you live on the sea.

Although the god Rakua-Thara is a single entity, in the civilized lands Rakua is only paid lip-service with short, very brief ceremonies, while most of the devotion goes to Thara. The opposite happens in warlike cultures and among pirates, where Rakua is worshipped by warrior-priests armed with the Tebuteh, ceremonial shark tooth swords, who



perform bloody rituals before raiding missions.

These priests call Thara the Broken Girl, the Prey, or the Fish, and to them she represents the passive, reproductive part of the deity. It's no surprise that cult of Rakua is very misogynistic and so forbidden in Ascaia.

In the coastal areas of the Cairnlands there is another cult, linked to the sea, which has existed for many centuries: the followers of the **Drowned King**. This isn't an organized religion in the true sense of the term, and you won't find a temple to the ancient King anywhere, but Cairnlanders who live near (and often on) the sea respect and venerate the old King. In particular, they believe that he dwells in an underwater palace, surrounded by warriors who found death at sea, and that he has a fleet of ghost ships under his command, which periodically come to raid the kingdoms of mankind. A particular sect of warriors exists, the Hull Breakers, berserkers who believe it is their holy duty to sink as many enemy ships as they can with their crews still aboard, to increase the fleet of their patron. Some of these madmen also consider themselves priests, but don't ask them to sanctify your marriage, unless you want some casual deaths among the guests.

Today, a number of Hull Breakers serve under Broken Sail (see page 17).

Apart from Rakua-Thara and the Drowned King, there are other entities all the people of the sea respect, the **Winds**.

Too informal to be a real cult, the Winds are important for everyone who travels daily on the blue belly of the seas, whether he is a fisherman, a trader or a pirate.

Winds are known with different names in every port; from the hot Jizzah, coming from the red desert, feared by the mariners of the Independent Cities because it precedes a dead calm, to the gentle Nisarikos, the Wind of the Sweet Figs, which the fishermen of Faberterra revere because, on the nights when it blows, their nets will be full.

But the names the common people give to winds aren't their true ones: stories say that every wind or breeze has a secret name and that some people know them. They are the Wind Callers, and have a very important gift; they can sometimes calm or raise the wind, if you pay heed to the stories of mariners who have seen one in action.

Very rare, and often considered a myth, there are several views on the true nature of their powers: in some cases, the names of the winds are a closely guarded secret passed from father to son, while in others it is a weird birth gift, which manifests without any training.

Whatever the real nature of Wind Calling, any captain worthy of his name would do anything to have a Wind Caller aboard; his presence could make the difference between life and death during a storm or when chased by pirates.

A DISTURBING THEORY ABOUT RAKUA-THARA

The Sages of Syranthia have always debated the true nature of Rakua-Thara. The deity is too well defined to be simply a myth, and its representation is always the same in all the lands touched by the Dread Sea, the Drowned King Sea and the Endless Ocean.

What if Rakua-Thara were a real creature, lurking somewhere in the depths of the waters?

For Fildago the Sage, this is much too simplistic a theory, and he is an authority on the topic; after all, the greatest temple of Rakua-Thara is in the Cove, a structure pre-dating the arrival of the pirates, and Fildago has studied it with great care. According to his discoveries, in the past, there were three great temples to the double deity. The temple of the Cove being one; legends say another was built near Boaraga, the piratical city of Goatfoot (see page 22), and a third one, strangely, was located somewhere in Jalizar, or to be more precise, under the City of Thieves.

Curiously, the inscriptions translated by Fildago say the god wasn't originally double, but triple, and his name was Jamban-Rakua-Thara. Was Jamhan a third, long-forgotten, aspect or does it refer to something darker?

Another theory Fildago puts forward, especially when he is drunk, is that the legend about Lorvakos the Lucky (see page 42) finding the bay of the Cove is no legend, but it was in some manner the temple which actually caused the shipwreck and lured the poor Lorvakos to the islands.

But will you believe the words of a drunkard?

THE ISLAND OF SHAGHARI

Stories say that there is an island, in the middle of the Brown Sea, which mortals normally cannot see: Shaghari, which means, in the Lhobanese tongue, Home of the Winds. Made invisible by the winds themselves, the island can be seen only once a year, and then only by the will of a Wind Caller. It is a rocky place, and in the middle there is a tall pinnacle upon which stands a temple with no doors and many windows, made by unknown hands, where all the winds of the world gather.

A Wind Caller who visits this place would hear, at the same time, the voices of all the winds of the Dominions, a trial which would likely shatter his mind; but in the unlikely case he survived, he'd become the Master of the Winds, with absolute power over the breezes of the entire world.

The only written record of a Master of the Winds is found in the Library of Syranthia, and speaks of Tabianos the Mad, lover of the Empress Ivestana of Faberterra, who, with his powers, brought a terrible tsunami onto the imperial city, causing the death of thousands of people and the destruction of several important buildings, including the arsenal. Tabianos, it seems, was killed by his own powers, while the Empress was found dead, on the tallest tower of the city, deposited there by the force of the gales.

But there is also another story about the Island of Shagari; every ten years the strongest Wind Callers of the Dominions go there, and gather, for three days and three nights, fighting each other with their powers. The winner is named Hosag, a title which seems to have great importance for them, and which means "Keeper". Keeper of what, exactly, is unknown.

THE FINGER ISLANDS AND THE COVE

This chapter expands the background information about the Finger Islands and the Cove found in *Beasts & Barbarians Golden Edition*.

THE REASONS FOR THE NAME

One time I asked an old mariner of the port of Askerios why the Finger Islands are called that.

He laughed, raised his hand, and told me: "There are as many reasons as the fingers of my hand, lad."

"The first reason," he said, showing me his little finger, "Is that they are a refuge for mutineers and pirates of every sort. Riotous slave-oarsmen on the galleys of Tricarnia are punished by cutting off their pinkie, at least the first time they try raising their heads, and so the name."

"But it isn't the only reason," he continued, showing me his ring finger. "They are also called that because if you look at them, they look more or less like the bones of a hand – if you broke it and smashed it with the head of an oar, obviously."

He smiled and I was certain he was mocking me, but he continued.

"Not even this one is the last reason," he said raising his middle finger in

an insulting gesture. Then, watching around to make sure that nobody was looking at us, he whispered, "They are called this because they are the agonizing hand that the Realm of Keron raised before drowning in the sea when the Dread Star fell. They are full of old haunted ruins, may Hulian protect us."

"You're still missing two fingers," I replied, pointing at his thumb and index finger.

"I need them to raise the pint of booze you'll pay me for this story." He smiled again at me, showing tar-smearred teeth.

– From the Letters of Justinus of Syranthia

IN THE THICK OF THE JUNGLE

The following pages gives a description of what lies in the jungle beyond the Cove.

A LABYRINTH OF CHANNELS

The Finger Islands are an archipelago north of the Fallen Kingdom of Keron. Nobody truly knows how many islands there are, because they have never been charted or fully explored. Islands vary in size, from small atolls to pieces of land large enough to host a city.

Some of them are so close together that you can move from one to the other with a single long jump, while others require a good swim, if you dare crossing shark-infested waters, or a boat of some type.

But even if you own a ship you must be very careful. Mariners say that sailing among

the Finger Islands is as treacherous as dealing with the people inhabiting them, and they are right for several reasons.

First, the islands form a labyrinth of channels in which it is easy to get lost if you don't know them; there are stories of crews lost forever whose tormented souls are still trying to find an exit from the archipelago.

Second, the waters, which in some points are so deep that even the best pearl diver cannot reach the bottom of the sea, and in others are so shallow that no ship can cross without running aground.

Third, the coral of the Finger Islands cuts like the axe of an executioner, as any mariner lucky enough to own a knife made of such material can tell you; insidious reef barriers, sharp enough to slice the strongest hulls, are commonly found among the channels and are the terror of any captain.

For these last two reasons in particular the best thing to do if you have to cross the archipelago is drop the anchor of your ship and use dinghies or trust a helmsman who knows a safe path, but in this case be very careful: he is probably a pirate of some sort.

WEATHER

The archipelago enjoys an almost tropical climate, due to the warm temperature of the Dread Sea and the sheltering effect of the Kingdom of Keron, which protects the islands from the cold wind of the ocean. So usually, it has long hot days, with spectacular red sunsets and wet nights.

This when the gods are happy; sometimes, cold winds start blowing from the north and when this happens you must quickly find a safe mooring for your ship because you can bet your last pint of Zalaska, the island booze, that a storm is coming.

Tempests in the Finger Islands are very bad: they are savage and fiery, capable of tearing away trees and masts with the same unforgiving fury and can last from hours to entire weeks.

Landlubbers and seamen alike fear them, but they aren't the worst accidents that can happen in the islands: the worst is when a subtle, hot wind blows from south, from Keron, bringing the sweet stench of uncovered graves and whispers of old, forgotten curses. The locals call it the Yellow Breeze, and it usually means that a disaster of some type is coming: a pestilence, such as when whole villages of Finger Tribes were wiped out by a deadly fever; a madness of some type such as when Captain Ralko, after a night of looting and carousing in the Cove, slaughtered his crew for no reason; or maybe simply that bad news is coming.



People of the Finger Tribes make amulets of seagull bones and palm bark to protect themselves against the Yellow Breeze, but every civilized man knows that the only real protection is given by a good swallow of Zalaska and some puffs of Fingerweed.

PLANTS

The Finger Islands are ripe with plant life: most of them are covered by thick jungle, with specimens of plants which aren't found anywhere in the world.

Fildago the Sage thinks that probably they are the last remnants of the original vegetation of the world, before the Dread Star submerged a great part of the civilized lands of that era.

Probably the current Finger Islands were mountaintops or tall hills of the past, spared from the catastrophe due to their position.

This plus the isolation from the mainland made the islands' plants unique.

Mangroves, baobabs and similar plants abound, but the pirates who hide in the bays and coves of the archipelago in particular love the sugar cane, which the Free Tribes call Zal, from which they concoct the infamous booze called Zalaska. The spirit is very strong on its own, but many brewers "stuff" them with plants, snakes and even spiders of some kinds, giving a particular flavor to the liquor.

Another plant typical of the Finger Islands is the red pineapple. In no other part of the Dominions can this sweet fruit be found, and it is considered a delicacy in the decadent courts of the Faberterran nobles.

The second favorite plant of the pirates is Fingerweed. A bastardized form of Lotus, this tall weed grows near ponds, swampy grounds and rivers and produces brown flowers with narcotic powers. Usually they are smoked, but the Finger tribesmen also munch them.

Pirates make great use of it, and some of them flavor it with different plants and essence, sometimes with strange results.

But the jungles of the Islands also hide several darker plants, probably the remnants of dark experiments by the Keronians millennia ago.

For example, the dangerous Black Kuzdu, a fast-growing water plant with floating roots which produces a mild paralyzing poison. Beasts and men so unfortunate as to swim in a Kuzdu-infested pond quickly find their limbs stiff, and discover they cannot move them anymore. This usually leads to a terrible death by drowning.

Another dangerous plant of the Island is the fabled Strangling Vine. Considered a legend by most people, this insidious, grayish vine conceals itself in the undergrowth. When an incautious victim passes over it the vine suddenly comes to life and constricts in a deadly grip. Then the dead body is brought to the roots of the plant where a mouth in the trunk starts munching the corpse. Nobody has really seen a Strangling Vine at work, but if you see a clearing in the jungle littered by old bones, well, stay clear of it.

Various forms of Lotus are found on the islands, the greater part of it in the form of orchids. The White Bell Lotus, for example, is a marvelous flower growing only on very old mangroves. It is said that if a man smells it he will lose his memory of the last few days. Infusions and

concoctions of this plant can rob a person of remembering his entire existence.

The Black Lotus, instead, grows only in old Keronian ruins, usually in proximity

to ancient, blood-smeared altars, and it is highly sought by sorcerers because it is used to create dark elixirs enhancing their faculties; but it is also a deadly poison (see sidebar).

HERO'S JOURNAL: BLACK LOTUS

This large flower, black as a witch's heart, vaguely resembles a large nocturnal butterfly ready to fly away. It is prized by sorcerers and warlocks of every kind, because it can greatly increase their powers, if properly prepared. The plant must be picked whole (roots included) on the night of the full moon and must be consumed before the next full moon (within 28 days). It must then be cooked in a copper stove over a fire of palm leaves, with pure water, a pinch of grave dust, red salt and the blood of a virgin, while the concocter constantly mutters a particular invocation in ancient Keronian while keeping a black pearl under the tongue.

Drink it warm.

In game terms, the concocter must make a Sorcery (-2) or Lotusmastery roll. Take note of how many successes and raises he scores; the potion works unless a critical failure is scored (in this case it only has the negative effects described below and grants no bonus).

The drinker must make a Vigor (-4) roll, +1 per success and raise the concocter scored above. If he fails the roll, he loses a Vigor die step for the next two scenarios, if this drops Vigor below d4, he dies. If the roll is a critical failure, the loss is permanent.

If he scores a success, he permanently gains a Power Point, two if he scored a raise or better.

Eating it Raw. *If a sorcerer is really mad or power-hungry, he can eat one of these flowers raw. In this case he must perform a Dramatic Task based on Spirit (-2), and must net at least five successes and/or raises on five rolls. He permanently loses a Vigor die step for each success below five. If he survives, he permanently increases his Sorcery skill by one die step.*

A character can only consume a Black Lotus potion once per Rank, and can only eat raw Black Lotus once in his career. If he tries to consume more, he rolls as normal, but only suffers from the negative effects.

Black Lotus Poison. *In the hands of a skilled poisoner, the Black Lotus can be deadly: the victim falls into a comatose state that lasts until she has fully recovered (she cannot act, as if she were Incapacitated). A poison concoction created with this plant receives +4 to opposed rolls, plus the victim suffers -4 to rolls to recover from Wounds taken in this manner. There are rumors that some powerful Lotusmasters know particularly nasty recipes that only exotic healing salves can counter (and finding them can be the basis of a plot for a scenario).*

A full-grown plant is very precious – many sorcerers will kill for it. It is worth at least 2000 Moons.

ANIMALS

The islands are also full of animal life, of various types.

The Pecari, a small, bad-tempered boar, lives in the thick of the jungle and it is the main indigenous source of meat, paired with the Hole Rabbit, a common rodent which digs extensive underground dens.

A peculiarity of the Finger Islands is the existence of various giant beasts.

For example, the Moa, a great grazing bird, not able to fly, which roams in flocks in the grasslands and along the seashore; usually peaceful, this beast becomes very aggressive if you come near the place where she buried her melon-sized eggs and can kill a man with her pike-shaped beak and strong kicks.

If you wander near the river, you must look out for Giant Crocodiles; these green-scaled beasts grow large as barges and drowse near the water, enjoying the sun. But you must not trust this apparent peacefulness. Quick as devils, they wake up in a heartbeat and can kill a Moa with a single bite, or roll over a barge with a tail slap and then devour the unfortunate mariners in it.

But the most impressive beast living near the rivers is the legendary Dragon Beast. A remnant of a forgotten past, this very rare creature is a giant turtle with a long neck and a spike-crowned head, plus a long bony tail. It lives mainly on plants, but if you see bushes of Fingerweed nearby run away as fast as you can: the Dragon Beast is very fond of this herb, which makes it raving mad, and given its size and impressive strength it can destroy a whole village in its bloodlust. Dragon Beasts, the legend says, are almost

immortal; a specimen as large as a cart (the average size) probably saw the fall of the Dread Star with its pale eyes. Given their longevity, legends say that their heart, if eaten raw and still pulsing, can prolong the life of a man.

Moving away from the rivers and entering the jungle again, probe every shadow in the foliage, because it might hide the Shadow Hunter, an enormously strong black panther. The Free Tribesmen say these animals were the wicked servants of the Keronians, who used them as pets. Some part of these stories must be true, because the Shadow Hunter is a very cruel beast; often it kills only for pleasure and doesn't eat the flesh of its victims.

In the trees live a number of monkeys and apes of various species.

Finger Monkeys are tiny creatures the size of a cat and gifted with almost human intelligence. They have large, nimble hands and are usually friendly; but they are also great thieves. If you unload the cargo of your ship on the seaside near a wood populated by Finger Monkeys put some men on guard, or you can be sure that all your crates will be opened and everything stolen, regardless of how well sealed they are.

But if you have some patience and a good supply of nuts and sweetmeats you can also befriend and train them; they are excellent pickpockets and burglars. They are also quite tasty, and some of the favorite dishes of the islands are monkey stew and stuffed monkey's head.

Other types of monkeys, less friendly, dwell on the islands; from the ferocious Strangler Monkey, a humanoid, red-furred beast a little smaller than a man with a very bad attitude and hands strong

enough to grapple and break the necks of its victims. But this isn't the most feared creature; villagers living near the jungle shut the doors and burn gray candles of turtle fat to keep away the fabled Black Shadow, a night-black ape, with shimmering eyes and long teeth, which sneaks into villages to drink the blood of babies, women and strong warriors alike. Very few people have seen it, and legends say it isn't a true beast, but the result of unholy crossbreeds between some demon summoned by Keronian sorcerers and a poor monkey.

Going back to the coastal areas, you must watch closely where you put your feet on the sandy beaches, because an apparently innocent mound of sand can hide a Sand Digger, a sort of giant scarab-like insect, which bursts out, cutting away your legs with its powerful claws and mouth. These creatures reach the size of a dog and are often found in colonies of dozens of individuals. A sub-species of this race also exists, called Sand Lanterns. They dwell in caverns and other dark environments near the sea, and favor the ones with sandy floors, where they can dig traps like their cousins. The main difference is that they have a luminous gland at the end of the tail, which emanates a faint glow that lasts for several weeks after the beast is dead. Their carapace is grayer than that of their cousins and often smeared with a sort of oil their own body secretes.

Finally, on the coast you can meet the Balaku or Giant Crab, a bulky, heavy beast that at times reaches the size of an ox. Tremendously strong and fitted with almost impenetrable armor, this creature is luckily fairly predictable: she moves clumsily left and right, and has a weak spot, the eyes. A lucky thrust with a spear in this unprotected location can reach the brain and kill it on the spot, but you

must strike true the first time, otherwise the sword-sized pincers of the crab will certainly tear you to pieces.

SEA LIFE

Getting off the land and peering into the waters, there is a lot of life there, too.

The sea between the islands is populated by dangerous sharks, from the small Rakka to the large White Devil.

The Rakka is an evil fish, up to three feet long, with a striped body covered in spines and three razor-sharp fins: one on the back and two on the side of the body, which it uses to slash prey. It usually hunts in small packs of three: two males, smaller but more aggressive, and a female, bigger in size, which attacks the prey after the two males have seriously wounded it.

The White Devil is a big white shark, long as a boat, and extremely dangerous. It swims without disturbing the water in any way, and attacks by surprise, killing fish and people alike in rushes of extreme violence. Some old fishermen say that White Devils aren't truly silent, they constantly sing, emitting a low pitched sound, and if you are in the water you can hear it, getting a moment's warning to get out of harm's way.

In the depths of the waters lurk things much more disturbing and dangerous than sharks: the horrible Talani, for example, an octopus large as a barn, which can grab and shatter the hull of a ship with a single swift tentacle blow, and then grab the crewmen to devour them in the darkness of the abyss.

The King's Mussel is a giant-sized shellfish, which guards the fabled black

pearls of the Finger Islands, big as a baby's fist. More than one bold pearl diver found his death by swimming to the bottom of the sea and prying open the mussel with a metal tool, only to be snapped to death by the shell.

The sea of the Islands is a place of beauty and enchantment; peaceful fish of every color of the rainbow lazily swim in the emerald green waters, but beware of the Chalada, a deep blue jellyfish tall as a girl, a creature of absolute perfection, and deadly as the kiss of a Tricarnian princess – the mere touch of its long tendrils releases a poison that causes such marvelous hallucinations you forget to breathe and die in happiness.

And, last but not least, we must remember the ever present coral reefs, the most beautiful in the Dominions; despite being sharp as a razor, they rival in beauty and perfection the greatest palaces the Syranthian architects have ever built.

RUINS

As said earlier, the actual Finger Islands are the mountains and hill tops of the past, spared from the fury of the Dread Star by their height; so it's no surprise there were some buildings on them, mainly observatories, but also small cities, palaces and towns. For some unknown reason, probably the effect of the dust raised by the cataclysm, almost all the inhabitants died, and now their spirits haunt the ruins.

These ancient ghosts are the restless souls of old Keronian sorcerers, and during the long nights, they blend their howls with those of the savage beasts of the jungle. Periodically, someone – usually pirates consumed by greed – penetrates the rotten

walls looking for treasures, but almost nobody comes back.

The survivors, the few still in their right minds, tell stories of hunched shadows dancing around fires of old bones and of alien horrors sealed in ancient crypts. Many of these stories come from the bottom of booze-filled tankards, but there must be a grain of truth in some.

PEOPLE OF THE FINGER ISLANDS

FINGER TRIBES

The archipelago is a place ripe with life. This, in conjunction with the fact that the Finger Islands are on the main sea routes to the southern lands, has made them a refuge of all sorts of people.

Apart from pirates, these people are collectively called the Finger Tribes. They are a mixture of people from several Savannah clans who had the bad luck to be captured by the Caldeians and sent north to be sold in the flesh markets of the Iron Empire and Tricarnia; sometimes the slavers' ships were destroyed by storms, shattered on coral reefs, or the black-skinned slaves rebelled and took control of them. In these cases, the survivors found shelter in the shady jungles of the islands and formed small tribes.

APPEARANCE

The Finger Tribes are of mixed blood, but they share some common traits; they are brown or dark skinned, with somewhat more morbid features than their Savannah cousins. Some of them

PIRATES OF THE DOMINIONS

have almost almond shaped eyes and black hair. They dress quite scantily, but more for reasons of temperature and humidity than from a lack of modesty; men usually wear only a loincloth or a short gown of some sort, while women dress in longer gowns and a piece of cloth to protect the breasts. Earrings and nose rings are quite common; the warriors, in particular, pierce their noses and insert pieces of bone and feathers, to appear more impressive and fearsome. Chiefs and important personalities, like priests and shamans, wear showy headgear made of colored plumes. Women tend to tie their hair in hundreds of tiny braids and to smear these with palm oil. Tattoos and tribal paints are also quite common.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND ECONOMY

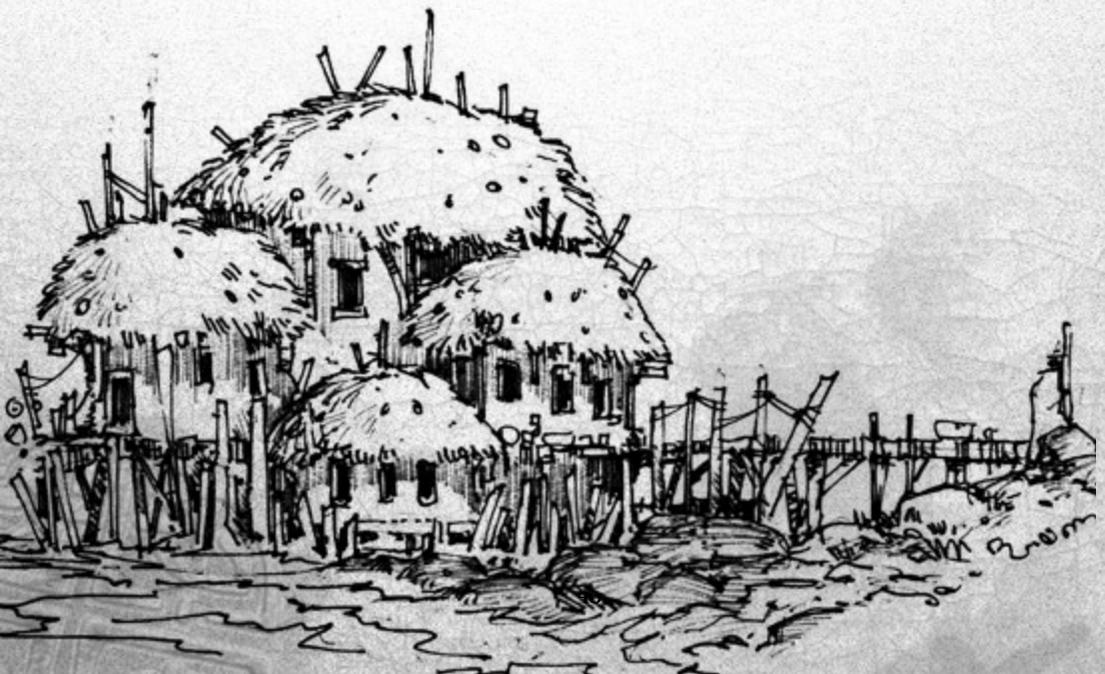
Many tribes are ruled by a group of elders, especially peaceful tribes; but other, more war-like ones are held in the iron grip of charismatic war leaders or cunning witch-doctors. Apart from this, their societies

tend to be quite egalitarian. However, this doesn't apply to women, who are usually relegated to a minor role.

Their economy is a very basic one: fishing, gathering and hunting are the main occupations of these people, though some of the most advanced clans practice a very basic agriculture. Hunting and fishing are almost totally male occupations, while the other chores are left to women.

Artisans, especially the ones working in coral, are held in high esteem, as are canoe-carvers and liquor makers. Following the traditions of the Savannah, the tribal liquors are made by women chewing sugar canes and spitting them into large vases where they are left to ferment, a habit that many civilized men find disgusting but which is perfectly normal among them: a woman, even if not particularly beautiful, is pretty sure to find a good husband if she has good teeth to chew sugar cane and is skilled in gutting and salting fish.

The greater number of the tribes live in isolation on different islands, and their



relationships with other clans are sporadic and often limited to raids to control territory or to steal women and food. The tribes tend to avoid contact with the pirates of the Cove, but, after the defeat of Guatulu-Watchi thanks to the efforts of their princess Sashani (see page 46), the situation is improving; some of them are slowly starting to trade with the pirates.

The tribesmen have no concept of (and no use for) money, but are ready to barter shiny baubles (such as pearls), food, booze and women in exchange for civilized goods like metal weapons and dyed cloth, of which they are very fond. A skilled trader could probably become quite rich trading with the Finger Tribes, but he must be very careful; if a tribesman suspects he has been swindled, he'll probably gut you with a fishing knife and use your entrails to feed the seagulls.

TECHNOLOGY

Finger Tribes are primitive: they aren't able to work metal, although they know of it, and use tools made of stone, wood and coral. They build vessels, but usually of only three types: small canoes, used for fishing, larger flat-bottomed barges, which are used in raids but cannot sail on the open sea, and catamarans. Their medicine is very primitive (fevers are one of the commonest causes of death among them) and they are illiterate. Their weapons are usually spears of various types (used also for fishing), daggers and war clubs. Certain clans use painted shields, reminiscent of the Savannah. The tribes retain their ancestral love for music and rhythm, and their dances, which often have a deep ritual and religious meaning, are as beautiful and enthralling as those made around the fires of the Savannah.

RELIGION

The Finger Tribes are animistic; they worship the forces of nature, especially sea, wind and fire, which they call by distorted versions of the names used in the Savannah: **Taalu** is the "Great Water" or the sea, **Wutani** is the "Powerful Whisper" or the wind and **Kolaka** is "The Angry One" or the fire.

Almost all the clans have forgotten their ancestral veneration of the god Uletu, but replaced it with the worship of animal spirits, which they pray to for help during the hunt or for protection from evil.

"The beast spirits walk among us," the tribesmen say, and by this they probably mean the Beast Kings (see *GE* page 165), which are quite powerful in this land.

Some of them are good and wise such as **Rusaru the Wise Cormorant**, others wicked and evil like **Vaarali the Black Panther** and **Yanaga the Snake Which Lurks in the Trees**, finally others are simply dangerous like **Rutaru the Wild Boar**.

Spirits can be good or bad, all but the dreaded **Alak the Night Spirit**, an amorphous ghost of darkness who comes out only when the sun goes to sleep. It is feared by everyone apart from the most wicked sorcerers who make bloody offerings in its name on old vine-covered altars in the thick of the jungle. Alak is a spirit of madness, treason and death. Its ultimate goal is dragging the living off to its dark realm underground, to make them eternal slaves. It is the Master of the Grave, and with a mere puff of its foul breath it can call the dead from their cold sleep. Beembo the Blind, a wise man and soothsayer, says that Guatulu-Watchi (see page 47), the dreaded pigmy necromancer of the past, was the chosen one of Alak,

and “others will come in the fullness of times”, whatever that might mean.

PIGMIES OF THE FINGER ISLANDS

The Finger Tribes represent the great majority of the clans dwelling in the islands, but they aren't the only ones there. Darker, more evil people lurk in the jungle.

Hunters of the Islands say that if you are hunting in the thick of the jungle you must always look out for tracks; not only those of the Shadow Hunters, but also those of small human feet. In that case, you must run as fast as you can, because it means you have trespassed on the territory of a tribe of Pigmies of Finger Islands!

Nobody truly knows the origin of their presence in the archipelago: there are rumors that they aren't the same race as their cousins of the Lush Jungle, but instead they are the offspring of the original servants of the Keronians, who escaped the Cataclysm by taking refuge among the hills and mountains that today are the Finger Islands.

Other legends say instead that the Pigmies of the Finger Islands are the survivors of a slave ship, full of these diminutive men, shipwrecked on the razor sharp reefs of the archipelago. Like rats, they escaped the wreckage, and, much like rodents, they took shelter in the dark jungles of the islands (so similar to their ancestral land) and reproduced.

Whatever the truth, Pigmies today occupy some islands, and lead a secluded existence. Very territorial, they prefer taking shelter in the darkest jungles or in old ruins. Absolutely xenophobic, they are organized more or less like their

southern counterparts, in large clans led by shamans and masked warriors, and tolerate no foreign presence in their lands; the incautious traveler caught by them can expect to be the main dish in a grisly banquet or, even worse, to be sacrificed during one of their unholy rites.

Even today, the Pigmies' secrets are shrouded in mystery, and the only taste the pirates have had of them was the dreaded Guatulu-Watchi, the worst threat the Cove has ever had to face (see page 47).

THE COVE

The archipelago hosts one of the places most feared by the civilized people of the northern Dominions: the fabled Cove, the hidden city where the pirates of half the world gather to carouse, sell loot and make nefarious new plans.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PIRATE CITY

Note: *the following history of the Cove was related by Fildago the Sage, when sober, to Justinus of Syranthia. It is mainly a collection of stories and legends told by pirates, so we have a number of doubts as to its historical accuracy.*

The first civilized person to discover the location of the Cove was Lorvakos the Lucky, a Faberterran pirate who survived the shipwreck of his ship, the *Gilded Belt*. Lorvakos always boasted that he was the captain of the ship and that the shipwreck happened after a terrible battle with the Caldeians, but the truth is he was simply the cook and the *Gilded Belt* sunk because



the helmsman, drunk as a pig, ran it aground on hidden reefs.

Whatever the truth, Lorvakos, who was a good swimmer, reached the beach of the Cove, and first blessed all the gods for saving him, and then cursed all of them because he was stranded in a savage land.

Stories say Lorvakos, feverish from the wounds inflicted by the razor-sharp reefs, stumbled into the jungle until he found an old temple, of Keronian origin, belonging to an ancient deity known as Rakua-Thara. He prayed to the two-headed deity who, in exchange for his soul, saved his life.

People say it is strange that a temple of the sea god is several miles deep in the thick of the jungle, but Fildago the Sage believes it was probably built on a shoreline that has receded over the centuries.

Lorvakos remained, alone and stranded, on the island of the Cove for three years, except for some elusive figures he glimpsed but never clearly saw. They could have been natives of the Finger Islands, some giant apes, or something even darker.

Then, one day, Lorvakos saw, very far away, the silhouette of a ship! He hastily built a fire with green palm wood, hoping to catch the attention of the crew with the smoke.

His plan worked, but too well. The *Tanakaïos*, a Caldeian slaver ship, changed course towards the smoke, and tore its hull open on the reefs under the water, sinking.

Stories say that half of the crew died in the accident, and with them went a good three quarters of the cargo, black-skinned slaves of the Ivory Savannah, who could not swim. Apart from ten men of the crew

only a group of Pigmy slaves, who swim like rats, were saved.

The crew reached the shore, while the Pigmies escaped into the jungle. Probably they are the ancestors of the current Finger Island Pigmies.

And what about Lorvakos? Well, the newly shipwrecked sailors weren't happy at all with the former cook, and, according to the legend, Iskar, the captain of the *Tanakaios*, planted a knife in the cook's belly in a rage.

But Lorvakos survived and crawled back to the temple of Rakua-Thara where, miraculously, he recovered again.

Being a really good cook, Lorvakos in the end managed to get himself accepted by the *Tanakaios* survivors, especially after Captain Iskar died mysteriously of food poisoning after few weeks.

"Probably he ate too much," Lorvakos defended himself with a shrug.

In the end, three years later, the survivors escaped the island on a makeshift raft, a dangerous journey whose story is still told today in the taverns of the Cove as the Ballad of the Twelve Rabbits (the crew left the island, for some reason, with only twelve rabbits for provisions and a single bottle of booze).

Lorvakos quickly found another pirate crew to join, and, a couple of years later, while his new ship, the *Scoundrel*, was chased by a warship from Hillias, he guided his vessel to the secret bay he remembered, this time avoiding the hidden reefs. The Hillianites weren't so lucky, and their hull broke like an earthenware pot at Midsummer Feast, killing all of them.

The captain of the *Scoundrel*, Naatarios of Jalizar, was no fool, and recognized the strategic value of a secret pirate base in the Finger Islands.

The first settlement was only a handful of crude huts on the shore, which quickly expanded into a small shantytown over a dozen or so years.

The pirates' arrival was watched by eyes in the jungle; those of the Finger Tribes, and much more malevolent ones, those of the Pigmies, who over the years had prospered like rats in a granary. Occasionally, a small band of pirates ventured inland to hunt or simply to explore, but very few of them come back and, in time, the sea scum learnt to avoid the land marked by the skull poles of the Pigmies.

Despite this, more and more pirates arrived, but Natarios was sly, and he kept secret the path through the reefs of the Cove. One night he convinced Lorvakos to show it to him, and, after following the whole path in a dingy, to celebrate, the captain offered a bottle of Zalaska, the local booze (see page 35), to the cook, who drank avidly.

After a few moments Lorvakos was on the bottom of the dinghy, frothing and shaking. The bottle was flavored with several jungle scorpion stingers, whose poison is always lethal.

This left Natarios the sole person knowing the path to the Cove. He used this knowledge to obtain fidelity from other pirate captains, who were forced to pay him homage (and a good share of their loot) to freely enter the secure haven.

But pirates are, by ideal and by inclination, a free bunch, and didn't take well to the new rules set by Natarios. For this reason, one

night, a drunken helmsman called Livas, a former Syranthian merchant who left his homeland to escape debtors' prison, wrote on a piece of sail what should have been, in his opinion, the rights of every pirate of the Cove. He read it aloud and the other customers, drunk as him, commented and made suggestions, promptly accepted by the Syranthian and included on the sail.

The phrases of Livas became so popular that all pirates accepted them, forcing Natarios to make the best of a bad situation and accept them as well.

In this way, a band of drunkards wrote The Pirates' Code, the most egalitarian law code of the Dominions, supporting the saying that "wisdom rests at the bottom of a bottle".

But even Natarios didn't live long: some years later, at the Rude Wench, the tavern which he used as his headquarters, a serious quarrel occurred between Natarios and One-Eyed Tarr, a rowdy Kyrosian pirate, which ended with the Jalizaran on the ground, his throat cut like that of a pig.

Tarr and other pirate captains took control of the town, but keeping the pirates under control wasn't an easy task; in the end, at the northeast corner table of the Rude Wench, a pact was sealed between the so-called Council of Five Captains, who formed a sort of government to ensure some law in the city. Since that day, the Cove has always been ruled by five pirates, whether captains or not.

Tarr and his men raided the sea in a period ranging from 1900 AF to 1910 AF and in this decade the sea ran red with the blood spilled by the pirates.

In the end, in 1911 AF, Tarr tried to attack Faberterra with a great fleet, but the Imperial navy, aided by the providential arrival of the Amazons' hawk ships at their backs, forced the pirates to retreat quickly to the open sea, a decision that almost all captains of the Dominions fear.

It wasn't Tarr's lucky day; a terrible storm caught the pirates during their escape, destroying a good part of the sea raiders' fleet.

Only Tarr's ship, the *Thunderer*, and a couple of others got home safely, but when they finally reached the Cove, a dire fate awaited the pirate. In his absence a tribe of the Finger Islands, the Kurakaka, had attacked the Cove from the land, easily defeating the token defense left by Tarr before setting sail on the ill-fated raid against Faberterra.

