

PYRAMID

Issue 3/64 February '14

PIRATES AND SWASHBUCKLERS

SWORDS AGAINST EVIL

by Sean Punch

SCURVY-DOG SORCERY
by Jason "PK" Levine

SAILING THE OPEN SKIES
by Christopher R. Rice

THE SPANISH PRISONER
by David L. Pulver

**THE QANAT PIRATES
OF OLD THAN**
by Matt Riggsby

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

Stock #37-2664

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Article Colors

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

- Pale Blue:* In This Issue
- Brown:* In Every Issue (humor, editorial, etc.)
- Green:* Columnist
- Dark Blue:* **GURPS** Features
- Purple:* Systemless Features

COVER ART

Don Maitz

INTERIOR ART

Matt Riggsby

Are your timbers insufficiently shivered? Do your hatches need more battening? Is there a stained glass window just *begging* to be smashed through so you can save the day? This month's *Pyramid* is here to help, swinging from a rope with cutlass in hand, with a treasure chest full of pirate-and-swash-buckling action!

We start to buckle our swashes by first testing our *Swords Against Evil!* Sean Punch – captain of the **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy** line – provides four Age of Sail-themed possibilities that reimagine the swashbuckler template from **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers**. You'll also get dozens of new customization suggestions, plus suggested power-ups for each one. A table of fancy weapons will help you pick just the right one.

Sometimes a "C" in spellcasting class is okay . . . especially when you're studying the arrr-cane! When magic-minded pirates want to cast spells, they turn to *Scurvy-Dog Sorcery*. This new magical style from Jason "PK" Levine – seadog behind **GURPS Thaumatology: Ritual Path Magic** – creates a fast path to mystical rites suitable for plundering on the high seas. Learn about the history of this art, its spell lists, and four new secret spells.

The Spanish Prisoner must be saved, and your English heroes are just the ones to do it! In this month's Eidetic Memory, David L. Pulver – the helmsman who guided souls to **GURPS Banestorm: Abydos** – provides an adventure outline for a group of buccaneers in the Caribbean, including brief **GURPS** stats for eight key players . . . and plenty of room for swordplay!

Water-borne thievery can even exist underground, as *The Qanat Pirates of Old Than* prove. Get the history, legends, and adventure seeds straight from one of the city's frequent visitors, Matt Riggsby, whose tales of riches from **GURPS Hot Spots: Renaissance Florence** have driven lesser men mad. This campaign setting includes descriptions, **GURPS** stats, and deck plans of qanat barges, plus a map of the city's underground waterways.

If your heroes are seasick, take away the water and try *Sailing the Open Skies*. With this optional expansion for **GURPS Spaceships**, you'll create vessels suitable for travel among the clouds. Pore over design notes, new and revised features and switches, and **Spaceships** stats for five airships. You'll also get tips for utilizing the Signature Gear advantage with beloved vehicles.

Finally, we sail into port with Random Thought Table, which ties up the issue with a look at pirate morality – and what to do about it. Whether you're privateering, dungeoneering, buccaneering, or commandeering, this shipshape *Pyramid* is a treasure trove of loot!

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FROM THE EDITOR

A DASH OF PIRACY

It's an unusual thought, but "pirates" and "swashbuckling" are kissing cousins of another gaming element: horror.

Horror isn't a genre by itself. If you told someone you were running a "horror" campaign, they wouldn't know what you meant: 1920s Lovecraftian dread? Modern splatter? Edwardian spooky cobblestones? Fantastic monstrosities? Urban horror? (Admittedly, this situation is somewhat different in the movie world, where there's a default assumption of "modern day" tied with the "horror" genre . . . but the gaming world is unfettered by such default assumptions.)

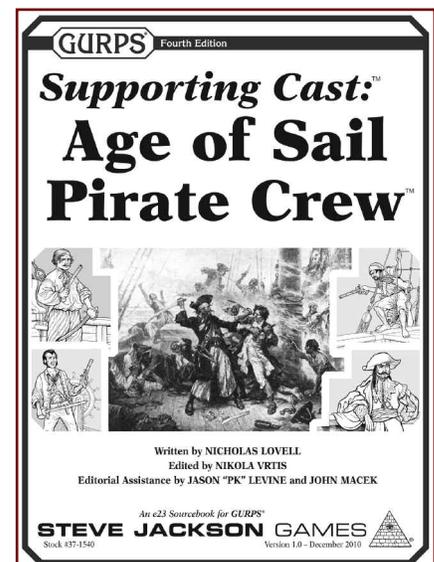
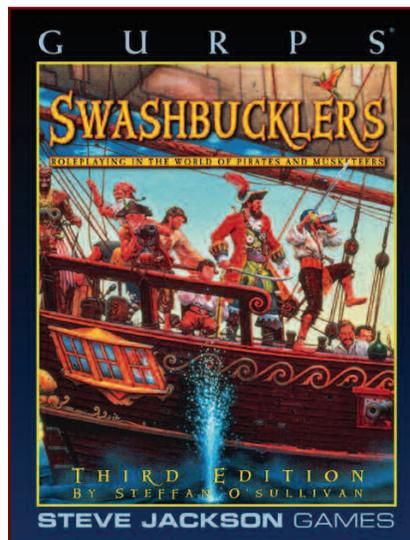
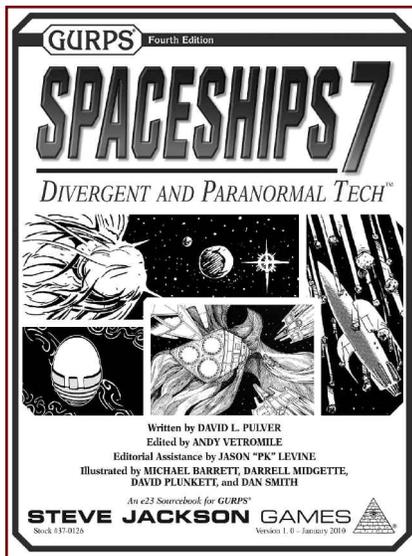
Similar to horror, "piracy" and "swashbuckling" are exceptionally versatile as far as themes. While it's not quite as addable to any genre as horror, it's still a highly adaptable idea: fantasy pirates, dungeon-dwelling pirates, skyship-sailing pirates, and more . . . including, yes, horror-tinged pirates.

(Even trying to think of unworkable counterexamples merely leads to intriguing ideas like "cyberpunk pirates" or *GURPS Swashbuckling Bunnies & Burrows* . . .) This issue of *Pyramid* explores some of the possibilities of adding the privateering impulse to different kinds of gaming, as well as giving some new ideas for swinging on a rope into new situations.

Almost regardless of the era, genre, or setting, "pirates suddenly burst in and excitement ensues" is at least as viable an adventure idea as when Robert Lewis Stevenson first popularized it in *Treasure Island*.

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Did this issue prepare your boarding parties for plundering? Or is there something about it that should've stayed in dock? Let us know how we're doing privately at pyramid@sjgames.com, or join the boisterous scallywags at forums.sjgames.com.



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SWORDS AGAINST EVIL

BY SEAN PUNCH

The swashbuckler isn't *just* the leading man of Age of Sail costume pieces. He's also a fashionable figure in adventure fantasy, including *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*. Like his more-or-less historical counterpart, such a dungeon explorer might be a valiant hero, an honor-bound gentleman, a rakish showoff, a somewhat antiheroic snob, or a borderline-villainous pirate. Here to illustrate this range are four re-imaginings of the swashbuckler template from pp. 11-12 of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1*.

All of these archetypes are specialists with the sword. Each has unique strengths and weaknesses, however: the *aristocrat* is a knight-swashbuckler hybrid, after a fashion; the *buccaneer* falls somewhere between a barbarian sailor and a seafaring scout, though with a preference for light blades; the *duelist* is a "pure" swashbuckler minus the bard's frou-frou and the thief's cunning; and the *rogue* swipes an extra share of that frou-frou and cunning. Like the basic swashbuckler, these fighters master one specific variety of blade and should aim to acquire a superior sword of that kind, ideally as Signature Gear – see *Choose Your Weapons!*

I shall need a map. And a pistol.

– Donna Thorland,
The Turncoat

ARISTOCRAT

250 points

You're a hero of noble blood, which truth is evident in your manner. A born leader of men, you're destined to rally warriors to glorious causes. If you lack the bodily might of the traditional knight, this is only because your tutors prudently taught you more than the physical arts. Indeed, among your teachers were some of the finest fencing masters money could hire, whose lessons have left you *quite* capable of schooling others – especially those who doubt your quality.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 15 [100]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 12 [20].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 10 [-5]; Per 10 [-5]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 7.00 [5]; Basic Move 7 [0].

Advantages: Born War Leader 4 [20]; Higher Purpose (Blood will tell)† [5]; Luck [15]; Wealth (Comfortable) [10]; Weapon

Bond (Any starting weapon) [1]; *and* Weapon Master (Weapon of choice) [20]. • Another 45 points chosen from among ST *or* HT +1 to +4 [10/level], DX *or* IQ +1 *or* +2 [20/level], Basic Speed +1 [20], Basic Move +1 to +3 [5/level], Alcohol Tolerance [1], Allies (see *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 15: Henchmen*) [Varies], Ambidexterity [5], Appearance (Attractive, Handsome, *or* Very Handsome) [4, 12, *or* 16], Charisma [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Enhanced Dodge 1 [15], Enhanced Parry 1 to 3 (Weapon of choice) [5/level], Extra Attack 1 [25], No Hangover [1], Penetrating Voice [1], Rapier Wit [5], Serendipity [15/level], Signature Gear [Varies], Striking ST 1 to 3 [5/level], replace Luck [15] with Extraordinary Luck [30] for 15 points *or* with Ridiculous Luck [60] for 45 points, *or* increase Wealth from Comfortable [10] to Wealthy [20] for 10 points *or* to Very Wealthy [30] for 20 points.