The surviving pirates, led by Tiberos, an apostate priest of Hulian turned to the worship of Rakua-Thara, quickly deposed Tarr and decided to sacrifice him to the God of the Sea, in the jungle temple.

Nobody knows if the sacrifice was the reason or not, but in the following months a terrible fever raged among the Kurakaka, almost extinguishing the warlike tribe, and from that moment on relationships with the Finger Tribes became even more tense.

Tiberos, obviously, got all the credit, and from that moment on the Voice of the Deep, the high priest of Rakua-Thara in the Cove, became the most influential counselor of the Council of Five Captains.

But many years were necessary to restore the Cove to its former strength.

During the ruling of Captain Sevenblades, in 2133 AF, the Cove underwent a major reconstruction: Sevenblades captured a whole ship full of builder slaves en route from Faberterra to Caldeia. Among them were stonemasons and carpenters, but also architects and educated men, like the famous Gymnarkos of Mount Syros. Gymnarkos, as the stories say, was an able architect and silver-tongued scoundrel; he knew Sevenblades was a great pirate, but a terrible gambler. He convinced the pirate captain to put the freedom of all the slaves of the ship at stake in a single game of Fissure (see page 94) and obviously the sly fox won it.

But in those years the Voice of the Deep was a woman, Tharkasha, probably the only female priestess of Rakua-Thara in history, who suggested to Sevenblades he should honor the debt, but first make the builders rebuild the shanty huts of the Cove from scratch.

Gymnarkos, reluctantly, obliged, not knowing the task he was about to start would take fifteen years. The architect never left the Cove, but when he died falling off the scaffolding of the Broken Bone Tower (see below), the Cove was a small, but strangely beautiful, stone town, made in the customary red stone typical of the Finger Islands. Given the different nationalities of the builders working on it, it was, and still is, a unique mixture of building styles from all over the Dominions, which cannot be seen anywhere else.

But after the rebuilding of the Cove, from the depths of the Finger Islands, a dark threat arose: his name was Guatulu-Watchi, or Feathered Man, and he was a powerful Pigmy shaman, who had learnt strange, forbidden sorceries in the sunken Keronian ruins dotting the islands.

His small, but dark shadow was cast very long, terrorizing not only the villages of the Finger Tribes, but also the boisterous pirates dwelling in the Cove; stories say he swore to his dark gods he would purge all the islands of the tainted blood of foreigners, and he almost managed it.

His warriors made the jungle paths impossible to travel, and the villagers of the Finger Islands were forced to close their wooden gates and starve, while Guatulu-Watchi's followers desecrated their graveyards to dig up corpses for their nefarious agenda.

In the end, the Finger Tribes did something previously unthinkable. Sashani, the daughter of the Valeko tribe's chief, reached the Cove and asked for the help of the pirates.

Turamos Iron Head, the Voice of the Deep, touched by the prettiness of the girl, publicly swore to get rid of the puny pigmy shaman, but his promises were no deeper than his tankard of booze. The night after, terrible screams were heard coming from the temple of Rakua-Thara, and when the pirates came checking, Turamos' body was found, beheaded but still alive and kicking! The animated body killed four pirates before Sashani managed to kill it with a bone dagger in its heart.

This was only the beginning of the terrible Night of the Awakening; from the depths of the Cove, where countless corpses rest, killed by the reefs, a horde of undead things crawled out, bringing death and ruin to the city of sleeping pirates. Luckily, at that very moment, the *Saber*, the ship of Captain Jarlago the Small, the last of the Five, was mooring at the docks, and his men gave the alarm, saving the city. A hideous battle of the living against the dead was fought that night, and it is

only thanks to the courage of Jarlago and Sashani that the Cove still exists today.

The pirates and the Finger Tribes had to fight a common enemy, and, for the first time, they joined forces; Sashani herself led Jarlago and his best men to the sunken ziggurat where Guatulu-Watchi lurked, with his dark followers. Nobody knows what exactly happened inside, because, at midnight, an earthquake like no other anyone can remember shook the Finger Islands like an old glove. When it was over, the ziggurat of Guatulu-Watchi was sunken in the Dread Sea, in that place which today Pirates call Torment Bay, a place where nobody goes fishing.

People still wonder about the fate of the beautiful Sashani, Jarlago and his men; some say they simply drowned, others, that they are still trapped in the underground kingdom of Guatulu-Watchi. Whatever the truth, since that day nobody has heard from the evil pigmy shaman.

From that moment, the relationships between the Finger Tribes and the pirates become more friendly; tribesmen started to sell their venison at the Cove, and some of them were even hired as crew. Likewise, some lonely pirates went to live with the tribes, but these are always isolated cases, and the two groups didn't really mix together.

Then we come to recent times.

In the last few centuries the pirates grew powerful again: the Council of Five Captains rules the city, and the sea, from the decks of their ships and from the corner table at the Rude Wench. Their names make the sailors and merchants of the Dominions tremble in their beds. Among all of them, the most feared one was Verado, the Thief of Thieves (see page

23), who some years ago managed to convince the other Captains to join him in the most daring piratical raid in the history of the Cove after Tarr's attack on Faberterra: an attack on Askerios, main port of Syranthia and greatest trade hub of the Dread Sea. Probably Verado's plan was no simple raid; the former Syranthian officer wanted to conquer a throne for himself, backed by the strength of the Cove's ships.

Unluckily for him, his great fleet was engaged by a combined force of Syranthian and Faberterran ships not far from Askerios, and was destroyed in the Battle of the Red Waters.

Very few pirates survived that doomed expedition, and since that day, the name of Verado is cursed in the taverns of the Cove. But, with the death of Verado, there is a power vacuum now: the other four Captains (the fifth seat is still empty) haven't the charisma or the strength to impose their will on all the Cove. This is a moment where a man (or woman) daring enough to accept the challenge could gather these dispersed scum once more into in a fleet worthy of the name...

THE COVE TODAY

The Cove is the perfect place for a base for a piratical campaign; it is a place full of adventures, dangers, but also a safe haven to rest. We don't want to make it *too* detailed, so that it can be freely used and custom tailored by the GM for his use, but the following section details some of its most important locations, to be used as a basis for adventures.

For each location, we give a brief story, character or other plot hook, to help you create an interesting tale.

THE AXE'S CUT OR THE SHIPYARD

No port worthy of its name is without a shipyard, and the Cove is no different. The place where the pirates' ships are built (very rarely, because most of them are simply part of the loot) or repaired is a sort of small channel, similar to the cut of a giant axe in a tree trunk (hence the name). Connected directly to the sea, it has a very handy way to bring in ships. The channel was probably originally a fissure created by a long-forgotten earthquake, but pirates love to tell the joke of Barashan's Fart, of how a legendary Kyrosian pirate of the past drank too much Zalaska and... well, you can imagine how he made the fissure.

Today, over the Axe's Cut there is a sort of big wooden warehouse, upon which slaves and shipwrights work like busy ants fixing hulls and masts, quarreling and fighting each other. In truth, much of the work is done outside the warehouse, along the shores of the channel and in the many houses and shops nearby, where the smell of salt mixes with that of tar.

The undisputed chief of the Axe's Cut is Torag the Legless. A giant of a man when he had both his legs, Torag's arms are big and strong enough to squeeze a shark to death (and, judging by his scars, he has probably done that in the past). Despite his mutilation, nobody contests the Northlander's skill in shipbuilding and every captain with enough money will have his ship fixed by him in person. Torag isn't part of the Council, but he controls a great number of workers, hard, tough fellows, and the Five are wise enough to consult him when matters of importance arise.

Torag's Jewel. A year ago, Captain Rago of Hillias commissioned Torag

to construct a great, powerful ship. He fast-talked Torag into this, tickling the builder's pride to create the pinnacle of his lifetime's work. This, joined with the promise of a huge pile of gold, convinced Torag to take his axe, and build, with his workers, the best ship the Cove has ever seen. The *Jewel* is thirty-five yards of wood, black as the skin of a Savannah dancer, and with the same agility. Fitted with a ram capable of shearing the chain of a chastity belt without scratching the lady wearing it, it has a system of sails, similar to Amazon rigging, made to capture the wind and throw the ship across the waves like an arrow. The problem is that Captain Rago disappeared at sea six months ago. Some say he was captured by the Caldeian Corsairs, while others say he was thrown in the scorpion pit in Teyaserana a month ago. When Torag heard the news, he swore the *Jewel* is now for sale: whoever pays him forty pounds of gold before his next birthday will be the captain of the Jewel. If nobody will pay, he'll have himself burned alive on the hull, surrounded by virgins. Torag was stone drunk when made the promise, but you know how Northlanders are: when they swear, they'll do anything to keep the promise.

BLOOD PEAK

Not a real part of the Cove, the Blood Peak is a small, but tall, mountain, directly by the sea, made of the strange reddish rock of which Gymnarkos built the houses of the Cove. The stories say that Lovarkos the Lucky made the bonfire that lured the *Tanakaiois* into the bay on its top, but that is probably false, because only a goat could climb to the top of the Blood Peak.

During Gymnarkos' reconstruction, a lot of stone was brought by slaves from the Peak to the Cove; this was dug from a mine, based on a network of natural

caverns snaking under the Peak, and if stories are true, even under the Cove itself.

Today the mine is abandoned (no pirate is interested in it), apart from the cavebugs, dangerous giant creatures (see *BOD* page 20).

Pirate's Graveyard. You can always count on a pirate to do a job in a lazy way, and the Pirate's Graveyard is a perfect example. Usually pirates bury their dead at sea; some rocks, a sack, a sip of Zalaska and the funeral is done, but, in some cases, they need to bury a comrade in the cold earth. So, when they chose the location of the Pirate's Graveyard (or simply the Graveyard), they paid attention to two things: first, that it would be suitably near to the Cove, second, that the ground would not be too hard to dig.

That was not a very good idea. The Graveyard is in a swampy plot of land north of the Peak, infested by vines and permanently shrouded in a sickly mist. Occasionally, when the tide of the sea swells too much, it is flooded, and it can happen that a freshly buried corpse goes willy-nilly into the arms of the Sea God. Pirates tend to avoid the Graveyard, especially by night, because there are strange lights shimmering among the rotting tombstones (usually made of wood), but also by day, because the Finger Pigmies are known to defile the tombs looking for bones and other grisly things for their evil rituals.

BROKEN BONE TOWER

The tallest building of the Cove is a tower, watching over the port. Imposing and massive, it is the Broken Bone Tower, so-called because it looks like a piece of broken bone fixed in the ground. In the plans of its creator, Gymnarkos, it was to have been

a lighthouse, and the final building of the city's reconstruction, as the architect promised to Captain Sevenblades. But the Tower was never finished: Gymnarkos mysteriously fell from its scaffolding, dropping for five floors, and dying on the rocks below. If you look carefully, you can still see the red stains on the ground, where the poor architect died. Stories say Gymnarkos didn't fall, but was pushed by Captain Sevenblades himself, who didn't want to honor the promise to free him and the other masons at the end of the tower's construction.

Obviously, Gymnarkos' tragic demise gave life to a number of wild stories among the superstitious pirates: according to the commonest one, his spirit haunts the Tower, to torment the dwellers forever.

But this rumor didn't prevent the pirates from using the building, which is traditionally the seat of one of the Five ruling the Cove, to whom also falls the task of keeping it manned and watching over the bay to give the alarm in case of incoming danger.

Actually the Broken Bone Tower is controlled by Captain Arkatos the Black, of the *Reaper*, which recently won it, in a bloody battle, from Captain Draago the Rebellious, of the *Painted Lizard*, who was forced to escape from the city and take shelter in the inland (see below).

The Dame. Everybody at the Cove knows the cause of the falling-out between Captain Arkatos and Captain Draago, which has cost the pirates of the Cove much blood. Arkatos and Draago have always been friends, close as brothers: Draago was Arkatos's second in command for five years before setting off in his own ship, with Arkatos's blessing. Then, two moons ago, the *Reaper* and the *Painted*

Lizard joined forces to attack a Tricornian trireme, headed from the City of Princes to Faberterra. As well as the rich loot, the crews found an enormous treasure: Princess Jamalaya of Ral Varsakor, a noblewoman of the Lands of the Demons and recent widow of a Faberterran noble, returning to her homeland. The idea was to bring her to the Cove and ask for a rich ransom from her family, but something went wrong. Both Arkatos and Draago fell in love with the woman. Harsh words were spoken by both captains; blades were drawn, the situation exploded, many pirates died, and Draago was forced to escape from the city, cut off from his ship (which is still moored at the Docks) and taking refuge in the jungle, brooding

vengeance against all the Brothers of the Cove. Spies say he is allying with rebellious Finger Tribes and even with Pigmies to attack the Cove. All for a damned Tricornian woman, who nobody has seen for months, as Arkatos keeps her locked in the tower. The other Captains are very worried, and someone is thinking that pretty Princess Jamalaya will better fare in some other hands – or dead with a knife in her pretty back...

COSHRA'S HULL

In the middle of the Cove stands a very unusual building: Coshra's Hull. In truth 'building' isn't the right word: Coshra's Hull is a ship, or, at least, what it remains



of it, solidly standing on the ground. On the base, the hull of a large Tricornian war ship, over the years the various occupants have built turrets, additional rooms and so on, so that today Coshra's Hull is a curious mix of ancient woodwork and modern bricks and stones. In the past, Gymnarkos proposed destroying it to build a palace in its place, but the pirates angrily refused: legend says that as long as Coshra's Hull still stands, the Cove cannot fall.

The origins of this curious building are lost in the mists of time, and several wild stories are told about it; according to one, old Captain Coshra, totally drunk one night, walked on the Long Dock, and pissed in the ocean, boasting with the Sea God that he was more powerful than him, because he could freely piss in his kingdom. That very night, an incredibly strong tide flooded the Cove, bringing Coshra's ship, a spoil of war, along with it. The pirate town was severely damaged, and the pirates quite pissed off: before dusk Coshra was hung from the tallest mast of his stranded ship, thus ending both his piratical boasting and his life.

There is another version of this story: one night, Captain Coshra, a notorious miser, being drunk (this is a recurrent element), bet his own crew all his treasure that they could not pull his ship onto the shore. The crew accepted, and working all night, they managed to drag Coshra's ship ashore, probably using poles, tree trunks and other similar means. Nobody knows if Coshra honored the bet.

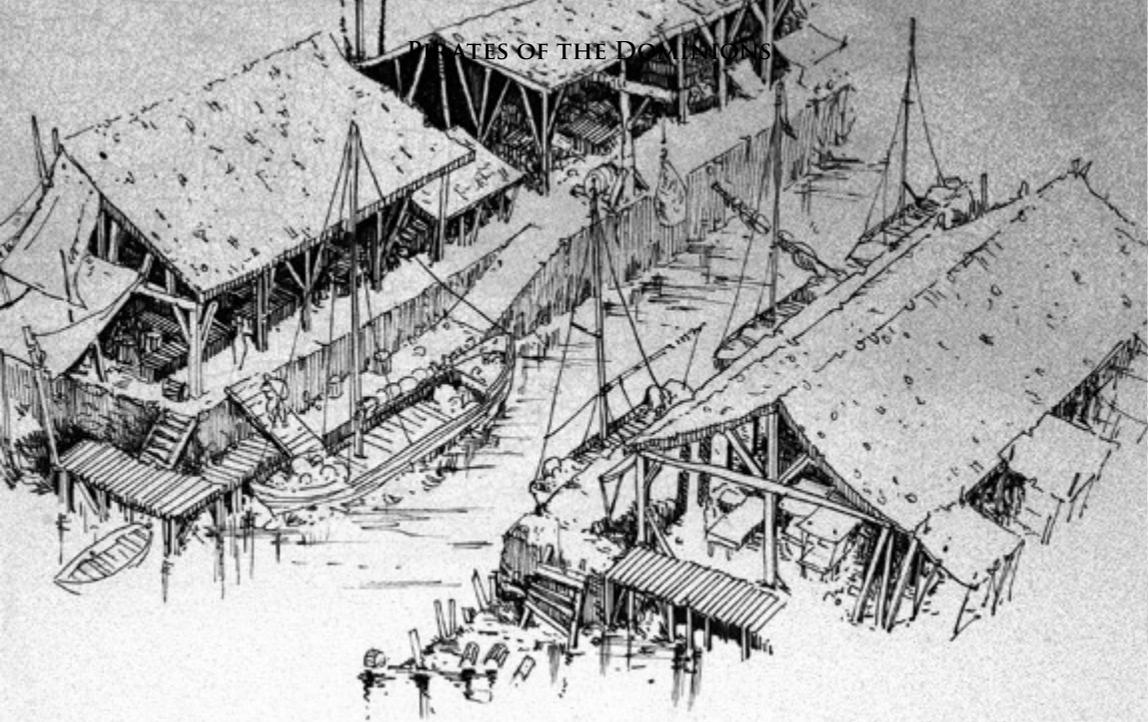
Probably both stories are false, and the truth of Coshra's Hull is lost in the mists of time; there are also rumors saying the mysterious ship was on the shore of the Cove before the arrival of Lorvakos the Lucky.

Owning Coshra's Hull has always been a sign of power and importance in the Cove, and today the building belongs to Captain Volekor of the *Silent*, probably the most dangerous and feared of the Pirate Captains, who occupied it shortly after Captain Verado's demise (see page 23); no other Captain has complained. Volekor quickly dismantled the previous gaudy trappings of the place, and is transforming it into the pirate version of a Tricornian palace.

The Ship of the Worlds. The owners of Coshra's Hull changes but Old Tor, its guardian and keeper, has been the same for many, many years: he knows every room, turret, and underground cellar of the strange building, and he is ready to serve faithfully whoever holds Coshra's Hull. But after Volekor got it, he coldly dismissed the old servant, throwing him into the road and now Old Tor can be found, nursing a cup of wine offered by the bartender at the Rude Wench. He has a story to tell, and he is ready to share it with whoever wants to hear it. Vorakor is doing something in Coshra's Hull; he is preparing to actually sail it, because, Old Tor overheard, the *Tirain-aga*, as Vorakor called the ship, actually sails between the worlds!

DOCKS

Like every sea port worthy of the name, the Cove has docks, of course. But, unlike the well-organized docks of Faberterra or Askerios, those of the Cove are built in a chaotic way, "like the dance of a drunken pig" as the saying goes. In truth, when Gymnarkos rebuilt the town from scratch, there were only two docks, made of solid stone; the eastern one, longer and adapted for big ships, and, on the opposite side of the Cove, a smaller one, for sailing boats and similar.



Today, as a plain, dirty joke, they are called Long Dock and Fat Dock, and they are only the backbone of a chaotic series of smaller, wooden docks built directly off them, protruding from the bigger ones like fishbones from a great shark.

The smaller docks form a chaotic maze where ships and barges of every size move one around the other in an apparently casual way. Docking places are very important for pirate ships: the more important a Captain is, the better (and larger) is his berth at the docks. Serious fights erupt between crews for the better places and often captains leave part of their crews (especially the wounded ones) ashore, to make sure nobody steals their place.

Apart from this, the docks are a place bubbling with life: on it, like busy ants, move sail-menders, porters, food sellers, slaves, fishermen, shipwrights, beggars, deck hands, merchants trying to get the first pick of the loot, and whatever other people can be useful to, or find profit from, the ships.

On the docks there are also a number of ramshackle huts and taverns, which periodically burn down or fall into the bay. These places often sell the worst booze you can find in the Cove, made with sugar palm and dead rats, but also the cheapest, so it is not uncommon to see tremendous fist-fights erupt there.

The Underdocks. As well as pirates, the Cove hosts a number of semi-invisible people; cripples, old sailors, courtesans too old to work in the taverns, children and so on. Some of them live in the streets, while others, especially by night, find shelter in the Underdocks, a series of catwalks built under the docks. It is a filthy place, full of rats and worse things, but it is out of the rain at least, and no pirates visit. There are stories that the Underdocks is connected to a network of underground tunnels twisting under the city of pirates and which in turn are probably connected to those of the Blood Peak. Sometimes vagabonds enter these tunnels and don't come back; Trag, the mad sail mender

who has lived in the Underdocks all his life, says there are “little, painted devils in the caverns, dragging you away”, whatever that means.

FIREFLY LANE

When Gymnarkos rebuilt the Cove, he designed it with well, with a central plaza (which still exists, see Flesh Market) and wide roads; but ten years after his death, his careful layout was destroyed by pirates and lowlifes building huts and makeshift houses whatever they wanted, giving the Cove the messed up appearance it has today, a network of narrow streets and alleys which, if not for the fair weather, would make you think you were in Jalizar.

The only street still showing some of the magnificence of the past is Firefly Lane, so called because a sly brothel owner, Jaavesa of Jalizar, used to set outside his house fireflies in a large glass globe to lure customers. The idea worked very well, and as happens in these cases, was quickly copied by others, so that today the whole lane is dimly lit by night by a sort of faerie fire, reflecting off the exposed flesh of the girls.

Firefly Lane is the perfect place for a pirate to blow off steam, whether he likes booze, food, girls or a mix of them. It is not unusual for a pirate to enter the Lane fully clothed, armed, and with pockets filled with gold, and to leave it naked, beaten and without a coin.

Brawls and fights are common in the various bawdy houses of the Lane, and the ruffians keeping order are notorious for their heavy hands.

The Lane isn't just a place to get lost in the pleasures of flesh, but is also dotted with small shops run by the real people of the Cove: peddlers, pawn shops, ill-reputed

healers, hedge mages, fortune tellers and any other shady business you can imagine.

Calatua's Tattoo Parlor. Pirates love tattoos, and, if you are a member of a pirate crew you probably have a couple – or a dozen – yourself. The Cove hosts a number of tattooists, but nobody else like Calatua. Finding her isn't easy; her shop is in a side alley off Firefly Lane, but you don't find it every time. “If Calatua doesn't want to be found, you won't find her,” the rumors say.

And that isn't the weirdest thing about this strange character.

A Finger Islands tribeswoman of indefinable age, Calatua has black rough hair, decorated with mud and pieces of bone, and quick, deft hands. She is also totally blind, but this doesn't stop her being the absolute mistress of tattoos in the Cove. She has quite a temper too. You don't go to Calatua and say to her “Do me a badass dragon,” unless you want to be thrown out; instead you enter her parlor, pay her, and wait. She'll make you sit on a chair, take her tools, and will touch your body with cold, inquisitive hands. When she finds the right place she grunts, and starts working, all without seeing. The result is often unpredictable but always amazing: Calatua's works are very strange to see, to touch, and stories say that they change forever you, in good ways or bad.

Stories say that there always been a Calatua in the Cove, but the name is common among the Finger Tribes, so probably it refers to several different women who have run the Parlor over the years. After all, nobody can live *that* long, can they?

CALATUA'S TATTOOS

After hearing of her, the heroes will probably look for Calatua. An adventurer can do this only once per adventure (or per After the Adventure phase).

Usually finding her requires a Spirit (-2) roll, with another, cumulative -2, for every time you have already visited her.

Calatua's Tattoos have no set price, but be fair in your offer: the blind lady doesn't like to be swindled.

Then, Calatua starts working. When the tattoo is completed, the GM secretly draws a card from the Action Deck.

If it is a number (2-10), nothing happens.

If it is a red face card (Joker included), the tattoo is magical, and the hero permanently gains the Luck Edge (or the Improved version if he already has Luck).

If it is a black face card (Joker included), the tattoo holds a curse of some type, and the hero permanently gains the Bad Luck Hindrance.

Calatua's tattoos can only be removed by her, and she will only remove a single tattoo per person.

BUYING AND SELLING IN THE FLESH MARKET

The Flesh Market of the Cove is a place where goods of every type can be found. At the end of an adventure, players can freely spend leftover bennies to find an additional Rare Item at the market, with no need to roll. They must pay the normal price, of course.

FLESH MARKET

The central plaza of the Cove, in truth the only plaza of the settlement, has been called the Flesh Market for centuries, because twice a year the pirates held a slave sale there with their best prizes. Today, this market is no longer held, for practical reasons; the merchants had to be taken from their ships moored on the coasts of Keron and brought, blindfolded, to the Cove. After the sale, the same merchants (and the slaves) had to be taken back to their ships, with all the security problems that involved. Today the pirates simply sell their slaves in the markets of the Independent Cities, where slavers ask no questions.

The Flesh Market is still the marketplace of the Cove. Here you can find food and Zalaska from the jungle, and loot stolen from ships of all the Dominions: Lhobanese wool, spices from Hillias, Caldeian Khav and Borderlands pelts all piled next to each other in a chaotic mess. Merchants of various types, often quartermasters of pirate ships, loudly hawk all these riches, and if you are a tough bargainer, you can make some real deals. You can also find a good number of Finger Tribesmen there, selling wares from the jungle, or simply enjoying the overripe fruits of civilization.

The Fountain of Zal Kasha. In the center of the Flesh Market there is big stone fountain, representing a strange naked woman with three breasts, with water pouring from her nipples. Unlike the reddish stone of the cove, this is made of grey marble, veined with green, typical of Keron. Long ago, the statue was taken from the ancient Keronian temple of Zal Kasha, somewhere in the jungle. According to the stories, the three-breasted statue holds the secret to a great treasure. In the past many have examined the fountain, but

nobody has found the secret. Well, almost nobody: Syras of Nal Sagath, the first mate of the *Horn* (see page 55) recently boasted, one night while drunk at the Rude Wench, that he had discovered it, but he has been missing for some time. Maybe he went into the jungle to verify his stories, or ended up gutted in some back alley after revealing his secret?

THE RUDE WENCH

Legend says the oldest tavern of the Cove, the Rude Wench, was the first makeshift kitchen used by Lorvakos the Lucky, and the big cauldron permanently boiling on the fireplace was part of the *Tanakaios'* cooking implements. In the ancient pot a fish stew constantly cooks, and tradition dictates the cook always adds new fish to it, making it virtually the oldest food in all the western Dominions (it is quite good, if you dare taste it).

But the really important relics of the Wench are other things.

First, the northeast corner table, which has been used as a council room by the Council of Five Captains for their meetings for centuries. It is stained by countless pints of booze, and scarred by hundreds of knives, but in this place, it has the same importance as the Ivory Throne of the City of Princes in Tricarnia. You simply don't approach that table, unless you are invited or you want to challenge one of the Five for their position, and in the latter case you'll better be well-backed and strong-willed, because the Captains always keep bodyguards sitting at the nearby tables.

Second, the Rude Wench itself. It is an old ship's figurehead, representing a naked woman, but so damaged by tar and salt that she is disfigured and seems to grin in

an angry way. According to some legends, this figure represents a real woman, whose identity is lost in the mists of time; one of the first workers at the tavern. The Rude Wench is kept on a shelf over the fireplace, and under it there is the most important object in the whole tavern, probably in the entire port: the Pirates' Code.

Written on a piece of sail by Livas of Kyros, it rests on the same shelf (see sidebar), and can only be touched by the tavern's owner and the Five.

Norak of the Gauntlet. The Rude Wench has passed through a number of hands over the centuries, but the latest owner is probably one of the strangest. A tall and silent Northlander, even if you wouldn't identify him immediately as a member of that race because he is bald and always perfectly clean-shaven.

Norak is broad-shouldered and strong, and always wears a long leather gauntlet, covering his right hand to the elbow. He never takes it off in public, but Karyna, one of the tavern girls, swears she once saw his bare hand, heavily scarred as if exposed to a terrible fire. The girl wondered how the man could still move that hand, but he surely can, given how well he keeps the rowdy customers of the tavern at bay.

The same girl says that Norak almost never sleeps, and constantly consumes Khav and other drugs to stay awake. One day he was particularly drunk, and he confessed to her that he cannot sleep "because the Dreamer is looking for him, and even Tosar cannot protect him. But he won't fail and *it* will be kept safe."

"Those were the very words he said!" Karyna swore, but everybody knows the girl would say (and do) anything for a pint of booze and some easy money.

THE PIRATES' CODE

The Pirates' Code is written on a piece of sail from some forgotten ship. Discolored by time, some parts of it can no longer be read, but all that is really important is still visible, and recorded below.

On the back of the sail are the names of all the Captains who have ruled the Cove.

Officially, the Pirates' Code only applies aboard ship. When ashore it isn't as strictly respected.

Treat it as a Code of Honor (Minor Hindrance), with the following tenets:

-All crewmen ("Brothers") are equal and receive an equal share of the booty, except the Captain and the First Mate who receive more shares.

-If a non-pirate kills a pirate, his Brothers must avenge him. The only exception is if the murderer offers himself as a replacement for the pirate killed.

-When on board, you cannot harm a Brother except in a fair duel. When ashore the Pit will decide the outcome of a quarrel.

-All the Brothers must obey the Captain and the First Mate, but any Brother can challenge them for their positions, except during a battle or a storm.

-The rule of acclamation can be invoked by any Brother and on any matter.

-You must pray to Rakua-Thara before setting sail.

-You will never reveal the Secret Path to the Cove, on your life and your soul. If you do, the spirits of all dead pirates will torment your soul forever.

-A Brother is a Brother, even if she is a Sister (later addition).

THE TEMPLE OF THE HUNDRED GODS

Pirates, officially, worship no god except Rakua-Thara, and then only for fear of the consequences.

In reality, things are more complex than this. Even the worst pirate, in his black heart, believes in something, and this is the reason for the existence of the Temple of the Hundred Gods. A ramshackle, oval building, it is so old that weeds have grown up in the fissures between the rocks of which it is made. Inside, there is a single, big room, with hundreds of small niches: in each of these is a small effigy of a god, and when you enter this place, you have the impression of dozens of cold eyes watching you.

Their appearances and origins are diverse: some are little more than sketchy earthenware shapes made by unskilled hands, while others are semi-precious statues ripped from the dead hands of a priest in some forgotten raid.

In this place you'll find, side by side, votive statues of Hulian and pleasure idols of Hordan, staff amulets of Etu and an engraved horn sacred to Kuletu, but also effigies and icons of more obscure deities, all side by side.

The keeper of the temple, for countless years, has been a shrouded old man called Six, because he only has six fingers between his two hands. Six, the stories say, was a skilled helmsman a lifetime ago, and there are stories about how he lost his fingers: the wildest one is that he played Knife Dance with a devil, and won, but at a cost. Only Six knows the truth, but he is always close-mouthed on the topic, as he is most of the time, of course.

The Whisperings. The Temple of the Hundred Gods is a little unnerving even by day, what with all the statues, amulets and effigies staring at you, but it can be terrifying by night. The temple is always open, because nobody in the Cove would ever think stealing one of the statues, not least because the majority of them are simply worthless. If you visit the temple by night, though, sooner or later you'll hear voices. Strange, disturbing whispers, speaking in unknown languages. Maybe they are only the sound of the sea wind echoing through the loose stones of the temple, but pirates think they are the voices of the gods themselves, speaking to the visitors.

There is a secret in these voices, people say, even if Fildago the Sage, who stayed three nights in the temple, didn't hear anything (the fact that he was completely drunk probably didn't help).

The only one who might know the secret of the voice of the gods is Trag, a sail-mender who works and dwells on the Long Dock, but everybody knows he is totally mad.

THE COUNCIL OF FIVE CAPTAINS

Power and politics are fickle ladies, especially in the city of pirates: a man can wake up a pirate captain one day, and be walking the plank the next. Below are described the current Five of the Cove, the de facto rulers of the city, but things can change at any moment. The GM is free to use them in his scenarios as he sees fit or to replace them at will, but remember, if a player character wants to become one of the Five, a Captain must first be removed...

Captain Arkatos. *White is getting more and more common in Arkatos's hair, a clear sign that this man is no longer in his prime, even if you would not guess that from his extravagant manners and gaudy dress. Captain Arkatos is by far the oldest of the Pirate Captains of the Cove, but, having lived in the shadow of Verado, he always felt the other Captains never gave him the respect he deserved. Till some time ago, Arkatos was a close friend with Draago the Black, but recently the two of them have been involved in a war over a woman, which could destroy the Cove (see page 49). Arkatos cannot be convinced to renounce the girl, and is trying to get the other Captains to side with him against Draago. Vanja, for now, seems to support him, as does Shalak (but now that counts for almost nothing), while Volekor, as always, is inscrutable. Arkatos's ship, the Painted Lizard, is the biggest and best-armed in the Cove, as is his crew.*

Captain Draago the Black. *A tall, dark-skinned man, always dressed in black, Draago was an excellent first mate for Arkatos, who took him from the hull of a slaver cargo, many years ago. Close-mouthed Draago is a man bound by his word: he never swore an oath he didn't fulfill, and he swore to have Princess Jamalaya for himself, with a burning passion uncommon in a man so controlled. Today Draago is in the jungle, in a fortified camp, cut off from the Cove, but he is gathering allies among the islands to move against Arkatos. His ship, the Reaper, second only to the Painted Lizard, lies untouched in the Cove's port; before escaping into the jungle, Draago opened a cage full of Silent Deaths, small, hairy spiders typical of Caldeia, which killed the first would-be ship thieves. Nevertheless, Draago would be very interested in having his ship back.*

Captain Shalak. *A tall, lean man, of a breed so mixed as to be indefinable, Shalak's face is scarred by a "caress" he got from a shark years ago. But he survived the experience and, from that moment on, all his ships have been called Shark. Months ago, Shalak captured a great prize, a Syranthian ship called Etu's Belly (see page 60), but he lost it on the Reefs. Apart from the economic damage, he became the laughing stock of the other captains. Even his crew doubts him, but given his deadly skill with the sword, nobody has yet challenged him, instead the cowardly Ochaba, his First Mate, convinced the rest of the crew to mutiny, and the Shark weighed anchor ten days ago, leaving him on the shore. Shalak needs to be back on top soon or he is doomed...*

Captain Vanja. *This blonde she-devil, a former Amazon commander, joined the pirates years ago, when she, her sister Anaya, and a whole battalion of Amazons deserted from the Ascaian navy to start a new life of piracy. Vanja appears cold and controlled, but in truth she is a boiling cauldron of emotion, always ready to explode, usually in bad ways. The crew of the Horn, her ship, is composed mainly of men, who respect and fear her. Vanja, unlike many Amazons, likes males, a lot, and she is known for her huge carnal appetites. At this moment her favorite lover is Yellowtiger (see page 50), but the warrior woman is known to be fickle, and she loves power above all. The only person Vanja really cares about is her sister, Anaya, called the Swift, who is the captain of the Blood Bride, another pirate ship, and hasn't visited the Cove for a while, since she broke with Verado. Anaya the Swift appears in the Eyes of the Night Savage Tale (see BOD, page 36-45).*

Captain Volekor. *Once, many years ago, he was Priest Prince Volekor of Ral Amarith, but those times are gone. Volekor is a haughty, tall Tricarnian, with a perpetually pensive expression, but the few times his cold eyes focus on someone, that man will tremble.*

Volekor is a skilled warrior and a dangerous sorcerer, as anyone who has seen him fight would say; he is usually in ancient bronze armor, wielding his black sword, shimmering with arcane runes.

Volekor's ship, the Silent, is manned by a creepy crew of servants; tall and strong, they have features similar to men of the Ivory Savannah, but they are gaunter and their skin is ash-colored. More interestingly, they are mute and with little interest in women, gold or food. The other pirates call them simply the Grays, and are scared as hell of them. Nobody knows where they come from: although many of them fall in battle, Volekor always finds a way to replace them, probably from some forgotten island, or, as some whisper, by making bargains with the ancient demons of nearby Keron.

Volekor's motivations are mystery to everyone; mildly interested in loot, quite cold with women, he actively seeks power in the Cove, but only as a base to further some other, greater, goal; what that is, nobody knows.

THE PIT

In the rough center of the Cove, there is a depression in the ground, a sort of hole, which no mason of the past was allowed to touch. On the sides of this depression there are spikes, long as a man's arm, of various origins: broken spears, pointed bamboo stakes, a ship's ram and even a blade from a scythed chariot – nobody remembers how *that* got there.

This place is the Pit, and in the Pit people fight, unarmed or with knives, in one of the less well-known but most dangerous arenas of the Dominions, not only because of the spikes which can easily wound or maim a fighter, but also due to the roughness of the fights, which have no rules.

In the upper part of the Pit there are seats and benches, where spectators take their places to see the bloody show.

Two small rooms, little more than grottoes dug in the earth, stand on opposite sides of the Pit, where the contenders rest before the fight.

Traditionally, the master of the games of the Pit is the Voice of the Deep, but he usually takes this role only on special occasions, or in the bloody celebration of the Sea God called the Blood Giving. On this occasion, the fighters are always slaves, prisoners or pirates sentenced to death for some reason. The loser of the fight, in this case, is dragged to the middle of the Pit, where a very ancient, pointed stone called the Sea Heart stands, and is impaled through the heart on it, his blood taken in a blue cup and then thrown from the Dock, to secure good luck for the pirates on their raids.

The Pit has also other uses: bets and decisions of various types are made on the outcome of the fights. In the past the Council of Five Captains themselves

fought in it, to decide who was right in a quarrel, but today many of them use skilled pit fighters, usually the meanest of their crews, to do this dirty job. Over the centuries whole fortunes, ships, wives, even titles have changed hands on the outcome of a knife fight in the Pit. A pirate ignoring the result of a Pit fight is considered a liar and a traitor to the Code.

Yellowtiger. For some time, Captain Vanja of the *Horn* has had a new man in her crew. He is a scarred, Savannah warrior, black as the night, that everybody calls Yellowtiger. The man, apart from being the current captain's lover, is the best bare-handed fighter seen in the Cove in the last few years. Pox, a pirate from Faberterra, swears that the tattoo Yellowtiger has on his chest is the Mercy of the Emperor, which is issued by the Emperor of Faberterra himself to the gladiator winning the Great Imperial Games.

Nobody knows if this is true or not, but Vanja is making the best use of her lover: she has made, and won, a number of bets on pits fights with other captains, so that nobody is willing to take her bets anymore. All except one: Captain Volekor of Tricornia recently agreed to bet his great ship, the *Silent*, against the *Horn* of the renegade amazon. The fight will happen in three days, but it seems that Yellowtiger has mysteriously disappeared. If the savannah warrior cannot be found, the amazon captain will lose her ship and her reputation in single night...

THE REEFS

The Cove is still untouched today because reaching it by sea requires navigating through treacherous waters filled with sharp, underwater reefs through which swim beautiful exotic fishes and ever-hungry sharks.

There is one way, and only one way, to cross the Reefs and reach the Cove, and

it is called the Secret Path (see box). The knowledge of the Path is probably the greatest secret of the Cove, passed from helmsman to helmsman, so important that it is even named in the Code.

The Reefs extends for several miles, and a ship usually takes between one and four hours, depending on the skill of the helmsman, that of the crew, and the weather, to travel the whole Secret Path.

The Path starts in the passage between the two small islands called Zulasta's Mouth (Zulasta, the stories say, was a popular whore of the Cove, dead long ago, notorious for the things she could do with... well, you can imagine) and goes deep into the archipelago, through narrow passages and apparently safe (but very treacherous) lagoons. Breaching the hull of the ship is probably the worst thing that can happen, but running aground in shallow waters is a good second.

When that happens, especially near the point named the Emperor's Hunchback, you must abandon the vessel as fast as you can, because nearby there is a large colony of carnivorous Sand Diggers, which have learnt that a grounded vessel is usually full of tasty human flesh to fill their bellies.

Despite the risk, do you think nobody has ever tried to reach the Cove uninvited?

You can bet they did, they do, and probably they'll keep on doing it, the damned fools.

The whole Secret Path is dotted with the wrecks of ships from every era, some of them very old and others quite recent. There are many treasures there, ready to be looted if you are daring enough; but they are surrounded by the corpses and skeletons of the countless mariners,

pirates and slaves who have died in the crystalline waters.

Etu's Belly. When, a month ago, Captain Shalak of the *Shark* captured *Etu's Belly*, a Kyrosian merchant ship headed to Hillias, he couldn't believe his luck: the ship was literally stuffed with precious spices, Lhoban wool, and, most important, a twelve-foot tall statue of the goddess, made of silver and gold, for the Temple of Renewal in Hillias.

There were also six marvelous girls aboard, Holy Dancers of Etu, who cursed the captain and crew in many ways for their blasphemous act. They stopped pretty quickly after a night in the crew's quarters, but probably there was power in their words, given what happened later.

Etu's Belly was as big and clumsy as a pregnant cow, so she had to be towed through the Secret Path, a difficult task by day, and even more dangerous by night, but given the incoming storm, Captain Shalak had no choice.

Well, more or less in the middle of the Path, in the place called the Snake's Teeth due to the sharpness of the coral, *Etu's Belly* smashed against the reefs, breaching the hull at three different points. The pirates abandoned ship as fast as they could, but the statue of the goddess, and most of the wares, remained aboard.

Captain Shalak didn't take this well, and even today, when he gets drunk, he speaks of the great treasure lost under water.

And what about the Holy Dancers? Well, five of them were sold as pleasure girls to the brothels of the Cove, but the sixth one, Vella, cannot be found anywhere. Could she have been trapped in the sunken ship? Or did she escape somehow and reach the nearby islands, where the pigmies live?

THE SECRET PATH

Following the Path. Sooner or later, the heroes will follow the Secret Path. If the helmsman knows the way, and isn't in any particular hurry, he must simply make a Boating roll. With a failure, some minor accident happens (a small breach in the hull, a delay or something similar). With a 1 on the Boating die, the situation is worse, and a Path Accident happens (see below).

If the helmsman doesn't know the Path or is in hurry, he can try to follow it, but so far nobody has managed to do that. If the madman doesn't know the Path and is in hurry... well, double the penalties on the rolls and good luck!

Following the Path is a Dramatic Task, based on Boating, which can be cooperative, but only with another helmsman character, who must use Notice instead of Boating.

The man at the wheel must make six Boating rolls, respectively at: 0, -4, -6, -2, -6, -4. For each failure, a Path Accident happens (see below). If the ship survives all six rolls, you made it, and you are at the Cove (or have left it).

Apply Visibility penalties as usual, and if, the weather is bad, another modifier ranging from -1 (rough waters) to -4 (tropical storm).

Following the Path once without knowing it doesn't mean you've learnt it, but is surely an impressive feat: the character permanently gains (player's choice) either two free die steps in Boating (up to d12) or the Luck Edge.

Learning the Path. *A player character with a pirate background can begin the game knowing the Secret Path, with the GM's approval, if he has the Quartermaster Edge and spends two extra skill points. A player character willing to learn it during the game, apart from being a pirate at least for a year and having the Quartermaster Edge, must find a proper teacher who usually tests his loyalty to the Cove in some way, and must spend an advance.*

Path Accidents. *If you do something wrong on the Secret Path, things can go very badly. Draw a Card from the Action Deck and check the table below. All damage caused by the Reefs is considered made by a Heavy Weapon.*

PATH ACCIDENTS TABLE

Card	Effect
2	<i>Dead Man's Blades. The ship hits the worst reefs of the Finger Islands; it suffers 4d8 damage, AP 6, Heavy Weapon.</i>
3-5	<i>Keronian Fingers. These insidious coral reefs are very thin and sharp, causing 3d6 Damage, AP 4. In addition, the ship is stuck on them, and the crew must make a Boating (-2) roll to free it. In the case of failure the ship suffers the same damage again and cannot move. Each roll requires fifteen minutes of hard work and cursing, and for every failure the Keronian Fingers deal their damage again.</i>
6-8	<i>Hidden Spur. A big piece of coral deals 2d10 damage, AP 5 to the ship.</i>
9-10	<i>Barrier Reef. The ship has struck the barrier reef head on! This inflicts 2d8 damage, AP 5, and in addition it is in a dead end, so the current round doesn't count for advancing along the Path.</i>
J	<i>Thin Reef. The ship is scraping against a bank of very thin coral blades, suffering only 2d6+2 damage, AP 4. If the card is black, the helm is damaged, and the ship suffers -2 to any Boating rolls until it is repaired.</i>
Q	<i>"The Drowned Ones Are Watching". The ship is passing over a lagoon, under which there are the wrecks of many other ships. The crew must immediately make a group Spirit (-2) roll or be scared for the rest of the day, suffering -2 to any roll linked to maneuvering the ship (the helmsman and any other Wild Cards aboard roll individually).</i>
K	<i>Shallow Waters. The ship ends in a cay and cannot move anymore unless the crew and the helmsman succeed in a Boating (-2) roll, which requires four hours of time and causes a level of Fatigue to all the crew. This roll can be attempted only once. After this, the ship is aground and must be towed off by another ship.</i>
A	<i>Dead End. The ship is in a dead end, and must go back. You suffer no damage, but the current round doesn't count towards advancing.</i>
Joker	<i>The Sea God is Watching You... with merciful eyes! You pass through the reefs suffering no damage and gain the Thara Bennie, a special Bennie which can be spent only on Boating rolls to cross reefs. It is saved between sessions but expires when used.</i>

NO TRAITORS?

GMs and players alike may wonder why, over several centuries, no helmsman has betrayed the secret of the Cove to the major nations of the Dominions for a big pile of gold.

Actually, this has happened, but only three times (at least, only three cases are actually known). The reason is that there seems to be a strange curse upon whoever betrays the Secret Path (see Pirates' Code): the ghosts of dead pirates will haunt the betrayer forever.

That story could be true, in fact.

Zal the Rat, the first mate of the Seabear, sold the secret three hundred years ago to the Syranthians, but, the night before leading the Syranthian fleet along the Path, he was found dead in his hammock, suffocated by a chunk of seaweed.

A century ago, Turso Two-Heads (so called for his chest tattoo) never managed to enjoy the title the Faberterran Emperor bestowed him for his betrayal; the main mast of the Justice, the Imperial trireme he was aboard, fell down, killing a single person, him.

Nootaaro of Jalizar, the last one, technically didn't betray the secret: he promised knowledge of the Secret Path to the Priest Prince of Ral Hordaka, but he took the gold and disappeared. With the Priest Prince's daughter.

SCUM OF THE SEA

This chapter introduces new options for creating characters based on the sea life, either as pirates or as simple mariners and wanderers.

ARCHETYPES

Although classical iconography represents pirates in a standardized way, many interesting characters are possible on a maritime theme. In this section are some character concepts to stir your imagination. As always customizing and mixing them is highly recommended.

Amazon Sea Archer. Fighting at sea is always a dangerous business, and often it ends in cruel melees on ships' decks

made slippery by the blood of the fallen. If you have good archers, you can sweep the enemy's deck clear before boarding, but shooting on a ship's deck, given the range and the unstable platform, is a tricky thing, and only the best archers can do it. Amazons, in particular, train warrior women for this task, and the Amazon Sea Archers are the best ones, capable of making shots that bypass the enemy's bulwarks and shields. An Amazon Sea Archer is a respected warrior, both in her homeland and as a mercenary.

Artillerist. Many navies, especially the Caldeian, Tricarnian and Imperial ones, employ war machines: catapults, ballistae and similar tools of destruction. In some cases, they also fire dangerous Lotus concoctions. Using these war machines

isn't easy; it requires intelligence, skill and good eye for distance. A good artilleryman can make the difference between life and death in a sea battle.

Captain. You are the man holding the crew together. You curse, lash, guide, and inspire them, and they'll die for you and your ship. Yes, "your" ship, don't forget that, and beware of your men. They might seem loyal, but there is always someone ready to stab you in the back and take command.

Cook. A good man in the galley can make the difference between a mutinous rabble and a happy band of marauders. Pirate cooks are renowned for their bad tempers (necessary to keep the men away from their larder) and for their ability to cook almost anything, from shark meat to rats and boiled boot soles, when all the storerooms are empty. Oh, don't count on them to watch over the Zalaska barrel, by the way.

Corsair. There are pirates and there are Corsairs. Although many people consider you part of the same scum of the sea, you aren't. You are a pirate hunter, and answer only to your Captain and King Caldaios, in that order. And don't believe the stories about Corsair vessels attacking and pillaging merchant ships when nobody is watching. It is all lies, at least so long as no survivor is found...

Daimao. Enormously fat, tattooed, Lhobanese thugs, Daimaos are the servants of the Sea Tyrant of the City of Leaves. Their impressive size depends both on their traditional, high fat diet, and on the use of special Lotus concoctions made to increase their size. They tattoo their bodies heavily, starting from the shoulders to cover every inch of skin. Deadly warriors, any crew of Brown Sea



pirates will
accept one of these
brutes among them.

Deckhand. They call you "boy", "rat", or, when the galley is empty enough, even "stew", and in that last cases, it is best for you to find a good place to hide. You are the youngest of the crew, and it is always your turn to clean the bilge or other bad jobs. But when a good prey is in sight, you take up a sword like your comrades and fight for loot and plunder. Maybe one day you'll have a ship yourself.

Drummer. There are rowers and there is the man beating the rhythm. You are the latter. On slave-rowed ships, you are feared and hated, because the rowers not respecting your tempo are whipped and beaten, while on a ship with free oarsmen, your companions appreciate your invaluable help in setting a faster pace. Drummers have a little magic in them, and there are stories about Savannah or Tricornian Drummers who know strange rhythms which can help the rowers ignore their fatigue, or, for the Tricornians, which can keep a man rowing until his heart fails from exhaustion.

Helmsman. The captain is on deck commanding the men, but you are the one at the wheel, holding the destiny of the ship in your hands. A good helmsman can make the difference between life and death during a storm, a battle, or a dangerous passage through the reefs.

Hull Breaker. Typical of the Cairnlands, this holy warrior considers himself a servant of the Drowned King, and scourges the sea looking for enemy ships to sink with their crews aboard, to increase the fleets of his master. Apart from this homicidal (and in certain cases suicidal) attitude, a Hull Breaker can be a good friend, ready to drown his comrades in a sea of cold beer. Only, if he suggests you take a walk on the dock to clear your head of booze, be cautious!

Marine. These have various names; Blue Guardian in Tricornia, Talattomos (warrior of the sea) in Faberterra, Sea Spear in Syranthia, and a dozen other names in the Independent Cities, but the substance is the same: they are marines, soldiers on duty aboard ships tasked with protecting them and their cargo with their lives. Some of them are even decent mariners, but the majority cannot

even swim, so sailors nickname them “the Drowned”. A former marine can carve out a position among pirates by his discipline and knowledge of sea combat.

Yellow Mask. A member of the strange sect of Lotusmasters of the Sea of Leaves, they never show their face without their customary, engraved mask, which they receive the day they are accepting into the order. Their lore is specific and mysterious, because they know the herbs, flowers and algae typical of the Sea of Leaves. They are sworn servants of the Sea Tyrant of the City of Leaves, but it can happen that one of them is sent on a mission to distant lands, or, more rarely, that he deserts the order.

Priest of Rakua-Thara. You are a priest or a priestess of Rakua-Thara. Among pirates, the aspect of Rakua, the destroyer and pillager, is predominant, and priests of Rakua are often power-hungry fanatics and misogynists, while priestesses of Thara are welcome in the communities for the benevolent aspect of their deity.

Rower. When the wind blows strong, there is no problem for ships, but when it is dead calm, that is the moment for rowers to do their job, and you are one of them. There are two types: slave rowers, usually kept (and considered) little better than beasts, and free rowers, usually big, muscular men, highly respected because the speed of the ship depends on their arms. In certain navies, such as the Amazons, all the crew are rowers, even the Captain takes a turn at the oars if necessary.

Shipwright. Old ships break and must be repaired, and new ships must be built. You are the man who does that. They call you various names: shipwright, master of the axe, shipbuilder, but the concept is always the same. You care for and nurture the ship as a mother does with her children,

and suffer when you see it damaged or, even worse, destroyed.

Windcaller. You can feel the wind. Not only on your skin, but in your bones, your mouth, and your mind. The wind is your friend, lover, father and mother. And you can talk to it, court it and convince it to blow full of rage or whisper with a gentle breeze. Every ship would like to have a true Windcaller on its deck, because he is the only one who can save you during a storm or fill the sails in dead calm.

Wool Dog. This is a group of highly-skilled marines employed by Lhobanport, tasked with guarding the ships bringing wool from the east to the west, along the Golden Route. Very skilled in the use of a special polearm, called the Wool Pike, they are known to be extremely loyal. Certain merchant families employ them on a permanent basis, in this case they are called Wool Shields.

PLAYING A DAIMAO

Daimaos are huge mountains of fat, under which are iron muscles. A player wanting to play a character of this type can take both the Brawny Edge and the Obese Hindrance during the character creation, but loses two Skill points for doing so.

HINDRANCES

FORMER CANNIBAL (MINOR)

Savage crewmembers coming from a cannibal tribe are a staple of piratical fiction, and, nobody knows why, they are often employed as cooks on pirate ships (probably because they aren't too picky

in choosing the ingredients for the crew's stew). This character renounced (but did he really?) his past eating habits but his filed teeth make civilized people shiver when they see him smile. In game terms, he suffers -4 to Charisma in every social activity, except Intimidation, where he receives +2. Note that a Former Cannibal is usually the first suspect when someone is missing or other murderous events happen.

WOMAN IN EVERY PORT (MINOR)

Sailors are known for their numerous paramours, one in every port, and this Hindrance represents this behavior, or, to be more accurate, its consequences.

Every time the character visits a new civilized place (where there is a chance he has been before), the GM secretly draws a card from the Action Deck: if a red face card appears, it means the hero meets someone linked to his past. If the card drawn is a heart, he stumbles on an old lover, if it is a diamond he is found by one or more children (or someone claiming to be one). If the card is a red joker, he meets both: lover and child(ren).

The newfound family doesn't display its best attitude, roll on the Reaction Table, but using only 2d4.

Take note of every place where the character has a relative: they could reappear when the hero visits that location again.

The GM can also skip the card draw mechanic and just assume the hero has met someone, but in this case he should reward the character with a Bennie.

Although the name refers to women, it is also perfectly fine with a male focus (Man in Every Port).

NEW EDGES

In this section are several new Edges, typical of the sea life. Unless otherwise noted, they are available to all characters.

Bloodline Edges: Some characters have certain gifts depending on their ancestors. These Edges are collectively called Bloodline Edges and are firstly described in *TLD* (page 89). These Edges can only be taken during character creation and a hero can only have one of them.

BACKGROUND EDGES

REBORN FROM THE WATERS

Requirements: Novice, Cairnlander

The hero faced certain death in the sea or some other body of water, and his soul wandered in the depths, until for some reason it returned to his body: maybe a sea ghost fell in love with him, or the Drowned King gave him a specific task to carry out on dry land. The hero emerged again from water, not dead, but not entirely alive either. His skin is slightly greenish or bluish, and he doesn't feel much pain anymore (gains +1 to Toughness). Someone Reborn from the Waters cannot drown; he suffers Fatigue as normal from immersion in water, but Incapacitation from this doesn't lead to death: when the water is removed from his lungs, he coughs and recovers. Note that his body neither ages nor corrupts while immersed in water (so it is a good way to achieve immortality, if staying immersed in water, sleeping, doesn't bother you). Treat the character as undead for any spell or power affecting this type of creature.

GM'S TIP: REBORN FROM THE WATERS IN PLAY

This Edge is great to add a twist to the story when a character dies at sea, giving the hero a second chance.

At the GM's discretion, a dead hero can return from sea, losing one Edge of his choice, to be replaced with Reborn from the Waters and an additional suitable Hindrance (for example a Vow or Death Wish).

If the hero has the Hard to Kill or Harder to Kill Edge this works even better: the hero returns from sea with the Reborn from the Waters Edge for free.

Obviously this rule must be used very sparingly in the campaign (not more than once).

HERO'S TALE: THE SOUL OF THE DROWNED ONE

There is a story, told in all the ports of the Drowned King Sea from Jalizar to Gis, about the Drowned One, a man who fell in the sea hundreds of years ago, and periodically re-emerges from the waters, with no memory and desperately looking for the answer to a specific question.

The question is: "What can change the nature of a man?"

Stories say that when he finds the answer the Drowned One will finally find peace.

YELLOW MASK

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Lotusmastery), Knowledge (Arcana) d8+, Lotusmastery d8+, Streetwise d6+

The character belongs to the mysterious sect of Lotusmasters of the City of Leaves. To join the sect, he endured long and rigorous training (this is the reason it is a Background Edge), at the end of which he receives the symbol of his craft, the Yellow Mask (see page 76).

Yellow Masks are specially trained in the military applications of Lotus: potions which burn on water, flesh-melting acids and similar things. In game terms, he gains +1 to all damage rolls of direct-damage Powers (like *blast*, *burst* and similar), and in addition, by spending 2 extra Power Points, he can add the Heavy Weapon Special Ability to a Power.

Note that while Yellow Masks are revered in the City of Leaves, they are considered criminals in the rest of the Dominions (so wandering ones should take the Wanted Hindrance).

BLOODLINE EDGES

GOATFOOT'S BLOOD

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d6+, Spirit d8+

The character is a descendant of the infamous Goatfoot, the most feared pirate of the past. Goatfoot's heirs always have a slightly deformed foot (in some cases this makes them limp, but only if the player decides to take the Lamé Hindrance). Males and females are gifted with a magnetic appearance (+2 Charisma), but only until their true nature and deformity is discovered (usually they wear a special boot or shoe to hide it), at which point the bonus becomes a penalty of -4 (this doesn't affect the bonus to Power Points described below).

Goatfoot was a demon worshipper and made unholy pacts: a demon cannot harm one of Goatfoot's heirs unless he wins an opposed Spirit roll with the character. The demon rolls at -4. This protection expires if the character attacks or harms the demon in any way.

In addition, this Edge confers a different effect depending on the sex of the heir.

Female. A woman with Goatfoot's Blood is a natural charmer. If she has the Temptress Edge, she doubles her Charisma bonus for the purpose of calculating Power Points and the duration is expressed in hours, not in rounds.

Male. A man with Goatfoot's Blood is a natural evoker. If he is a sorcerer and knows the *summon ally* Power, he can call demons as if he were one Rank higher. He also adds his Charisma modifier to Power Points, if positive.

PIGMY BLOOD

Requirements: Novice

In your veins there is some Finger Pigmy blood, which forever taints your bloodline, but gives you certain knacks. Legends say that people of this bloodline are recognizable by their very big ears and eyes, and their flaccid mouths, but these stories are hardly true.

What is true is that these characters see in darkness better than others, reducing visibility penalties for bad lighting by one, and are naturally silent and vigilant, raising the Wild Die in Notice and Stealth by one die step if they are Wild Cards or granting them a Wild Die on those skills if they aren't.

“Pigmy Blood is treacherous,” the saying goes, and this may be or may not be true, but they are professional backstabbers: whenever the character is successful in an attack with the Drop, he can freely reroll one of the damage dice, keeping the highest result.

COMBAT EDGES

HOOK

Requirements: Novice, One Arm Hindrance

The one-armed pirate, with a menacing hook in place of a hand, is a staple of piratical stories. This character has suffered such a mutilation, but learnt to use his hook to best advantage, both in and outside combat. He only suffers half penalties (-2) for tasks requiring two hands, and in melee, he can use his deadly appendage with skill: he receives +1 to Parry with the hook and +2 to tricks and opposed rolls made with it. Obviously, a character with a Hook cannot be disarmed.

SEA WOLF

Requirements: Seasoned, Agility d6+, Boating d8+, Fighting d6+, Smarts d6+

The character has seen his shares of battles on the blood-stained decks of a ship and knows very well how to move on it. In game terms, while on the deck of a ship, he gains +2 to Tricks (made or resisted) and can roll on Boating rather than on Fighting when making a melee attack (his Parry value isn't affected and is calculated, as normal, based on Fighting). Having one or more Sea Wolves as part of a crew grants it +1 to rolls to increase the crew's quality (see page 96).

SLAM!

Requirements: Seasoned, Obese *or* Brawny, Strength d8+, Vigor d8+

This big fighter knows how to use his sheer mass to slam away foes in combat. When making a melee attack unarmed or with a blunt weapon he can decide to perform a slam, suffering -2 to the Fighting roll. On a success, the target, as well as suffering damage, is knocked back by 1" plus 1" per raise. As per the standard Push rules, if the attacker scored at least one raise and the foe hits a solid obstacle, he suffers 1d6 damage per raise (the slam damage is a different damage roll from the weapon damage).

This move cannot be combined with Sweep, First Strike or similar Edges.

PROFESSIONAL EDGES

AMAZON SEA ARCHER

Requirements: Novice, Amazon, Trained Thrower (Composite Bow), Vigor d8+

The Sea Archers of Ascaia are among the deadliest ranged troops of the Dominions, and they could be on a par with Valk archers for bowmanship. They are trained to shoot from a ship and to compensate for its movements; if using a bow, they ignore the unstable platform modifier and gain +1 to damage rolls. In addition, they are trained in indirect shots over the bulwarks of enemy ships, so they can decide to shoot at -2, ignoring all Cover modifiers. If they succeed, the target doesn't benefit from the Cover bonus to Toughness either. They can use this type of shot only at Medium or Long range.



CANNIBAL COOK

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d6+, Survival d8+, must have the Former Cannibal Hindrance

Former cannibals often end working as cooks on pirate ships. And nobody can make a stew like them!

In game terms, a group having a Cannibal Cook among them is always well fed, and all party members receive +1 to all Vigor (except on Soak rolls), the Cannibal Cook included.

In addition, with 1d4 hours of time, a Cannibal Cook who has a pot and some ingredients (the basic ones are available in any galley or kitchen, and he can find the

“special” ones himself), can make a special Stew, for up to two persons per Rank (maximum 10 people at Legendary).

The Stew can be of two types, a Yummy One or a Grisly One. The player character must secretly tell the GM what type of Stew is making and then must make a Survival roll.

At this point the Special Stew is ready and can be served. The cook must convince at least one person per Rank to eat it, to make it work. If he manages to do that, at this point the type of Stew is revealed.

If it is the Yummy One, it is very tasty and everybody eating it feels very well. For each success and raise the Cannibal Cook scored on the Survival roll, the diner

can choose one of these effects: recovers a Fatigue Level, heals a Wound, raises Strength, Agility, Vigor (or any Skill connected to those Traits) by one die step for a day, as per the *boost trait* Power.

If the Stew is a Grisly One, it is delicious anyway, but one of the diners discovers something very disturbing in it (left to the cook's description). Every diner (apart from the cook) must immediately make a Spirit roll to avoid throwing up and being Nauseated till the end of the session, but the Cannibal Cook gains one Bennie per success and raise on the Survival roll (up to a maximum of two).

This Edge is designed to encourage role-play and for light-hearted campaigns.

No person has the stomach to eat more than one Special Stew per session.

CORSAIR FENCER

Requirements: Novice, Agility d8+, Fighting d8+, Taunt d4+, must have been part of the Caldeian Corsairs.

Caldeians are renowned for their craft with swords, and the Corsairs in particular developed a fighting style based on quick thrusts, parries and counterattacks, which is very deadly.

In game terms, a Corsair Fencer, if unencumbered and wielding a short or long sword in one hand, and no other weapon or shield in his off-hand, receives +1 Parry and +2 to sword-based Tricks.

In addition, if he has the Counterattack Edge (in normal or improved form), he receives +2 to Fighting rolls to counterattacks only.

HULL BREAKER

Requirements: Novice, Boating d6+, Fighting d8+, Strength d10+, must be a Cairlander

One of the most feared warriors of Cairlander raiding ships is the Hull Breaker. These men, usually big, tough, and mad as hatters, cover their skin with bluish tattoos and war paint, in honor of the Drowned King, and consider themselves his chosen soldiers. During a sea battle, the Hull Breaker doesn't concentrate on killing enemies, but on sinking the enemy ship, so it can join the ghost fleet of the Drowned King, with the final objective of drowning as many people as possible, so they can join the Drowned King as eternal rowers in the realm under the sea. They are often armed with a great axe, a maul or the dreaded crow's beak, see page 76. In game terms, a Hull Breaker armed with a melee weapon with AP gains +1 to AP, and in addition receives +1 damage per Rank against inanimate targets. If the character also has the Priest Edge, and worships the Drowned King, he can invoke the gods (as per the Priest Edge), not to obtain a Bennie, but to confer the Heavy Weapon Special Ability on his attacks for one round.

A Hull Breaker who manages to sink a ship receives a special Bennie, the Broken Hull Bennie, which is saved between sessions until is spent. There is no limit to the number of Broken Hull Bennies a character can have.

POWER EDGES

DRUMMER OF DOOM

Requirements: Novice, Knowledge (Arcana) d4+, Sorcery d6+, Spirit d8+

There is magic in drums, as any shaman south of the Red Desert will tell you. The music of the drums sounds in the bones and echoes in the soul. This character has learnt secret, ancestral rhythms and can use them easily.

Apart from knowing the language of drums of his culture (and thus being capable of sending messages with them), the Drummer of Doom can use their music to power his magic. When using a Power with the drums' sound as a trapping, he receives +2 to opposed rolls *or* he can double its duration (both base and maintained). This choice must be made before rolling; if no choice is made, assume double duration.

A Drummer of Doom can help a Dancing Witch in the use of her abilities: the witch, dancing to the rhythm of the drums, receives +2 to her Vigor roll and she casts Powers as if one Rank higher, two if the Drummer is of at least Veteran Rank.

In addition, aboard ship a Drummer of Doom can give a great boost to the rowers (see page 132).

WEIRD EDGES

EYEPATCH

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d6+, One Eye Hindrance *or* Intimidation d10+

A common trope of pirates is the eyepatch. While anyone can wear a piece of cloth to cover a missing eye, only a character with the Eyepatch Edge can coldly stare with an empty socket to freeze the hearts of his enemies.

The character gains +2 to Intimidation rolls if he can stare at an opponent nearby (3" or less on the battlefield). If he wins the test, next round the one-eyed hero, in addition to the normal effects of the Test of Will, receives +1 to attack and damage rolls against that opponent. If he wins with a raise, the bonus is +2 and lasts for



the whole fight. These bonuses don't stack, only the best one is used (so you cannot win an Intimidation roll in the first round, and win again with a raise in the second to receive +3).

If, for some reason, the hero loses the eyepatch (Called Shots to the head have a 50% chance of breaking it), this Edge cannot be used until the patch is properly replaced.

It isn't necessary to be one-eyed to wear the Eyepatch, if you are menacing enough you can use it to cover a perfectly working eye, but if you are discovered, you cannot use this Edge anymore for the remainder of the session and lose a Bennie. Pirates hate tricksters.

WEATHER WOUND

Requirements: Novice, must have rolled at least once on the Injury Table *or* must have the Elderly Hindrance *or* must have a Mutilation (see *JCT*, page 69)

This hero had a bone broken in the past, and although the wound healed, it still aches a bit when the weather changes.

In game terms characters with this Edge always know, 1d4 hours before, if a storm is coming, and in general have a good perception of the weather, giving +1 to the crew's Boating rolls in every situation affected by the weather.

In addition, the player can declare, at any time except during combat, that his wound is aching, suffering a level of Fatigue, but gaining a Bennie.

This Edge can grant up to two Bennies per session, but the Fatigue wears off only at the end of the session (and only a single level is recovered per session).

Note that this Edge is rarely taken directly by players, but may be acquired during the game through the "It Really Aches" Setting Rule (see page 90).

WIND CALLER

Requirements: Novice, Notice d8+, Spirit d10+

The character is a wind caller, of the few fortunate persons capable of hearing, and to some extent commanding, the winds.

In game terms this Edge grants several abilities.

First, whenever the Wind Roll is done (see page 131), a Wind Caller can ask the GM to roll it again up to twice more, and chooses the result he likes best.

Second, with a Spirit (-2) roll the Wind Caller can change the weather (see page 91) by one step, two with a raise, in any direction on the table.

Third, with a Spirit (-4) roll the Wind Caller can use the *havoc* Power at the basic duration, using Spirit as arcane skill.

The second and third uses of the Edge always cause a level of Fatigue, which lasts for a day.

Additionally, a character with the Sorcery or Enlightenment Arcane Background adds +2 to opposed rolls and +1 to damage rolls when using a Power with a wind trapping.



GEAR

This chapter details several items typical of the sea life, including an extended selection of ships!

MELEE WEAPONS TABLE

Type	Damage	Wt	Cost	Notes
UNARMED				
Hook	Str+d4	2	150	AP 1, see notes
Rakka Gauntlet	Str+d4/+1	2	400	See notes.
BLADES				
Butterfly Sword	Str+d6	3	350	Rare Item, Monk Weapon, if used in pairs grant +1 Parry
Tebuteh	Str+d8	3	400	AP 1, Rare Item, see notes
AXES AND MAULS				
Boarding Axe	Str+d8	9	500	AP 1, 2 Hands: +1 Damage, Rare Item
Crow's Beak	Str+d10	30	400	AP 2, Parry -1, -1 to Fighting rolls, 2 hands, see notes
POLEARMS				
Harpoon	Str+d6	6	300	See notes
Wool Pike	Str+d8	10	300	Reach 1, 2 hands, see notes, Rare Item outside Lhoban

RANGED WEAPONSTABLE

Type	Rng	Dmg	Cost	Wt	Str	Notes
Harpoon	4/8/16	Str+d8	300	6	d8	AP 2, -1 to Throwing rolls, see notes

ARMORS TABLE

Type	Armor	Wt	Cost	Notes
Skull Helm	+2	3	300	+2 to Intimidation rolls, -1 to Notice rolls, Rare Item outside the Cairnlands, see notes
Yellow Mask	+1	2	500	Rare Item, see notes

GENERAL ITEMS

Type	Wt	Cost	Notes
Animals and Tack			
Finger	-	400	Rare Item

WEAPON DESCRIPTIONS

Boarding Axe. This weapon was probably born in the Independent Cities, adapting a common axe to a specialized task. Boarding axes have very heavy blades, and slightly longer handles, to give them more momentum. They are used during boarding as shock weapons given to the first rank of boarders and as an easy way to “hook” the hull of the ship being boarded. In game terms, they have AP 1. Despite being a one handed weapon, you can also use it two handed, gaining +1 to damage rolls.

Butterfly Sword. This single edged sword, fitted with an elaborate guard, is typical of far Lhoban. Originally a weapon mastered by the temple guards of the monasteries of southern Lhoban, it quickly become a weapon used by pirates. They are often used in pairs, to create a deadly storm of blades.

Crow’s Beak. This oversized maul is typical of Cairnlands coastal areas. Made of stone, or, more rarely, cast in metal, one side of its head comes to a point, like a

cruel crow’s beak. It is more a tool than a weapon, so it is quite unwieldy in combat, and it is used to damage ships, especially their hulls and masts. The crow’s beak leaves very big holes; even if it doesn’t pierce the hull in a single blow, it can do so with a sequence of attacks. In game terms, every time it deals damage to the same spot on an inanimate object, the object loses -2 Toughness or you can trade -6 Toughness (i.e. three blows) to remove the Heavy Armor quality from that specific part of the object (not bigger than 1” on the battleground). Crows’ beaks have numerous uses, and more than one Borderlands village gate has been torn apart by one of the ugly things.

Harpoon. A wicked tool for hunting, a harpoon is a short, heavy spear, fitted with a barbed, weighted spear point, making it unbalanced in melee. It is a weapon made to be thrown at short range to kill big fish, a task requiring considerable strength, but dealing massive damage given the amount of momentum behind the throw. If the roll hits with a raise, the victim is impaled and must roll Strength

(-4) to break free, suffering 2d6 damage in the process. Often these weapons are attached to a length of rope (or very rarely, chain), which allows retrieving impaled prey (with an opposed Strength roll, the harpooner rolling with +2).

Hook. A curved metal hook, used on ships for a number of tasks, it is one of the commonest weapons among mariners. If the attacker hits with a raise, the weapon is stuck in the target, granting +2 to Grapple rolls. It can be freed with a Strength (-2) roll, which, if successful, also causes normal weapon damage (ignoring armor) to the target.

Rakka Gauntlet. A heavy leather gauntlet, made with the skin of the infamous Rakka fish, an evil beast covered in poisonous spines two inches long. Characters with the Martial Artist Edge using one of these add +1 to their unarmed damage. These gauntlets are very thick, causing -2 to fine manipulation tasks, but in combat, they are deadly: a target Shaken or Wounded by an attack made with a Rakka Gauntlet must make a Vigor roll or be Fatigued, due to the poison lingering in the spines.

Tebuteh. The “shark-sword”, this being the meaning of the word, is the trademark weapon of the priests of Rakua. Of very ancient design, it is basically a wooden sword, with a blade made of shark teeth. A crude, but wicked, weapon that stories say is always hungry for blood. In the hands of a Priest of Rakua it grants him the option to freely reroll any 1 on damage rolls, as if he had spent a Bennie, but only if the blade has already killed someone in the current scene. Due to the primitive design it is quite fragile; consider it made of wood for purposes of breaking the weapon.

Wool Pike. In truth more a halberd than a spear, this long-shafted, large-bladed weapon is the trademark of the Wool Dogs, the marines tasked to protect the wool ships sailing from Lhobanport to the western ports. If you are strong and skilled enough (Strength and Fighting d8+) you can also use it efficiently for defense, gaining +1 Parry. In Lhoban, only Wool Dogs have the right to use this weapon (and gain +1 Charisma). Having one without being part of this category of warriors costs -2 Charisma.

ARMORS DESCRIPTION

Skull Helm. This impressive headgear is found almost exclusively among the Cairnlanders, and, in cruder forms, among some of the most civilized bands of Nandals. Originally they were made with the skull of a dead Ancestor, but nowadays it isn't uncommon to find one made with the skull of an enemy or of a big beast (like a bear or an elk). In game terms wearing one of those grants +2 to Intimidation rolls, at the cost of -1 to Notice rolls. A Cairlander character with the Danger Sense Edge wearing one of these made from an Ancestor's bones receives +2 to the Notice roll to spot danger. The infamous Skull Raiders wear this type of helm, but they are made of the bones of unknown creatures, probably walrus.