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Gentleman's) [-10].

• Another -30 points chosen from among Bad Temper [-10*], Bully [-10*], Chummy [-5] *or* Gregarious [-10], Compulsive Carousing [-5*], Compulsive Generosity [-5*], Compulsive Spending [-5*], Greed [-15*], Honesty [-10*], Impulsiveness [-10*], Jealousy [-10], Laziness [-10], Lecherousness [-15*], Obsession ("Become the best swordsman in the world!") [-10*], Overconfidence [-5*], Selfish [-5*] *or* Selfless [-5*], Sense of Duty (Adventuring companions) [-5], Sense of Duty (Nation) [-10], Short Attention Span [-10*], Vow (Use only weapon of choice) [-5] *or* (Never refuse a challenge to combat) [-10] *or* (Challenge every swordsman to combat *or* Never wear armor) [-15], *or* intensify Code of Honor from Gentleman's [-10] to Chivalry [-15] for -5 points.

Primary Skills: Leadership (A) IQ+3 [1]-14‡; *and* Strategy and Tactics, both (H) IQ+3 [2]-14‡. • *Either* Crossbow *or* Thrown Weapon (Knife), both (E) DX+1 [2]-16. • *One* of these three 20-point melee skills packages:

1. *One* of Broadsword, Rapier, Saber, *or* Smallsword, all (A) DX+3 [12]-18; *one* of Shield *or* Shield (Buckler), both (E) DX+3 [8]-18, *or* Cloak *or* Main-Gauche, both (A) DX+2 [8]-17.
2. *One* of the sword skills in option 1 at DX+4 [16]-19; *one* of Shield *or* Shield (Buckler), both (E) DX+2 [4]-17, *or* Cloak *or* Main-Gauche, both (A) DX+1 [4]-16.
3. *One* of the sword skills in option 1 at DX+5 [20]-20 *or* Two-Handed Sword (A) DX+5 [20]-20!

Secondary Skills: Fast-Draw (Sword *or* Two-Handed Sword) and Jumping, both (E) DX [1]-15; Acrobatics (H) DX-1 [2]-14; *and* Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ+1 [2]-12.

Background Skills: Six of Fast-Draw (any) (E) DX [1]-15; Boxing, Climbing, Dancing, Riding (Horse), Stealth, or Wrestling, all (A) DX-1 [1]-14; First Aid or Gesture, both (E) IQ [1]-11; Armoury (Body Armor or Melee Weapons), Connoisseur (any), Fast-Talk, Gambling, Heraldry, Merchant, Public Speaking, or Teaching, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Diplomacy (H) IQ-2 [1]-9; Carousing (E) HT [1]-12, Sex Appeal (A) HT-1 [1]-11; Intimidation (A) Will-1 [1]-9; Observation (A) Per-1 [1]-9; or 1 point to raise one of those skills or any one-point primary or secondary skill by a level.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† Gives +1 to all rolls made in one-on-one conflicts against *sapient* (IQ 6+), *civilized* beings of “lesser” social position, provided that the aristocrat is unwavering in his belief that high birth trumps all else, taking as read that lowborn folk cannot best him and that nobility of blood implies nobility of intent.

‡ Includes +4 for Born War Leader (*Dungeon Fantasy 1*, p. 14).

Customization Notes

The aristocrat is defined first by his ability to formulate strategies and lead others. He may lack the bard’s Charisma, wizard’s IQ, and holy warrior’s drive to eradicate evil, but he makes a credible party leader nonetheless. Still, because his role is a supporting one in many ways – flashy swordsmanship notwithstanding – the GM might steer players away from the archetype in a campaign where *Onward to Victory!* (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons*, p. 11) is unlikely to matter much and the PCs won’t occasionally get to command sword-fodder. In games where the aristocrat is a viable PC, he can go in any of several directions.

The *dissipated fop* leads commoners out of duty, but lives to dress nicely, party, and impress highborn girls with embroidered tales of his daring exploits. He’s prone to flaws like Compulsive Carousing, Compulsive Spending, Lecherousness, Laziness, and Short Attention Span, and even darker impulses such as Greed, Jealousy, and Selfish, but he’s no coward. His lifestyle would benefit from several noncombat advantages, particularly Alcohol Tolerance, Appearance, No Hangover, Rapier Wit, and higher Wealth. Sword skills favor courtly blades (Smallsword or perhaps Rapier); other abilities are several of Carousing, Connoisseur, Dancing, Fast-Talk, Gambling, and Sex Appeal at serviceable levels.

The *heartless snob* knows that his underlings’ lives are his to spend to buy objectives, preferably ones that increase his fortune or power. He has several of Bad Temper, Bully, Greed, Overconfidence, and Selfish – though he’s also convinced of his Code of Honor and Higher Purpose, which stave off full-on Megalomania. His advantage points are split between combat abilities (good for putting others in their place), Serendipity and extra Luck (evidence of his gods-given station), and higher Wealth. He’s likely a member of the equestrian classes, implying Riding and either Broadsword or Saber. Other skills aid snarling orders (Intimidation and Public Speaking) and building fortunes (Connoisseur and Merchant).

The *selfless hero* believes in his nobility but doesn’t lord it over others. He takes his Code of Honor seriously and may even elevate it to Chivalry. Alongside this come traits like Chummy, Compulsive Generosity, Honesty, Selfless, and Sense of Duty. Advantage points are likely to buy not just better combat abilities (particularly decent ST), but also warrior Allies, Penetrating Voice for rallying the troops, and Charisma and higher IQ to assist with leadership. Such swashbucklers are “lead from the front” types who prefer military weapons wielded with Broadsword and Shield – or Two-Handed Sword. Round out the package with chivalrous background skills, especially Diplomacy, Heraldry, and Riding.

One for All, All for One

When several gamers want to play dashing swordsmen, consider using these templates to maintain niche protection. This might even lead to a party made up of one adventurer of each archetype! Such a group could handle *most* of what a knight, a scout, a standard swashbuckler, and a thief could tackle. “Most” isn’t “all,” however.

First, while all four templates include some ranged combat ability, they could benefit from more. The GM may want to encourage players to spend points from quirks to learn or improve Bow and Fast-Draw (Arrow). With a swashbuckler’s DX, respectable skill comes cheap. The lowest baseline DX on these templates is 14; thus, quirk points alone could buy *at least* Bow (A) DX+1 [4]-15 and Fast-Draw (E) DX [1]-14.

Thieving ability could be better, too. The rogue leans farthest in that direction, and as he already has respectable ranged ability, he might spend quirk points to improve criminal skills instead. With complementary advantage picks (Flexibility, High Manual Dexterity, and Perfect Balance), he would be a respectable burglar indeed.

The biggest hole is magical capability – and as a few points cannot fill this, it’s probably best to add “swashbuckling spellcasters” to the party. Bards are already in keeping with the theme, and so are clerics of gods of messengers and rogues (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 7: Clerics*, pp. 22-23). In pirate-themed campaigns, druids, clerics of sea or storm gods (*Dungeon Fantasy 7*, pp. 25-28), and water-attuned elementalists (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9: Summoners*, pp. 9-12) are also fitting. To enable players of such characters to participate in swordplay, add Enhanced Parry 1 (Weapon of choice) [5], Weapon Bond (Any starting weapon) [1], and Weapon Master (Weapon of choice) [20] to each template’s advantage options; swap existing Melee Weapon skills for a choice of Broadsword, Rapier, Saber, Shortsword, or Smallsword; and permit Cloak, Main-Gauche, or Shield (Buckler) to replace Shield. With these changes, almost *any* spellcaster might fit in!

BUCCANEER

250 points

Surefooted and at one with the ocean, you’re a born seafaring warrior. While many a pirate favors whatever weapon slays his enemies most quickly, you have a sense of style, and prefer to swing from the rigging with cutlass, saber, or scimitar in hand. Your rough lifestyle has left you mighty enough to battle inhuman foes – you’ve faced krakens and sea serpents, after all! – while your experience fighting alongside a ragtag band makes you a natural for the delver’s life.

Attributes: ST 13 [30]; DX 14 [80]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 13 [30].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d/2d-1; BL 34 lbs.; HP 13 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 13 [0]; Basic Speed 7.00 [5]; Basic Move 7 [0].

Advantages: Luck [15]; Perfect Balance [15]; Seafarer 2 [20]; Weapon Bond (Any starting weapon) [1]; and Weapon Master (Weapon of choice) [20]. • Another 40 points chosen from among ST or HT +1 to +4 [10/level], DX +1 or +2 [20 or 40], Per +1 to +6 [5/level], Basic Speed +1 [20], Basic Move +1 to +3 [5/level], Absolute Direction [5], Acute Vision [2/level], Alcohol Tolerance [1], Ambidexterity [5], Appearance (Attractive) [4], Breath-Holding 1 [2], Charisma [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Daredevil [15], Enhanced Dodge 1 or 2 [15 or 30], Enhanced Parry 1 to 3 (Weapon of choice) [5/level], Extra Attack 1 [25], Fearlessness [2/level], Flexibility [5], Hard to Kill [2/level], High Pain Threshold [10], No Hangover [1], Rapier Wit [5], Seafarer 3 or 4 [10 or 20], Serendipity [15/level], Signature Gear [Varies], Temperature Tolerance 1 or 2 [1 or 2], or replace Luck [15] with Extraordinary Luck [30] for 15 points.