Yellow Mask. This somewhat scary ornament is the trademark garment of the Yellow Masks, the secret order of Lotusmasters of the City of Leaves. Made from a golden wood, polished and treated with special Lotus so as to be almost infrangible, it is both an ornament and a useful tool: in the mouth and in the nose there are special plugs, which, apart from changing the voice of the wearer, grant him protection against gases and other

inhaled substances (+2 to opposed rolls). In the City of Leaves, wearing a Mask grants +2 to Charisma. These masks aren't usually sold; the listed price represents the cost to make another one, in case the original one given to an adept is destroyed. Note that wearing such an item without being a member of the sect is a capital offense wherever the Sea Tyrant rules.

GENERAL ITEMS DESCRIPTION

Finger Monkey. A number of different sub-races of these diminutive beasts exist, but the commonest one dwells in the jungles of the

Finger Islands. They owe their name both to their area of origin and to the fact they are very small (usually no bigger than a cat). Despite their small size, these beasts are very intelligent, and with fine manipulation skills. If you have enough patience, you can train one as an entertainer or even as a small thief (they are fascinated by locks). The costs refer to a fully trained one. Characters with the Beast Master Edge can start with a Finger Monkey, if they want (see page 137 for stats).

HERO'S JOURNAL: ABOUT THE YELLOW MASKS

There is a theory about the Yellow Masks, which, despite being somewhat far-fetched, could have some truth in it. If you've ever had the chance to see one of the masks of the Alchemists of Gis and one of the Yellow Masks you'll surely notice there are a number of similarities, both in design and (if stories are true) in functionality.

The first written reports found in the Library of Syranthia on the Yellow Masks date back to 1057 AF. Ten years before this date, the Eighth Alchemist of Gis, according to the records of the Black House of the City of Alchemists, was banished by his peers for some unknown misdeed, his name struck from the records, and his place taken by his first apprentice. The record says the original Eighth was never found, nor was his mask (which, it seems, was re-made by the other Alchemists to fit their new brother).

At this point the stories become confused, but almost all say the Eighth escaped south and his mask was made of the purest gold...

HERO'S JOURNAL: CORAL BLADES

Coral, apart from being very beautiful, is extremely sharp and is traditionally used in the Finger Islands to create short blades of many types, which are highly prized. Despite its sharpness, coral is quite fragile, and if not properly treated, it can break.

A blade made of coral deals +1 damage and weighs only 50% as much as usual, but is considered being weaker than stone and harder than bone for purposes of the breaking weapons rule (see GE page 101). Only relatively short blades such as daggers, spear points and arrow tips can be made with it. They cost twice the base cost and are Rare Items outside the Finger Islands.

Treated Coral Blades. *A few armorers, almost all natives of the Finger Tribes, know how to make coral blades harder and more flexible. The technique is a very old one, and is a secret passed only from father to son; it requires particularly good coral, oils made from various animals and plants, and certain strange rituals. The result is a blade hard as iron for breaking purposes and with the same stats as above. As it is a more flexible material, larger blades can be made with this coral: daggers, spear points, arrows tips, short swords, heads for axes and battle axe heads. These blades are Rare Items everywhere and cost six times the normal price.*

SHIPS

In the table below you'll find the descriptions of several vessel types of the Dominions, plus, in a separate table, the War Machines and other implements of death you can find on them.

The Ship Table, as you can see, has a number of columns; the non-standard ones are explained below.

Size: Ships are divided into three size classes, Small, Medium and Large. Explanations on how the ship's size affects the game are on page 97.

Battle Value (BV): This is a new, optional stat, useful for mass combats, introduced in *TB*. The higher the value, the stronger the vessel is in combat. See sidebar on page 129.

Personalities and Support Tokens: Both these stats, totally optional, are used if you integrate the following rules with the Bands rules of *TB*.



TRICARNIAN WAR GALLERY



SYRANTHIAN WARSHIP



CAIRNLANDER KNARR



PIRATE SHIP



CORSAIR



AMAZON HAWK SHIP



JUNK



CHIBBAR



MERCHANT SHIP



CATAMARAN



WAR PIROGUE

SHIP TABLE

SHIP TYPE	Acc/TS	Toughness	Crew	Cost	Size	Notes	BV	Personalities (*)	Support Tokens (*)
Amazon Hawk Ship	2/16	15(4)	10+50	100K	Medium	Amazon Sails, Heavy Armor, Reduced Draft, Rowers	400	¼	2
Cairlander Knarr	2/12	13(2)	15+45	50K	Medium	Sails, Reduced Draft, Rowers	200	0/4	1
Catamaran	2/6	12	2+8	15K	Small	Double Hull, Reduced Draft, Sails	50	0/2	0
Chibbar	2/8	11	2+8	10K	Small	Chibbar Rigging, Sails	50	0/2	0
Corsair Ship	2/12	14(3)	15+50	80K	Medium	Sails, Ram	300	¼	1
Junk	2/12	13(2)	15+60	60K	Medium	Sails, can have Rowers	200	0/4	1
Large Merchant Ship	2/8	15(4)	8+20	80K	Large	Sails, Rowers	200	0/4	1
Large Pirate Ship	2/10	16(4)	20+80	120K	Large	Heavy Armor, Sails, Rowers	400	¼	2
Merchant Ship	2/12	14(3)	6+15	40K	Medium	Sails	100	0/3	0
Pirate Ship	2/12	14(3)	15+60	60K	Medium	Sails	200	0/4	1
Small Merchant Ship	2/10	13(2)	4+10	20K	Small	Sails	50	0/2	0
Syranthian Warship	2/10	17(4)	30+90	120K	Medium	Heavy Armor, Ram, Sails, Rowers	300	0/4	1
Tricarnian War Galley	2/8	19(4)	60+100	150K	Large	Heavy Armor, Ram, Sails, Rowers	300	0/4	1
War Canoe	2/8	8	20	10K	Small	Rowers, Reduced Draft	50	0/2	0

(*) Used only with TB Bands Rules.

WAR MACHINES

Item	Range	Damage	Artillery Bonus	Crew	Reload	Cost	Notes
Ballista (dart)	50/100/200	3d8	+2	2	1	4K	AP 6, Heavy Weapon
Ballista (arrows)		3d6					MBT
Ballista (bullets)		2d6					LBT, AP 4
Boarding Bridge	-	-	+2	4	-	3K	See notes
Catapult	75/150/300	4d6	+3	6	2	6K	AP 10, MBT, Heavy Weapon
Hulian Scorpion	25/50/100	3d8	+1	1	1	2K	AP 4, Heavy Weapon
Ram	-	Special	+4	-	-	10% of Ship	See Notes
CATAPULT SPECIAL AMMO							
Gis Fire Pot		Special	+2			1K/shot	See Notes
Hordan's Gift		Special	+1			500/shot	See Notes
Yellow Lotus of Fear		Special	-			500/shot	See Notes

SHIPS DESCRIPTIONS

Amazon Warship. Probably the best vessel of the Dominions, it is long, thin and has a reduced draft, so it can navigate in shallow waters, like rivers. The standard model is fitted with a single mast, but there exists a variant with two; for some unknown reason, the second, smaller, mast is called the “maiden pole”. The figureheads of these ships usually resemble a bird of prey, and the bow is painted to resemble a bird’s plumage.

Cairnlander Knarr. The people of the Cairns aren’t renowned for their crafting abilities, and their vessels are true to their nature: crude, shabby, and adorned with grisly symbols. The typical Cairnlander vessel is the knarr, a sort of long ship, with a larger hull than the elegant Amazon Hawk Ships and fewer rowers than the typical imperial galley. Knarrs are multi-purpose vessels, used both for war and for

trading (the few times the Cairnlanders practice this over-civilized activity). Knarrs aren’t attractive, but can navigate shallow waters, making them excellent raiding vessels, and often sport terrible looking figureheads made with animal skulls and shields hanging from the hull, decorated with the scalps of enemies.

Catamaran. Literally meaning “logs bound together,” catamarans are small vessels with two hulls and a shared platform joining them, propelled by sails. They are quite common in the southern Dominions, especially in the area of the delta of the Anaconda River and among some of the most advanced cannibal tribes, which paint the hulls to make them resemble sharks or other sea devils. They are very good for navigating shallow waters.

Chibbar. A Chibbar is a smugglers' ship typical of Jalizar. Slender and light, Chibbars aren't made for long voyages but are very maneuverable and can sail in shallow waters. They are also very fast, to evade the Seagulls' patrols, because they are fitted with Chibbar Rigging (see below).

Corsair Ship. The typical vessel of the Corsairs of Caldeia looks somewhat like a predator. Slender, agile and fast, it is often fitted with two masts and a deadly ram, slightly below the waterline, which gives the impression a big shark is swimming right in front of the ship. Although they cannot compete with Amazon Hawk Ships, Corsair vessels are the next best thing, and are often armed with at least a couple of ballistae and scorpions.

Junk. Their typical vessel of the Lhoban people, it is made of bamboo or other softwood, but the ones built in the City of Leaves are coated with a special substance that makes the hull very hard. The sails of a junk can be moved inward toward the long axis of the ship, allowing the junk to sail closer into the wind. The sails include several horizontal members, called "battens", which provide shape and strength. Junk sails are controlled at their trailing edge by lines, in much the same way as the mainsail on a typical sailboat, but on the junk's sail each batten has a line attached to its trailing edge where on a typical sailboat only a single line (the sheet) is attached to the boom. A junk can be fitted with benches for rowers raising the cost by 25%. Most junks have a single mast, but a number of them have two.

Large Merchant Ship. A large trading vessel, with two masts and a belly fat as a pregnant cow, and with the same agility, too. It is not a ship made for battle, but

often it has at least a ballista, and a group of marines to protect it.

Large Pirate Ship. The capital ships of the sea marauders, these vessels usually belong to one of the Council of Five Captains or other similar legendary pirates. Manned by a crew of the worst sea dogs you can find in the Cove, each of these ships has a story and a legend behind it. They always have two masts, except the *Painted Lizard* (see page 57) which sports three.

Merchant Ship. A vessel of average size and speed, with a single mast. It is a good compromise between cargo space and defense. It is the typical Syranthian trading vessel, found in any port of the Dominions.

Pirate Ship. The typical vessel of the Pirates of the Cove is a slender hull with two masts and extra sails to catch more wind, a dangerous choice which can rip your mast away, but the right thing to outrun merchant and Corsair ships. Rams aren't very common on these ships because pirates want to capture enemy vessels intact to use or plunder, but the decks are often overcrowded, because pirates count on sheer numbers to overpower enemy crews.

Small Merchant Ship. A typical trading vessel, the property of a single merchant. They aren't armed, but rely on speed to escape. Note that some of them also hide part of the cargo in hidden compartments, to avoid those pesky customs officers.

Syranthian Warship. The state of the art ship of the Iron Empire navy, these ships are big, not very fast, but very powerful and sporting a single mast but a double bank of rowers. They always have a strong military force of Talattomos (marines) aboard, and at least a catapult and two

ballistae. Due to their deep draft they are totally unadapted to shallow waters (-4 to Boating rolls in reefs).

Tricornian War Galley. The terror of the sea, these ships come out of a forgotten past. They are of a very ancient design, probably pre-dating the Keronian Empire, which the Priest Princes never updated. Tradition demands that on the day of launching a young virgin is sacrificed on the ram, to make the ship hungry for blood. They are huge vessels, with triple banks of rowers, impressively shaped rams, and tall bulwarks and what they lack in maneuverability they make up for by the fear they cause in enemies.

War Canoe. The typical vessel of the Cannibal Islands, this long boat looks crude, but can brave the sea very well. The design is simple: a boat, with rowers and a helmsman handling the tiller. It has no deck, only seats for the rowers, who are always warriors. War canoes are very difficult to spot (-2 to Notice rolls) in open sea, because they have no mast, and can easily navigate shallow waters.

SHIP KEYWORDS

Below you'll find explanations of the various notes on ships.

Amazon Sails. These special sails are used only by Amazons, making their ships capable of sailing on the open sea and granting them extra speed and maneuverability. In game terms, they generally grant +1 to Boating rolls to the helmsman. Only Amazons know how to properly use and maintain this type of rigging, so, to effectively use them, at least half the crew must be Amazons (the roll suffers -4 if the crew isn't entirely made of Amazons). An Amazon teaching these secret techniques to strangers will be

surely branded as a criminal and a traitor in Ascaia.

Chibbar Rigging. This particular rigging, typical of Jalizar, has saved the skin of more than one smuggler. In desperate situations, the crew can increase speed by putting on additional sails. In game terms, they make a group Boating roll per hour of sailing. For each success and raise the ship gains +25% Top Speed (+50% maximum), but if a 1 is rolled on the Boating die, regardless of the Wild Die, the Chibbar capsizes (see page 108).

Double Hull. This ship has two hulls, so it is very difficult to sink. Every time it suffers a Hull damage result on the Ship Critical Hits Table (see page 130), roll a d6. If the result is odd, the right hull is hit, if it is even, the left one is the target. To sink the ship, both hulls must be destroyed.

Ram. The ship is fitted with a Ram (see page 84).

Reduced Draft. This ship has a shallow draft so it can easily navigate rivers and other shallow waters. It receives +2 to Boating rolls to avoid reefs.

Rowers. The ship is propelled by rowers. This means that it is independent of the wind and can ignore Dead Calm (see page 91).

Sails. The ship is fitted with sails, which are the standard locomotive system of Dominions vessels.

WAR MACHINE DESCRIPTIONS

Ballista. A sort of very large crossbow, the ballista is a clever and very flexible tool of war; it can be loaded with a single big dart, with a sheaf of arrows to throw a rain of

projectiles on enemies or with a mass of deadly lead bullets.

Boarding Bridge. One of the best inventions of the Iron Empire navy, this is a simple movable bridge (Toughness: 6), 2" wide and 4" long on the tabletop, with hooks on both ends, used to board enemy ships. Four men can easily emplace it, while one can overthrow it with a Strength (-2) roll, with an additional -2 per person on it during the attempt. During Mass Battles Boarding Bridges give a substantial bonus, but only during the round of boarding.

Catapult. The heaviest war machine carried on ships, a catapult is an engine of war using a strong arm to propel large projectiles over great distances. At sea, catapults usually throw boulders or pots filled with various nasty Lotus concoctions (see below).

Gis Fire Pot. This deadly, highly prized concoction comes in large pots, made to be thrown with catapults. Highly flammable, it burns (even on water) for a long, long time. In game terms, the shot counts as the *blast* Power, causing 3d6 damage in a LBT and with a very high chance to set fire to flammable objects (2-6 on a d6). If the shot misses and lands on water it creates a pool of liquid fire of LBT size, which lasts for an entire tabletop combat or a single mass battle round. In this case, consider it a *barrier* Power cast with a fiery trapping. All powers are cast with Lotusmastery d10. Gis Fire is highly volatile so it must be handled with extreme care: on a 1 on the Shooting die (regardless of the result of the Wild Die) the pot explodes before being thrown. In mass battles you can decide to use a Gis Fire Pot adding its Artillery Bonus to your roll (this must be declared before rolling). Gis Fire is a Rare Item everywhere except in Gis.

Hordan's Gift. One of the typical weapons of the fleet of Ral Hordaka (see *TLD*), these large earthenware pots are filled with deadly cavern scorpions captured in the dark tunnels of the Port of Darkness. Thrown with catapults onto the enemy's deck they shatter, releasing a horde of deadly beasts. In game terms, this is considered a Large Swarm, which also has a Venomous (-2) poison. In a mass battle, as well as granting an Artillery Bonus, the use of Hordan's Gift forces the defender to make an immediate Morale roll. Hordan's Gift is common in Ral Hordaka, a Rare Item in the rest of Tricarnia, and (luckily) impossible to find in the rest of the Dominions.

Hulian Scorpion. Normally called simply "scorpions", these weapons are a divergent evolution of the ballista; smaller, and with a shorter range, they are basically big, fixed ballistae, made for sniping on the battlefield. According to legend the Scorpion was devised by Smith Priest Tavarus during the Second Tricarnian War, and successfully used in the Battle of the Elephants' River, throwing steel-tipped darts against Tricarnian demons across the river. Given their maneuverability they were quickly adopted by the Iron Phalanxes and the navy of the Empire. During mass battles, if you are using *TB* expanded rules, you can forfeit the Artillery Bonus of the scorpion to attack one of your opponent's Personalities which was used in the last round, forcing him to make an Agility (-2) roll. In the case of a failure, he is hit by a Scorpion dart, suffering 3d6 if he is a player character or being automatically removed from the battle if an NPC. This represents the typical sniping use of scorpions on the battlefield.

Ram. A nasty metal point, attached to the bow of a ship, used to pierce enemies'

hulls. To hit with a ram, the helmsman of the attacking ship must win an opposed Boating roll against the helmsman of the defending ship. If the attacker wins, the defending ship suffers 1d6 damage per 2 points of Speed of the attacker, plus another d6 if the attacking helmsman won the opposed roll with a raise or better. The damage is unmodified if the attacking ship is of the same Size of the defending ship, reduced by 50% if it is smaller and multiplied by 150% if it is larger. The Ram is a Heavy Weapon. In Mass Battle, the ram's Artillery Bonus is used only when Ramming (see page 133).

Yellow Lotus of Fear. This terrible concoction is the trademark of the Yellow Masks, the Lotusmasters of the City of Leaves. Made with a secret mixture of

giant waterlily flowers and other exotic components, this gaseous substance causes severe hallucinations. Sealed in earthenware pots, it is delivered by catapult to the decks of enemy ships and causes hallucinations in whoever inhales the gas. In game terms, it counts as the *fear* Power, cast with Lotusmastery d8 and affecting a LBT. The gas lasts for 1d4 rounds, moving 1d4" in a random direction each round. During mass battles, when a commander uses the Lotus of Fear he doesn't gain any Artillery Bonus, but instead forces the enemy to make an additional Morale roll at -2 at the end of the round. It is a Rare Item in the City of Leaves and almost impossible to find in other places.

SETTING RULES

This chapter introduces several Setting Rules, specific to the sea life. The GM should insert them progressively into the game.

THE MARINER'S LIFE

Often characters make long trips by sea, or, during downtime, they sail with the rest of the crew. In these periods there isn't much to do except help the mariners with the ship, so it is probable they'll become at least passable seamen.

In game terms, when in the After the Adventure phase the table says Carousing, the character can make a Smarts (-2) roll. On a success, he permanently gains a die step in Boating, with a max level of d6.

The cost for Carousing is still incurred (probably gambling with the crew).

ADVANCEMENT SUBSTITUTIONS

Even when the GM has planned a campaign at sea, the players might decide to move on, changing the focus of the events. If a player has invested in marine Edges, such as Sea Wolf, this could be a problem, as he will feel he has wasted precious resources. In this case, the GM

should allow the hero to replace his now-useless advancement with something more appropriate.

In general terms, every time a player gets a new advance, he can also replace a past advance with another one (respecting all its requirements). This option should not be abused and no hero can use it more than once each Rank.

DIVING

There are stories that the best mariners cannot swim. These are just tales, sailors know how to swim, otherwise they would soon be dead. Apart from swimming, in certain cases the heroes might need to dive, to reach something in the unfathomable depths of the sea. In game terms, diving is handled as a special kind of Dramatic Task.

The hero starts with a number of Breath Tokens equal to 2 plus their Vigor die, or half that if they weren't prepared for being submerged and didn't have time to take a deep breath. For every round of diving, the character must make a Swimming (-2) roll, in the case of failure he loses a Breath Token, two with a critical failure. Whenever the diver loses all his Breath Tokens he starts drowning,

as per the *Savage Worlds* rules. A diving hero descends half his Swimming die in tabletop inches, as per the standard *Savage Worlds* swimming rules, but goes up at double this rate.

IT REALLY ACHES!

The life of a mariner, especially that of a pirate, is dangerous, and broken bones, wounds and so on are part of the job. Some of these wounds continues to ache all the character's life, especially when the weather changes, and in certain cases these pains are more accurate than the forecasts of the Sages of Syranthia.

In game terms, at the end of a session during which a character rolls on the Injury Table, he is allowed a Vigor (-4) roll (only -2 if the wound suffered is permanent); in the case of success, the GM can ask him to permanently acquire the Weather Wound Edge at the cost of one Experience Point.

Usually no more than a single player per group should have this Edge.

SMUGGLING CARGO

One of the trickiest things for pirates is selling their cargoes of stolen goods, and, occasionally, a captured ship. They can do that at the Cove (or the City of Leaves), but there, competition being what it is, they can never get more than 20% of the value of the goods sold.

So some enterprising pirates decided to try selling their stolen goods in other ports: the Independent Cities and Tricarnia are usually the best places to go, because people there don't ask questions, but other ports are also good. Usually this

requires going undercover, changing the name and the rigging of the ships (both the pirate ship and the ship on sale) and various similar tricks.

In game terms, the captain (or whoever is trying to conduct the business), makes a Streetwise (-2) roll. For each success and raise, he manages to sell the goods for 20% more (so 40% with a success, 60% with a raise), while with a failure he sells it at the base of 20%. The problem is that, if he scores 1 or less on the skill die, regardless of the Wild Die, something bad happens: the character is discovered to be a pirate, an old enemy finds him and so on.

The roll suffers -4 if the cargo is sold in a place directly connected with it (for example if you are trying to sell a Syranthian ship in a Syranthian port or are you selling a cargo of Khav destined for the City of Princes, in that very place).

WATCH THAT DAMN' CREW!

Whenever you are with a crew of pirates in a civilized city, you can keep them on as tight a leash as you want, but you are smoking Khav on a haystack, to speak figuratively. The same can happen for calmer crews (such as those made up of simple mariners), but it is less likely.

When you think there is a chance for the crew to get in trouble, draw a card from the Action Deck, and if it is a black card, something bad might happen (check the table below). For example, one of your men kills someone in a tavern brawl, or talks too much while drunk and ends up in jail: the exact outcome of the situation is left to the GM, but it should have some dramatic repercussion (and maybe introduce a twist into the scenario).

SETTING RULES

You should use this rule only when dramatically important (and never more than once per week).

Note that this rule can also be used with Bands of any type.

CREW TROUBLE TABLE

The Port is...

The Crew is...	Dangerous (Cove)	Normal
Rowdy (pirates)	Black Card	Any Club Card
Normal (sailors, mercenaries)	Club Card	Club Deuce-Ten
Disciplined (military)	Club Deuce-Ten	Club Deuce-Six

WEATHER

At sea your life could depend on the weather. Given the warm temperature of the Dread Sea, the climate is subject to very quick changes, which can be deadly for the unprepared sailor.

Often the GM decides the weather to suit the plot, but in certain cases he can decide to leave it to chance, simply picking a card from the Action Deck. If it is a club, the weather changes; check the table below and good luck.

Another card must be drawn every day to check if the weather changes again.

The weather table should be used only when dramatically appropriate.

WEATHER TABLE

Deuce – The Mother of all Storms! A terrible tempest, the worst you have seen in years, is unleashed on the ship! For each half day of duration, the crew and all the

player characters must make a Boating (-4) roll. With a failure, the crew is Fatigued (until they rest for at least three days), if the result of the die is 1 or less, the ship suffers a Wound. If it is -2 or more, the ship must roll for capsizing (see page 108)! If a hero fails, he suffers a level of Fatigue, or a Wound if the result of the die is one or less. After such a storm it's very likely the ship is totally off course.

Three to Four – Storm. As above, but the Boating roll is only made at -2, and must be made once per day. After such a storm there is 50% the ship went off course.

Five to Six – Strong Wind. The wind blows steadily, as if, somewhere, a god might be laughing thunderously. The ship travels double the normal distance. During combat, if you are using the Wind rules (see page 108), add 1 to the Wind's strength.

Seven to Ten – Windy Day. A standard day at sea. The travel speed is unchanged.

Jack to Queen – Low Wind. The wind blows feebly. The ship only travels half the expected distance. During combat, if you are using the Wind rules, subtract 1 from the Wind's strength.

King to Ace – Dead Calm. No wind at all! Unless the ship is fitted with oars, it can't move. A ship equipped only with sails suffers -4 to all Boating rolls when movement of the vessel is involved.

Joker – Omen. The weather remains as it is, but an Omen happens! The GM knows how to handle that (see page 113)!

GAMBLING LIKE A PIRATE

If there is something a pirate can do well, apart from cursing and drinking, it is gambling. Note that the concept of “gambling” is quite open, as you will see in the following paragraphs. The GM is free to introduce one or more gambling contests in the worst taverns of the Dominions or other lowly places.

BOOZING CONTESTS

Nobody drinks like a pirate and every scum of the sea boasts he can endure alcohol better than the others. A drinking contest is often seen as an “amicable” way to see who is the toughest dog in the pack, but more than one woman, treasure and ship have been lost in such a way.

In the Cove, where this game is very popular, the contestants drink Zalaska, the infamous local booze, but every region has its favorite poison.

Ruleswise the game works in this way: the contenders take turns in quaffing down cups (or tankards) of liquor. Each drink requires a Vigor roll. In the case of failure the drinker suffers a level of Fatigue. The first drinker becoming Incapacitated falls down, and his opponent wins. Such Fatigue wears off gradually after 2d6 hours per level. Mass is very important for alcohol resistance, so characters with the Brawny Edge or the Obese Hindrance receive +1 to the roll, the same happens for characters with Habit (Drinking). Heroes with the Liquid Courage Edge gain +2 and, if they win a boozing competition, gain a Bennie (maximum one per session).

Cheating. There are various ways to cheat in a drinking competition, the commonest one consists of letting fall some liquor on the ground. You can do this by winning an opposed Stealth vs Notice roll with your opponent (or the spectators if applicable). In the case of success you get +1 to the Vigor roll. Another way, safer but requiring more preparation, consists of eating at least a pound of butter or a cup of oil. This requires a Vigor (-2) roll to avoid throwing up (and getting a Fatigue level), but if you are successful you gain two Fat Counters. When, in the next hour, you suffer Fatigue from drinking, you can negate one level simply by discarding a token.

KNIFE DANCE

Another typical game of skill of pirates, the knife dance is both a show of courage and a way to win easy money, or to lose a finger or two, obviously.

The game has two players, sitting at a table, with a sharp, pointed, knife. The first player stares in the eyes of the second one, while he puts his hand on the table, fingers well spread, then, starting from the thumbs, he stabs the knife in the table, in the space between the fingers, very quickly, from thumb to pinkie.

The players take turns in doing this, while the crowd incites them to do it, faster every time. The first player stabbing a finger, or a hand, loses.

A variant of the game is that after each turn the player drinks a tankard of booze (as in Boozing contests above).

In game terms, it works this way: randomly select who takes the knife first, then follow this sequence. First, the two players make



an opposed roll, pitting Spirit (player with the knife) vs. Intimidation (player without knife). If the player with the knife wins there are no consequences, he isn't distracted by the opponent's stare, while if he loses he suffers -1 to the Fighting roll below per success and raise achieved by the player without the knife.

At this point the player with the knife is ready to make the blade dance: he makes a Fighting (or Agility, whichever is best) (-2) roll, plus the penalty above. If scores at least a success, he manages to make the knife dance without any problem, and hands the dagger to his opponent. If he fails, it means he stabbed his hand with the blade. He loses the game, suffering Str+d4+2 damage, which cannot be Soaked in any manner.

If the damage is enough to cause a Wound, the loser must also make a Vigor roll and apply the results below.

Failure. The hand is permanently incapacitated, and must be cut off. The character acquires the One Armed Hindrance.

Success. The hand is severely wounded, and the character suffers the One Arm Hindrance until the Wound is healed or 24 hours pass, whichever is the worst.

Raise. It is only a deep scratch; the character suffers the One Arm Hindrance until the Wound is healed.

Cheating. There is really no way to cheat in the knife dance, which is therefore often used to resolve feuds among pirates.

HERO'S JOURNAL:

"FISSURE" AND OTHER DICE GAMES

Most of the gambling in the Dominions is done with dice. They are fabricated from bone, wood, stone and a number of other materials. As most people are illiterate, they usually use symbols in place of numbers.

The majority of them are six-sided (because these are the easiest ones to make), although in Tricarnia they are eight-sided (as Baachaga, the Toad Goad, has eight eyes, see TLD page 44) and in Jalizar, where they have twelve faces and are called Ranikos's Nails.

Dozens, probably hundreds, of games exist, but among the pirates of the Cove the commonest one is called "Fissure" and is played with two six-faced dice. On each die there are different faces, of increasing importance (they are called Sword, Boot, Dagger, Flower and Death), and the players consider only their best die, if it is more "powerful" than the opponent's highest dice he wins. In the case of a draw nobody wins and the pot increases.

There is a sixth result, a crude scratch in the dice face called "Fissure". It is the lowest result and always loses, but if both dice end showing a Fissure result, the first player shouting "Fissure!" and grabbing the dice wins.

Ruleswise the game is handled with the standard Savage Worlds gambling rules, with one exception. In addition to the gambling die each participant rolls a d12. The result has no importance, apart when a "1" is rolled. In this case the game stops immediately and every player at the table makes an opposed Agility roll; the character winning it is the one shouting "Fissure" and grabbing the dice before the others.

SHIPS AND CREWS

This chapter deals with the most central element of piratical games in the Dominions: ships, of course! Wouldn't you like to lead your crew of sea scum to plunder rich merchant ships and bathe in the blood of your enemies? Of course you would, and in these pages you'll find out how to do it!

THE NATURE OF SHIPS IN PLAY

Ships are a complex theme, game-wise, because they meld a number of elements.

Ships as Vehicles. First of all, ships are meant to move from one place to another. *Savage Worlds* perfectly handles this with vehicle rules.

Ship as Armies. Second, ships are tools of war, or, stretching the concept a bit, they are armies: if you have a ship of sea marauders under your command, you are a power to reckon with. To handle ships in mass battles, *Beasts & Barbarians* uses the concept of Battle Value (BV), introduced in TB and summarized in the sidebar. Note that this value includes many factors: the combat prowess and size of the crew, the size and weapons of the ship (such as a ram, catapults and so on).

Ships as Bands. Third, ships are organizations, closed social structures, wandering alone on the sea: backstabbing, politics, riots and so on are part of the sea (and piratical!) life. If you are using TB, the *Beasts & Barbarians* sourcebook handling mercenary companies and bandit bands, ships are simply another type of band. Replace the word "Commander" with "Captain", and you won't have any problems at all using those rules.

Each of these elements can be included in the game, adding layers of complexity and detail, depending on how much focus the GM wants to put on "ships" in the game.

ACQUIRING SHIPS

There are many ways to acquire a ship in play, briefly detailed below.

Buy. The most straightforward one is buying one (after all, they are listed in the Gear section). Obviously this isn't an item you can find in a small village emporium, but you might find one for sale, especially in large cities, for one reason or another.

The drawback of buying a ship is obviously the cost, but if the GM allows players to ignore the Savings Setting Rules (as we suggest you do sometimes) a single

treasure hoard can be enough to let you acquire a ship.

Custom Made. Another option is to hire a shipwright to build one, a task which can require some months (even years in certain cases). The advantage of “ordering” a ship is that it can be built to the specific needs of the buyer: the GM should allow the players to swap one point of Acc/TS, Toughness or to add and remove an item in the Notes.

To keep things simple, the costs of the crew are also included in the prices of the ships.

Edges. The second way to acquire a ship is through Edges. A character with the Rich or Noble Edges should be allowed to trade his wealth for a ship (of cost 60K or less). Acquiring a ship of greater cost should be allowed only with the Band Commander (see TB) or Filthy Rich Edges.

Scenarios. The third and commonest way to acquire a ship is through an adventure, in this case leaving the exact nature of the vessel in the hand of fate.

GM'S TIP: THE SHIP'S NAME

Regardless of how you decide to handle ships in your game, there is one element which is very important: the name.

You are probably not a real-world expert on ships, so you cannot describe in an accurate way the differences in hull, rigging and other technicalities of ships. Nor should you; that is outside the scope of this game. But if you find a powerful and memorable name to a ship, and maybe a unique feature (like the hull color, a particular figurehead on the prow and so on), the players will remember it.

CREWS

Ships, after all, are only pieces of wood, cloth and metal bound together, and they are useless without a good crew.

On every ship there are a number of people with different training and skills: mariners, cooks, deckhands, soldiers and so on. While individualities are important for roleplaying scenes, at sea it isn't a single man that makes the difference, but the crew in all its complexity.

In game terms, the capability of the crew is given by their average Boating skill (see below).

A starting Crew is usually of Average value. To be properly manned, a ship requires at least a Poor crew.

Using the Crew's Boating Skill. The focus of the game should be on the heroes, not on the crew, so, in most cases, the Crew makes cooperative rolls to help the players succeed at their heroic sea deeds. In addition, there are a number of situations (detailed in the Setting Rules), where the Crew's Boating is tested.

Increasing and Reducing Crew Level.

Whenever a crew successfully tests its Boating skill in a dire situation (for example during a storm, a sea battle, crossing the Secret Path to the Cove) put a mark near the Boating skill of the crew. At the end of the scenario, if there are three or more marks cancel them and roll a die equal to the Boating level of the ship: if the result is the highest number on the dice (4 for a d4, 6 for a d6 and so on), increase the Crew's quality by one step.

Crews are homogenous, so even if there are casualties, and they are replaced, the average

level of the crew doesn't change as the new recruits quickly get into the "way of the ship". The only time this happens is when the ship loses two thirds of its Battle Value: in this case drop the Crew Level by one die step.

CREW LEVEL TABLE

Crew Quality	Boating Level	Notes
Poor	d4	
Average	d6	
Skilled	d8	
Veteran	d10	
Master	d10	Wild Die

SHIP SIZES

To make things more realistic, ships are divided into roughly three size classes. Size affects a number of things and, in particular, how fast a vessel sinks.

Ship Size	Example	Effect
Small	Chibbar, Small Merchant Ship	Sinks in 1d6 rounds, immediately in mass battles.
Medium	Corsair Ship, Merchant Ship	Sinks in 1d6 minutes or in one battle round during mass battles.
Large	Tricornian War Galley	Sinks in 1d6 hours or in 1d4 battle rounds during mass battles.

SHIPS AS BANDS

This chapter gives some additional Bands Edges, Hindrances and Personalities, for use with *TB* Bands rules.

BAND EDGES

ARCHERS

Requirements: Novice

A large percentage of this Band is equipped with a ranged weapon and is well-trained in its use. In mass battles, they have a +1 Artillery Bonus, which can be used every round until a 1 is rolled on the Battle die, meaning they have exhausted their ammo or they are engaged in close combat. Typical troops of this type are Amazon Sea Archers, Valk riders, Gis Red Slingers and similar.

BOARDERS

Requirements: Novice, Crew Boating d6+

This crew is made up of furious boarders, deadly in the first clash. During actual boarding (the first Close Combat round), they confer +2 on the Battle roll. In addition, if they win the round, the Band gains a Bennie.

Typical boarders are the dreaded Skull Riders and the pirates of the Brown Sea.

ROWERS

Requirements: Novice, Crew Boating d6+

This Edge has two different meanings.

If a ship is normally not fitted with rowing benches, it now is, and has a crew of rowers to propel it. Consider the ship to have the Rowers keyword.

If the ship already has Rowers, it means there are extra rowers or those aboard are



of excellent quality, gaining +4 to all rolls involving rowing.

BAND HINDRANCES

HAUNTED (MAJOR)

There is something wrong with this ship. A presence, maybe a ghost, a curse or something similar. For each week of navigation, the GM draws a card from the Action Deck. If it is a club, a bad event happens: an incident among the crew, food spoils, mysterious presences are seen or something similar. In game terms, the crew is so unnerved that it suffers -1 to Boating and Spirit rolls for a full week. If the card drawn is a club face card, the event is even worse: an unpredictable death among the crew, a ghastly apparition, a terrible stroke of bad luck. The game effect

is as above, but the penalty is doubled (-2). This Hindrance can be removed if the cause of the Haunting is found (this can be the goal of a scenario); in this case the Hindrance must be replaced with another one.

BOWDY (MINOR)

The men of this Band can be excellent fighters or mariners, but you can never let go them off-duty, because they'll likely destroy the city they are guarding, starting with the taverns, of course. If there is a fistfight in the city or a girl is molested, you can bet the culprit was one of your boys.

In gaming terms, the Band must always use the Watch Your Crew! Setting Rule every time they enter a new city or port, and always draw two cards (using the

worst one). Obviously, for the purposes of that rule, they are considered a Rowdy Crew.

WEAK HULL (MAJOR)

For some reason, the ship's hull isn't very strong: maybe it is infested with parasites, needs a good careening, or maybe the wood is just older than King Caldaio's grandfather. Whatever the reason, the ship suffers -1 to Toughness and at the first leak it suffers, it starts sinking.

PERSONALITIES

COOK

Requirements: Intimidation d4+, Smarts d6+

If you've never passed a month at sea, eating only rotten meat and hard tack, you cannot understand why a cook, a decent one, is a real asset for every ship (or army). A ship's cook is obviously not the chef at the court of Faberterra, but he can surely make a good soup with whatever he can find in the galley (rats included!). In game terms, a Band with a Cook, provided it has at least half of the Support Tokens required, obtains an extra Support Token. In addition, it gains +1 to all Spirit rolls not directly linked to combat.

You may wonder why Intimidation is a requirement for this Personality. To shoo those damn' mariners away from your galley, of course!

DRUMMER

Requirements: Intimidation d6+, Smarts d6+, Spirit d6+

The drummer is the big, muscular guy, beating the rhythm for the rowers on a big drum. He isn't shy about dropping the music and picking up a whip, if the need arises. A drummer aboard gives +2 to all rolls involving rowers, grants +2 Top Speed to the ship and allows rerolling any 1 on rolls involving rowers.

Note: if the Drummer has the Drummer of Doom Edge, he can double the bonuses above, driving the rowers to the edge of collapse with the magic of his music, but this causes them a Level of Fatigue (Exhausted rowers cannot row anymore).

HULL BREAKER

Requirements: Hull Breaker

This character is one of the mad followers of the Drowned King of the Cairnlanders, who has sworn to sink as many ships as he can. He can be very useful in sea battles, so long as you aren't interested in capturing the enemy vessel, of



course. During sea battles, when you are boarding, at the beginning of each battle round draw a card from the Action Deck for each Hull Breaker. If it is a face card, the enemy ship loses a battle Token, which is automatically a Ship Token. If it is a Joker, the enemy loses two Tokens. If the Hull Breaker draws a deuce or a three, it means he took too many risks and suffers 3d6 damage.

If you have a Hull Breaker with you, and you decide to capture a ship instead of sinking it, he'll become seriously pissed off, and the Commander must make a Persuasion (-2) roll, otherwise this Personality will abandon the ship at the first opportunity.

LOOKOUT

Requirements: Notice d8+, cannot cover other Personality Slots

The lookout is the man in the crow's nest, incessantly scouting the sea, looking for other ships, landmarks or storms. If there is a skilled Lookout aboard, the Crew can use its Notice roll during the Spotting Phase, rolling at +2. Being the Lookout is a long and solitary job, so the character filling that role cannot cover any other one. As a partial compensation, if he spots something really interesting, the *player* can shout it aloud to gain a Bennie (once per session).

MASCOT

Requirements: a character aboard with the Beast Master Edge

The Mascot is a beast (usually a parrot or a monkey, but other examples can be found) which gets along particularly well with the ship and the crew. In a peculiar way, it is "part" of the vessel, and the mariners love it. In game terms, a ship with a Mascot aboard receives a Bennie every session, which can be used for any roll involving the vessel or the crew.

SHIPWRIGHT

Requirements: Boating d6+, Repair d8+

The character is a master of the axe, capable of repairing any ship and keeping it in order. With a shipwright aboard all rolls to repair damage to the vessel are made at +2. In addition, he keeps the vessel at its best, giving it +1 Toughness.



GM GUIDE

RUNNING A PIRATE GAME

This chapter gives you, the GM, some suggestions on how to run a successful, pirate-themed game. Despite being tailored for the Dominions, many of these suggestions can be useful in any piratical setting.

THE PIRATE MOOD

Pirates are a staple of fiction, movies and comics, but capturing the right feeling in the game can be tricky. Below you'll find several "themes" you should include in your game to make it really piratical.

THE CENTRALITY OF THE SEA

You must always remember, when playing a pirate-themed game, that the sea is the key to everything.

It is the main theme of the game, on several levels, because it has a number of meanings.

First, the sea represents the unrestrainable power of nature. The sea, for a mariner, is always a force to be reckoned with; it is a beast to be dominated rather than a merciful lady. This aspect blends very well with the vision of nature in *Sword and Sorcery*, which is indomitable and alien.

Remember, navigation in the Dominions is dangerous: ships (except those of the Amazons) tend to sail close to the shore and aren't made to face the open sea; a simple storm can capsize and destroy even the sturdiest vessel.

The difficulties and dangers of sea travel should always be present in your scenarios, as elements of the plot or, at least, as background. The players should smell the tar and feel the wind and the sun on their skin during a game.

On the other hand, the sea is also a symbol of freedom; in its vast, empty spaces, a man can be himself, without no boundaries or limitations except his strength and skill. This aspect is perfectly aligned with the pirates' way of life: they call themselves "free brothers" for a reason.

At sea, no man can enslave another.

THE SHIP...

A game about pirates and the sea cannot ignore the importance of ships. A ship isn't just a vehicle, it is home and shelter.

In many ways, the ship itself is a character; the survival of the party is directly linked to their vessel. Real mariners think ships have personalities and you should try to give one to the heroes' vessel. Don't be shy of humanizing the ship a little in your descriptions; tell the players how their characters feel the planks of the deck alive under their feet, how the ship is actually happy when the sails are filled with wind and or how the hull creaks in pain during a terrible storm, like the bones of an old lady.

If you, the GM, can make the group actually care about the piece of wood

upon which they are floating, you are doing your job well.

In addition, you must consider that a ship is an enclosed space, a sort of micro setting itself, wandering in an enormous, apparently empty space. Be conscious that below decks a ship, especially a big one, is cramped, often smelly and dirty and surely dark. Nobody can truly know what happens in these cramped spaces, stowaways being the least of the problems.

...AND THE CREW

If ships are the space where the players move during adventures, the crew are the people they move among. Probably the heroes will be important figures among the other mariners and pirates, and is obviously impossible (and actually not recommended) to detail every crewman, but you should try, when possible, to detail at least some of them. It isn't necessary to be over-detailed, broad strokes are enough. In this case, too, the players should feel affection (or in certain cases, hate) toward crewmembers.

A crew is a social structure, with leaders, rivalries, enmities, friendships and so on. Often the greatest enemy of a hero isn't the one waving the axe in front of him, but the devious betrayer with a smile on his face and a dagger hidden behind his back...

WANDERING AND EXPLORATION...

Strictly connected to the themes of the sea, ships and crews there is obviously the theme of travel, which, for a piratical game, is often a restless wandering on the sea, looking for prey, or simply, for a

safe harbor to hide from the dogs of sea (Corsairs and others) on their heels.

The life of a pirate is full of exotic vistas and places: one day they are wenching in a tavern of the Cove, the next they are cautiously exploring an uncharted land, looking for food, water, and possibly, treasures in ancient ruins.

The second aspect of travel is, in fact, exploration: pirates often go to places where no civilized man has been before. Note that one of the tropes of the genre is the treasure map (see below), which always means a journey of some type...

...AND LOOT!

The final goal of any pirate, you must always remember, is loot. It might not be the goal of the heroes, but it is certainly the goal of the crew!

Every pirate, in his heart, would like to plunder the treasure of a lifetime and retire, but, as they are squanderers, this almost never happens.

This can lead to a number of interesting situations, for example the crew looking for money and their captain (or the heroes) motivated by another goal, like revenge.

Remember that pirates' gold is always tainted with blood, and is not destined to stay in their hands; often it is more a curse than a blessing, because the rich pirate is the target of his greedy, less-fortunate comrades and curses of every type linger on treasure, as a sort of cosmic retribution for the violence it caused.

KEEP IT ON THE MOVE

Whatever the themes you want to insert in your game, always remember the most important thing in a piratical game: keep it on the move. This type of story depends on movement: daring prison escapes, terrible naval battles, chases on the sea, a years-long, incessant search for hidden treasures, and aimless wandering on the vast, limitless, waters.

This doesn't mean your game must be constantly moving. Of course not. Static situations, such as crews shipwrecked on mysterious islands, or heroes locked in prisons, can be very interesting, but always because in some manner they "prevent" movement.

Alternating moment and static situations wisely will create a good rhythm for your game.

PIRATICAL THEMES

It isn't always easy to fall into the right mood for a piratical game, but reading the following should make it easier for you.

- † *Ancient Curses and the Dead Coming Back*
- † *Brotherhood and Pacts*
- † *Boarding and Executions*
- † *Booze and Women*
- † *Chases and Escapes*
- † *Gold and Blood*
- † *Green Islands and Azure Sea*
- † *Legends of Terror*
- † *Life is to be Lived Fully*
- † *Oaths and Betrayals*
- † *Slavery and Freedom*
- † *Storms and Water*
- † *Swords and Dice*
- † *Tar and Rigging*
- † *Treasures and Maps*
- † *Wind and Sails*

PIRATICAL CAMPAIGN FRAMEWORK

This chapter describes some ideas on how to create a piratical game, from the perspective of organizing a campaign.

By their nature, pirates are good for running episodic stories. Every adventure could be a single “trip” on the sea, looking for loot and trouble, with the After the Adventure taking place in the Cove, with the heroes spending their ill-gotten loot and making new acquaintances.

As always, remember the golden rule of *Beasts & Barbarians*: be non-linear. Even a fully piratical campaign can be interrupted and turned into something else to keep the game fresh for everyone; for example, the pirate crew, captured, could be forced to join the arena games in some Independent City.

That said, below we’ll describe some ideas for crafting a pirate-based campaign.

THE FREEBOOTERS

This is the “standard” piratical campaign. The heroes, by fate or choice, find themselves joining a pirates’ crew. The *Eyes of the Night* scenario from *BOD* is a good way to introduce this type of campaign.

Usually the adventurers join the crew as underdogs, often mistrusted and despised by their new companions. Over the course of the game they’ll gain trust and importance, in the end taking control of the ship.

This type of campaign allows very different scenarios: from sea raids to errands given by various personalities of the crew, or simply the struggle to survive among a pack of sea-dogs.

Ways to Power. There are several ways for the heroes to “make a career” among pirates. If they are honest, they could, in time, ascend the ship’s ranks by simply replacing the dead officers and other personalities. This could also happen with the former captain, who could have been a sort of mentor to them.

But sword and sorcery is a gritty genre, and that happens rarely; more probably the heroes will plot, betray and, in the end, fight to get absolute power over the ship. Or the captain himself, sensing the threat to his position, will attack them first. But, in the Dominions, only the strongest survives.

Wild Adventure or Politics? A Freebooters campaign, as mentioned before, can be very light-hearted and based on exploration. But remember that, especially if the heroes are part of the crew of the Wise Captains of the City of Leaves (or one of the Council of Five of the Cove), they will find themselves involved, willy-nilly, in politics and struggles for ultimate power over other pirates. Remember, having a fleet under his own command, can make a man dream great dreams.

CHARACTER TYPES

This type of campaign is suited for almost all types of characters, not just mariners and sea raiders: barbarians, sorcerers, scoundrels, even entertainers can find a place in the crew. After all, anybody can be captured and forced to join the pirates.

THE LEGEND OF THE PIRATE QUEEN

Pirates are romantic characters and their deeds can be the stuff of legend, especially if they are very charismatic and iconic. The classic example is the beautiful and savage pirate queen, ruling over a crew of fanatical followers.

Note that “Pirate Queen” is only an archetype of a charismatic, romantic, piratical hero. You can easily substitute a “One-Eyed Captain Haunted by a Tragic Doom” or something similar.

Usually this type of character is interesting also for her motivations: vengeance, a curse, or even the simple force of Fate can direct her actions. In other words, the Pirate Queen is “a girl with a mission”, in the broadest sense of the phrase.

While a Pirate Queen can be a worthy opponent in a campaign, what if the heroes actually join her? They will be her companions, aiding her in fulfilling her goals. The reasons for the heroes to do this could be wildly different: love (one of the party can be her love), greed, a common purpose, or simply the curiosity to stay near such an outstanding personality.

This type of campaign tends to be very focused. Pirate Queens tend to be fanatics, and almost every mission will be about fulfilling the goal of the Pirate Queen (though some occasional diversions can happen). This can lead to a series of interesting problems, both with the group and with the crew. Sooner or later, the Pirate Queen will suggest something highly dangerous and even her closest followers will doubt her...

This type of campaign can be very emotional, especially if the GM manages

to make the heroes (at least one of them) “care” for the Pirate Queen.

Djallah (see page 20), was designed to be an archetypical Pirate Queen.

With the Legend or the Legend Herself?

The above supposes the Pirate Queen is an NPC, and the heroes will live, a little, in her shadow. This can be fun, but must be tightly controlled by the GM, because you must be sure the player characters are the real stars of the game, not the Pirate Queen.

But there is also another option, especially if you are planning a short campaign: one of the player characters could *be* the Pirate Queen. This solution makes the game more personal, but it requires a certain cooperation from the players. You must pay even more attention to ensure the Pirate Queen doesn’t overshadow the other players, but, if properly run, this type of campaign can lead to truly memorable adventures.

Tragic Ending. The Pirate Queen is an embodied myth, and what transforms this type of story into a legend is its tragic end. Almost always, in fact, the goal of this character is so high and difficult to achieve as to be doomed from the beginning. Or, in the few cases she manages to accomplish it, the drawbacks are so high as to cost the Pirate Queen’s own life. Players don’t like to “lose” and how tragic the end of the Pirate Queen must be is left to you. In the case of a player character she could simply disappear, taking a new identity and leaving a trail of wild stories behind.

CHARACTER TYPES

This type of game requires (apart from the Pirate Queen if this role is taken by a player character), at least one strong

“protector” hero, someone capable of actually keeping her out of troubles. This role is particularly fitting for warriors and mariners of all types. In addition, a

“counselor” character is handy: a Sage, a sorcerer, or another wise person tasked to keep the fanaticism of the Pirate Queen under control.

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE: “I WAS THERE”

This special narrative technique is useful to make the heroes involved in key events of the Dominions’ recent history, and it is a variation of the Flashback described in GE.

In few words, the heroes live through an adventure that happened in the past, which is also narrated by an external voice, telling it in a version different, in key points, from that actually lived by the players. As an additional twist, at the end of the tale, the past reconnects with the present.

Here follows an example.

The Death of Verado

The heroes are sitting at the tavern of the Scarred One, in Kyros, nursing their wine, while a wandering minstrel starts singing “The Death of Verado”, a tale recounting how, years ago, the legendary pirate lord was defeated and killed.

This triggers a sudden memory in the adventurers, because they were actually with Verado!

At this point the adventure starts, played as a “normal” flashback and tells on how the heroes got involved with pirate captain, joined him, and were on his side during the Battle of the Red Waters.

Before the actual battle is played in game, the story turns back to the minstrel, who tells that “Verado died in the battle, but his body was never found”.

At this point go back to the game, and run the scene: Verado, in the end, survives, even if horribly scarred, and flees away with his beloved, a Syranthian princess, and a sack of jewels, while the heroes cover his escape.

Now switch to the tavern again. The story ends, and the tavern keeper’s wife, a pretty woman in her forties, brings a free goblet of wine to the heroes, smiling. Her husband, behind the counter, raises a flagon in a silent toast to the party, too. He is a tall man, handsome except for an ugly scar on his face...

The tavern keeper is Verado, who bought the tavern with the remnants of his loot and now lives a peaceful and anonymous life with his wife.

BESTLESS HUNTERS

This campaign approaches the pirate theme from the opposite point of view. The heroes, for some reason, are actually hunting pirates! This can be for some personal grudge, for gain, or for duty, or

both; for example, because they are part of the Caldeian Corsairs.

Whatever the reason, pirates are their enemies. This type of game is about locating, hunting and uprooting the scum of the sea. The heroes may expect to

find support and help from the civilized nations, at least in appearance, because it's no secret piracy is a business for many, for example the Independent Cities, where no questions are asked about the origin of wares.

A campaign of this type will probably require a good part of investigation, and sneaking too. Probably the heroes will try to find their way to the Cove or another piratical base.

A game framework of this type can support both long and short campaigns, and is also excellent to use as a diversion from other themes (for example, the heroes could be a Jalizaran band of thieves hired by a rich merchant lord to weed out the Skull Raiders).

Duels of Swords and Wits. This particular campaign is all about hunting and outsmarting the prey. Unlike how things usually happen, the heroes will be the trackers, not the quarry. You, the GM, should work to transform this into a duel of ingenuity, pirates versus heroes, with the players finally outsmarting their opponents. The presence of a strong nemesis is particularly useful in this type of game, a main villain like a charismatic pirate who always manages to escape.

Inside Job. Fighting pirates directly can be a very long task, because they know how to hide, so a good twist to this framework is the heroes actually trying to infiltrate the sea scum and destroy them from the inside. This can be a very dangerous business, because the adventurers are basically alone against everyone, and, if discovered, their deaths will be long and extremely painful. In addition, there is also another theme which can appear in the game: romance and personal involvement with the enemy. What if, for example, the

dangerous pirate you must unseat turns out to be a fascinating Pirate Queen? Will the heroes follow their duty or succumb to the temptation of changing sides? Both options are equally ripe for adventure.

CHARACTER TYPES

This framework works well with any character with a mariner background and a penchant for hunting. Corsairs, of course, are the favorites, but any adventurer based on stealth and guile can really shine in a campaign like this one.

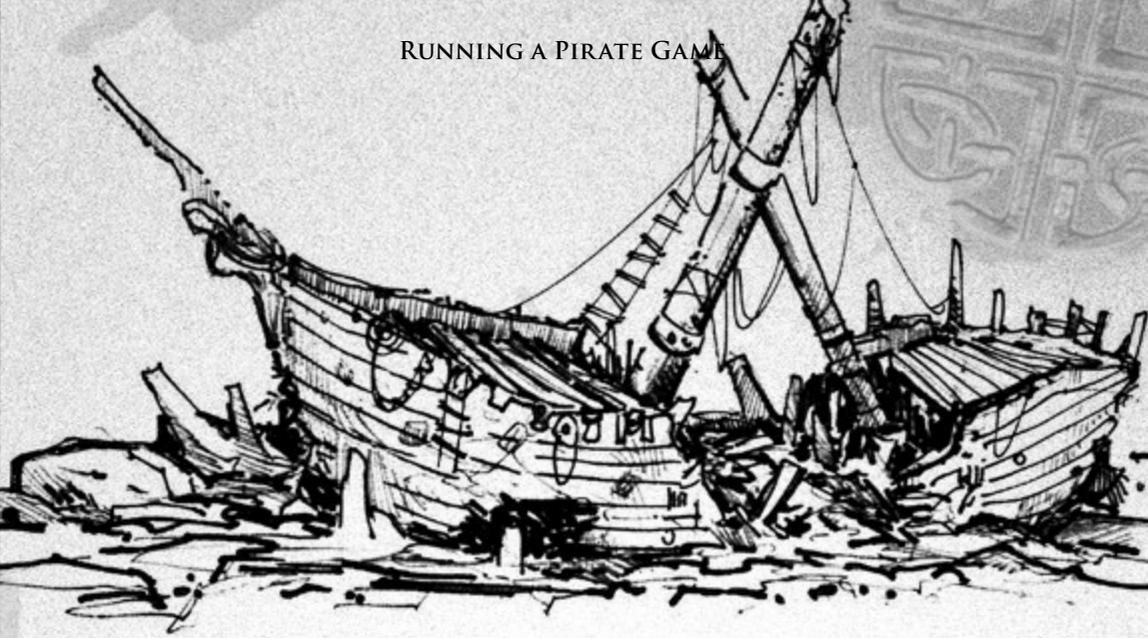
DANGERS OF THE SEA

As said above, the sea is the key element of a piratical game. In this chapter are described some of the most typical nautical dangers, and how to include them in a scenario. You can also use the suggestions detailed below to give a twist to the Weather Table results of page 91.

CAPSIZING

Probably the worst thing that can happen at sea, apart from a big leak in the hull. Whenever there is a chance of Capsizing, the crew must make an immediate Boating (-2) roll, without modifiers for a Medium Size ship or at +2 in the case of a Large Size ship.

In the case of success the vessel turns dangerously on its side, and people aboard must roll on Agility to avoid falling down, suffering 2d6 damage (and being thrown overboard on a 1 or less). In the case of failure, the ship actually capsizes, and any person aboard must roll on Agility (-4) to avoid falling in water. If the roll is one or



less, the situation is even worse, the ship turns turtle and is totally upside down! In this case the normal drowning rules apply.

A capsizing is terrible for the crew: you can freely assume that $(1d4-1) \times 10\%$ of the crewmen die or are scattered in this sort of event, and the percentage raises to $(1d8-1) \times 10\%$ if the ship turns turtle. To keep things simple, the BV of the ship suffers the same loss.

Once a ship has capsized, it can be recovered, taking $1d4$ hours per Size of the ship and a Boating roll with (-2) per Size of the ship.

If the vessel turned turtle, the situation is even worse, the vessel must be rolled out of its capsized position, in $1d6$ hours per Size of the ship and a Boating (-4) roll.

Righting a ship of Medium or Large Size requires a port or the help of another vessel of the same Size or bigger.

Capsizing in Play. A capsizing during a sea battle (due a wrong maneuver) or during a storm, can add a very interesting

twist to the scenario, making the players use all their skills and brains to right their ship. In the same way, the exploration of a capsized ship could be a fun diversion.

DEAD CALM

Most of the ships of the Dominions are propelled by sails and a dead calm can stop them in the middle of nowhere, causing serious troubles, especially if supplies are running low. In game terms there isn't much the heroes can do to end a Dead Calm, at least if you think like a modern person such as ourselves. But the people of the Dominions aren't modern, and, in their primitive way of seeing the world, there is something that can be done. Primarily, prayers and sacrifices. You, the GM, have the final call on whether these methods work or not. After all the gods, if they exist, could hear the pleas of the crew.

If you want to leave the outcome to the fate, after a prayer or a sacrifice, have the crew make a group Spirit (-2) roll, using the lowest Spirit die of any person aboard. If the leader of the ceremony has the Priest Edge (and worships a suitable

deity), add +1 to the roll, if the sacrifice is an apt one (GM's call) add another +1. With a success, the Dead Calm ends in 1d4 hours, with a raise or better it ends in few minutes. A critical failure can instead anger the gods, adding another 1d6 days (the roll can ace, skip any other weather change check) of Dead Calm.

Wind Callers and Dead Calm. A character with the Wind Caller Edge can try to use his powers to end a Dead Calm, but the roll is made at -2.

Dead Calm in Play. This type of hazard should be used to create tension in the game, not to slow it down. The effect can be achieved in various ways, for example making a dead calm happen during a very climatic event, like a naval chase: both ships are halted by the calm, maybe they aren't even far away, but now the chase has stopped and the party must find a way to end the impasse. The second way is letting paranoia explode. Often the crews, in fact, think that a dead calm is a sign of the gods to show that someone aboard has offended them. In these cases, if the crew isn't kept at tight leash, they'll quickly look for a scapegoat, someone to sacrifice to appease the deities, with all the potential troubles that entails.

GETTING LOST

A typical accident that can happen at sea is simply getting lost, and it is more common you might think, especially if the ship, for onw reason or another, is forced to sail out of sight of the coast.

Rules-wise, this works very simply. First, the GM must decide if the current situation causes automatically getting lost (for example after a storm) or if there is simply a chance of it.

In the second case the helmsman must make a Smarts (-4) roll, with +2 if he has Boating d10 or more. In the case of success he manages to keep to the right direction, otherwise he gets lost.

What happens when a ship gets lost? Basically, whatever the GM wants; the vessel moves in the wrong direction for a number of days till it finds the mysterious, uncharted island where the next adventure awaits or finds itself hundreds of leagues away from its desired location.

If you prefer a more accurate system, you can use the following. First, determine the current direction of the ship (for example south, east, and so on). At this point secretly roll the Direction Die (d10) and a Days Die (d6). The first dice, multiplied by 30, gives you the deviation, in degrees, of the route, reading clockwise from the chosen direction, while the second one gives you the number of days the ship travels in the wrong direction. At this point, the helmsman can make another roll, at +1, to check if he understands he is lost, in the case of failure he moves for another Days Die in the wrong direction (which can be the same as above or can be rerolled). As you can see, this system can lead you far away from the chosen destination.

Example. The Blood Bride is moving from Tricarnia to Hillias, and is forced to cross the open sea because she is being chased by the fleet of Ral Hordaka, so the GM decides it is very likely to get lost. Zandorra, the captain and woman at the wheel, rolls on Boating (-4), but she fails, so the Blood Bride starts deviating. The ship is directed southwards, the GM rolls 2 as Direction Die and 6 as Days Die. The ship deviates by 60 degrees (so from south to south-west). Zandorra rolls again after six days, failing again.

The Days Die says 6, and the GM decides the ship continues to travel in the same direction. At dawn on the thirteenth day, the lookout of the Blood Bride sees land, but it isn't the coast of Hillias...

Getting Lost in Play. Getting lost is an excellent way to slow down the heroes or introduce them to another, un-planned adventure, but it should be used sparingly, to avoid creating frustration in the party.

TRAVEL SPEED AND DISTANCES

In Beasts & Barbarians journeys, both on land and at sea, are made at the speed of plot, so you won't find any distance table of cities and locations. They are too dependent on weather, the skill of the crew and sheer luck. In addition, they probably aren't in the place you see them on the map either, since cartography is still very inaccurate...

MAELSTROMS

One of the greatest terrors of every sailor of the Dominions, are the maelstroms, terrible whirlpools of water capable of swallowing even the strongest ship.

Luckily they are quite rare, even if some of them are known to be semi-permanent (see sidebar). There are many legends on their origin, but what is important here is handling them rules-wise.

Consider the Maelstrom as divided into three rough sectors: the outer one, the largest and where the power of the water is weakest; the middle one, smaller, where

the tide is stronger; and finally the inner one, very small, and terribly destructive. Inside the inner sector is the black mouth of the maelstrom.

Ships are caught in the maelstrom in the Outer sector, and when this happens, an Escaping Sequence begins. Escaping Sequences last a number of Navigation Rounds (see below) depending on the sector the ship is actually in.

During each Navigation Round, the crew makes a Boating roll. At the end of the number of available navigation rounds (see table below), count the number of successes they scored (raises count as extra successes). If the number is higher than the number of Navigation Rounds spent in the current sector, they manage to leave, moving one sector towards the outside (if they are in the outer sector, they escape the maelstrom). If it is equal, they remain in the same sector, and another Escaping Sequence begins. If they score fewer successes than Navigation Rounds in the sector, they are moved one sector deeper into the Maelstrom, for example from the Outer to the Middle, and must start a new Escaping Sequence, this time with the Navigation Rounds and Boating Modifiers of the current sector.

The struggle goes on till the ship escapes or falls into the mouth of the Maelstrom.

Ship Size. Small ships are very easy prey for maelstroms, so they roll at -4.

Navigation Round Duration. The exact duration of the navigation Round is left to the GM, it can be minutes long, or even hours, depending on the needs of the story.

Maelstroms in Play. You will have noticed that there is no description

of what happens in the mouth of the Maelstrom. The reason is simple: there is only death at the bottom of it. For this reason Maelstroms should be used more as plot devices than a real threat the party can defeat, and the party should be given a narrative way to escape such a dangerous threat.

Sector	Navigation Rounds	Boating Modifier
Outer	3	0
Middle	2	-2
Inner	1	-4

HERO'S JOURNAL: MORE ABOUT MAELSTROMS...

Maelstroms are unusual events, the cause of which even the Sages of the Library of Syranthia haven't yet unraveled. But some of them are semi-permanent, and quite well-known by the mariners of all the Dominions.

The most famous ones are listed below.

Arak's Mouth. *This maelstrom appears, not more than three or four times a year, in the Drowned King Sea, at the mouth of Elephants' River, not far away from Gis, and lasts exactly one day. People says it owes its name to the famous magician Arak of Gis, who disappeared, with his whole palace, centuries ago, in mysterious circumstances.*

The Kraken's Mouth. *Another maelstrom of the Drowned King Sea, this one, an enormous one, is said to appear in the very middle of the sea. Stories say it isn't a natural phenomenon, but is produced by the great sea monster sitting at the center of it, the Kraken (see page 143). Whatever the truth, the western Dominions should thank this maelstrom, because, only five years ago, it swallowed a fleet of ships from Valkheim, full of warriors, which were moving to invade the heart of the Iron Empire.*

The Guan-Ja-Haio. *This whirlwind, which, the stories say, lurks somewhere in the Brown Sea, is very peculiar, because a human scream comes from the mouth of it, like a woman crying. For this reason, it is called "Guan-Ja-Haio", which can be translated from the Lhobanese as "Screaming Widow". There is another fact connected to this maelstrom: a few moments before it appears, the water turns deep green.*

The Red Goat. *The legend says that, the year after Goatfoot's demise (see page 11), a terrible maelstrom appeared near the Islands of the Maimed Ones, seething with foam, to crush and destroy any ship so unlucky as to finish inside it. The few survivors swore that, in the inner part of the maelstrom, there is ship, perpetually rotating without ever falling inside, its hull and sails painted red, which can only be the Red Goat, Goatfoot's ship. Is this story true or only a tale born at the bottom of a Zalaska barrel?*

MIRAGES

One of the main reasons people fear the sea is that they doesn't fully understand it. Mirages are one of the typical hazards that can be used to enhance this sense of wonder and a supernatural fear of the sea.

The real origin of the mirage is left to the GM: it can be a real optical illusion, created by a combination of light, magnetic fields, and weird reflections, or it can have a supernatural origin, like waters infested by hallucinogenic Lotus algae or even the effect of sorcery. Finally, mirages can be simply the fruit of autosuggestion, and this type of thing happens when the crew is particularly stressed for some reason (they got lost, they have a woman aboard, food and provisions are dwindling and so on).

The exact nature of the mirage is left to the GM, but here are some examples.

Mirage Examples:

- † Strange ship(s) on the horizon
- † Glimpse of land not far away
- † Palace or castle sticking up out of the sea
- † Chorus of feminine voices chanting
- † People at sea
- † The dead coming out of the mist (only at night)
- † Flying horses or people in the sky
- † Cities built in reflections of the sea

The effect of the mirage can be very varied. A "natural" mirage can be simply a weird event, nothing more than a strange vista.

Others might be, at the GM's discretion, fearful (in this case the crew must make a group Spirit roll, in the case of failure they are awed and fearful for 2d4 days, suffering -1 to all rolls, as if Nauseated).

Finally, if there is an evil intelligence behind a mirage, they can be awfully

dangerous, for example leading the heroes' ship over reefs.

Mirages in Play. This type of hazard is a good way to insert a slightly supernatural event into the game. The GM should always leave some uncertainty in the players' minds as to whether they have seen something real, or not.

OMENS

Mariners and pirates alike are a superstitious bunch, probably because their lives are often stakes in the game of chance they play with the sea. They see a number of events, both natural and unnatural, as a sign of fate.

In game terms, when an Omen appears (see page 113), the GM must consider the nature of the card drawn: if red, the Omen is a good one, and the crew is heartened and encouraged. The ship receives a Bennie, usable by the ship or her crew only.

If the card drawn is black, instead, the Omen is bad; the crew is restless and frightened, and suffers -1 to all rolls for the remainder of the session (or 2d4 days in gaming time, whichever is longer). Player characters can try to shake off the crew's fear with some good role-playing or a Social Conflict (opposed by the Spirit of the crew, d6).

The GM should create Omens on the fly, but, if you need some ideas, a few are listed below.

Good Omens

- † A white bird flying three times around the mast
- † The figurehead of the ship turning blue
- † Having glittering fishes following the ship

- † A crewmember miraculously saved from a deadly accident (for example, one falls down from the crow's nest uninjured)
- † Finding a forgotten barrel of wine

Bad Omens

- † Seeing an albatross
- † Having women aboard (except female mariners)
- † Having a rabbit aboard
- † A series of unrelated incidents
- † No more rats aboard

Omens in Play. Omens are an excellent way to give the crew of the ship some extra attention. Regardless of whether they are true or not (for example a bad omen could be a sign of a curse lingering on the ship), they make peoples' worst fears come out, and, since everybody is in an enclosed space, this could have drastic results. In addition, when there is a bad omen, there is always someone saying aloud (or whispering in shadows), that it's the captain's fault...

FEVERS

Illness and maladies are one of the most insidious accidents that can happen aboard, and, sadly, quite common. As you can easily imagine, sanitary conditions aboard ships of the Dominions aren't the best, and this, plus the bad diet and the cramped spaces, makes it easy for illnesses to spread.

Dozens and dozens of diseases and maladies exist, many of them nameless. Below you'll find three of the most iconic ones; the GM is encouraged to devise his own.

Scurvy. Also called "the Plague of the Mariner", scurvy is a common, non-infectious illness caused by lack of vitamins in diet (the mariners' diet is based on cured meat and hard tack). In game terms, it is considered a Long-Term Chronic, Majorly Debilitating illness. It may set in after 1d4+1 weeks of bad diet (i.e. no fresh fruit or vegetables). From this point on, the characters must roll Vigor every week (-1 per subsequent week) to avoid it. It can be cured with a good dose of fresh food and a week of rest. The only culture which has so far understood the way to efficiently prevent Scurvy are the Amazons, who stock their ships with a barrel or two of citrus fruit (consider it a Rare Item in any port except Ascaia, costing 300 Moons and giving immunity to Scurvy for at least two months of travel).

Wool Pox. This is a particularly deadly illness, which is quite common on the Brown Sea. It causes a high fever and brown, suppurating pustules and leads quickly to death. It is very infectious (-2 to the Vigor roll to avoid infection), spreads by contact, and usually kills in a matter of days. Consider it a Short Term, Lethal illness, but victims must roll every day for four days on Vigor (-4) or suffer one Fatigue Level. If they survive, on the fourth day they recover, and are immune thereafter. This illness is called Wool Pox because it was common on the ships bringing wool from Lhobanport to the western Dominions. The Lhobanese think the cause of the pox is in the wool: if a virgin woman was bedded on it, the disease will spread from it. For this reason, the wool is closely guarded in the warehouses of Lhobanport, to avoid illicit affairs. In truth the cause of the pox is strange Lotus algae, which float in large banks in the Brown Sea and which, in certain seasons, produce deadly spores, the real cause of the infection. The Lhoban mariners, when

a case of Wool Pox happens, sacrifice a young virgin woman to a deity called the Merciful Lady, cutting her throat with a jade knife and spreading her blood on the deck. Many crews keep a female slave aboard specifically for this purpose.

Sadly, this ritual has no effect.

Yellow Breeze. This term refers to a number of weird maladies that sometimes people get when sailing too near to the shores of the Fallen Kingdom of Keron.

A sickly hot breeze, coming from the crypts and ruins dotting that cursed land, sweeps the sea, and, in certain cases, it even reaches the Finger Islands. The effect of the Yellow Breeze isn't always the same, draw a card from the Action Deck and check the list below.

Typically, the Yellow Breeze blows for 4d6 hours (the dice can ace). The effects must be checked only once per character per breeze.

Clubs – Killing Spree. Whoever breathes the sickly air must make a Spirit (+2) roll, or his mind fills with murderous thoughts, and he tries to assassinate persons at random to the best of his skill.

Diamonds – Yellow Cough. The breeze causes the lungs of the victims to fill with a yellowish substance, suffocating them in few hours (2d6). It is a Short Term, Lethal Illness. The only known cure is a compress of fresh palm leaves and oil, left under a full moon for a day. Luckily, it isn't infectious.

Hearts – Ghastly Vision. For the duration of the breeze, anytime a person rolls 1 on a Trait die for Spirit, Smarts or a Skill linked to those attributes, she suffers a ghastly

hallucination of some sort, requiring a Fear Check (-2).

Spades – Slumber of the Dead. Every person on the scene must make a Vigor (-2) roll or fall into a deep sleep for the duration of the breeze. A person in this state cannot be waken up in any manner. Stories say that people in this state visit a strange Garden, where death itself rules (see *B&B* #7 – *Garden of Death*).

Joker – The Dead Rise! The breeze affects the dead, not the living! If there is a graveyard or another burial site nearby, the corpses wake up, hungry for human flesh, and remain active while the wind continues to blow!

Fevers in Play. Obviously, the purpose of a pestilence on board isn't killing the players mercilessly, but instead they are intended as obstacles to overcome (for example, the heroes should find a cure for the sick crew), or as a distressing element creating potentially dangerous situations (if the sickness starts after the heroes brought aboard the mysterious Tricornian princess, the crew can easily think she is the culprit, and only sacrificing her to the gods of the sea can end the threat).

REEFS

Of the many dangers a mariner can meet at sea, reefs are among the commonest, but not the least insidious ones. A hidden rock or shallow water can easily break the hull of a ship apart.