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Pirate's) [-5] and Greed (12) [-15]. • Another -15 points chosen from among Appearance (Unattractive or Ugly) [-4 or -8], Bad Temper [-10*], Bloodlust [-10*], Callous [-5], Chummy [-5] or Gregarious [-10], Compulsive Carousing [-5*], Odious Personal Habit (Unrefined manners) [-5], One Eye [-15], Overconfidence [-5*], Sense of Duty (Adventuring companions) [-5], Wounded [-5], Xenophilia [-10*], or worsen Greed from (12) [-15] to (9) [-22] for -7 points or to (6) [-30] for -15 points. • A further -15 points chosen from the previous list or Compulsive Spending [-5*], Impulsiveness [-10*], Jealousy [-10], Lecherousness [-15*], Obsession ("Become the best swordsman in the world!") [-10*], Trickster [-15*], or Vow (Use only weapon of choice) [-5] or (Never refuse a challenge to combat) [-10] or (Challenge every swordsman to combat or Never wear armor) [-15].

Primary Skills: Boating (Unpowered) (A) DX+1 [1]-15‡; Climbing (A) DX+1 [2]-15‡; Knot-Tying (E) DX+2 [1]-16‡; Seamanship (E) IQ+2 [1]-12‡; Survival (Island/Beach) (A) Per+2 [2]-12‡; and Swimming (E) HT+2 [1]-15‡. • Thrown Weapon (Harpoon) (E) DX+3 [2]-17‡ or Thrown Weapon

(Axe/Mace or Knife) (E) DX+1 [2]-15. • One of these three 20-point melee skills packages:

1. One of Broadsword, Saber, or Shortsword, all (A) DX+3 [12]-17; one of Shield (Buckler) (E) DX+3 [8]-17, or Axe/Mace or Main-Gauche, both (A) DX+2 [8]-16.
2. One of the sword skills in option 1 at DX+4 [16]-18; one of Shield (Buckler) (E) DX+2 [4]-16, or Axe/Mace or Main-Gauche, both (A) DX+1 [4]-15.
3. One of the sword skills in option 1 at DX+5 [20]-19.

Secondary Skills: Brawling, Fast-Draw (Sword), and Jumping, all (E) DX [1]-14; Wrestling (A) DX [2]-14; and Acrobatics (H) DX [2]-14‡.

Background Skills: Seven of Fast-Draw (Knife) or Forced Entry, both (E) DX [1]-14; Stealth (A) DX-1 [1]-13; First Aid or Gesture, both (E) IQ [1]-10; Navigation or Weather Sense, both (A) IQ+1 [1]-11‡; Streetwise (A) IQ-1 [1]-9/11‡; Fast-Talk, Gambling, or Smuggling, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-9; Carousing (E) HT [1]-13/15‡; Hiking or Sex Appeal, both (A) HT-1 [1]-12; Intimidation (A) Will-1 [1]-9; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-10; Observation, Search, or Tracking, all (A) Per-1 [1]-9; or 1 point to raise one of those skills or any one-point primary or secondary skill by a level.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

‡ Includes +2 for Seafarer (**GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 11: Power-Ups**, p. 19). This bonus also benefits Carousing and Streetwise rolls in port towns.

‡ Includes +1 for Perfect Balance.

Customization Notes

Greedy, tough, deadly with a sword . . . the buccaneer is arguably the swashbuckler best-suited to a traditional **Dungeon Fantasy** campaign! His only "special need" is for occasional oceangoing adventure. Otherwise, all the points diverted from pure combat ability to Perfect Balance, Seafarer, and nautical skills might sit unused. As with most delver archetypes, there's a good range of possibilities.

The *black-hearted raider* is a murderous ruffian of the high seas. He boasts endearing flaws like Bad Temper, Bloodlust, Callous, Jealousy, and severe Greed, and likely has an unspeakable fondness for maidens (Lecherousness). To better slaughter enemies and take their booty, he spends advantage points almost exclusively on abilities that aid combat. He favors an intimidating scimitar (Broadsword) and a knife (wielded with Main-Gauche and Thrown Weapon) in combat. To his fighting skills he adds Stealth for sneaking up anchor lines on night raids, Search and Forced Entry for locating and smashing open fat chests of loot, and Intimidation for making prisoners talk.

The *dashing pirate* might not be an actual pirate – just a charming, well-traveled chap with a passion for banter and treasure. He mixes Charisma, Daredevil, Enhanced Dodge, Rapier Wit, and decent Appearance with traits such as Chummy, Compulsive Carousing, Sense of Duty, Trickster, and Xenophilia. He's always up for daring adventure in far-off lands, provided that it promises rum and companionship! He favors flashy fighting with Saber, and prefers to leave a hand free for swinging from lines. His background skills are the likes of Carousing, Fast-Draw, Fast-Talk, Gambling, and Sex Appeal . . . a couple of them even at reliable levels.

Ultimate Weapons

With modest ST and light weapons, swashbucklers have low damage output even with their Weapon Master bonus. Consider some modifications to remedy this:

- *Fine* (+3 CF) or *very fine* (+19 CF), for +1 or +2 damage, respectively.
- *Penetrating Weapon* enchantment (+\$5,000), for armor divisor (2).
- *Puissance* enchantment (+\$5,000), for +1 damage.
- *Silver coating* (+2 CF), for bonus damage vs. many monsters (p. B275).

Everything here "stacks." Multiply the price of a good weapon by (1 + total CF) and add enchantment costs at the end. Divide final cost by \$500 to calculate the blade's point cost as Signature Gear.

Choose Your Weapons!

Swashbucklers favor stabbing and cut-and-thrust blades. Good choices from pp. B271-274 are the cavalry saber, rapier, saber, smallsword, and thrusting broadsword in one hand; the large knife, small knife, and dagger wielded with Main-Gauche in the “off” hand (alternatively,

use two one-handed swords!); and the thrusting bastard sword and thrusting greatsword in two hands. Gamers without *GURPS Low-Tech* might find some additional variants interesting.

| <i>Weapon</i> | <i>Damage</i> | <i>Reach</i> | <i>Parry</i> | <i>Cost</i> | <i>Weight</i> | <i>ST</i> | <i>Notes</i> |
|--|---------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|-----------|--------------|
| BRAWLING or DX | | | | | | | |
| Backsword | thr cr | C | 0 | \$550 | 3 | – | [1, 2] |
| Cutlass | thr cr | C | 0 | \$500 | 2 | – | [1, 2] |
| BROADSWORD (DX-5, Rapier-4, Saber-4, Shortsword-2, or Two-Handed Sword-4) | | | | | | | |
| Backsword | sw+1 cut | 1 | 0 | \$550 | 3 | 10 | [2] |
| <i>or</i> | thr+1 imp | 1 | 0 | – | – | 10 | |
| Edged Rapier | sw cut | 1, 2 | 0 | \$1,000 | 3 | 10 | |
| <i>or</i> | thr+1 imp | 1, 2 | 0 | – | – | 10 | |
| Longsword | sw+1 cut | 1 | 0 | \$700 | 4 | 10 | |
| <i>or</i> | thr+2 imp | 1, 2 | 0 | – | – | 10 | |
| MAIN-GAUCHE (DX-5, Knife-4, Rapier-3, Saber-3, or Smallsword-3) | | | | | | | |
| Long Knife | sw-1 cut | C, 1 | 0F | \$120 | 1.5 | 7 | [3] |
| <i>or</i> | thr imp | C, 1 | 0F | – | – | 7 | |
| Main-Gauche | sw-3 cut | C, 1 | 0F | \$50 | 1.25 | 6 | [2, 3] |
| <i>or</i> | thr imp | C, 1 | 0F | – | – | 6 | |
| Stiletto | thr-1 imp | C | 0F | \$20 | 0.25 | 5 | [3, 4] |
| RAPIER (DX-5, Broadsword-4, Main-Gauche-3, Saber-3, or Smallsword-3) | | | | | | | |
| Edged Rapier | sw cut | 1, 2 | 0F | \$1,000 | 3 | 10 | |
| <i>or</i> | thr+1 imp | 1, 2 | 0F | – | – | 10 | |
| Light Edged Rapier | sw-1 cut | 1 | 0F | \$700 | 2.25 | 8 | |
| <i>or</i> | thr+1 imp | 1 | 0F | – | – | 8 | |
| Light Rapier | thr+1 imp | 1 | 0F | \$400 | 2 | 8 | |
| SHORTSWORD (DX-5, Broadsword-2, Knife-4, Saber-4, or Smallsword-4) | | | | | | | |
| Cutlass | sw cut | 1 | 0 | \$500 | 2 | 8 | [2] |
| <i>or</i> | thr+1 imp | 1 | 0 | – | – | 8 | |
| Long Knife | sw-1 cut | 1 | 0 | \$120 | 1.5 | 7 | |
| <i>or</i> | thr imp | C, 1 | 0 | – | – | 7 | |
| Shortsword | sw cut | 1 | 0 | \$400 | 2 | 8 | |
| <i>or</i> | thr+1 imp | 1 | 0 | – | – | 8 | |
| SMALLSWORD (DX-5, Main-Gauche-3, Rapier-3, Saber-3, or Shortsword-4) | | | | | | | |
| Dress Smallsword | thr imp | C, 1 | 0F | \$300 | 1 | 5 | |
| TWO-HANDED SWORD (DX-5 or Broadsword-4) | | | | | | | |
| Longsword | sw+1 cut | 1 | 0 | \$700 | 4 | 9† | |
| <i>or</i> | thr+3 imp | 1, 2 | 0 | – | – | 9† | |

Notes

[1] Hilt punch. Receives Brawling damage bonuses.

[2] Metal hilt gives hand (only) DR 4, cumulative with glove DR, but is too cramped to accommodate *metal* gauntlets.

[3] Cannot be thrown!

[4] Reduces penalty for targeting chinks in armor (p. B400) by -2.

The *salty dog* is a seaman first. He shares the dashing pirate's respect for fellow crew (Chummy and Sense of Duty), but years far from land have left him gruff (Bad Temper and Odious Personal Habit). Advantage points go toward traits that aid survival at sea: even more ST, HT, and Seafarer, plus some of Absolute Direction, Acute Vision, Breath-Holding, Fearlessness, Hard to Kill, and Temperature Tolerance. He's likely to fight with cutlass and boarding axe (Shortsword and Axe/Mace), and sometimes chuck the axe or possibly a harpoon (choose Thrown Weapon appropriately). Background skill points go toward nautical pursuits: Navigation, Weather Sense, and higher Boating, Knot-Tying, Seamanship, and Swimming.

In all cases, don't overlook advantages that benefit key skills: Absolute Direction is good for +3 to Navigation, Flexibility grants +3 to Climbing, and boosting Seafarer aids *all* nautical pursuits.

DUELIST

250 points

Like all adventurers identified as "swashbucklers," you're a master of the sword. You leave chandelier-swinging wisecracking to dandies and drunkards, however. Your way is that of the slayer of men in formal contests. Unmatched in speed and precision with light blades, you're willing to sell your skills to anyone who can offer gold, even if this means facing monstrous opponents that call for more than a single, swift stab. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger – and of course *wealthier*.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 16 [120]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 12 [20].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 8.00 [20]; Basic Move 8 [0].

Advantages: Enhanced Parry 1 (Weapon of choice) [5]; Luck [15]; Weapon Bond (Any starting weapon) [1]; *and* Weapon Master (Weapon of choice) [20]. • Another 45 points chosen from among ST *or* HT +1 to +4 [10/level], DX +1 or +2 [20/level], Will +1 to +6 [5/level], Basic Speed +1 [20], Basic Move +1 to +3 [5/level], Ambidexterity [5], Combat Reflexes [15], Daredevil [15], Enhanced Dodge 1 or 2 [15 or 30], Enhanced Parry 2 or 3 (Weapon of choice) [5 or 10], Extra Attack 1 [25], Fit [5] *or* Very Fit [15], Hard to Kill [2/level], Perfect Balance [15], Serendipity [15/level], Signature Gear [Varies], Striking ST 1 or 2 [5 or 10], Unfazeable [15], Wealth (Comfortable) [10], or replace Luck [15] with Extraordinary Luck [30] for 15 points *or* with Ridiculous Luck [60] for 45 points.

Disadvantages: -15 points chosen from among Code of Honor (Professional or Gentleman's) [-5 or -10], Greed [-15*], Obsession ("Become the best swordsman in the world!") [-10*], Overconfidence [-5*], Vow (Use only weapon of choice) [-5] *or* (Never refuse a challenge to combat) [-10] *or* (Challenge every swordsman to combat *or* Never wear armor) [-15]. • Another -35 points chosen from among those traits or Bad Temper [-10*], Bloodlust [-10*], Callous [-5], Impulsiveness [-10*], Jealousy [-10], Loner [-5*], No Sense of Humor [-10], One Eye [-15], Sense of Duty (Adventuring companions) [-5], Stubbornness [-5], or Wounded [-5].

Primary Skills: Fast-Draw (Sword) (E) DX [1]-16. • *One* of these three 20-point melee skills packages:

1. *One* of Rapier, Saber, or Smallsword, all (A) DX+3 [12]-19; *one* of Shield (Buckler) (E) DX+3 [8]-19, or Cloak or Main-Gauche, both (A) DX+2 [8]-18.
2. *One* of the sword skills in option 1 at DX+4 [16]-20; *one* of Shield (Buckler) (E) DX+2 [4]-18, or Cloak or Main-Gauche, both (A) DX+1 [4]-17.
3. *One* of the sword skills in option 1 at DX+5 [20]-21!

Secondary Skills: Acrobatics (H) DX-1 [2]-15; Intimidation (A) Will+2 [8]-12; Jumping (E) DX [1]-16; *and* Wrestling (A) DX [2]-16. • *Either* Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-17 or Boxing (A) DX [2]-16. • *Either* Thrown Weapon (Knife) (E) DX [1]-16 or Throwing (A) DX-1 [1]-15.

Background Skills: *Seven* of Fast-Draw (any) (E) DX [1]-16; Climbing or Stealth, both (A) DX-1 [1]-15; First Aid, Gesture, or Savoir-Faire (High Society), all (E) IQ [1]-10; Armoury (Melee Weapons), Connoisseur (Weapons), Fast-Talk, Gambling, Teaching, or Streetwise, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-9; Hiking or Running, both (A) HT-1 [1]-11; Search (A) Per-1 [1]-9; or 1 point to raise one of those skills or any one-point primary or secondary skill by a level.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Customization Notes

The duelist aims to make high skill pay off, substituting it for raw power by striking rapidly at vital areas. Be warned that not all dungeon denizens can be defeated through such tactics! On the other hand, even the toughest dragon can't ignore someone who's agile and precise enough to seriously consider leaping onto its back and driving a blade into an eye socket . . . and not all duelists fight the same way.

The *fencer* believes that since fighting can get you killed, it's crucial to look to one's defenses. Give him Combat Reflexes to boost all of his active defenses, and then add as much Enhanced Dodge and Enhanced Parry as possible. A sword-and-buckler loadout favors defense, and even-numbered skill levels are optimal for Parry and Block; e.g., Rapier-20 and Shield (Buckler)-18. Heavier fencing blades are more likely to survive parries, so he prefers the Rapier skill. Everything else is up to the individual, though the canny fencer uses Stealth, Fast-Talk, and Streetwise to avoid trouble – and Running to escape it.

The *purist* lives for the first, truest strike. He sacrifices everything – even defense – to skewer his opponent before the hapless victim can react. Give him higher Basic Speed, extra Basic Move to bridge the gap (Move 11 gives a two-yard step!), and conceivably Combat Reflexes to be this speedy in surprise situations. One skill at 21 is the way to go here, and Rapier affords the longest reach and thus the earliest hit. Other handy skills are better Fast-Draw for contests where swords start sheathed, Savoir-Faire or Streetwise to know the local "code," and Armoury or Connoisseur to judge blades.

The *scrapper* favors damage and plans for multiple opponents and inhuman monsters. He needs ST and Striking ST for power, and Ambidexterity or Extra Attack for multiple attacks. Perfect Balance makes it easier to stand atop behemoths before stabbing them in the eye, Unfazeable lets him bring the fight even to Elder Things, and Hard to Kill offers insurance when things go south. Saber exploits swing cutting damage, making it a good primary weapon choice vs. monsters; take it on its own (use two blades!) or pair it with Cloak or Shield (Buckler) for defense against groups.

Practical backup skills are those valuable to all delvers: Climbing, First Aid, Hiking, Running, Search, and Stealth.

Regardless of *skill* set, duelists tend toward a few basic *mindsets*. The *hired sword* has Greed as his primary motivation, Code of Honor (Professional) as a “selling point,” Bloodlust and Callous to stomach killing for a price, and probably Loner and No Sense of Humor as consequences of his grim profession. The *hot-tempered gent* accepts duels out of Code of Honor (Gentleman’s), Impulsiveness, and/or a Vow, often displays Bad Temper and Jealousy, yet is fiercely loyal to allies (Sense of Duty). And the *perfectionist* is an athlete motivated by Stubbornness and an Obsession to become the best; he’s his own biggest fan in the form of Overconfidence (showing Jealousy toward those who might rival him), and sets himself challenges by taking as many Vows as the gods (GM) will sustain.

ROGUE

250 points

You combine a gift for swordsmanship with a love for procuring wealth through skill and cunning. You’re no thief, and would rather win a fortune in an up-front contest than steal it. You’re also no fool, however – you know that fighting can get you *killed*, so you avoid needless violence. Still, you’re an exceptional warrior when the mood takes you, and aren’t easily intimidated by monstrous foes . . . it’s just that you prefer to stab them from behind.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 15 [100]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 12 [20].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.;

HP 11 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 7.00 [5]; Basic Move 7 [0].

Advantages: Luck [15]; Weapon Bond (Any starting weapon) [1]; and Weapon Master (Weapon of choice) [20]. • Another 45 points chosen from among DX or IQ +1 or +2 [20 or 40], Per +1 to +6 [5/level], Basic Speed +1 [20], Basic Move +1 to +3 [5/level], Alcohol Tolerance [1], Ambidexterity [5], Appearance (Attractive, Handsome, or Very Handsome) [4, 12, or 16], Catfall [10], Charisma [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Daredevil [15], Enhanced Dodge 1 or 2 [15 or 30], Enhanced Parry 1 or 2 (Weapon of choice) [5 or 10], Extra Attack 1 [25], Flexibility [5] or Double-Jointed [15], High Manual Dexterity 1-4 [5/level], No Hangover [1], Perfect Balance [15], Rapier Wit [5], Serendipity [15/level], Signature Gear [Varies], Smooth Operator 1-3 [15/level], Striking ST 1 or 2 (Only on surprise attack, -60%) [2 or 4], Wealth (Comfortable or Wealthy) [10 or 20], or replace Luck [15] with Extraordinary Luck [30] for 15 points or with Ridiculous Luck [60] for 45 points.