The most insidious known reefs are the ones leading to the Cove (see page 61). In the table below are detailed generic reefs, for use in other zones at sea.

You can decide to select at random, drawing one or more cards to determine

PIRATES OF THE DOMINIONS

the various aspects of the reefs (Spotting Modifier, Damage Modifier and so on), or you can simply pick them.

Rules-wise reefs are handled in this way: first, the crew must check to spot them, with a Notice roll, modified by the Spotting Difficulty. When spotted, the crew can decide to go back (in this case no roll is necessary) or to try crossing them.

If the crew decides to cross the reefs (or, if they failed the Notice roll and stumble into it), they must evade them, with a Boating roll, with the Evasion Modifier of the table.

If the crew failed the spotting roll, they suffer an additional penalty of -4.

If the Boating roll fails, there is bad news: the ship suffers the damage shown on the table (consider the reef a Heavy Weapon).

At this point, the ship can try to get away from the reefs, making another Boating roll, with the same penalty as above +1 (but don't include the -4 for not spotting the reefs).

In the case of failure the ship takes damage again.

The roll to get free can be made any number of times, with an increasing bonus, but every time the roll fails, the ship takes damage. Usually an attempt requires 1d6 time units, depending on the ship size (units are ten minutes long for Small ships, one hour long for Medium Ships and three hours long for Large Ships).

Card Value	Spotting Modifier	Evasion Modifier (*)	Damage
2-3	+4	-4	3d6, AP 2
4-6	+2	-2	2d8, AP 4
7-8	+1	-1	2d6, AP 6
9-10	0	0	2d8
J-Q	-1	+1	2d6, AP 2
K-A	-2	+2	2d10, AP 4
Joker	-4	+4	4d4, AP 6

(*) Ships of Medium Size subtract -2 from the roll, Large Ships subtract -4. Ships with Reduced Draft roll with +2.

Reefs in Play. Reefs are an excellent obstacle to make the heroes move very fast: for example, if the ship springs a leak due to a reef, the party must quickly coordinate the crew to disembark or to fix the vessel. They are also an excellent plot device to make the players think. If a zone of sea the party must cross is filled with reefs, the heroes must find another way to travel through it, for example, swimming.

In addition, reefs are excellent terrain for a sea battle: remember that a smaller, weaker ship, has a better chance to pass over them than a large, heavily-armed one...

SEA MONSTERS

"Beware of the darkness, because it is full of monsters," the saying goes. And no place is darker than the sea's depths, where strange, ancient things lurk.

Let's be honest, sea monsters exist in the Dominions, even if they are much rarer

than mariners' stories suggest. Sailors are a superstitious bunch, and for them, anything they cannot explain, like a terrible tempest, has a supernatural cause.

Sea monsters are of many types; usually they are very old beasts, which have grown enormous, and infest certain sea areas. Luckily for mankind, most of the time they are sleeping, but when hungry, or when woken up by some evil sorcerer, they emerge to bring mayhem and destruction.

In game terms, sea monsters are both enemies (see page 116) and hazards for the ship.

Every round a ship is attacked by one of these creatures, it suffers from the Monstrous Impact damage of the monster (see creature description), which can be soaked normally. Unless the sea monster has a specific reason to attack a ship, its incursions are brief, lasting 1d4+1 rounds.

Sea Monsters in Play. These creatures are the guardians of the depths, and encountering them should never be casual, but always the fruit of a specific choice by the GM. Usually they guard specific places or are the emissaries of powerful forces, which use them as their agents.

STORMS AND HURRICANES

Storms and bad weathers are probably the most typical danger at sea. The rules on page 91 describe things from the general perspective of the crew, but, if you want to make the heroes more important, you can focus on them, finding specific, crucial tasks for the survival of the ship.

In game terms, they are handled as Dramatic Tasks using one or more Traits, which can be performed individually or as a group (usually the first two rolls are

made on the first Trait, the remaining rolls on the second Trait). If the heroes are successful, the crew receives a bonus of +2 to their roll, which becomes a modifier of -2 in the case of failure. In addition, if a hero rolls a 1 on the Trait die, regardless of the Wild Die, something really bad happens to him, such as suffering 3d6 damage or being thrown overboard!

Some examples are: holding course using the rudder (Boating and Strength), cutting away loose sails (Climbing and Agility), maintaining order among the crew (Spirit and Intimidation), emptying the bilge (Vigor and Smarts).

During a storm, it is very likely a ship Gets Lost (see page 110), going off course.

Storms in Play. Tempests should be used with moderation in game, because they are very dangerous both for the players and the ship, although you can put a number of them in the background (by simply saying "you pass through a tempest three days long"). A particular twist could be some other event happening aboard during a tempest, for example a murder, a theft, or a dark ritual.

RELICS OF THE SEA

GM'S TIP: WHAT ABOUT SHIPWRECKS?

You'll notice that this section of the book misses a very typical situation of sea fiction: shipwrecks.

This is intentional.

Shipwrecks are a very important narrative tool in the hands of the GM, because they create a brusque change in the flow of the campaign, and each of them should be supported by an interesting follow-up adventure.

Before the disaster, the heroes are respected members of a crew, maybe they even commanded a ship, and now they have nothing, only the clothes on their back (and those are quite ruined, too).

This is a very sword and sorcerish thing to happen, but you must use it with caution, especially if the party invested a lot in the ship (not only on the monetary side, but also in building relationships with the crew members).

That said, use a shipwreck when you see the campaign is stagnating a bit or is becoming too cerebral: in this manner the heroes are forced to concentrate on very basic things (survive, find shelter and so on).

In addition, a shipwreck always has interesting repercussion on the world around them: first, the heroes are probably now considered dead, both by their friends and their enemies alike. Second, what happened to the crew? Are they all dead? Maybe not, and finding the survivors (and a new ship to man) could lead to an interesting adventure.

Piratical tales are full of strange objects and relics: some of them are just fakes, but some are real. Below are described twelve of them (so you can select them randomly by rolling a d12), to be used as plot hooks or simply to be found as loot by your players. As often happens in the Dread Sea Dominions, such objects can be very dangerous...

1. **Pearl Eyepatch.** This leather eyepatch has a big white pearl in its center, which, stories say, was one of the eyes of Rakua-Thara himself. If the user wears it, and has the One Eye Hindrance, by some strange magic the pearl on the patch works like a real eye, allowing him to see (ignore the penalty for the Hindrance). In addition, whoever wears this Eyepatch receives +4 on rolls to spot cheaters while gambling. But this relic bears a curse too: if the wearer is enraged for some reason (in combat: rolls 1 to recover from Shaken) he becomes wild, attacking the nearest target. He calms down only when the target is killed, or when he makes a Spirit (-4) roll to calm down (but he must spend a Bennie to roll), or if the Pearl Eyepatch is removed.
2. **Ral Vashri Astrolabe.** This ancient device, of Keronian origin, is apparently a metal sphere six inches wide, surprisingly light. There are carvings on it, which, if touched in the right sequence (with a Smarts (-4) roll or a Knowledge (Arcana) one), unlock it, revealing five interlocked rings and hemispheres, engraved with strange symbols,



longer exists, and this may be true. If the user rolls a 1 on the Smarts roll, when using it to navigate at sea by night, in the next few hours he could see, at a distance, the ghastly lights of a city, on a coast which should not be there...



symbolizing the stars in the sky. In the middle of the device, which is empty, there is a strange black stone, with the amazing property of attracting metal, which makes the various rings and hemispheres of the device slowly rotate on themselves. This strange apparatus, if properly understood (at least three successes or raises on a Smarts (-2) roll, max. one roll per week), can be very helpful in maintaining a course (+2 to the rolls to navigate and avoid getting lost). In addition, it also gives +2 to rolls for Astrology attempts (see *TLD*, page 132). The stories say the Ral Vashri Astrolabe was built to lead any ship to the port of Ral Vashri (Port of Dreams in the ancient Keronian tongue), which no

3. **Seagull Amulet.** This charm, typical of the Finger Tribes, is made with the skull of a seagull, and is decorated with feathers and semi-precious stones. The creation process requires the bird to have died of natural causes and its body being buried, for three nights, under the nest of a jungle snake. At this point, it is cleaned of all rotten meat, polished with sand, and then three secret blessings are said. If all of this happens in the right way, the user is immune to all the effects of the Yellow Breeze, plus he receives +2 to all Vigor rolls against other maladies. But this comes at a cost: the wearer of the amulet should never eat seagull meat, otherwise, the legends say, his guts will rot from inside and he'll suffer a terrible death.

4. **Figurehead of Tharana.** This blue wood statue, carved by a gifted hand, was the figurehead of some ancient ship, whose name was forgotten. There are various legends about it; the first is that it represents Thara, the female deity of the sea, as she was seen by her mortal lover Vaataro, centuries ago. The same story says Vaataro sculpted it only by touch, because he went blind after seeing the goddess in her true form. The second legend says the figurehead depicts Queen Tharana of Askerios, who fled from her home town on the ship of her lover. The vessel miraculously passed over the Reefs of the Guardian, a bank of dangerous

rocks not far away from the city port, while the pursuing ships ran aground, letting the two lovers escape the rage of the King. Unluckily for Tharana, her lover, the infamous pirate Vaardo, sold her as a concubine to a Tricornian Prince a few months later. In game terms, a ship with the Figurehead of Tharana fitted on the prow gains +4 to all rolls to avoid reefs and ignores the AP of reefs. This blessing is true while no woman aboard is mistreated or killed by the crew. If that happens, the legend says the ship will be sunk by the rage of Thara herself.

5. **Drums of the Dead Man.** These twin bongos are made of ancient wood and covered with very soft, brown skin. If the legend is true, the skin is that of a powerful shaman of the Finger Islands Pigmies. His real name is lost, but he is remembered as the Dead Man. Beating the drum in the right way allows the user to use the *zombie* Power, raising from death every target within a LBT centered on the drum, paying only the basic cost. The user, if unskilled in Sorcery, uses Spirit as his arcane skill, while a magician can use his Sorcery, if higher. The drum confers 10 Power Points for this purpose only, and the dead stay “alive” till the next dawn. If the drummer rolls a 1 on the skill die, regardless of the Wild Die, the bodies are animated, but without control, and attack everyone in sight! A character with the Drummer of Doom Edge using this item raises his Sorcery die by one die step. An unconfirmed tale says that, painted on the skin of the drums, on the interior, there is a map of where the Dead Man is buried with his enormous treasure, but nobody has dared cut open the drums, fearing

the dark spirit which surely lurks inside.

6. **Shark Song.** There is an old legend according to which if you know the right song and chant it, sharks will never attack you. Although you might laugh at the idea, it is true. According to the story, in truth the Shark Song is an old prayer to Rakua, chanted in a forgotten language. Today, only a few sailors and fishermen know it, and they pass it from father to son. They are scarce in the Dominions: some of them in Dread Sea, others in the Drowned King Sea, and even some of them on the shores of the Endless Ocean. Despite the different languages of these people, the Shark Song is always the same. In game terms, a hero who is taught the Song, and who chants it in the sea, must draw a card from the Action Deck. If it is any card but a Joker, the Song works, and no shark will attack him unless he threatens it first. Note that this protection doesn't extend to the singer's friends; just him. If the card is a black Joker, no shark will attack, but only because after 2d6 rounds the Talaska (see page 143) will arrive. If it is a red Joker, the fate of the hero, and of his friends, is even worse: if they are at sea, an anomalous wave drags them underwater, and they wake up in the mysterious Shark Labyrinth, an underwater temple of Rakua, from which nobody has ever escaped...
7. **Fabron's Finger.** When looking at this, long, mummified finger, you cannot believe it belonged to a man, especially as the nail, gray and curved, is like that of a beast. Nevertheless, stories say this crude relic is actually a finger of the first Smith Priest of

Faberterra and that it was severed by a thief the night after Fabron's death. At this point the story turns wild, saying that the thief broke three knives trying to cut it, because Hulian made the body of his first disciple hard as iron. We don't know if this story is true, but the finger is surely heavy, and, most importantly, it unerringly points northwards, as if guided by an unknown force, granting +2 to any roll related to navigation. In addition, if the wearer keeps it in contact with the skin, he benefits from an unnatural stamina, gaining +1 to all his Vigor rolls, although he develops a strange craving for raw fish meat. In certain, rare cases, the finger flexes, as if returning to life, and this always seems to happen, strangely, in the bay of Jalizar.

8. **The Rude Wench's Frying Pan.** This, old, battered and soot-covered frying pan, if you pay heed to the stories, belonged to the original "rude wench," the woman who gave the name to the most famous watering hole in the Cove. Long-hafted and heavy, it was very often used to sedate some rowdy pirate, and it is considered a medium sized Improvised Weapon (Str+d6, 2 hands). In the hands of a woman, it is a normal medium weapon (no Improvised Weapon penalty), and also confers the Strong Willed Edge. There is a legend about this pan and "rude wench meat". This particular dish, whose recipe requires shark meat, palm hearts, jungle peppers and another mysterious ingredient, if cooked in this pan, will make a memorable repast (raising the Strength die of the eater permanently by one step, but only once in his life). The problem

is that no one remembers what the unknown ingredient is.

9. **Sootcrow's Bones.** This pair of old, battered, bone dice, made to play Fissure (see page 94), periodically appears in the major ports of the Dominions. They must be haunted by something, because the owner receives the Luck Edge (or the Improved version if he already has the base Edge), plus +4 to Gambling rolls, whenever he plays Fissure. There is only one exception: if for any reason the owner ends up rolling a double Death he wins the pot, but he will die within a moon. Rules-wise this event happens the first time the player aces on the Gambling die and the Fissure die is 12. This curse dates back to the origin of the dice, which, if the legends are true, were made with the bones of an ancient Cairnlander pirate, Sootcrow. The same legend tells that the only way to escape the curse is returning the dice to their rightful owner, but nobody knows where his tomb (and legendary treasure) are, even if stories say that the key to find the resting place "lies in the dice themselves", whatever that might mean. Sootcrow's Bones are well known, especially at the Cove, and any pirate or mariner can remember this story with a Common Knowledge (-2) roll.
10. **Jitaasa.** The origin of this apparently harmless Finger Monkey are lost in the mist of times. Stories say she was trapped centuries ago in a Keronian ruin, and managed to leave only thanks to the dark gods. Other tales say she was the pet and familiar of a powerful sorcerer of the Finger Islands. Jitaasa is a very smart monkey (Smarts d8, human) even if

she conceals it well. She is surprising skilled, and, even if she cannot speak, she is able to write and communicate in various manners. When she is found, she knows d4 Smarts based Skills (included Knowledge skills) of various types at levels ranging from d6 to d12. Simply roll a d4+1 for Skill, and consider the number as the dice step: so two means d6, three means d8 and so on. Jiitaasa is much more than she appears. She is a vampire of souls. Once per week, she must feed, usually on freshly dead or dying persons. She must simply touch the corpse and start sucking away. When she feeds, she instantly gains part of the knowledge of the dead one (acquires another Skill, up to one per maximum value of her Smarts, so 8). If there are no dead around, Jitaasa tries feeding on a sleeping person. In this case, she and the victim make an opposed Spirit roll (the victim rolling at -2). If the victim loses, he wakes up with a level of Smarts permanently lost and the monkey gains a Skill. A victim rolling a 1 on the Smarts die or reduced to less than Smarts d4 dies in his sleep. The only way to recover the lost dice is by killing the monkey (no easy task). If Jitaasa cannot feed every week, she loses one of her stolen Skills. After this, she takes a level of Fatigue per week, until she enters into a state of suspended animation which can last for centuries.

- 11. Jiang Goo Vaa.** Also called “the Widow’s Ship.” Over the years, this old junk has passed through a number of hands: Lhobanese merchants, Ekulian smugglers, even Pirates of the City of Leaves. In some way it has always managed to pass untouched through all these dangers.

In game terms, the ship is considered a Wild Card, has three Bennies and receives +2 to Soak rolls. The Bennies can be used for crew rolls directly linked to the ship’s safety, and to force opponents to reroll successful dice against the junk (choosing the worst result). The reason for this mysterious immunity is that it is actually haunted: during its maiden voyage, the ship was assaulted by pirates and all the crew slaughtered, except Yet Mao, the young wife of the captain, who, to avoid being captured by the pirates, committed suicide by planting a sword in her chest, cursing the pirates’ souls. Scared, the pirates fled, abandoning the vessel, which was found drifting, weeks later, by a family of pearl divers. In game terms, the ship is Haunted (see page 98), but in a really serious way. During the anniversary of the very night when Yet Mao died, her spirit and those of the mariners walk free in the ship. In particular, Yet Mao tries to possess a young woman aboard (if there isn’t any, the youngest male), and repeat her suicide of centuries ago.

- 12. Ho Jan’s Dragon.** This ancient war machine, if you pay heed to stories, was once fitted on the *Green Dragon*, the terrible ship of Ho Jan (see page 23). Made entirely of bronze, it is very heavy (it requires a crew of four), and resembles a crouching Lhobanese dragon, with its mouth open. The machine is filled with exotic Lotus concoctions, which it spouts in the form of liquid fire! In game terms, it can be used in two ways: either to launch balls of fire at a distance (consider this the *blast* Power, with range 40/80/160) or to spout fire at close range (consider this the *burst* Power). Both attacks

are considered Heavy Weapons, and can set fire to targets (+1 to the set fire roll). The device requires a skilled Lotusmaster to create its ammo, who uses his Power Points to feed it (in game terms, he prepares the concoctions). If the Lotusmaster has the Yellow Mask Edge, every Power Point spent counts double (so he can create a *burst* for only one Power Point). The maximum number of Power Points that can be spent at any one time on ammo is 20. This device is very tricky, and is fired using either Lotusmastery or Shooting (-2). If the skill die roll is a 1 or less, regardless of the Wild Die, something went horribly wrong, the area in a LBT around the Dragon is filled by a cloud of fire, dealing 3d6 damage (Heavy Weapon, +1 to rolls to set fire), and all the ammo is destroyed. The Dragon itself is immune to fire.

TREASURE MAPS

One of the most iconic elements of a pirate game is obviously treasure maps. These are very interesting items, because they provide, apart from a good reward, a great source of adventures and plots. With a good treasure map handy, the party can play literally for weeks. In this chapter we will detail how to use a treasure map to create an adventure on the fly; consider this a specific version of the Adventure Generator found in *GE*.

You can integrate a map into your adventure simply by drawing an additional card, or using one of the already drawn cards (we suggest the Reward card) as the map card, or finally you can only draw cards for the map and create a whole adventure around it.

In game terms, the card suit provides ideas about the nature of the map, while the value adds a Twist to the story around it, usually giving details on the nature of the treasure or of what will happen during the quest for it. If you want, you can draw more cards for the Twist (but we suggest no more than three in all) and apply all of them. If you re-draw a card with the same value, it simply reinforces the Twist (for example, a Dangerous Position becomes a *very* Dangerous Position and so on).

As always, generators are only guidelines to help spark your imagination, don't feel constrained by the results of the cards.

GM'S TIP: ACTUAL MAPS

The rules found in this book don't require you to have a real treasure map. You can simply describe the map to the players, but it is obviously much more intriguing having a real map, a prop to hand the players. You can find dozens of them on the internet, and, with some customization, you can include clues and red herrings of various types, which the players must discover...

THE MAP

The first element to determine is the physical appearance of the map, because, as you can imagine, the term "map" can be stretched a little. This is done by considering the suit of the card drawn.

Clubs – Split Parts. The map, which is probably a piece of parchment or is



inscribed on an object or something similar, is actually divided into several parts. One of them is in the hands of the heroes, the others must be located and acquired, honestly or by guile; this is left to the party. Even finding the locations and owners of the other parts of the map can be an adventure on its own.

Diamonds – Hidden. The map is actually hidden and its real purpose isn't obvious. For example, a map can be sewn inside a cloak, or hidden in the hollow hilt of a sword, or written in a particular ink which is visible only in certain conditions. Understanding and finding the map can be casual, or linked to a particular event; maybe the heroes don't know that the worthless piece of glass they found, if placed in front of a candle, projects onto the wall a map to the treasure of the famous sorcerer Zaror Var; but the evil cultists chasing the party surely do...

Hearts – Key. The map is more than it appears, it is also the key to unlock the place or container where the treasure is kept. The key can be the map itself (for example if the directions to the loot are carved on an ancient Keronian amulet, the same amulet can be the key to safely open the room where the treasure is kept), or it can be a secondary object, for example an actual key, to be used to unlock the treasure room.

Spades – Riddle. The map isn't a physical object (or, even if it is, the material component of the object isn't the important part of it); it is more an enigma of some sort, for example a mysterious song where every line indicates a place (and smaller parts of the same locations: for example, a specific sea, a specific island, a specific tree on that island), or, if it is a real map, it is written in a code that must be broken. If you have some time, you should make the riddle something the players must solve

with their wits, rather than the heroes figuring it out with a lucky die roll (even if the characters' Traits can give them some hints).

Joker – Magical or Special! The map is something really out of ordinary. Maybe it isn't a real object, but something totally different, such as a recurring dream one of the heroes has, a madman speaking gibberish (and among the lunatic words are hidden the clues to the treasure), or a sort of magical compass, giving you directions based on the place you are now (and it isn't certain it will lead you along the shortest path). Wherever it is, draw another card for the Twist (see below).

THE TWIST

Deuce – Fake! There is something really bad about this treasure or the map itself. Probably at least one of the two are fakes, made to mislead the heroes. Is this a plot by the party's enemies? Or simply the last jest by a pirate dead many centuries ago? Whatever the truth, nothing good will come from this treasure hunt, in the end, except maybe being a little wiser in future.

Three – Competitor. The heroes aren't the only ones looking for the treasure. Some other party (maybe more than one) is looking for it and they could be a real threat to the outcome of the search. Competitors aren't always fanatical enemies (although they can be); in certain cases, you can parley or resolve the question in peaceful ways. Other times, competitors are only there to die horribly in the traps protecting the treasure.

Four – Dangerous Position/Guard. The treasure is hidden in some very dangerous or heavily guarded place, for example, in a cavern within a volcano (it wouldn't decide to erupt *right now*, would it?), or maybe

the old sorcerous book the heroes are looking for has been hidden, for a number of centuries, under the sixth tile in the bedroom of the Empress of Faberterra.

Five – Moved/Already Found! When the heroes reach the treasure's location, they discover someone has already been here, and moved the loot! It might have happened only moments before (for example if the party has some pesky competitors), or a long time ago. For example, the golden statue hidden in the Forbidden Temple was discovered long ago by a tribe of Cannibals, and now it is in their village. Obviously, the Cannibals worship it as a god, offering it human sacrifices.

Six – Guardian. The treasure is protected by a powerful guardian of some sort. He is the real threat of the scenario. It can be a nasty surprise the heroes uncover only when it is too late (for example the whole crew of dead pirates, lying in the ship where the treasure is, suddenly arise when the party tries to carry off the strongbox with the loot), or something of which they are well aware, and for which they must find a solution before trying to recover the treasure. For example, the map the heroes have can clearly state the Hand of Tovarash is protected by the Three-Named Guardian, a powerful, almost invulnerable demon, which can be defeated only by saying his three names aloud. Finding them could be an important part of the scenario (and the party need not necessarily discover the right ones...).

Seven – Forced Cooperation. “Cold nights make strange bedfellows,” the saying goes, and this is just the case. To find and retrieve the treasure the heroes must cooperate with someone they really despise: maybe only Gazul Ra,

the Caldeian sorcerer who is the party's arch-nemesis, knows the second part of the incantation to open the door of the Tomb of Whispering Mysteries, while the heroes know the first one. If they want to get to the fabulous Wand of Caldaio, the two groups must cooperate, but will the wicked magician keep his word?

Eight – Element Required. Having the map isn't enough to reach the treasure. Some other element is necessary. It could be an object (like a key), an event (you can recognize the plant under which the treasure is buried only when it blossoms, because all the other plants have white flowers, while the right tree has red ones), or even a person (only someone with Goatfoot's blood in his veins can open his cursed chest without being killed, and the only one you know is that dumbass tavern wench who recently enlisted with the Amazons...). Finding (and keeping) the required element is a key part of the scenario.

Nine – Race Against Time! For one reason or another, time is a crucial element in the treasure hunt. Maybe the heroes aren't looking for the treasure of their own will, but an evil Lotusmaster poisoned them with a slow toxin, which gives them exactly three days to live, unless they take the antidote. Or maybe the island where Verado's treasure is buried is in the middle of a maelstrom, which pauses for only two days per year. Whatever the reason, the party must hurry!

Ten – Trapped! Traps are the main element of this treasure hunt, in the loosest meaning of the term. Maybe the loot is protected by a very dangerous device (for example, it is coated with a nasty Lotus concoction which causes hallucinations), or the treasure is a trap itself (the last trick of a very evil pirate), or perhaps during

the search, the heroes will fall into a very dangerous ambush of some type.

Jack – Forbidden! The treasure itself is something that should not fall into human hands, for a number of reasons. Maybe it is cursed, or, rather than being a real treasure, it is the prison of a powerful supernatural being, like a demon. In this case finding it is only the prologue to a challenging scenario where the group must get rid of the evil thing they set free!

Queen – Betrayer! Lust and greed are among the strongest feelings of mankind, as are resentment and vengeance. And probably these are the causes of the betrayal the heroes will suffer during the treasure hunt! Maybe a friend, driven by greed or forced to do so in some manner, sells them out to their enemies, or their guide locks them in the burial room with the mummies (after escaping with the treasure, of course), or it might also be a party member who unwittingly betrays his friend, for example by accepting the strange lucky coin that Virtanja the Seer gave him, which allows the evil witch to follow the party with her nasty minions.

King – Treasure Hunt. The heroes have to do a lot of legwork to get the treasure, like a scavenger hunt. The map they have could be only the first step of a series of hints, leading them in the end to the location of the treasure. We suggest not overdoing the number of steps (no more than four or five), so that the players don't get frustrated with the hunt. If you keep the number reasonable, and the hints very different (for example, a map, a riddle, a person knowing useful information), it can be a really fun adventure!

Joker – It's More Complicated Than it Looks! Draw two other cards and try combine the results.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER —THE EAGLE OF THE TENTH

PHALANX

Here follows an example of an adventure created from a Map, using two cards.

The first one drawn is the Queen of Diamonds, while the second one is the Six of Clubs.

The first card determinates the nature of the map, which is “hidden”, plus a Twist, the Traitor. While the Six tells the GM there is a powerful Guardian around the treasure.

It won't be an easy story for the party.

The GM decides that the old battered Phalanx helm Shangor got as a free replacement for one he lost in the last adventure is more than it seems. Some nights later, in Hillias, while the barbarian is in the company of his current lover, the courtesan Vezzala, he is attacked by a band of off-duty guards, led by Vezzala's previous lover, Sergeant Tilkar, who isn't at all happy Shangor is her new paramour.

The barbarian breaks a couple of bones and the dogs flee, but one of them gives him a good cudgel blow on the head, breaking his helm in two as a parting gift.

To his surprise, Shangor discovers that under the padding, there is an engraving on the metal of the helm, with a map scratched on it! Vezzala, peering over his head, notices a symbol on the map, that of the legendary Tenth Phalanx, which was lost at sea, with the loot of the Red Desert Campaign. The map shows

an area of coast, around Keron, and an island...

The heroes set off for the mysterious place, taking with them Vezzala, who doesn't want to leave her lover. On the island, apart from an old, wrecked Imperial ship, they find an ancient Keronian temple, where the bones of the old legionaries lie, guarding a number of old strongboxes with the seal of the Tenth Phalanx.

At this point Vezzala is revealed as a Traitor: she made signals (using mirrors and lanterns) from the heroes' ship to help Tilkar and his men follow the party. The plan is simple: she plans to steal the treasure, from both the party and that fool Tilkar.

Tilkar's men outnumber the heroes, but, when they touch the treasure crates, the dead Phalanx soldiers return from death, to kill the thieves!

Escaping and sealing the doors of the temple is the only way out of this situation, but Vezzala, driven by greed, stays behind to plunder some gold, and is taken by the undead. The heroes must decide whether to risk their lives to save her, or entomb the treacherous courtesan with the undead guardians. Whatever their choice, they'll end the adventure with only their skins – and the ship Tilkar's men used to follow the party, of course.



SAILS AND BLOOD

This chapter expands the rules for sea battles. These rules are totally optional, and you can use some or all of them to make your combats more exciting.

Typically, a sea battle follows these phases: spotting, getting closer, volleys, and close combat.

Each phase can be handled with one of two systems, depending on the needs of the game: tactical tabletop or the mass battles rules.

The two systems are interlocked, so you can decide to run an entire battle in the same way or, for example, the first part of the battle with the mass battle rules (spotting, getting closer) and the second part with tabletop rules (volleys, close combat).

Each phase is described below, and some suggestions are given for each of them to help introduce particular elements, like

the lookouts falling asleep, setting fire to the sails and so on.

Before starting, you'll find the following notes useful.

Helmsman and Captain: Whoever is steering the ship is the “helmsman”, while the man in command of the vessel, giving orders to mariners, the helmsman and so on is the “captain”. In theory he can be the same person (and often is), but if he pilots the ship and gives orders, he suffers a multi-action penalty. By default, if he isn't a player character or a described NPC, the helmsman is part of the Crew (so he uses their average Boating skill).

Action Cards: The ship moves during the helmsman's turn (if there is no specified helmsman, you can deal the ship a single card representing the whole crew). Unlike the standard mass battles rules, every ship involved in the battle is dealt a card, which

is useful in both the Getting Closer phase and the Close Combat phase.

Sea Battles: While having the Knowledge (Battle) skill is always handy, sea battles depend mainly on the Boating skill of the captain. In such cases, you can use Boating in place of Knowledge (Battle).

Sea Battle Rounds: Given the nature of the sea, the duration of a sea battle tends to be long. When the ships are very far away, each round can be long hours, quickly becoming dozens of minutes when the ships are close enough to use ranged attacks, then going down to standard tabletop combat rounds when the ships are locked together for boarding. For ease of use, in the following rules we always use the term “round”, but the GM is free to give them a different duration, in game time, as he sees fit.

BATTLE VALUE?

The Battle Value (BV) is a new stat introduced in TB, to handle the absolute strength of armies in an abstract way, summarized below.

It can also be used to calculate the combat efficiency of ships.

During mass battles you calculate the number of Battle Tokens of two armies using Battle Values in this way:

- 1) The army with the higher Battle Value receives 10 Battle Tokens*
- 2) The army with the lower Battle Value receives a number of Tokens equal to $(10 \times \text{Lowest Battle Value}) / \text{Highest Battle Value}$. The result is rounded down.*
- 3) Losses influence Battle Value in the same way. If for example an army lost one Battle Token out of six, its Battle Value is reduced by 1/6.*

SHIP DAMAGE AND MORALE

The Critical Hits table for vehicles in *Savage Worlds* is very generic, so, for ships only, you'll find an alternate version of the table below, to be used in the same way as the standard one.

Ship Damage and Mass Battles. The mass battles system of *Savage Worlds* is abstract, but in a naval conflict it is important to understand, at least roughly, if the damage suffered was to men or to the vessel. In game terms this can be done in an easy way. When Battle Tokens are assigned, at the beginning of a battle, use two different colors, so you can differentiate Ship Tokens from Crew Tokens. You receive half of them for each type, rounding as you wish. When losing Battle Tokens, the defender decides which kind of Token (Crew or Ship) is lost first during a round, while all further Tokens lost in the same round are decided by the attacker.

If, at any time, one side has lost all its Ship Tokens, the vessel is wrecked and starts to sink (see above). If at any time one side has lost all its Crew Tokens, the crew is wiped out and the defending ship is captured.

At the end of the battle, recover Battle Tokens as normal, for Ship Tokens this means the damage can be quickly patched up by the crew, while for Crew Tokens is simply means sailors are healed and retrieved from their hiding places in the bilges.

Any unrecovered Ship Token damage is considered a “Wound” to be repaired as normal.

Morale and Sea Battles. On land, armies can rout and flee from harm but in the vast emptiness of the sea, there is nowhere

to escape. Morale rolls must only be made when a Crew Token is lost (+2 for the Cannot Retreat modifier). On a failure the crew surrenders, while with a 1 or less some of the sailors, panicked, jump overboard (another Crew Token is lost, and cannot be recovered in any way after the battle).

Example. The Blood Bride, commanded by Captain Zandorra (Boating d8, Spirit d8, Wild Die) is battling the dreaded Wild Boar, a Syranthian war galley (Boating d8, Spirit d6). Odds are in favor of the Syranthians who have 10 Battle Tokens (5 Ship and 5 Crew), while Zandorra's ship only has 8 (4 Ship and 4 Crew).

Neither ship is armed with war machines or archers, so the battle is resolved by boarding (see below). In the first round of Mass Battle the Syranthians roll 8 vs. 5 from Zandorra, winning with a success. Having lost a single Token, Zandorra decides to lose one Ship Token. The second round Zandorra rolls a mighty 14 vs. 4 from the Syranthians, winning with 2 raises. The Syranthian captain chooses to lose one Crew Token, and Zandorra decide to inflict another 2 Crew Tokens of damage! The Syranthians also roll on morale, but a 5, -3 for casualties taken, +2 for Cannot Retreat modifier, is enough to pass.

During the third round, the roll is similar; Zandorra rolls 10, while the Syranthians, disheartened, only 2. Three more Tokens of damage are assigned; the Syranthian captain chooses to lose a Ship Token, but Zandorra uses the other two to totally wipe out the Crew Tokens of the Syranthians. Having no remaining Crew, the Syranthian ship is conquered and Zandorra's seadogs can pillage it! After the fumes of victory wear off, the pirates verify the damage to the Blood Bride, rolling 2 for the Ship Token (lost). The Blood

Bride suffered some damage, which will need to be patched up...

Ships Critical Hits Table

2d6	Effect
2	Scratches and Dents: The sea gods (or devils!) are looking with benevolence on the vessel. There's no permanent damage.
3	Locomotion: The oars or sails of the ship are damaged. Halve the vehicle's Top Speed and reduce the current speed by 1d6.
4	Helm: The helm is hit. Until a Repair roll is made, the vehicle can only perform turns to one side (1-3 left, 4-6 right). During mass battles, the ship suffers an additional -1 to Boating rolls.
5-7	Hull: The ship suffers a serious leak in the hull, and starts taking on water. A leak can be repaired, by the crew, with a Repair (-2) or Boating (-4) roll. With a second leak, the ship starts sinking.
8-10	Crew: The crew is affected. If the roll is odd, a player character or important NPC is hit, if the roll is even, 10% of the crew is affected by the damage.
11	Weapon: A random weapon on the side of the ship that was hit is destroyed and may no longer be used. If there is no suitable weapon, this is a Crew hit instead.
12	Wrecked: The vehicle sinks and automatically goes Out of Control.

THE WIND

Landlubbers like you and me think of the sea as an empty, motionless space full of water. In truth, the sea is a living beast, as the priests of Rakua-Thara well know, and it is the wind which makes it a placid lamb or a raging dragon.

Whenever it is necessary to determinate the strength and the direction of the wind at sea, you can use the following rules, which are presented in two versions: abstract (if you are not playing on the tabletop), or tabletop.

Wind Roll (Abstract Version): *The GM picks two d4, of different colors (let's call them Die 1 and Die 2), throws them (the rolls cannot ace), and simply subtracts Die 2 from Die 1 (D1-D2). The result, ranging from -3 to +3, is the Wind modifier, considered from the players' perspective, and affects any Boating roll where wind is involved (for example during a sea battle). The opponents of the heroes have the same modifier, but of the opposite sign.*

Example: Captain Zandorra and her first mate Shangor, aboard the Blood Bride, are being chased by the Grey Doom, a Tricarnian War Galley. Before the scene starts, the GM makes a Wind Roll, rolling 3, 1 for a Wind Modifier of +2. This means that the Blood Bride receives +2 to her Boating rolls due to the wind, and the enemy ship suffers -2.

Wind Roll (Tabletop Version): *The GM picks two d4, of different colors (let's call them Die 1 and Die 2), throws them (the rolls cannot ace), and simply subtracts the highest from the lowest. This is the Wind Strength. At this point roll a d12 and read it clockwise, giving the direction from where the Wind is blowing. Ships moving in the direction of the wind add the Wind Modifier to their Acceleration, ships moving in the opposite direction subtract the Wind Modifier from their Acceleration.*

The rules above are intended to be used only when dramatically important and can be skipped in minor conflicts.

SEA BATTLE PHASES

SPOTTING

All Systems. Wise captains always have a lookout posted, because being alerted to enemy ships is vital, and on the Dominion's seas every ship is an enemy, unless proven otherwise. Rules-wise, when two ships (or crews) come into contact, the respective lookouts make an opposed Boating roll (use the Crew's Boating).