Disadvantages: One of Greed (12) [-15], Kleptomania (12) [-15], or Trickster (12) [-15]. • Another -15 points chosen from among those traits or Bloodlust [-10*], Code of Honor (Pirate’s) [-5], Compulsive Carousing [-5*], Compulsive Gambling [-5*], Compulsive Lying [-15*], Compulsive Spending [-5*], Curious [-5*], Laziness [-10], Lecherousness [-15*], or Social Stigma (Criminal Record) [-5]. • A further -20 points chosen from the two previous lists or Callous [-5], Chummy [-5] or Loner [-5*], Cowardice [-10*], Impulsiveness [-10*], Jealousy [-10], Obsession (“Become the best swordsman in the

world!”) [-10*], One Eye [-15], Overconfidence [-5*], Post-Combat Shakes [-5*], Sense of Duty (Adventuring companions) [-5], Short Attention Span [-10*], or Vow (Use only weapon of choice) [-5] or (Never refuse a challenge to combat) [-10] or (Challenge every swordsman to combat or Never wear armor) [-15].

Primary Skills: Stealth (A) DX [2]-15. • One of these three 20-point melee skills packages:

1. One of Rapier, Saber, Shortsword, or Smallsword, all (A) DX+3 [12]-18; one of Shield (Buckler) (E) DX+3 [8]-18, or Cloak or Main-Gauche, both (A) DX+2 [8]-17.
2. One of the sword skills in option 1 at DX+4 [16]-19; one of Shield (Buckler) (E) DX+2 [4]-17, or Cloak or Main-Gauche, both (A) DX+1 [4]-16.
3. One of the sword skills in option 1 at DX+5 [20]-20!

Power-Ups

The general power-ups in *Dungeon Fantasy 11* – particularly the *combat* power-ups – suit swordsmen built on any of these templates. The swashbuckler power-ups could use some fine-tuning, however.

All swashbucklers may buy these power-ups:

- Any advantage or skill on their template.
- Basic Speed up to +3 [20/level].
- Blind Fighting, Flying Leap, Kiai, and Power Blow skills *without* needing Chi Mastery.
- Extra Attack up to 2 [25/level].

Further options are template-specific. Those with an asterisk (*) come from *Dungeon Fantasy 11*.

Aristocrat: Armor Familiarity* [1]; Armor Mastery* [5]; Born War Leader up to 6 [5/level]; Combat Haberdashery* [1]; Enhanced Block up to 3 [5/level]; Higher Purpose (Blood will tell) up to 3 [5/level]; Sheer Speed* [1]. The aristocrat may also spend character points for henchman Allies (family retainers) or portable Signature Gear (inheritance) at any time, *if* the GM feels that his clan’s people could reach him.

Buccaneer: Chandelier Leap* [10]; Combat Haberdashery* [1]; Damage Resistance 1 or 2 (Tough Skin, -40%) [3 or 6]; Ragnar’s Breath* [5]; Ridiculous Luck [60]; Seafarer* up to 6 [10/level]; Sheer Speed* [1]; Sure Grasp* [5/level]. Buccaneers may also replace One Eye, One Hand, Missing Legs, and so forth with Distinctive Features [-1] by paying the point difference – against all sense, the eye patch, hook, peg leg, or whatever is just as good as the original!

Duelist: Basic Speed up to +4 [20/level]; Botte Segrete* [20]; Coup de Jarnac* [15]; Enhanced Time Sense [45] (replacing Combat Reflexes [15]); Sheer Speed* [1]. Duelists may also expand Weapon Master to “two weapons” [25], “fencing weapons” [30], or “swords” [35], if they learn the associated skills.

Rogue: Chandelier Leap* [10]; Combat Haberdashery* [1]; Craftiness* up to 4 [5/level]; Enhanced Dodge up to 3 [15/level]; Jack of All Trades* up to 3 [10/level]; Serendipity [15/level], with *no* upper limit; Sheer Speed* [1]; Street-Smart* up to 4 [5/level].

Secondary Skills: Acrobatics (H) DX-1 [2]-14; Jumping (E) DX [1]-15; and Streetwise (A) IQ [2]-12. • *One* of Crossbow or Thrown Weapon (Knife), both (E) DX [1]-15; Bow or Throwing, both (A) DX-1 [1]-14; or Blowpipe or Sling, both (H) DX-2 [1]-13. • *Five* of Brawling, Fast-Draw (any), Forced Entry, or Garrote, all (E) DX+1 [2]-16; Climbing, Filch, or Wrestling, all (A) DX [2]-15; Escape, Pickpocket, or Sleight of Hand, all (H) DX-1 [2]-14; Fast-Talk, Gambling, Holdout, Lockpicking, Shadowing, Smuggling, or Traps, all (A) IQ [2]-12; Poisons (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Intimidation (A) Will [2]-12; Observation, Search, or Urban Survival, all (A) Per [2]-12; or 2 points to raise one of those skills or any two-point primary or secondary skill by a level.

Background Skills: Six of Dancing (A) DX-1 [1]-14; First Aid, Gesture, or Panhandling, all (E) IQ [1]-12; Cartography, Connoisseur (any), Disguise, or Merchant, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Carousing (E) HT [1]-12; Hiking, Running, or Sex Appeal, all (A) HT-1 [1]-11; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-12; 1 point to raise one of those skills by a level; or 1 point to acquire another secondary skill option at one level lower.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Customization Notes

The rogue is arguably what most gamers think of when they imagine a swashbuckler: a swift fighter, surely – but also a *smart* one. In many ways, while the buccaneer might be the best all-around combatant and the duelist has more to offer by way of sheer skill, the rogue is the *most versatile* swashbuckler. Possible subtypes range widely.

The *dark rogue* turns his superior swordsmanship to the art of assassination. Greed leads him to sell his skills, after which Bloodlust takes over, likely complemented by negative traits like Compulsive Lying, Cowardice, or Loner (often leading to a Social Stigma). Combat advantages become very important – particularly Extra Attack, and Striking ST for blows from the shadows. Weapons-wise, cutting blades work best on throats, which suggests Saber or Shortsword skill, and this is likely to go with Cloak or Main-Gauche for literal cloak-and-dagger work. Beyond that, ranged weapons aren't a bad idea (Crossbow is deadliest), and consider Garrote, Poisons, and Shadowing.

The *sneaky rogue* resembles a thief with better combat skills. Greed or Kleptomaniac is *de rigueur*, along with foibles such as Compulsive Spending and Laziness to explain the need to steal, possibly resulting in Social Stigma. To be any good at this, improve DX and consider advantages like Cat-fall, Flexibility, High Manual Dexterity, and Perfect Balance. Higher Stealth is smart, and usually goes with a few of Climbing, Filch, Lockpicking, Pickpocket, and Traps. Background skill points buy even more thieving skills, or supporting abilities like Cartography for the dungeon and Connoisseur and Merchant for fencing goods. As for all swashbucklers, combat skills are a focus, but discretion suggests smaller weapons wielded using Main-Gauche, Shortsword, and Smallsword – perhaps alongside Holdout.

The *witty rogue* is like a bard minus the magic. His outgoing personality shows up in such traits as Chummy, Compulsive Carousing, Compulsive Gambling, Overconfidence, Sense of Duty, and Trickster. He has an intelligent, charming manner, as evidenced by high IQ and some of positive Appearance, Charisma, Rapier Wit, and Smooth Operator. Combat skills vary, but Smallsword paired with Cloak or Main-Gauche can allow him to go armed in social situations. A knack for manipulating people is also important – which in this case means superior Fast-Talk, Intimidation, and Streetwise, alongside Carousing, Dancing, Disguise, Merchant, Panhandling, and Sex Appeal.

Rogues should take care to match advantage choices to skills: Flexibility (or Double-Jointed) helps Climbing and Escape; High Manual Dexterity adds to Pickpocket, Sleight of Hand, and many applications of Lockpicking and Traps; Perfect Balance is great for Acrobatics and Climbing; and Smooth Operator aids Carousing, Fast-Talk, Intimidation, Panhandling, Sex Appeal, and Streetwise.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean “Dr. Kromm” Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985, ended up the *GURPS* Line Editor in 1995, and has engineered rules for almost every *GURPS* product since. He developed, edited, or wrote dozens of *GURPS Third Edition* projects between 1995 and 2002. In 2004, he produced the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition* with David Pulver. Since then, he has created *GURPS Powers* (with Phil Masters), *GURPS Martial Arts* (with Peter Dell’Orto), *GURPS Zombies*, and the *GURPS Action, GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*, and *GURPS Power-Ups* series . . . among other things. Sean has been a gamer since 1979. His non-gaming interests include cinema, mixology, and Argentine tango. He lives in Montréal, Québec with his wife, Bonnie.



SCURVY-DOG SORCERY

BY JASON "PK" LEVINE

The lad in the crow's nest lowered his spyglass. "It's a false flag, Cap'n! They got men prepared with pistols an' swords!"

"Hard to port, Jon," Captain Young ordered, his tone steady. "Men, arm yourselves, but fear not. The wind is ours, and the coast is but a few hours off." The sailors moved about nervously, readying their pistols and stowing loose dross.

*The change was palpable and sudden – the wind went out of the sails for a moment, then the ship actually blew **back** a few yards. The bosun spun the wheel and began shouting orders to the seamen in the rigging. They adjusted the sails as quickly as they could, but now the ship was inexplicably being forced to tack **into** the wind. And it was plain to see that the intruding ship was having no such problem.*

"Captain, we cannot outrun them if they have the weather gage," Jon warned.