If one of the lookouts wins the roll with a raise, the winning ship decides at what Distance (Short, Medium or Long) the naval confrontation begins. If nobody wins with a raise, the confrontation begins at Medium Distance.

Dozing Lookout. If one of the lookouts rolls a 1 on the Boating roll, it means something really bad happened (for example the lookout fell asleep or was distracted); the opposing captain gets a Bennie.

GETTING CLOSER

Mass Battles. Getting closer in Mass Battle rules is simply handled as a Chase (usually of Extended duration), using the Boating skill of the captains, who can benefit from a cooperative roll by the Crew. The two ships are considered to be at Medium Distance. Mass battles are only possible if they are armed with war machines (so they can throw Volleys as below) until one of the two ships receives a Short Range result; in this case, the two ships are near enough that the crews can stare each other in the eyes and can start boarding (see Close Combat below).

Escaping. The rules above are perfect if both ships are trying to get in contact, but when one of the ships is trying to escape from the other, the situation is a little different. In this case, the escaping ship starts the Chase with a number of Escape Tokens depending on the distance apart the two ships are (see Ship Distances Table). Every time the pursuing ship gets a Medium Range Card or better (a face card), the escaping ship can discard an Escape Token to prevent being engaged in Close Combat. When the escaping ship runs out of Tokens, the next Short Range Card dealt to the pursuer means she gets into Close Combat! The escaping ship can gain ground too; when dealt a Short Range Card (Ace-Joker) it forfeits its attack, but gains an Escape Token. Note that the escaping ship must always consider face cards as Medium Range, otherwise they forfeit the opportunity to escape.

If the escaping ship isn't engaged in melee at the end of the Chase, she has escaped.

Tabletop. If you want to play this phase on the tabletop, we strongly suggest you change the scale of the tabletop to something more viable; usually 1" on the tabletop equates to 5 or 10 game inches, in this way you can play out a sea battle on your kitchen table.

Ships begin combat at a fixed distance, as in the Starting Tabletop Distance of the table below. Movement is made in the standard way, but remember the influence of the wind (see sidebar).

Oars and Sails. If a ship is fitted with oars and sails, the rowers can give her an extra boost. The rowers make a Boating roll (minus half the Wind modifier, if negative), and for each success and raise, the ship gains +1 Acc for the current

round. If the Boating roll is a 1, the rowers have a problem (they lose their rhythm, get tired, or something similar) and cannot be used in the current round or the next.

Ship Distances Table

Distance	Escape Tokens	Starting Tabletop Distance
Far	3	400
Medium	2	200
Close	1	100

VOLLEYS!

Mass Battles. When at a distance, a mass battle can happen only if the ship is fitted with war machines or a good part of the crew is armed with ranged weapons (if you are playing with *TB* rules, it has the Sea Archers Band Edge). Each war machine (see Gear) has an Artillery Bonus listed, simply add this to the mass battle roll. If you are using *TB* and a ship has the War Machine Edge, add another +1 to the roll (in this case ignore the sentence in the Edge saying it can only be used once every two rounds).

Tabletop. While the ships are at distance, only ranged attacks can be made. Ships are sometimes fitted with war machines (see Gear), which can be used by the crew or by a character. Heroes with personal ranged weapons can use them, but probably only when enemy vessels are quite near and to kill a particular opponent (for example the helmsman or the captain of the enemy ship).

Fire Arrows! The ranged weapons of the crew (and the heroes) can also be used to destroy the enemy's sails. Sails are easily set afire (4-6 on the d6), but they must burn for a while before any serious damage is inflicted. For each flaming arrow reaching

the sails and setting them afire, put a Flaming Sail Counter on the table. At the beginning of each round, each Flaming Counter “spawns” another one. Whenever there are 12 or more Flaming Counters on the table, the ship suffers a Wound (don’t roll on the Ship Damage table: consider it Locomotion damage).

The crew and any player can try to extinguish the fire with a Boating or an Agility roll. Per success and raise, remove one Flaming Sail Counter (two for the crew if they are putting the fire out).

CLOSE COMBAT!

Mass Battles. When one of the two ships is dealt a Short Range card, a close quarters battle can happen!

Ramming. If one of the ships is fitted with a ram, the helmsman can use his action to hit the enemy’s hull! For this round only, the battle roll is made including the ram’s Artillery Bonus. All damage is dealt to Ship Tokens. Note that ramming, if successful, can be used only once, and then the two ships are locked together.

Oar Breaking. Another common sea battle trick, used against ships with oars, consists of flanking the enemy ships and breaking their oars! In game terms, a ship acting before the enemy in initiative order can decide to forfeit its attack to attempt this maneuver (the oar-breaking ship will make a normal battle roll, but cannot cause any damage). The two helmsmen make an opposed Boating roll (the attacker suffers -2). If the attacker wins, half the oars of the enemy ship are destroyed, causing -2 to all Boating rolls for the rest of the battle. The maneuver can be used with success only twice per ship.

Grappling Hooks. A common technique to simplify boarding is throwing grappling hooks onto the opponent’s deck, preventing the escape of the prey. In game terms the boarder’s side forfeits the boarding attempt to make a Boating (+2) roll. For each success and raise it gains +1 to its Boating roll in the next battle round, but only for boarding (see below). A grappled ship has more trouble escaping (see below).

Boarding! Whenever two ships are in close combat, boarding may happen. This is a normal mass battle round, but you cannot use war machines (except a Boarding Bridge). In addition, if the Action Card your side is dealt is a club, a Complication of some type happens, as for Chases, giving you a penalty. A boarded ship, unless it was rammed, can try to disengage with an opposed Boating roll between the two crews, but the escaping ship rolls at -2, with an additional -2 if the ship was grappled with hooks.

Tabletop. When two ships are very close, they are ready to start the real fight!

Ramming. On the tabletop ramming is handled with an opposed Boating roll between the two helmsmen, who can receive cooperative aid from their crews. If the attacker wins, he hits the opponent’s hull with the ram (see Gear for effects). In addition, the two ships are now locked together and boarding is possible (see below). Failing a ramming maneuver leaves the attacking ship in a bad position, so it suffers -2 to Boating rolls till the end of the battle round.

Oar-Breaking. On tabletop the helmsman of the attacking ship must win an opposed Boating roll (at -2 for the attacker). In the case of success half of the oars of the defending ship are destroyed, consider

this Locomotion damage. Failing an oar-breaking maneuver leaves the attacking ship in a bad position, so it suffers -2 to Boating rolls till the end of the battle round.

Grappling Hooks. Boarding hooks have a range of 6/12/24, and success on the Throwing roll represents both hitting the opponent's deck and embedding the hook. If at least 5 hooks per Size of the ship successfully hit, consider the distance between the two ships (see below), reduced by 1". To quickly calculate how many hooks the crew successfully throws, make a group Boating roll, for each success and raise 1d6 hooks successfully hit.

Boarding! When two ships are near enough (usually 3" or less on the tabletop) boarding is possible. Imagine a raging horde of bloodthirsty pirates jumping

over the bulwark, and you have a clear idea of what a boarding is. Characters usually need an Agility (-2) or Strength roll to safely jump onto the enemy deck. In the case of failure, they simply have to stop after the jump, while if they roll 1 or less they fall in the water (this can be more deadly than being on the deck, because the risk of being smashed by the two hulls is real; each turn in the water the character must make a Swimming (-2) roll, and if he fails he suffers 3d6 damage.

Once the two crews are locked in melee a normal fight happens. To make the combat spicier see the sidebar.

Usually boarding ends when all the enemy crew is slaughtered or surrenders.

"ON MY COMMAND - BOARD!"

Ship combat can be memorable. After all, there are lot of props and enemies packed close together, people shouting, cursing and dying, while the ship is sinking... To make tabletop sea fights more memorable, the GM can use some of the terrain and props rules described below.

"Barrels, barrels everywhere!" *Ships decks are crammed with equipment: heaps of ropes, ballast, and, obviously, barrels. A typical barrel (Toughness: 6) is 1" by 1" on the tabletop, while a big one is 2" by 2", has Toughness: 7 and a Strength roll is required to move it. They count as Difficult Terrain and roll very well: they can be used for Agility Tricks (+2), hitting everybody in a straight line 2d6" long. Note the position of barrels: if the ship is sinking (see below), they'll move, sweeping away everyone in their path (count as an Agility Trick made at d8), crossing the whole deck.*

“Below decks.” *Fighting below decks is difficult, due to the cramped quarters. Weapons with Reach cannot be used, and sword-sized weapons suffer -2 to attack rolls. Daggers and equally small weapons suffer no penalties.*

“Fighting in the Rigging!” *Sometimes epic duels take place in the rigging, with the fighters in precarious equilibrium. Run the fight as normal, but, if an attack successfully hits (regardless of whether it beats the target’s Toughness or not), the defender is forced to retreat 2”. In addition, if a 1 is rolled on an Agility-based skill (like Fighting) the character falls down. An Agility roll must be made to avoid the same fate if the defender is Shaken or Wounded. Spars are usually 12”-18” long on the battlefield. They are placed at the Top (3d6 damage in case of fall), Medium (2d6 damage), or Bottom (1d6 damage) of the mast.*

“Fire and Smoke!” *One of the typical things happening during a boarding is that a fire starts. The first time a Joker is dealt, it means that somewhere a fire has started. Place 1d4 SBT of fire, in contact with each other. At the end of each round, roll a d6. On a 5-6 the fire expands, put another SBT in contact with one of the previous ones. A SBT of fire can be extinguished with a Boating or Agility (-2) roll, if there is water handy. The roll can be cooperative.*

“First Man on Deck!” *Boarding is a dangerous business, and the crew must be encouraged (and sometimes whipped) to jump on an enemy vessel looking for trouble. For this reason, usually the first man landing on the enemy ship is rewarded with an extra share of the loot and he immediately gains a Bennie. Not that that is enough to save his skin.*

“Swing on a Rope!” *Landlubbers walk across a plank to board, but real mariners use ropes to fly over the enemy’s deck. To use a rope, you must first spot one (with a Notice roll, it is 2d4” away from you), then you must reach it and use it (which takes a whole round), then choose a point on the battlefield where you want to land. At this point make an Agility (-2) roll, the Acrobat Edge applies. With a raise or better you land on the exact point you decided, with a success you land nearby (d4” away in a random direction), with a failure you land, but 2d6” away from the chosen spot. On a critical failure the GM can decide you remain on the rope screaming, fall in the water, or something equally nasty. Note that if you bang into an obstacle, you are automatically Shaken. You can also try to land directly on an enemy: you suffer -2 to the Agility roll, but, with a success, you can make a free Bash attack at +2.*

“It’s sinking!” *If the vessel is sinking, it will probably move and incline dangerously. In this case, anytime a character is dealt a deuce Action Card, before his action the ship inclines. Every person aboard must make an Agility (-2) roll or they fall down and are moved 1d6” in the direction of the inclination. If they hit a hard obstacle, they are automatically Shaken. Note that if they are barrels on the deck, they’ll move too (see above).*

“Slick with blood!” *From the fourth round of melee on, the planks of the deck are made slippery by blood and fallen corpses. Anytime a 1 is rolled on Agility or an Agility-based skill, the character automatically slips and falls down (this doesn’t apply to the Wild Die).*

“Turn it around!” *Siege weapons, like catapults, cannot be used during boarding, but ballista and scorpions, if you are desperate enough, can be moved, turned and pointed toward your own deck. This requires a Strength (-2) roll, which can be cooperative. For each success and raise the war machine moves by 2” or rotates by 90 degrees.*

MONSTERS AND PIRATES

This chapter describes some of the most iconic creatures and denizens useful in a sea-based campaign.

As always, they can be customized as you see fit.

Stories say the Blue Lady was, in the past, a pearl diver of great beauty, and when chased by Finger Pigmies, preferred drowning herself in the sea to being captured and dragged into the dark dens of the jungle dwellers.

BEASTS

BLUE LADY

This creature, also known as the Chalada, is one of the most dangerous beasts of the Finger Islands. A giant jellyfish, big as a girl, of an incredible blue hue, is a marvelous sight; but also a very deadly one, because its tendrils deliver a poison that causes incredibly vivid hallucinations, making the victim forget to breathe, and so causing death. After the victim dies, the Blue Lady feeds on her warm blood.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6.

Pace: 0; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities

- **Aquatic:** Pace 6 in water.
- **Languid Caress of Death:** The Blue Lady attacks by brushing her victims with the tendrils. This is considered a Touch Attack (+2 to the attack roll). In the case of success the victim suffers the effect of Very Fast *poison* Power, cast with arcane skill d10. If the victim survives he permanently gains +1 to resist any pleasure causing poisons.
- **Supernatural Beauty:** Any person seeing a Chalada for the first time

must make a Spirit roll to avoid being stricken (Shaken) by the absolute marvel of her appearance.

MONKEY

Monkeys are quite common, not only in the Finger Islands, but throughout the Dominions.

FINGER MONKEY

Finger Monkeys are very small beasts, typical of the jungles of the Finger Islands. Very smart and cunning, they live on nuts, fruits and small insects, but if held in captivity they show an incredible passion for sweetmeats (which is the customary way to train them). This race in particular (others exist in different lands of the Dominions) are very mechanically inclined, and can become very good burglars, if properly trained and fitted with small size lockpicks (cost three times as much as standard lockpicks and must be custom made, they are a Rare Item).

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d8 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d6, Lockpicking d6, Notice d6, Stealth d10, Taunt d8, Throwing d6.

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities

- **Acrobat:** +2 to Agility rolls to perform acrobatic maneuvers; +1 to Parry if unencumbered.
- **Demi-human Intelligence:** Finger Monkeys are smart, very smart, and Sages debate if their mind qualifies as “human”. In truth, nobody knows, but these beasts, when trained, can show incredible understanding in some cases. Rules-wise, they can be given the same complexity of orders as a dog without any problem. If ordered to do something more complex (for example:

“sneak in the house, open the big cage and loot it”), both the Monkey and the owner must make a Smarts roll (with a penalty decided by the GM). In the case of success the beast understands the command (but that doesn’t necessarily mean she will carry it out).

- **Mechanically Inclined:** Finger Monkeys are fascinated by locks and can be trained to pick them, gaining +2 to Lockpicking rolls.
- **Size -2:** Finger Monkeys are very small.
- **Small:** Attackers subtract 2 from their attack rolls.

STRANGLER MONKEY

These reddish monkeys, similar to baboons in their posture and faces, have very large hands, and a really bad temper. Omnivorous but with a predilection for meat, they aren’t shy about attacking men, strangling them.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6.

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

- **Special Abilities**
- **Bad Attitude:** This creature is extremely prone to rages. If, in the previous round, it was Shaken, it receives +1 to all rolls.
- **Natural Grappler:** The typical attack of a Strangler Monkey consists of grappling its opponent’s neck with its oversized hands. The beast receives +2 to all grappling rolls.

MOA

A giant bird, incapable of flight, but with a very powerful beak and strong legs with talons. Usually peaceful, this beast can become very dangerous if its eggs are menaced. They exist in a number of hues

and stripes. Those of the Islands of the Maimed Ones are slightly bigger than those of the Finger Islands.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6.

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities

- **Beak:** Str+d6, AP 2.
- **Fleet-Footed:** Moas are excellent runners, they roll d8 instead of d6 as running dice.
- **Talons:** Str+d4. The Moa can make two attacks with its talons per round without any multi-action penalty.

PLAGUE DRAGON

You can tell one of these nightmarish creatures is near only by one thing: the awful smell.

Enormous, fat, lizards, Plague Dragons are big as cows, in certain cases even bigger. Their violet skin is covered in putrid wounds, seeping with yellowish pus. Their mouths, large as an oven, are drooling with venomous saliva, which they produce continuously.

Nobody knows the real origin of these beasts. Sages of Syranthia think they came from the Islands of the Maimed Ones, where they are quite common, but nowadays some examples can be found in the Finger Islands.

Despite permanently festering, these beasts are almost immune to everything, and act as disease carriers.

In addition, if the stories are true, they have a very long, almost infinite, life span, and continue to grow throughout their existence, until they are killed in some way, or die of hunger.

Lazy and quite stupid, their favorite hunting technique consists of biting their prey (they are carnivorous), and letting it escape. The victim will die of septicemia in few hours, and the Plague Dragon, following the scent trail, will find it and devour the diseased corpse.

Pigmies and Finger tribesmen alike fear Plague Dragons, and call them with the same name: Guragaluka, meaning “poisoner of water”. In fact, one of these beasts can easily kill an entire village if decides to drink from a spring or stream from which the people collect water, polluting it.

The following profile refers to a medium size specimen.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6.

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 13 (2)

Special Abilities

- **Armor +2:** Thick, festering, skin.
- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Large:** Attackers add 2 to their attacks to hit this beast, given its size.
- **Plague Carrier:** This creature is a walking contagion-spreader, bearing a terrible malady. Any character in contact with it (see below), must roll Vigor to avoid contracting a Short Term, Lethal disease. Depending on the nature of the contact, the roll suffers a modifier: (-4) for a successful bite or for eating or drinking a substance in contact with the monster, (-2) for skin contact, which happens when rolling 1 on the Fighting die during a melee, or without penalty for skin contact with an object or person brushed by the monster.
- **Size +4:** Plague Dragons are very big, larger than cows.

THE TRAITOR'S TONGUE

The tongue of a Plague Dragon is the source of its infections. Since the creature has a very slow metabolism, its tongue continues to produce infectious liquid for at least a week after being severed from the monster. If properly prepared with special alchemical treatments (a Lotusmastery (-2) roll and 500 Moons of components are required), it can continue to live permanently, in the form of the deadly artifact called the Traitor's Tongue, which must be kept in a tightly-sealed pot.

This spongy piece of meat produces three doses of toxin every day, which can be collected with a Lotusmastery roll and a day's work. In addition, if used to touch someone, the tongue has the same effect as skin contact (see the Plague Carrier ability of the monster). Note that handling this item is very dangerous, and if the wielder rolls a 1 on the skill die, regardless of the Wild Die, he gets the illness himself.

A Traitor's Tongue can net as much as 5000 Moons for the right customers. Given the nature of the persons interested in such an item, they'll probably kill you to get it.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Stealth d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities

- **Armor +1:** Shimmering shell.
- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Size -1:** Sand Diggers are more or less the size of dogs.
- **Underground Ambusher:** Sand Diggers have a limited form of burrow. They can conceal themselves under the sand, to spring up at their enemies. If the beast wins an opposed roll of Stealth against the victim's Notice, it also gets The Drop.

SAND DIGGER

This dog-sized, scarab-like insect has long legs and powerful jaws. Carnivorous, it infests a number of shores of the Finger Islands. Its favorite hunting technique consists of hiding under the sand, and jumping up at prey from below, catching them flat-footed.



LANTERN DIGGER

This particular sub-race of sand diggers dwells only underground and in dark places. They have a bulbous gland at the end of the body, which emanates a gloomy luminesce (consider it a light source in a MBT). The gland continues to work for 2d4 days after the death of the critter and can be safely removed with a Survival roll.

If used in a Lotus potion with a light trapping, it doubles the duration, or gives +2 to opposed rolls.

A Lantern Digger gland is worth around 50 Moons to Lotusmasters, but only if still active.

SHARKS

Among the most dangerous predators of the seas, sharks are the constant nightmare of fishermen, mariners and pirates alike. They are a good way to dispose of unwanted stowaways, too. Sharks are holy

beasts to Rakua, and fishermen always pray to the god after killing one of them.

WHITE DEVIL

A large, dangerous shark found mainly in the Dread Sea and the Endless Ocean, the White Devil is a silent hunter, which attacks prey with deadly accuracy. The bigger specimens are also known to have attacked small boats.

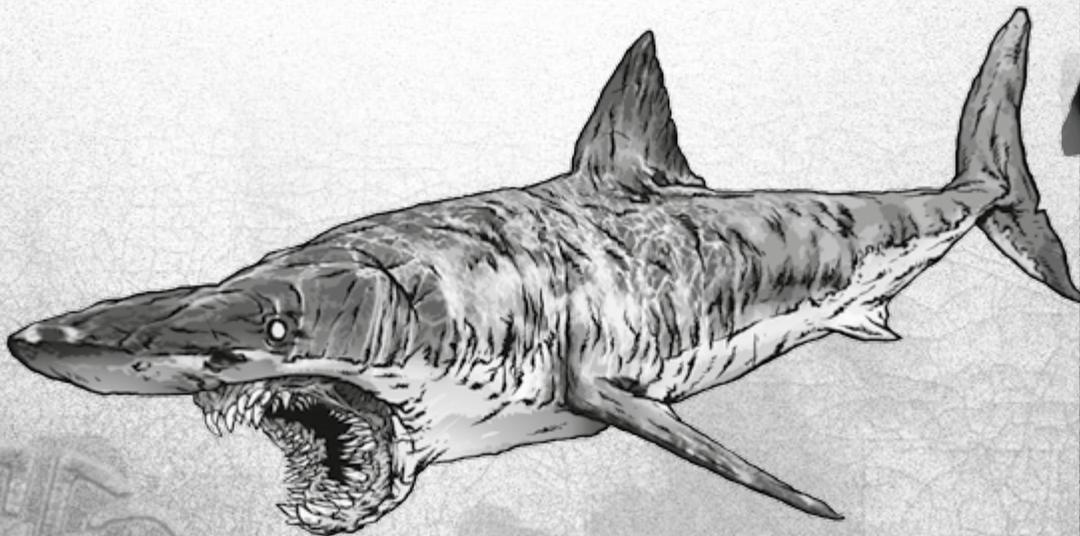
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d10, Stealth d10, Swimming d10

Pace: —; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10

Special Abilities

- **Aquatic:** Pace 10.
- **Bite:** Str+d8.
- **Silent Killer:** White Devils are very quiet. If they win an opposed Stealth roll, they automatically gain The Drop on their opponent.
- **Size +3:** White Devils can grow up to 16' in length.



HERO'S JOURNAL: PRAYING FOR SHARKS

There are stories that priests of Rakua can command sharks. This cannot be entirely true, but, in some cases, it has happened. A character with the Priest Edge, who is a follower of Rakua, can try to call for sharks, but only if he has murderous intent in his soul. In game terms, the priest must pray and make at least one of these Preparations: spend a Bennie, cut himself and spill his blood in the sea (causing an un-Soakable Wound), or sacrifice a living being in the water. At this point he performs a Dramatic Task based on Spirit (-2), +2 per additional Preparation beyond the first. If the Dramatic Task is successful, the sharks (at least as many as the priest's Spirit die type) will come in 2d4x10 minutes (the roll can ace). Note that the sharks are hungry, very hungry, and are not under the control of the priest.

If the priest obtains three or more failures in the Dramatic Task, Rakua is displeased, and this counts as having failed the Spirit roll for the Priest Edge.

somewhat larger female (Size +1), which is the pack leader.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Swimming d8

Pace: —; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Special Abilities

- **Aquatic:** Pace 8.
- **Armor +1:** Very thick hide and fins.
- **Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Poisonous Fins:** Str+d4. The skin of a Rakka Fish is covered in short, poisonous fins, which the beast uses to cut its prey. This can be done intentionally, with the fish passing near the victim and winning an opposed Swimming roll (+2 for the fish). Otherwise, while in melee, if the opponent scores a 1 on the Fighting die, regardless of the Wild Die, he is automatically hit by the fins. The poison isn't very strong, but is very persistent, and any character Shaken or Wounded by the fins must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue (multiple levels can lead to death).
- **Size -1:** Rakka Fishes are somewhat smaller than a human.

MONSTERS



SEA MONSTER

This generic profile represents a Sea Monster, a gargantuan being dwelling in the depths. They are all different and the GM is strongly encouraged to tweak it according to his needs, using the Legendary Sea Monsters sidebar as guideline.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+10, Vigor d12

RAKKA FISH

This sub-species of sharks is very peculiar. Not very long, only three feet, it has a somewhat broader build than other sharks, but it is covered by a series of long, sharp, poisoned fins, which make it somewhat similar to a cross-breed between a shark and a puffer fish. Rakka Fishes always hunt in packs of three: two males, and a

PIRATES OF THE DOMINIONS

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6.

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 22 (4)

Special Abilities

- **Aquatic:** Pace 16 in water.
- **Armor +4:** Scaly skin.
- **Bite:** Str+d8.
- **Fear (-2):** Sea Monsters awake atavistic terror in men, requiring a Fear Check.
- **Gargantuan:** Sea Monsters are enormous. Attackers add +4 to their attacks to hit these beasts. Given their size, the monsters' attacks are considered Heavy Weapons, and they add their Size to Strength rolls.
- **Hardy:** The Sea Monster does not suffer a Wound from a second Shaken result.
- **Monstrous Impact:** A Sea Monster uses all its mass to crush large objects (like ships or the walls of a city for those capable of leaving water). In game terms, they make a Strength roll, opposed by the target's Boating (if applicable). On a success the victim is crushed for 4d6 damage.
- **Size +10:** Sea Monsters are enormous, as large as ships at least.



LEGENDARY SEA MONSTERS

Below are some of the most famous Sea Monsters of the Dominions, for use in your adventures or as examples for your own.

That-Which-Devours. *This enormous creature, infesting the sea around the Islands of the Maimed Ones, is a mass of diseased flesh, corrupted by the taint of the Islands. Originally, it was probably a whale. If the stories are true, it guards the path to the lost city of Vanaua. It seldom appears, preferring to sleep in the depths, but when it does, it never calms down until a young virgin woman is sacrificed to its unholy appetite.*

Tweaks: That-Which-Devours is so big it can easily capsizes (see page 111) ships, simply by winning an opposed Strength roll against the crew's Boating.

Talaska. *There are no confirmed sightings of this creature, except the stories told by the Cannibals of the Islands around campfires. Talaska is the personification of the sea's hunger, and has the shape of an enormous shark. Stories say it can be seen by night from far away, because its open mouth emanates a faint light, emitted by the souls of the devoured trapped inside it. Talaska is said to attack only by night, and only when it is dead calm.*

Tweaks: Talaska swims very fast (Pace: 24) and its mouth causes Str+d10, AP 6 damage. It doesn't have the Monstrous Impact Special Ability.

The Kraken. *If the legends are true, an enormous, black octopus dwells in the middle of the Drowned King Sea, a servant of the King himself. It sleeps all the time, until someone displeases its lord. In this case it starts sucking in water, creating an enormous maelstrom, which is called the Kraken's Mouth (see page 111). Note this is an unconfirmed legend, because so far, nobody has survived the Kraken's Mouth to confirm it.*

Tweaks: The Kraken is surrounded by a Maelstrom (see page 111). In addition, it has twelve long tentacles (Reach 12, Parry 5, Toughness: 12 (3), Damage: Str+d4) which it can use, in place of the Monstrous Impact Special Ability, to grab things. If they hit with a raise, they grab the victim (who is usually carried away).

Zalka-Dhun. *This word is a strange mix of Lhobanese and Ekulian, probably because the home of this ancient creature is the north-eastern coast of the Brown Sea, from Ekul to Lhobanport. Literally "Warrior of the Depths", this creature is a giant crab, dwelling not far away from the coast. The legend says Zalka was the chosen bodyguard of King Azamaros of Ekul, who was tasked to guard the enormous treasure of his lord, a notorious miser. One day, King Azamaros found a single coin missing, and condemned Zalka to die, throwing him into the sea in full armor. But the sea spirits took the valiant warrior and transformed Zalka into the enormous creature he is now. The legend says that, years after, Azamaros was overthrown by his own people and took ship to Lhoban where he was attacked by Zalka-Dhun himself. The ship was destroyed, and the enormous treasure of the King was taken to an underground grotto, guarded again by Zalka-Dhun. Nobody knows what happened to the King.*

Tweaks: Zalka-Dhun is armed with two powerful pincers (Str+d10, AP 4), and his shell is so thick he has Heavy Armor. The only weak points are the eyes (-4 to hit, Toughness: 12). He cannot use the Monstrous Impact Special Ability.



BLACK SHADOW

This fearful creature is probably the result of unnatural crossbreeding between apes and demons that the Keronians attempted millennia ago. Somewhat after the Dread Star's fall, some of these beasts managed to escape their cages, and found shelter in the Finger Islands. A big, long-fanged ape, this creature has fur the color of the night, and, despite its bulk, it can move surprisingly well. A natural-born predator, the yellowish light shimmering in its eyes denotes an intelligence far superior to that of a beast. Be warned, don't let your eyes be caught by its stare, otherwise you will be lost in the depths of the beast's soul, while it tears at your body.

Black Shadows, having demon blood, are sometimes summoned by sorcerers; they are considered Heroic creatures, but given their nature, the caster suffers -2 to the Sorcery roll.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d10.

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10

Special Abilities

- **Draining Bite:** Str+d4. The Black Shadow is fitted with long, partially retractable teeth. As well as attacking with them in melee (with -2), it can use them to drain the blood from a dead victim. This requires at least three minutes. After this, the Black Shadow can make a Natural Healing roll, or if fully healed, it can gain one die step in Strength or Vigor (up to d12+2) for a full day.
- **Fear:** Black Shadows make your skin crawl, requiring a Fear check the first time you see one of them.
- **Fists:** Str+d4.

- **Hypnotic Gaze:** The eyes of this beast can enthrall the minds of persons. As an action, it can make an opposed Spirit roll with someone who can see its eyes (usually 6" on the battlefield). On a success, the victim is Shaken.
- **Shadow-Black Fur:** The fur of this creature is peculiar, with the capability of absorbing light. It receives +2 to all Stealth rolls made in darkness.
- **Size +3:** A Black Shadow is very large, even if silent as death itself.

DROWNED ONE

Every day, lots of people die at sea: mariners, fishermen, even the occasional suicide. The greater part of these unfortunate souls find peace in the cold arms of the sea, but others return, in the form of awful undead creatures, craving for the warm flesh of the living.

DROWNED SAILOR

The typical dead at sea, this monster is usually part of the crew of ghost ships (if you believe they really exist).

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Swimming d6.

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Gear: Tarnished bronze sword (Str+d6)

Special Abilities

- **Aquatic:** Drowned Sailors move with uncanny skill in water.
- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recovering from being Shaken; immune to poison, disease, called shots and, obviously, drowning.
- **Wall Walker:** The slimy hands of a Drowned Sailor stick very well to solid surfaces, they can climb even very steep walls without any need to roll.

- **Weakness (Head):** Crushing the severed head of the Drowned Sailor (Toughness 3) immediately kills it, reducing it to a heap of rotting flesh.



DROWNED CAPTAIN

The captain of a ghost ship, an unfortunate soul eternally linked to his vessel and his crew.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Boating d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Swimming d6.

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9

Gear: Tarnished sword (Str+d8), tatters of light armor (+1), rotten eyepatch

Special Abilities

- **Burning Eye of Terror:** The archetypal Drowned Captain wears a rotten eyepatch, with something disgusting living in the eye socket. A stare from this monstrosity counts as both having The Eyepatch and the Improved Impressive Aura Edges.
- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Dark Gifts of the Depths:** Drowned Captains have supernatural abilities conferred on them by the dark powers that call them back from the grave. They can use the following Powers: *fear* (terrible howl), *havoc* (summon storm), *summon ally* (swarm of crabs, shark, Drowned Sailor). They have 20 Power Points and use Spirit as their arcane skill.
- **Invulnerability:** You can Shake a Drowned Captain, but nothing short of magic or his Weakness will kill him.
- **One with the Ship:** The Drowned Captain is intimately linked to his ship. Killing him usually destroys the ship, and, in the same way, destroying the ship lays the captain to rest.

- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recovering from being Shaken; immune to poison, disease, called shots and, obviously, drowning.
- **Weakness (varies):** Drowned Captains are tormented souls, and to lay them to rest, something special must be done: they must be killed with a special weapon, or their treasure must be restored to their burial place, or they must be given a particular object or person. The GM should design the Weakness of every Drowned Captain individually.



SEA WAILER

If you have to stay on deck by night, old Cairnlander mariners say, bring with you some seaweed and a pinch of salt, to put in your ears if you stumble on a Sea Wailer. These wretched souls, almost always women, are restless spirits who died at sea, and return to haunt the living and drive them mad with their hopeless wails. Stories say that only women who commit suicide at sea come back in this way, but this doesn't seem to be true.

Sea Wailers are considered Legendary creatures for the purposes of the *summon ally* Power.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d12+2, Notice d6.

Pace: 6; **Parry:** -; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities

- **Cold Fingers of Death:** Sea Wailers ignore any type of non-magical armor.
- **Ethereal:** Sea Wailers can be harmed only by magic or magical weapons.
- **Hopeless Wail:** Sea Wailers are full of an unimaginable sorrow; they express it with a terrible wail, which can be heard within Spirit x 10" on the

battlefield. Beasts hearing it simply make a Fear check (-4), in the case of failure they flee. Humans, instead, must make a Spirit roll, opposed by the Intimidation of the Wailer. For each success and raise by the Wailer, they suffer a level of Fatigue, which can lead to permanent madness (consider the hero as good as dead). Stuffing the ears with seaweed grants +2 to the roll, adding salt grants another +2. These protections are known by any sailor of the Drowned King Sea and any character succeeding at a Knowledge (Legends and Lore) roll.

- **Restless Spirit:** Sea Wailers, even if killed by magic, return after 2d6 days. The only way to get rid of them permanently is by exploiting their weakness (see below).
- **Weakness (Reason for Unrest):** Sea Wailers remain in our world because there is something unresolved in their lives; they may seek retribution from those who killed them, a truth exposed, or simply want their mortal remains to be found and properly buried. Finding and resolving the problem frees them. The character doing so should be rewarded with a special Bennie, the Unrest Bennie, which is conserved between sessions until spent (when it expires); this works as usual, but also grants +2 to any roll against undead.

DENIZENS OF THE SEA

CORSAIRS OF CALDEIA

Corsairs, the freebooters reporting to the King of Caldeia, are the terror of the pirates of the Cove, even if they are often as rapacious as their counterparts. Despite

their sinister fame, Corsairs are skilled sailors and warriors.

CORSAIR

A soldier-mariner serving Caldeia. Many of them are former pirates themselves, adventurers by vocation.

Customization: Artillerist (Smarts d8, Shooting d8, add +2 to attack rolls with war machines), Swordsman (Fighting d10, Taunt d8, add the Block and Counterattack Edges), Shield Bearer (replace Weapons with Medium Shield and Spear and Corsair Fencer with Block).

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Boating d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d6.

Charisma: +1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7;

Toughness: 6(1)

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Corsair Fencer.

Hindrances: Some of them have the Code of Honor (Corsairs – see sidebar).

Gear: Corsair bronze sword (Str+d8), bronze dagger (Str+d4, Range: 3/6/12), light corsair armor (+1).

Special Abilities

- **Hunter of Pirates:** When fighting pirates, Corsairs receive +1 to damage rolls.
- **Officer:** Corsairs are very organized. One of them in every twelve is an officer, with Fighting and Intimidation one die step higher and the Command Edge.



CORSAIR CAPTAIN

The Commander of a Corsair ship, he must be both a good soldier and an excellent sailor. Corsair Captains respond to Lord Karvas directly (see page 23).

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Boating d8, Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Taunt d8, Throwing d6.

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 8(2)

Edges: Block, Charismatic, Counterattack, Combat Reflexes, Corsair Fencer, Command, Hold the Line!

Hindrances: Some of them have the Code of Honor (Corsairs') – see sidebar.

Gear: Corsair bronze sword (Str+d8), bronze dagger (Str+d4, Range: 3/6/12), medium corsair armor (+2).

Special Abilities

Hunter of Pirates: When fighting pirates, Corsairs receive +1 to damage rolls.

AN EXTRAVAGANT WAY OF LIFE

Corsairs are very organized at war, but in truth, there is more than a roguish touch to them. Easy to inflame and tremendous enemies of pirates, many of them exhibit a certain courtesy toward women and are fair fighters. Below are summarized the tenets of the Corsairs' Code of Honor that some of them (not all) follow:

- † *Always respect your given word.*
- † *A friend of my friend is my friend.*
- † *Respect your opponent, so long as he respects you.*
- † *Treat ladies with fairness.*
- † *My loyalty is to my Captain, his Lord and my Lady, in that order.*

DAIMAO

These massive thugs, grown abnormally big due to the Lotus they consume, are, with the Yellow Masks, the main force supporting the Sea Tyrant of the City of Leaves. Don't be fooled by their appearance: they can be very fast and deadly.

Customization: Bodyguard (can use the Fanatics setting rule toward his principal), Butterfly Lord (Fighting d10, replace gear with a pair of Butterfly Swords, add the Two Fisted and Ambidexterity Edges), Crusher (Fighting d10, add the Martial Artist, Brawler and Bruiser Edges, replace gear with seashells necklace (count as iron fists)), Smuggler (Streetwise d8, Contacts (any two)), Torturer (Intimidation d10, Persuasion d8).