*"As you were, Jon. We've no cannon, but nor do they. We've at least twice the manpower they show arrayed, and all with good arms. If we cannot . . . what?" A streak of light drew his attention as it sped from the pirate ship and **exploded** onto the deck. Suddenly, all Hell had broken loose. Men ran for cover. Seamen dropped out of the rigging, letting unfinished knots unravel. Captain Young fired a shot into the air and demanded order, but that only made things worse.*

*Faster than it seemed possible, the ship had drawn up alongside them. A few men remained in position to throw off boarding planks . . . but when the pirates walked **through the air** to land on the deck of the ship, half those men threw their weapons down. Deciding that discretion was the better part of valor, Captain Young strode forward and set his pistol and sword on the deck. "I am the captain. This vessel is yours. Please, do with me what you will, but spare my crew."*

Pirates are not known for casting spells . . . but in a world where magic is known to exist, why *wouldn't* they?

The obvious reason is that most pirates aren't thoughtful scholars. The standard **GURPS** magic rules lend themselves to theoretical practitioners – wizards who don't mind learning 20 or 30 different elemental spells as prerequisites before mastering the Weather college, for example. Pirates tend to be far more direct and pragmatic, wanting useful results *now*, without going through all that "academic nonsense."

Taking that into consideration, it would only be a matter of time until a group of magically inclined pirates refined their needs into a *magical style*. (See **GURPS Thaumatology: Magical Styles** for details and rules.)

THE ORIGIN

Robert Cora was a quartermaster and dabbling mage. He knew a few Water spells, which he often used to his advantage. On a raid against a merchant ship, Cora's crew brought one of the passengers, Marcus Fray, to his attention. A quick glance through the books in his possession made it clear that Marcus was a wizard by trade, so Cora offered to spare his life if he joined their crew.

Cora treated Fray fairly, and once he felt that he could trust Fray, Cora revealed his own magical abilities. The two eventually became friends, and Fray helped to expand Cora's repertoire of spells. Their foray into weather-manipulation quickly began to frustrate him, however. "Why do I have to make my room smell nice before I can learn to summon wind? Why am I learning to burn paper when I want to make rain?" At first, Fray was frustrated, but eventually, he started taking Cora's questions seriously. Could a more direct approach be possible?

The History of Scurvy-Dog Sorcery

Everything in *The Origin* should be considered flavor text – a way for the GM to introduce this magical style into an existing campaign. Don't hesitate to change anything about its history, origin, or place in the campaign world. If it's incorporated into the setting from Day One, stylists may even be *ubiquitous* among competent pirate crews!

When Cora let it slip that he was planning on retiring, Fray proposed something radical: They could recruit interested mages and see if it was possible to strip down complex magical theory into a more straightforward, results-oriented approach. Over the course of the next two decades, they did so, refining a no-nonsense "style" that focused solely on practical piracy.

Cora knew the smartest way to parlay this into a gold mine was to prove its worth, so he sent out a dozen mages to join up with his friends' and contacts' crews. Within a year, every such crew was the envy of their rivals, and a thorn in the side of the law. Word gradually leaked out about their magical edge, and pirate captains began making their way to Cora and Fray. The pair was more than happy to teach anyone who could pay the (very steep) price. Teaching was generally done a step at a time; for a hefty amount of gold, they'd get a mage up to the basic standards (all required spells plus a few second-level ones) and send him back out with the crew.

Once the crew had used the trainee's power to earn gold, the pirate-mage would return for more training, and so on.

The one thing Cora and Fray never did was give the style a catchy moniker . . . or any name at all, in fact! Instead, they encouraged each captain to name the style after himself or whatever struck his fancy. This served to bolster the captains' egos, but also to confuse the outsiders trying to get to the bottom of where these new spellcasting pirates were receiving their training. Investigators began to refer to the magic collectively as "scurvy-dog sorcery," and that designation eventually caught on.

Today, the style is still somewhat rare, if only because most pirates lack Magery, and few mages choose a career of piracy. But among what spellcasting pirates there are, Cora and Fray's training has become almost ubiquitous. Students are constantly improving on the system. The first version taught had half the Magic Perks and no secret spells; those were all added by later tinkerers! Whenever this happens, the inventor does his best to keep it quiet – but it always seems to *eventually* work its way into public knowledge, as he's forced to trade the information for favors, money, or his life.

SCURVY-DOG SORCERY

10 points

Style Prerequisite: Magery 1 (not One-College Only).

This style does *not* count as its own college, which is why Magery with One-College Only is insufficient for learning it. However, there are many pirate mages who've trained solely in this style, learning it almost by rote, to the exclusion of any other type of magical training. With the GM's permission, these casters can buy Magery with the limitation Scurvy-Dog Sorcery Only (-30%).

The spells herein can be split into four rough groups (by theme). The first group consists of spells to aid navigation – by divination at first, and then by actually manipulating the ocean and weather at higher levels. Pirates who focus on these will often have high Per, which they enhance with Attribute Substitution perks. They'll grab Shortcut to Power for Current, Wind, or both, as well as Secret Spell (Seek Navy) when possible.

The second group handles day-to-day ship operation, including keeping the crew fed, healthy, and happy. Mages with a bent for this will benefit from Improvised Magic, Limited Energy Reserve, and Wizardly Dabbler for versatility – you never know what crisis will pop up next! Mystic's Stupor is smart for those who drink with the fellows. And Fast Casting (Swim) can save someone before he even realizes what's happened.

The most aggressive spells are those to aid boarders. Practitioners are taught to open with Fear, which can benefit from Continuous Ritual ("wait until you see the whites of their eyes"), Rule of 17, and Staff Attunement. Alternatively, by taking Shortcut to Power (Throw Spell), possibly along with Missile Spell Mastery, the mage can inflict Fear from a great distance. (Remember the +4 for targeting an area!) When boarding, Secret Spell (Safe Boarding) keeps everyone alive, Reduced Footprint allows for more simultaneous "buffs," Blocking Spell Mastery is great for defense, and Secret Mage can prevent the other side from immediately realizing who to target.

The final group of spells focuses on *post*-boarding activities, from interrogation to loot identification. Limited Energy Reserve lets a mage cast plenty of spells without resting (and

appearing weak). Rule of 17 (or 18 or 19) is worth having for anyone keeping victims cowed via Fear. Secret Spell (Identify Loot) isn't available until the fifth level, but is a must-have upon reaching it.

Required Skills: Navigation (Sea); Seamanship; Weather Sense.

Required Spells: Climbing; Fear; Find Direction; Keen (Hearing or Vision); Sense Danger; Sense Life.

Perks: Attribute Substitution (Hawk Vision, Keen (Sense), Night Vision, Sense Danger, or Sense Life based on Per); Blocking Spell Mastery (Bladeturning, Deflect Missile, Fumble, Hold Fast, or Return Missile); Continuous Ritual (Fear); Fast Casting (Sharpen or Swim); Improvised Magic (Scurvy-Dog Sorcery); Limited Energy Reserve (Scurvy-Dog Sorcery); Missile Spell Mastery (Throw Spell); Mystic's Stupor; Reduced Footprint (any spell in style); Rule of 17 (Fear); Secret Mage; Secret Spell (Identify Loot, Safe Boarding, or Seek Navy); Shortcut to Power (Current, Throw Spell, or Wind); Staff Attunement; Wizardly Dabbler (any spells in style).

Secret Spells: Identify Loot; Safe Boarding; Seek Navy.

Optional Traits

Attributes and Secondary Characteristics: Improved DX and Per.

Advantages: Acute Hearing; Acute Vision; Alcohol Tolerance; Born Sailor (see **GURPS Power-Ups 3: Talents**); Fearlessness; Magery 2+; No Hangover.

Disadvantages: Alcoholism; Bad Temper; Code of Honor (Pirate's); Enemy (Navy); Reputation (Pirate); Sadism.

Skills: Axe/Mace; Boating (Sailboat or Unpowered); Brawling; Carousing; Carpentry; Climbing; Guns (Musket or Pistol); Intimidation; Jumping; Knot-Tying; Sewing; Shiphandling (Ship); Shortsword; Spear.

Spell List

Stylists must know a minimum number of spells from each lower level before understanding the fundamentals enough to move on to higher-level spells.

First Level (Ship's Boy)

These six spells represent the style's fundamental training. Only one of Keen Hearing or Keen Vision is mandatory; the other becomes an optional first-level spell. Many practitioners learn both.

Climbing is useful for both manning the rigging and boarding prey ships. Fear is arguably *the* best spell for intimidating victims into surrendering, either after boarding or in combination with Throw Spell – see *Sixth Level (Captain)*, p. 14. Find Direction aids navigation as a compass. Sense Life locates people trying to hide from (or ambush) boarders. And Keen (Sense) and Sense Danger are staples in the dangerous life of a pirate.

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| Climbing | Keen (Hearing or Vision) |
| Fear | Sense Danger |
| Find Direction | Sense Life |

Second Level (Boarder)

After learning all six required first-level spells, a practitioner may learn as many of the following 15 spells as he wishes. Several represent defensive training, specifically to keep the mage and his fellow crew alive during ship-to-ship combat.

These either boost general defenses (Armor and Shield), ward off specific weapons (Bladeturning, Deflect Missile, and Missile Shield), or let the pirate board safely and avoid being knocked overboard (Hold Fast and Jump).

Hawk Vision and Night Vision allow the subject to outperform the best telescope that the Age of Sail has to offer! As well, Night Vision is a wonderful “combat buff” if the pirates will be boarding in the dark.

The remaining spells either aid with the day-to-day operation and safety of the ship (Extinguish Fire, Preserve Food, Purify Water, and Seek Coastline), or cover specific, common situations. Specifically, Lockmaster gives access to loot when “bash it open!” isn’t an option, while Recover Energy helps mages who have little time to rest between spells.

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Armor* | Missile Shield |
| Bladeturning | Night Vision |
| Deflect Missile | Preserve Food |
| Extinguish Fire | Purify Water |
| Hawk Vision | Recover Energy |
| Hold Fast | Seek Coastline |
| Jump | Shield* |
| Lockmaster | |

* Requires Magery 2.

Third Level (Seaman)

Learning any of these 15 spells requires knowing at least *eight* second-level spells (for a total of at least 14 spells, including the required ones). The spells of this level either are more advanced versions of lower-level spells or focus on more specialized situations.

The former category finds *better* spells to ward off attacks (Return Missile and Reverse Missiles), keep the crew fed and sober (Create Water, Purify Food, and Relieve Sickness), and navigate safely (Know Location, Pathfinder, and Predict Weather).

Past those, many new spells are aimed at bolstering the crew’s physical prowess and ability to move (Grace, Might, Safe Boarding, and Vigor) – useful not only for fighting, but also for everyday operations around the ship. Many mages learn the related Fumble spell for self-defense.

The two remaining spells focus on getting information out of captives: Pain is a practical (if sadistic) way to compel answers, while Truthsayer tells the mage if those answers are useful.

| | |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| Create Water | Purify Food |
| Fumble | Relieve Sickness |
| Grace | Return Missile |
| Know Location | Reverse Missiles |
| Might | Safe Boarding† (p. 14) |
| Pain | Truthsayer |
| Pathfinder* | Vigor |
| Predict Weather | |

* Requires IQ 12+.

† Requires Secret Spell perk.

Fourth Level (Bosun)

Learning any of these 14 spells requires knowing *eight* third-level spells (a total of 22 spells, including all lower-level ones). Most practitioners never work their way up to this level, instead relying on lower-level spells while using Shortcut to Power to

grab Current, Wind, or both. Those who do, however, quickly become feared and respected for their wide range of power.

Fourth-level spells open up control over the ocean, with options like Current, Waves, Whirlpool, and Wind . . . and knowledge of *who’s* on the sea, with the secret spell Seek Navy. On a smaller scale, spells like Breathe Water and Swim can save the life of anyone who falls overboard. This water mastery is versatile, allowing for everything from potential torture (Thirst) to flushing out illnesses (Cure Disease) to creating morale-boosting libations (Water to Wine) that go well with victuals (Create Food).

Boarding options continue to improve with combat aid (Reflexes). After boarding, it’s easy to find out what supplies are being hidden and how (Compel Truth and See Secrets).

| | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| Breathe Water | Seek Navy‡ (p. 14) |
| Compel Truth* | Swim |
| Create Food | Thirst |
| Cure Disease | Water to Wine |
| Current† | Waves |
| Reflexes | Whirlpool |
| See Secrets | Wind† |

* Requires Magery 2.

† Can be acquired via Shortcut to Power perk.

‡ Requires Secret Spell perk.

The Weather Gage

In games that use this rule (from *GURPS Supporting Cast: Age of Sail Pirate Crew*, p. 8), a successful casting of Current or Wind that affects all ships involved gives the captain a bonus in the Quick Contest of Shiphandling skill. This bonus is proportional to how much extra energy was put into the spell: +1 for a base casting, +2 for double cost, +3 for triple cost, and so on. This bonus is not part of a resisted spell; do *not* apply the Rule of 16 in the Shiphandling Contest!

Fifth Level (Quartermaster)

In practice, this is the highest level a stylist will usually attain; see *Sixth Level (Captain)* (p. 14) for why this is the case. A mage must master at least *seven* fourth-level spells (a total of 29 spells) before he can learn any of these 10. Practitioners of this level are *very* rare; even taking the pragmatism and focus of this style into account, few pirates have the patience to work their way up this far.

A fifth-level practitioner is a force to be reckoned with. He has near-total control over the sea: He can stir or calm it (Storm), raise or lower it (Tide), ward off inclement weather (Weather Dome), or dispel chilled air or fog (Warm). He can fix any damage to his ship (Repair) and command ropes to do his bidding (Fasten, which is fast enough to be used in combat, and Knot). Before a fight, he can give his crew’s weapons a deadly edge (Sharpen). Afterward, he can unerringly find all things of value (using the secret spell Identify Loot). And convincing his crew to turn against him is folly if he knows the trinity of Create Water, Water to Wine, and Distill, as he can “conjure spirits” – at least, the only spirits that most pirates care about!

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Distill | Sharpen* |
| Fasten | Storm |
| Identify Loot*† (see below) | Tide |
| Knot | Warm |
| Repair* | Weather Dome |

* Requires Magery 2.

† Requires Secret Spell perk.

Sixth Level (Captain)

To learn the single spell of this level, a mage must first know at least *five* fifth-level spells (a total of 34 spells). However, almost no practitioner bothers with that route; anyone who wants to learn Throw Spell typically does so via Shortcut to Power.

The “Captain” designation here is almost tongue-in-cheek, as the captain of a pirate ship does not quite “outrank” the quartermaster. Instead, the quartermaster has control of the ship during day-to-day operations, while the captain has absolute authority only during times of battle. Thus, this is a higher level from the perspective of a magical style, but mastering Throw Spell does not accord any additional prestige or respect. In fact, because Throw Spell can be the 11th spell learned in this style (since 10 style spells are required before Shortcut to Power can be taken), it’s often found in the repertoire of second- and third-level practitioners who are fortunate enough to have Magery 3.

Throw Spell*†

* Requires Magery 3.

† Can be acquired via Shortcut to Power perk.

The secret spells of Scurvy-Dog Sorcery are practical, useful spells.

SECRET SPELLS

There aren’t many theoretical magicians practicing this style, but the few who do so tend to research practical, useful spells, each of which addresses a particular need or problem. The following three spells represent those that have become common knowledge among stylists; there are likely a few others floating around out there.

Identify Loot

Information; Area

This spell tells the caster which inanimate objects in the area have the most potential value proportional to their weight; see below for details. A successful casting will mentally highlight items equal to the margin of success (minimum 1), in order of best value (by weight). For each such item, the caster will also get a vague sense of why it’s valuable; e.g., “rare artwork” or “there’s gold under that clay.” The mage can exclude any objects he wishes when casting.

The GM should estimate the value for each item as if it were assessed by the nearest *appropriate* merchant for this type of item. For example, the value of a rare Indian carpet is

the average price that would be given by a fabric merchant who understood its worth. The GM should feel free to approximate, since the spell doesn’t tell the caster the actual price! The real value of this spell is to highlight things like hidden jewelry and unobvious treasures, and to tell true finds from fakes.

Base Cost: 2. Cannot be maintained; must be recast.

Time to cast: 5 minutes.

Prerequisites: Magery 2, Secret Spell (Identify Loot), and seven Fourth-Level spells.

Safe Boarding

Regular

Temporarily grants the subject the Walk on Air advantage (p. B97) with a few restrictions: He may travel only over a fixed distance no greater than his Move in yards, and there must be water below him as he walks. In effect, this spell allows the subject to safely walk from one ship to another, or from a ship to a dock. If he stops or is knocked down in mid-air, he will not fall, however; the air between the two ships is like a solid plank for him.

This spell may be cast on multiple subjects at once (still as a Regular spell); multiply the cost by the number of subjects (e.g., to protect 10 sailors, this becomes 10 to cast, 10 to maintain). Calculate distance penalties based on the *furthest* subject from the mage.

Duration: 1 minute.

Cost: 1 to cast, 1 to maintain.

Prerequisites: Secret Spell (Safe Boarding) and eight Second-Level spells.

Seek Navy

Information

Tells the caster where the nearest ship is that is part of a national military or whose crew is empowered (by a nation or the equivalent) to bring criminals to justice. He may exclude known ships, which is especially useful when casting multiple times to see how *large* of a navy is nearby.

When cast, the GM will roll in secret, applying long-distance modifiers (p. B241) to the nearest appropriate ship. If the spell succeeds, the caster will know the exact location of that ship, phrased in a useful context (e.g., “100 miles north of you” or “in the Blue Harbor”). If the spell fails, the nearest ship in question is “invisible” to this spell until a *full day* has passed; a repeat casting will locate the *next*-nearest ship.

Cost: 3.

Time to cast: 10 minutes. Cannot be maintained; must be recast.

Prerequisites: Secret Spell (Seek Navy) and eight Third-Level spells.