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Boating d4, Climbing d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6.

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

Edges: Brawny, Loincloth Hero, Quick.

Hindrances: Obese.

Gear: Spear (Str+d6, 2 hands, +1 Parry, Reach 1), dagger (Str+d4, Range: 3/6/12).

Special Abilities

- **Mountain of Flesh:** A Daimao is big and fat, over the normal human standards, but there are iron muscles under that layer of fat. He has both the Brawny and Obese Hindrances.
- **Turtle Shell Tattoo:** Daimaos are often covered in tattoos, representing their skill and rank in the organization. In particular, many of them sports a turtle shell tattoo on an arm, this conferring +1 to Intimidation rolls.

FINGER PIGMIES TRIBES

Pigmies of the Finger Islands are slightly different, physically, from their Lush Jungle counterparts: they are slightly taller and their skin is a shade grayer.

Their customs have evolved somewhat from ways of the jungle, in some cases returning to the old ways of Keron.

Rules-wise, you can use the same profiles as in GE.

Here follow descriptions of some of the most infamous Pigmy tribes of the Finger Islands, including their traditional Warrior Masks. These are only a selection: surely other clans exist in the archipelago, and the GM is encouraged to devise his own.

GHOST SKULLS

The members of this clan paint their entire body with a white, chalk-like powder which gives them the appearance of small ghosts. Actually, this powder is made from bones they find in tombs and old ruins, and the pigmies think it makes them invulnerable.

The Ghost Skulls try to capture their victims alive to perform a perverse ritual: first they carve the teeth of the prisoners with arcane symbols, then they throw them in the Pit of Whispers, a cursed place full of echoes. After a week, the victim is retrieved, totally changed in mind and body, and becomes a Bone Slave: a pale, ghoulish abomination, fond of human flesh, totally subjugated to the will of the tribal shamans (use the Twisted Servants profile adding the Undead Special Ability).

Warrior Mask: Takuchuk (Death Who Walks). *Hardy Special Ability and Combat Reflexes Edge. Fighting d10 and Strength d10. Gear: black wood war club.*

UMBA BAGA

This clan of pigmies is very small, with only a few dozen of members. Probably they were originally a caste in a larger tribe, but today they form a separate clan. Umba Baga means more or less "hex man" in their language and they are very unnerving: dressed in smelly robes made of un-treated skins, they are terrible sorcerers, capable of killing and maiming enemies with the power of their curses, feared even by other clans. They dwell in ancient temples, preferably underground, where they perform unholy rites to their strange deities. The Umba Baga are all males, and they kidnap women of every race for breeding purposes, or buy slaves from pirates and other evildoers. The offspring are all Pigmies and the unfortunate mothers are never seen again. The Umba Baga have a slightly different custom regarding masks: all of them wear one (because their faces are often misshapen and deformed), but they are only a pale imitation of their unique Warrior Mask: Utula of the Six Eyes (see below).

Umba Baga have no Warriors, only acolytes. The acolytes use the same profile as the Pigmy Painted Shaman from GE but they only have 2 Powers, 10 Power Points, don't have the Woodsman Edge and are Extras.

Warrior Mask: Utula (Six-Eyed Demon). *Use the Pigmy Painted Shaman as the base template, adding Low Light Vision and Ritual of Binding Edge. Sorcery d10, Knowledge (Arcana) d10. Gear: horned staff (Str+d4, +1 Parry, 2 hands, counts as a Sorcerer's Staff, grants AP 2 to damage-dealing Powers).*

MARINE

Marines are the typical soldiers employed by the navies of all the civilized Dominions, especially Faberterra, Syranthia, Kyros and the Independent Cities. Of average skill and training but with good equipment, they are usually enough to turn pirates aside.

Customization: Gis Ship Slinger (Shooting d8, add the Trained Thrower (Sling) Edge, replace Weapons with War Sling and Bronze Short Sword); Lhobanport Wool Dog (Fighting and Strength d8, replace Gear with Wool Pike and medium armor, they have the Loyal Hindrance and the Combat Reflexes Edge); Faberterranean Talattomo (Fighting d8, all his weapons are of iron, add javelin to Gear); Independent Cities Archer (Shooting d8, add Bow to Gear); Syranthian Sea Spear (Fighting d8, replace Gear with spear and medium armor); Tricarnian Blue Guardian (Strength d8, Fighting d8, Spirit d4, replace gear with Caste Sword (Str+d8, -1 Parry) and medium shield, head shaved and dyed blue to stop him escaping).

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Boating d4, Climbing d4, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d6, Throwing d6.

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6;

Toughness: 6(1)

Edges: None.

Hindrances: None.

Gear: Bronze sword (Str+d8) and medium shield (+1 Parry, +2 Toughness vs. ranged attacks) or spear (Str+d6, Range:3/6/12, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands), light leather armor (+1), bronze helm (+2, only head).

Special Abilities

- **Fight in Ranks:** Marines aren't as well-trained as phalanxes, obviously,

but know how to fight on a ship, in cramped quarters. If they are adjacent to another Marine and within Command Radius of an Officer, they gain +1 to Fighting rolls.

- **Officer:** Marines are usually well-organized, one in every ten is an Officer, with Fighting d8 and the Command Edge.

MARINER

The typical sailors of the Dominions can be represented with this profile.

SAILOR

A typical member of a ship's crew, found everywhere in the Dominions.

Note on Weapons: Usually, Sailors aren't armed with real weapons aboard ship (except those listed in the profile), but the ship's armory is equipped with short swords, axes and bows.

Customization: Big Sailor (add the Brawny Edge and Intimidation d8), Deckhand (Young Hindrance, remove Intimidation), Helmsman (add the Quartermaster Edge and Boating d8), Lookout (Notice d8), Old Sea Wolf (Boating d8, add the Sea Wolf Edge), Slave Sailor (if Tricarnian: Strength d8, Smarts d4, no Gear, otherwise like Sailor).

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d4, Notice d4, Shooting d4, Throwing d4.

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5;

Toughness: 5

Edges: None.

Hindrances: None.

Gear: Bronze dagger (Str+d4, Range: 3/6/12) or bronze hook (Str+d4, AP 1).

Special Abilities

- **Man at the Helm:** Only for the Helmsman. He has a single Bennie which can be used only for ship-related tasks (Boating rolls and soaking ship wounds as per the Quartermaster Edge).

CAPTAIN

The commander of a vessel. He must be both a skilled sailor and a commander of men.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Boating d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d4, Streetwise d6, Throwing d4.

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6(1)

Edges: None.

Hindrances: None.

Gear: Bronze sword (Str+d8), bronze dagger (Str+d4, Range: 3/6/12), light leather armor (+1).

Special Abilities

- **“It’s My Ship!”:** Aboard his vessel only, the Captain has the Command Edge and Command Radius 10”, but only toward his own crew.

YELLOW MASK

One of the Lotusmasters serving the mysterious Sea Tyrant of the City of Leaves, this man (or woman) is never seen without his wooden mask. He is a scholar, a bureaucrat and, occasionally, a spy and an assassin.

Customization: Bag Master of the Tyrant (Persuasion d10, Streetwise d10, Contacts (any three), replace the *blast* Power with the *poison* Power, he is a Wild Card), Justice of the Tyrant (Agility and Fighting d8, add the Acrobat and Thief Edges, replace the *barrier* Power with

the *invisibility* (Gray Lotus of Masking) Power), Naval Artillerist (Boating d8, Shooting d8, add the Command Edge, he gains +2 to attack rolls with war machines).

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Healing d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Lotusmastery d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Stealth d4, Throwing d6.

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: Arcane Background (Lotusmastery), Lotus Reserve, New Power, Power Points, Yellow Mask.

Hindrances: Loyal.

Powers [15 PP]: *barrier* (Purple Lotus of Fiery Fire), *blast* (Leaves Dragon’s Breath), *burst* (Justice of the Sea Tyrant).

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), Lotusmaster’s bag, healer’s kit, 5 doses of Refined Lotus, yellow mask (+2).

Special Abilities

- **Well-Stocked:** A non-player Lotusmaster generally has more time to study than a wandering adventurer. For this reason, he can use the Lotus Reserve Edge twice per session.

SKULL BANDER

A member of the dreaded pirates of the Drowned King Sea, answering only to Broken Sail. With some tweaks, you can use this profile for generic pirates of the northern seas.



HULL BREAKER

A zealous warrior, tasked to sink enemy ships. Many of them are also fervent followers of the Drowned King.

Customization: Mad Berserker (Fighting and Strength d12, add the Berserk Edge

and the Loincloth Hero Edges, remove all armor except the skull helm), Priest of the Drowned King (Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Knowledge (Religion) d8, add the Priest Edge).

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Boating d8, Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Knowledge (Battle) d4, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Repair d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d8.

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8

Edges: Brawny, Hull Breaker, No Mercy, Sweep, Trademark Weapon (crow's beak).

Hindrances: Arrogant, Delusion (I will be rewarded by the Drowned King – major).

Gear: Stone crow's beak (Str+d10, AP 2, 2 hands, -1 Parry, -1 to Fighting rolls), medium bone armor (+2), skull helm (+2,+2 to Intimidation rolls, -1 to Notice roll), bow (Damage: 2d6, Range: 12/24/48).



SKULL RAIDER CAPTAIN

A skilled mariner and sea reaver, he chose to follow Broken Sail to increase his personal power, and, why not, to find a place in the hall of the Drowned King after a glorious death in battle.

Customization: Bow Master (Shooting d10, add the Trained Thrower and Marksman Edges), Lord of the Beast (add the Beastmaster Edge, he has a Bear companion), Reborn from the Sea (Intimidation d10, add the Improved Nerves of Steel and Reborn from Waters Edges).

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Boating d8, Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Intimidation

d8, Notice d6, Riding d4, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Throwing d8.

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 7(1)

Edges: Block, Command, Sea Wolf, Dodge, Hold the Line!

Hindrances: Arrogant, Delusion (will be rewarded by the Drowned King – major), Greedy.

Gear: Bronze long axe (Str+d8), medium bone armor (+2), medium shield (+1 Parry, +2 Toughness vs. ranged attacks), skull helm (+2, +2 to Intimidation rolls, -1 to Notice roll), bow (Damage: 2d6, Range: 12/24/48).

Special Abilities

- **Lord of the Skull:** If he is present on the scene, the Terror of the Seas Special Ability of the Skull Raider Warriors works even better, causing -2 to the Fear Check.

SKULL RAIDER WARRIOR

A sea reaver, at the service of Broken Sail. The same profile can represent a typical pirate of the northern seas.

Customization: Crazy Helmsman (Boating d10, add Quartermaster and Luck Edges, add Delusion (Occasional Hallucinations) Hindrance, he is a Wildcard), Fanatical Boarder (add Frenzy and Berserk Edges, replace weapon with bone greataxe), Grizzled One-Eyed Pirate (Smarts d6, Boating d8 add One Eye and Weather Wound Hindrances).

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d6, Stealth d4, Survival d4, Throwing d6.

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6(1)

Edges: Brute.

Hindrances: Delusion (will be rewarded by the Drowned King – major).

Gear: Bronze battle axe (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 Parry, +2 Toughness vs. ranged attacks), bow (Damage: 2d6, Range: 12/24/48), light leather armor (+1), skull helm (+2, +2 to Intimidation rolls, -1 to Notice roll), severed head (Str+d4, Range: 4/8/16).

Special Abilities

- **Terror of the Seas:** Seeing a group of five or more charging Skull Raiders is a frightening sight, which requires a Fear check the first time it happens.

SHIPS

In this part of the bestiary, you'll find several ship's profiles, crews included, to use for your piratical enterprises and sea battles. As the Dominions are a place where no mass production exists, remember they are only guidelines, and individual ships could vary a lot from the standards described below.

As it is impossible to detail every member of the crew, they are described as a single entity with three parameters.

Crew X+Y: X indicates the minimum number of persons necessary to man it, and Y the additional persons (passengers, troops, extra sailors) the vessel can transport.

Crew Level: Indicates the average Boating skill of the sailors aboard (see page 96),

Crew Composition: This gives you a rough percentage of what character profiles (found in this book and in *GE*) make up the crew. If no percentage is given, it means there is a single character of this type in the crew.

Personalities: The typical personalities found aboard. Personalities in italics are found in *TB*, the plain text ones in this book. You can ignore these if not using the Band rules.

Edges and Hindrances: These refer to the optional Band Edges and Hindrances. Entries in italics are found in *TB*, the plain text ones in this book. You can ignore these if not using the Band rules.

Support Tokens: An abstract unit of wealth, introduced in *TB*, which gives you an idea of the cargo present in a ship (and how much of it you need to support your ship, if you are playing with Bands rules). In normal monetary terms, a Support Token is roughly worth 2000 Moons.

AMAZON HAWK SHIP

The typical ship of Ascaia, this slender and fast vessel represents the best seafaring craft in the Dominions. Manned by a crew of experienced warrior-sailors, an Amazon Hawk Ship is feared by everyone, even the mighty Tricornian Triremes. The War Hawks (see Customization below) are the capital ships, and usually there aren't more than three or four in the whole Ascaian fleet.

Customization: Scout Ship (Acc/TS: 4/20, Toughness: 12(2), Crew: 10+10, No Armaments, BV: 200), War Hawk (Acc/TS: 2/14, Crew: 20+60, Ship Size Large, Captain's Knowledge (Battle) d10, add a Catapult and two Hulian's Gifts to Armaments, BV: 600).

Acc/TS: 2/16 **Toughness:** 15(4) **Crew:** 10+50 **Crew Level:** d8 **BV:** 400

Ship Size: Medium

Captain's Skills: Boating d10, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Spirit d8

Personalities: Lieutenant, Shipwright, Specialist Leader (Archers).

Edges: Archers, Rowers.

Hindrances: *Exclusive, Costly.*

Armaments: Ballista (x2), Ram.

Crew Composition: Amazon Mariner (75%), Amazon Sea Archer (25%, add the Amazon Sea Archer to the Amazon Mariner profile), Hawk Ship Captain.

Notes: Amazon Sails, Heavy Armor, Reduced Draft, Rowers.

Special Abilities

- **Daughters of the Sea:** Amazons rarely marry, but the crews of a Hawk Ship are said to be married to the sea. They receive the Wild Die on Boating rolls, or, if they already have it, raise it by one die step.
- **Pride of Ascaia:** The crews of Hawk Ships are conscious of being the best of Ascaia, the last shield defending their country's independence from male power. They receive +2 to all Spirit rolls, including morale rolls in sea battles.

CAIRNLANDER KNARR

A Cairnlander vessel, fitted with rows and a single mast, used for both war and trade.

Customization: Trading Ship (Toughness: 14 (2), all the crew is composed of Sailors, no personality aboard but it carries 1d4+1 Support Tokens, BV: 180), Skull Raider Ship (all the crew is made of Skull Raider Warriors, and they are led by a Skull Raider Captain, with Boating d8 and Spirit d8, BV: 250).

Acc/TS: 2/12 **Toughness:** 13(2) **Crew:** 15+45 **Crew Level:** d6 **BV:** 200

Ship Size: Medium

Captain Skills: Boating d6, Knowledge (Battle) d4, Spirit d6

Personalities: Drummer or Hull Breaker.

Edges: Rowers.

Hindrances: *Superstitious, Undisciplined.*

Armaments: None.

Crew Composition: Cairnlander Warrior (50%), Sailor (50%), Captain.

Notes: Rowers, Sails.

Special Abilities

- **Figurehead of Doom:** The figurehead of a Cairnlander Knarr is made of bones, and often sailors put oil lamps inside it before an attack, so it seems to shimmer with an unholy light. While the figurehead is intact, the crew receives +1 to Boating and Battle rolls (in mass battles only), while on the tabletop, consider the Figurehead as having the Command and Hold the Line! Edges and a Command Radius of 15". The Figurehead has Toughness 6 (2) on the tabletop or can be destroyed, in mass battles, by accepting a -2 to the Battle roll (in the case of success any lost Token is a Ship Token and the Figurehead is automatically destroyed). Whenever the Figurehead is destroyed, the Cairnlanders suffer -1 to all rolls till the captain or another character with the Command Edge manages to rally them (with a Persuasion (-2) or Intimidation (-2) roll).

CORSAIR SHIP

A slender and fast war ship of the Corsairs of Caldeia. It is a vessel made for war, not for trade.

Customization: Bait Ship (this ship resembles a merchant vessel to lure pirates, but the hull is filled with soldiers, Acc/TS: 2/10, no Armaments, Crew: 10+60, if boarded, the first round of boarding a Bait Ship receive +4 to battle rolls due surprise), Scout Ship (Acc/TS: 3/12, Toughness: 12 (3), Crew: 10+20, BV: 200, replace Armaments with Ballista).

Acc/TS: 2/12 **Toughness:** 14(3) **Crew:** 15+50 **Crew Level:** d8 **BV:** 300

Ship Size: Medium

Captain Skills: Boating d8, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Spirit d8

Personalities: *Lieutenant or Specialist Leader (Boarders).*

Edges: *Animosity (Pirates), Mobility.*

Hindrances: Exclusive.

Armaments: Boarding Bridge, Hulian Scorpions (x2), Ram.

Crew Composition: Corsair (100%), Corsair Captain.

Notes: Sails.

Special Abilities

- **Corsair Discipline:** Corsairs are very well trained and are a well-oiled war machine. A Corsair ship starts with an additional Bennie at the beginning of each battle.
- **Wall of Shields:** Corsairs are mainly swordsmen in close fights, but they are also trained with spear and shield. These are also very good to form a sort of wall of shields against incoming arrows. This requires the captain to spend the ship Bennie. If you are using the mass battle rules, they reduce the Battle Tokens lost by one, if you are using the tabletop rules they form a line (at least 6 corsairs in contact). Any corsair in contact with another one doubles the effect of shields (+4 Toughness versus ranged attacks, +2 Parry, but they suffer -2 to Fighting rolls). The Wall of Shields breaks, during mass battles, when the ship suffers an actual battle token loss (counting the reduction), or on the tabletop, when the line is broken in at least two points.

GHOST SHIP

There are lot of stories about Ghost Ships in the Dominions (see sidebar). Are they just stories born at the bottom of a Zalaska

barrel or there is some truth in them? Nobody knows, but the profile below represents such a ship and its undead crew.

Customization: Drowned King Ship (replace Drowned One and Drowned Captain with Cairnlander Raider and Cairnlander Warlord with the Undead Special Ability and Boating d6), Tricornian Nightmare (add Catapult (x2) and Ram to Armaments, replace Drowned Captain with Priest Prince with Boating d8 and the Undead Special Ability).

Acc/TS: 2/10 **Toughness:** 16(4) **Crew:** 20+80 **Crew Level:** d6 **BV:** 400

Ship Size: Large

Captain Skills: Boating d6, Spirit d10.

Personalities: *Champion or Sorcerer.*

Edges: *Frightening, Mindless Army.*

Hindrances: *Faceless Grunts.*

Armaments: None.

Crew Composition: Drowned One (100%), Drowned Captain.

Notes: Heavy Armor, Rows, Sails.

Special Abilities

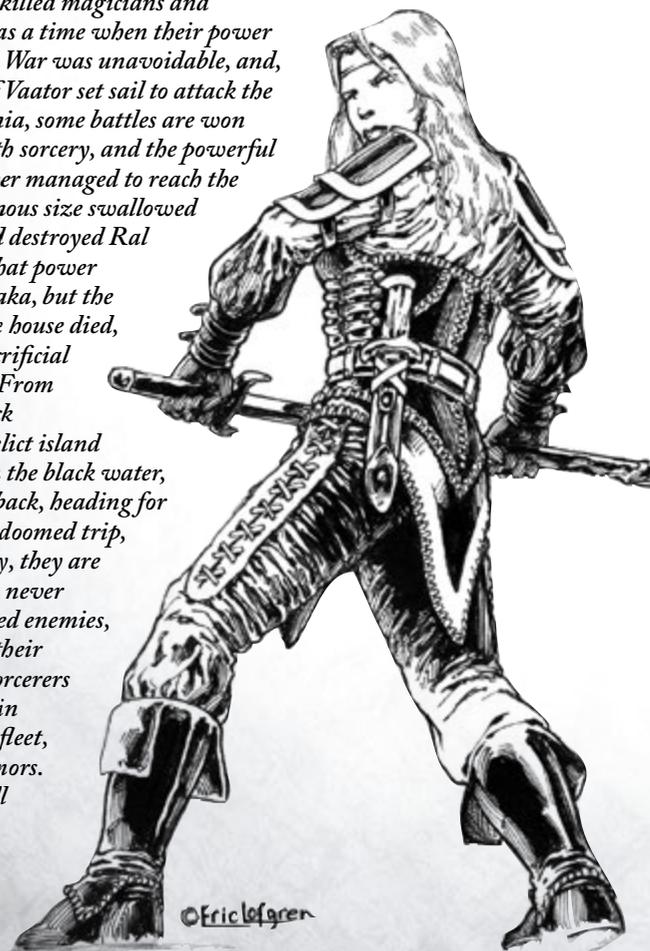
- **Vessel of Dread:** This ship is animated by magic, so during mass battles it can make a free Soak roll (using the Spirit of the captain) to reduce lost Battle Tokens. On the tabletop, this is represented by the Undead Special Ability of the crew.
- **Weakness (Ship Focus):** This vessel is animated by dark magic, meaning that there is something aboard which keeps it afloat. This can be a person (like the captain of the vessel), an object (for example the figurehead) or even an event (until the dread ritual aboard continues). When the focus is destroyed the ship loses 1d4 Ship Tokens per battle round during Mass Battles (the Vessel of Dread Special Ability doesn't apply), while on the tabletop, it sinks in 2d6 rounds.

FROM THE DEAD WAVES...

Stories about ghost ships are widespread in the Dominions, but real sightings are (luckily) very rare. A GM wanting to introduce such a threat into his campaign, should make a ghost ship the focus of a scenario. Below are described some of the most famous ones, which can be used as they are, or as inspirations for your own.

The Dead of Ral Vaator. *In a forgotten past, not far away from the southern coast of Tricarnia, half way between the City of Princes and Ral Hordaka, stood the island of Ral Vaator, with its port of white polished marble, so that it was called the City of the White Towers. The Vaatorian Princes were skilled magicians and excellent sailors, and there was a time when their power rivaled that of Ral Hordaka. War was unavoidable, and, in the end, the mighty fleet of Vaator set sail to attack the Port of Night. But in Tricarnia, some battles are won with weapons and others with sorcery, and the powerful fleet of the White Towers never managed to reach the enemy: a tidal wave of enormous size swallowed it in a single, titanic bite, and destroyed Ral Vaator too. Nobody knows what power did such a favor to Ral Hordaka, but the same day the eldest heir of the house died, butchered on the altar, the sacrificial knife held by his own father. From that very day, sometimes black clouds gather around the derelict island of Ral Vaator, and then, from the black water, the ships of Ral Vaator come back, heading for Ral Hordaka. But theirs is a doomed trip, because at the first light of day, they are forced to return to the depths, never managing to attack their hated enemies, but destroying any vessel on their route. There are stories that sorcerers with the blood of Ral Vaator in their veins can call upon this fleet, but they are unconfirmed rumors. The ships of Ral Vaator are all Tricarnian War Triremes.*

The Cup of the Heroes. *During the coldest nights, when a ship is facing the snow and the winds*



of the Drowned King Sea, it can happen that the lookout spots a greenish light in darkness. If this happens, turn the prow of your ship away and flee as fast as you can, making full sail regardless of the risks, because the light is that of the Cupbearer, the ship of the fabled Hollow Arm. A war lord of the distant past, Hollow Arm was the herald of the Drowned King, the first of his fleet, and the last to sink when his master angered the Ancestors. Now, during winter nights, the Cupbearer emerges from the depths and hunts for other ships. Hollow Arm looks for strong warriors and mariners, true heroes, to take with him into the sea, so they can serve his master. When the Cupbearer sees you, it starts chasing you, and won't stop till Hollow Arm and his crew board your vessel, or you leave the Drowned King Sea. Once he boards, his undead warriors kill every unworthy person (i.e. Extra) aboard, while they bring the worthy ones in front of him. Hollow Arm always has a wooden cup with him, filled with the wine of his lord's mansion, a salty liquid, and offers it to his prisoners. If you drink it, you wake up, in the palace of the Drowned King, his slave forever, while if you refuse, the soldiers will kill you and dismember your body. They'll throw it into the sea, except the head, which they hang from the bulwark.

There are rumors that the only way to stop Hollow Arm is to find his old spear, Deathbringer, which is made from the same tree as his cup, and plant it in the heart of the undead lord.

The Hangman's Curse. *Vartano of Caldeia was a famous Corsair. His ship, the Hangman, was the terror of the pirates of the Cove, and many good brothers fell beneath his sword, or, even worse, were captured alive and brought to Caldeia City, where they were consigned to the Priests of the King and disappeared forever.*

Then, four years ago Vartano was killed, in a fair duel, it must be said, by a young deckhand called Girios. He could not know he was the son of Draago, one of the Captains of the Cove. From that moment on, Draago started a merciless hunt on the sea, and finally, at Fate's Cape, the point where the coast of Keron leads to the Endless Ocean, Draago's ship the Reaper, helped by the Painted Lizard (also his at that time) and his good friend Arkatos, managed to engage the Hangman. It was a long and hard battle, and, in the end, the Corsairs were defeated. Draago ordered his men to kill all of them. All except one, Vartano, who was tied to the main mast. Then the hull of the Hangman was broken, and the ship left to sink, with the captain on it. Witnesses say that Vartano cursed Draago to the end, and, when the cold waters of Keron closed over his head, the echoes of his curses lingered long in the wind. From that day three long years have passed, and there are rumors that, incredibly, the Hangman has been seen again, crossing the sea, her sails tattered and with no apparent crew, apart from a solitary figure standing on the deck. Nobody knows what the strange ship really is or, more importantly, what the mysterious helmsman wants.

LARGE MERCHANT SHIP

A large, cumbersome and slow ship, made to transport great quantities of wares. You can expect rich loot from it, but also some trouble from the crew. Sometimes these ships travel in convoys and are escorted by military ships.

Customization: Caldeian Slaver Ship (crew is 15+50, the cargo is worth +1d6 Support Tokens but it is all human beings, replace Sailor with Pirate in Crew, BV: 220), Imperial Merchant Vessel (crew is composed of Sailor (50%), Marine (50%), replace Armaments with ballista, BV: 240), Syranthian Granary Ship (Acc/Ts: 1/6, Toughness: 16 (3), Crew: 16+8, the cargo is worth +1 Support Tokens but it is all food and will be worthless after 1d4+1 weeks).

Acc/Ts: 2/8 **Toughness:** 15(4) **Crew:** 8+20 **Crew Level:** d6 **BV:** 200

Ship Size: Large

Captain Skills: Boating d8, Spirit d6.

Personalities: *Quartermaster* or *Cook*.

Edges: None.

Hindrances: None.

Armaments: Hulian Scorpion.

Crew Composition: Marine 25%, Sailor (75%), Captain.

Notes: Rows, Sails.

Special Abilities

- **Passengers:** These ships sometimes carry civilians aboard, some of whom could be interesting (for example, worthy of a ransom). Draw two cards from the Action Deck; for every face card, there is an interesting personality on the ship (a merchant, a noble, a damsel, a priest or someone similar). With a Joker, there is an entire group of them.
- **Trading Vessel:** This ship isn't made for war, but for trade. It rarely travels empty, and you can find at least 1d6+1

Support Tokens of goods, valuables and slaves in it.

MEDIUM MERCHANT SHIP

This vessel is the typical merchant ship you can find almost anywhere in the Dominions.

Customization: Caldeian Khav ship (crew is 10+20, the cargo is worth +4 Support Tokens, replace Sailor with Pirate (Fighting d8) in Crew, BV: 180), Kyrosian Merchant Vessel (crew is composed of Sailor (75%), Marine (25%), add Hulian Scorpion to Armaments, BV: 140), Syranthian Merchant Ship (Acc/Ts: 3/12, Captain's Boating d8).

Acc/Ts: 2/12 **Toughness:** 14(3)/ **Crew:** 6+15 **Crew Level:** d6 **BV:** 100

Ship Size: Medium

Captain Skills: Boating d6, Spirit d6.

Personalities: None.

Edges: None.

Hindrances: *Reluctant Fighters*.

Armaments: None.

Crew Composition: Sailor (100%), Captain.

Notes: Sails.

Special Abilities

- **Passengers:** These ships sometimes carry civilians aboard, some of whom could be interesting (for example, worthy of a ransom). Draw a card from the Action Deck, if it is a face card, there is an interesting personality on the ship (a merchant, a noble, a damsel, a priest or someone similar). With a Joker, there is an entire group of them.
- **Trading Vessel:** This ship isn't made for war, but for trade. It rarely travels empty, and you can find at least 1d4-1 (minimum 1) Support Tokens of goods, valuables and slaves in it.

PIRATE SHIP

In truth there is no such thing as a “standard pirate ship”. Every pirate vessel has a different story; it could be a captured merchant or military vessel or one whose crew rebelled, a vessel built in the Cove or other piratical port, or a ship patched up from some shipwreck.

Customization: Cannibal Ship (all the crew, except the captain is composed of Cannibals, they have the Frugal Edge, because they are interested only in human flesh, not loot, BV 250), Deserter Ship (add Ram and Catapult to Armaments, crew composition is 50% Sailors, 50% Marines, can replace Specialist Leader with Artillerist).

Acc/TS: 2/12 **Toughness:** 14(3) **Crew:** 15+60 **Crew Level:** d6 **BV:** 200

Ship Size: Medium

Captain Skills: Boating d8, Knowledge (Battle) d4, Spirit d8

Personalities: *Champion* or *Specialist Leader (Boarders)*.

Edges: None.

Hindrances: *Courage in Numbers, Wanted.*

Armaments: None.

Crew Composition: Pirate (100%), Pirate Captain.

Notes: Sails.

Special Abilities

- **Courage in Numbers:** Pirates are often a disorganized mass of people, with vastly different equipment and training, but they find confidence and strength in numbers. While they have more Battle Tokens than the enemy they gain +1 to Battle rolls.
- **“We’ll Bathe in Wine and Gold Tonight!”:** Nothing motivates pirates more than loot. If, during a sea battle, the captain convinces them there will be much loot, he can make a Persuasion (-4) roll, +1 per

Loot Token he promises to find (at least one per 100 BV of the ship). If he is successful, the pirates gain +1 to Fighting and Damage rolls on the tabletop for the entire battle, or +1 to battle rolls, double the bonus with a raise. At the end of the battle, if the loot found is less than that promised, the pirates lose one Discipline step (if you are using *TB* rules), or are simply very upset and likely to rebel.

TRADING JUNK

The typical trading ship of the Brown Sea.

Customization: Independent Trader (crew is composed of Sailors (100%), Captain has Boating and Spirit d8, BV: 120), Wool Ship (crew is composed of Marines (50%), Sailors (50%), it transports 2d4+2 Support Tokens of loot, BV: 180).

Acc/TS: 2/12 **Toughness:** 12(2) **Crew:** 15+40 **Crew Level:** d6 **BV:** 150

Ship Size: Medium

Captain Skills: Boating d6, Spirit d6

Personalities: *Lieutenant.*

Edges: None.

Hindrances: *Reluctant Fighters.*

Armaments: None.

Crew Composition: Marine (25%), Sailor (75%), Captain.

Notes: Sails.

Special Abilities

- **Into the Wind:** Junks, given their system of sails, can move into the wind, giving an edge in sea battles. They receive an additional Bennie to be spent during chases or in sea battles, but only before boarding.
- **Passengers:** These ships sometimes carry civilians aboard, some of whom could be interesting (for example, worthy of a ransom). Draw a card from the Action Deck, if it is a face card, there is an interesting personality

on the ship (a merchant, a noble, a damsel, a priest or someone similar). With a Joker, there is an entire group of them.

- **Trading Vessel:** This ship isn't made for war, but for trade. It rarely travels empty, and you can find at least 1d6 Support Tokens of goods, valuables and slaves in it.

TRICARNIAN WAR TRIBEMÉ

Every person of the Dominion who lives on the coast trembles whenever he sees one of these black-sailed ships, because they always bring with them doom, desperation, and a fate worse than death: in the past, hundreds of people were captured and thrown into their black hulls, to be sold as slaves in far-away Tricornia. The most unfortunate never reached the land of Princes and Demons and ended their life as greasy meals for the creatures lurking below the deck.

Customization: Ral Hordaka Ship (remove the Catapults and add four Swarms (see SWD page 141) and one Beast Rider (TLD page 225)), Pirate Vessel (Remove the Faceless Grunts Hindrance and replace Drummer with Champion), Sorcerer's Ship (Remove Catapult, add the Monster Edge, the Captain has the stats of a Priest Prince, plus Boating d8).

Acc/TS: 2/8 **Toughness:** 19(4) **Crew:** 60+100 **Crew Level:** d6 **BV:** 350

Ship Size: Large

Captain Skills: Boating d8, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Spirit d8

Personalities: Drummer.

Edges: Frightening.

Hindrances: Faceless Grunts.

Armaments: Boarding Bridge, Ballista (x2) Catapult (x2), Rostrum.

Crew Composition: Slave Sailor (50%), Slave Marine (50%), Captain.

Notes: Heavy Armor, Sails, Rows.

Special Abilities

- **Flesh Cargo:** This ship has 1d6+2 Loot Tokens of slaves aboard.
- **Slave Ship:** The majority of the crew on a Tricornian ship is made up of slaves. Tricornian slaves are very docile and obedient, but never forget that, on the open sea, during a sea battle, even they can rebel. Whenever the War Trireme has fewer Battle Tokens than its opponent, and rolls a 1 on the Battle dice, in addition to any damage suffered part of the crew mutinies, joining the attackers. For mass battles, one of the Crew Tokens of the Tricornian ship is given to the opponent, while on tabletop 2d4x5% of the crew joins their opponent.

WAR JUNK

A junk of the Brown Sea, made for war. Unlike the trading version it includes a single bank of oars; it is also sturdier and armed with war machines.

Customization: City of Leaves Ship (crew is composed of Marines (60%), Sailors (40%), Captain has Knowledge (Battle) d8, BV: 300), Lhobanport War Ship (change crew to Pirate (100%), add Lotusmaster to Personalities, BV: 300).

Acc/TS: 2/12 **Toughness:** 13(2) **Crew:** 15+60 **Crew Level:** d6 **BV:** 250

Ship Size: Medium

Captain Skills: Boating d8, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Spirit d6

Personalities: *Champion, Lieutenant.*

Edges: Battle Hardened.

Hindrances: None.

Armaments: Ballista, Hulian Scorpion.

Crew Composition: Marine (50%), Sailor (50%), Captain.

Notes: Rows, Sails.

Special Abilities

- **Into the Wind:** Junks, given their system of sails, can move into the wind, giving an edge in sea battles. They receive an additional Bennie to be spent during chases or in sea battles, but only before boarding.

WAR SHIP

A large war ship, employed by the navies of Faberterra, Syranthia and Kyros. It is cumbersome and very costly to maintain, but can grant sea superiority.

Customization: Imperial Dromon (add the Archers Edge, all the Marines and half the Sailors are armed with bows and have Shooting d6), Syranthian Sea Knight (crew is composed of Sailors (25%), Marines (75%), Captain's Knowledge (Battle) d8), Kyrosian Justicar (remove Catapult and Ballista, add two Hulian Scorpions, +2 Armor from front, +2 to ramming attempts, BV: 320).

Acc/TS: 2/10 **Toughness:** 17(4) **Crew:** 30+90 **Crew Level:** d8 **BV:** 350

Ship Size: Large

Captain Skills: Boating d8, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Spirit d8

Personalities: Artillerist, Lieutenant.

Edges: Artillery, Battle Hardened.

Hindrances: Costly.

Armaments: Ballista (x2), Boarding Bridge, Catapult, Hulian Scorpion (x2), Rostrum.

Crew Composition: Sailor (50%), Marine (50%), Captain.

Notes: Heavy Armor, Sails, Rowers.

Special Abilities

Capital Ship: This ship is big and dangerous. The crew of any smaller vessel facing it, must make a group Spirit roll at the beginning of the battle, or suffer -1 to all rolls for the first two battle rounds.

Rain of Death: A War Ship is dangerous not only for the soldiers aboard, but also for its war machines, which can throw a rain of death on opponents. In mass battles, during Volleys, the captain can make a Boating (-2) roll, in the case of success he receives +2 to his Battle roll, because he manages to reposition the war engines to shoot at their best. On the tabletop, the ship can shoot with half his war machines, rounded up, every round. In addition, the captain can make a Boating (-2) roll. In the case of success he manages to reposition the other artillery and can shoot with the other half as well, but at -2.