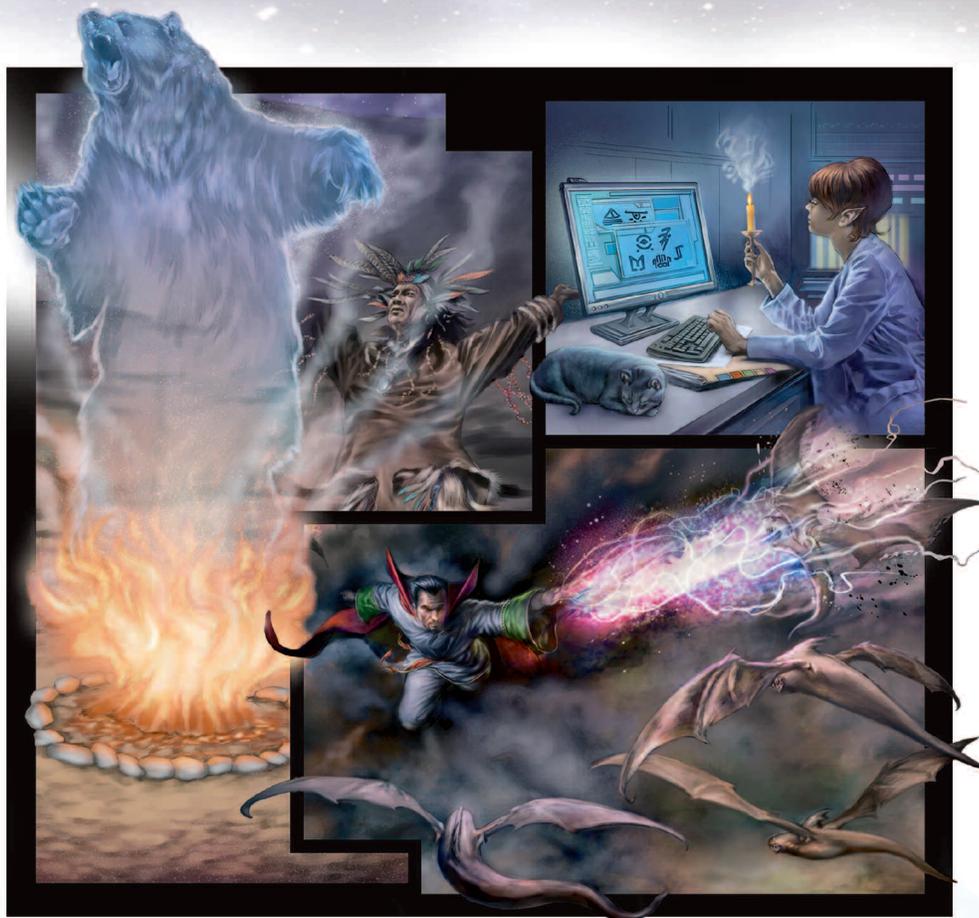
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The scourge of the Seven Seas known as both “Pee Kitty” and “The Reverend” was famed for wreaking havoc up and down the eastern American coastline. He rarely stole or killed, but instead pounced upon manuscripts and revised them, declaring himself the Assistant **GURPS** Line Editor. More about his life is available at the historical website mygurps.com.

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EIDETIC MEMORY

THE SPANISH PRISONER

BY DAVID L. PULVER

This *GURPS Swashbucklers* adventure was originally run as a convention scenario, but it's suitable for campaign play. It is set during the golden age of piracy. The adventurers should be buccaneers and pirates with the usual antagonisms toward Spaniards.

Preparations

The adventure assumes a party of three to seven (supported by perhaps that many NPCs) serving as ship's crew on a small vessel. If they already have a ship and crew they can use that; adjust the encounters proportionate to its crew and capabilities.

If the PCs don't have a ship or crew, Morgan will lend them a vessel and up to half-dozen crew: *La Isabela*, a captured Spanish smuggler's sloop of 150 tons, armed with four cannon (12 pounders) and requiring at least five men to sail. The protagonists can rename it – perhaps the first thing they should do is vote on a new name! The group may also wish to draw up some articles of agreement (see *GURPS Supporting Cast: Age of Sail Pirate Crew*, pp. 5-6) before the voyage that cover the shares and other rules, and vote on who will be captain, quartermaster, and other positions.

PLANNING THE EXPEDITION

The year is 1666, the era of the buccaneer. Louis XIV reigns in France, Philip IV in Spain, Charles II in England. Our tale begins on Isle of Cows, a small island in the Caribbean, once held by the Spanish. It's now a forward base for English buccaneers. Many have rendezvoused here to plan their next expedition. First among them is "Admiral" Henry Morgan, age 30, an experienced commander who holds a commission from Sir Thomas Modyford, the English governor of Jamaica, to raid the Spanish.

It's early evening. There's little settlement on Cow Island – just huts along the beach under the open stars, the jungle behind it. Buccaneers are roasting plantains and making turtle soup, drinking grog, and singing ribald songs. The more industrious are cleaning weapons or scraping barnacles off the ships careened on the beach. A half-dozen vessels are drawn on or anchored just off shore, the nucleus of a pirate fleet.

You are invited to see Henry Morgan himself, seated around a driftwood campfire pouring over sea charts with his officers. Upon seeing you, he rises and roars a greeting in his slight Welsh accent: "Argh, me hearties! Sit your arses down beside me. Have some rum! I've been at my rope's end, but you're just the sea dogs I'm looking for!"

"Of late, the cursed Spaniards have been sailing treasure fleets back to Spain from odd times and places to confuse us. Well, a trusted informer in Porto Bello says a Spanish mule train will arrive at the coastal town of Porto Calavera on the Spanish Main, laden with silver, ready to be loaded into galleons and sent to Cuba. The Spaniards have men-of-war on the way to protect it, and we'll have a devil's times dealing with the entire convoy. Our best odds are to take it is while its in port, but it won't be easy."

"Porto Calavera is guarded by Castillo Sangriento," says Crafty Dick, one of his lieutenants. "It sits atop a rocky outcrop in the harbor. It has two giant bronze cannons that the Spaniards call *Las Hermanas Mayores*. Biggest battery this side of Panama."

"True enough," says Henry Morgan. "With the guns guarding the entrance to Calavera Bay, our fleet will have the devil's time surviving an assault, and the jungle is too thick to get a large force through by land; we can't carry enough provisions, and we'd end up eating our boots! But a small force could sneak into the fort to destroy *Las Hermanas* while our ships lurk over the horizon, ready to pounce! Unfortunately, Dick has scoped out the defenses, and a direct assault on the guns of Castillo Sangriento is suicide. But there may be one man who knows a secret way inside."

"Last year, the English privateer *Moonlight Rambler* was sent to Davy Jones' locker last year by a Spanish man-of-war. Its survivors were thrown in Castillo Sangriento and tortured by the Inquisition. After eight months, just one man escaped: a sea dog named Rat-Eared Jack. It's said he knows a secret way out of the fortress – and a way out's a way in, for a small party to spike the Spanish guns and get out alive."

"He was last seen in Port Royal, a week's sail from here," Morgan continues. "As you see, I'm busy organizing the raid with my captains, so that's where you bold lads come in! I need some trusted men to find Rat-Eared Jack and bring him here, or persuade him to show us the secret route."

I can promise him a twentieth-share of the raid's booty if he agrees to come with us to show us the way and save us a lot of lives.

"So how about this, lads? If you bring Rat-Eared Jack within a month's time, or have him show his secret route, I'll give you each a hat full of silver, and if you've got the guts, command of the raiders. *That* will earn you a full captain's share each of the Spanish silver, good for a year of wenching and drinking. What do you say, me hearties? Will you find me the man who'll let us tweak the Spaniard's tails?"

PORT ROYAL

Port Royal is the capital of Jamaica, currently held by the English under a governor sympathetic to buccaneers. It's five day's sail away, and the PCs shouldn't have any trouble getting there, thanks to fair winds.

Port Royal! Its waterside bristles with wharves, while sail lofts, carpentry stalls, grog shops, and brothels are bunched together on the narrow streets. Piles of Spanish loot are sold openly in the marketplaces, and rowdy groups of drunken

buccaneers roam the streets, letting off pistol shots and drinking rum by the barrel.

A few hours asking around on the streets and grog shops after Rat-Eared Jack will lead them to the Fish and Anchor, a notorious dive. The tavern is a one-story building. The common room has a chandelier and two heavy wooden tables; next to each fellow is a mug of beer. Carpets are scattered on the floor, and an oil lamp is on each table.

Several crewmen are drinking in the tavern, including at least four other pirates. The GM may ask for some Carousing rolls to gather information. It becomes quickly apparent that Jack is well-known, but opinion on him is sharply divided.

"Argh, Rat-Eared Jack?" says an old pirate with one arm. "We served together on the *Witch of the Indies*. He was a brave shipmate – cool as ice, a dead shot with a swivel gun, never gave up. Always had something up his sleeve."

A big man with an Irish accent remarks: "Up his sleeve, aye, like a second deck of cards! That scurvy dog was the foulest cheat ever! He cheated me out of my entire share, so he did. Were I to see him again, he'd not be walking home alive, I'm thinking!"

Drunken Pirates

Here are the offenders. Only stats relevant to tavern interactions are listed.

Bartholomew Hawk, the One-Handed Buccaneer

Jack's ex-shipmate, with a hook for a hand, Hawk'll try to make use of heights, jumping onto a table. If the fight gets nasty, he has a cutlass (1d-1 imp or 1d+2 cut). He's not afraid to use his hook (see *One Hand*, p. B147) as a weapon.

ST 12; DX 12; IQ 10; HT 12.

Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 12; Will 12; Per 12; FP 12. Basic Speed 6.00; Basic Move 6; Dodge 9; Parry 10. 6'; 170 lbs.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Attractive; Code of Honor (Pirate's); English (Native); One Hand (Hook).

Skills: Brawling-12; Jumping-13; Shortsword-14.

Lucien de Maricourt, the Exiled Huguenot Swordsman

Hotheaded, handsome, and French, he's a swashbuckler equally good with his feet, a cloak, or a thrown mug. He disliked Jack. If things get bloody, he uses a rapier (1d-1 imp).

ST 10; DX 12; IQ 11; HT 12.

Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 12; Will 12; Per 12; FP 12. Basic Speed 6.00; Basic Move 6; Dodge 9; Parry 10. 5'7"; 170 lbs.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Appearance (Handsome); Bad Temper (12); English (Accented); French (Native).

Skills: Acrobatics-12; Brawling-14; Cloak-12; Rapier-13; Throwing-11. **Techniques:** Kicking-14.

Darcy Roberts, the Impoverished Colonial Gentleman

Another Jack shipmate, Roberts once was a rich planter, but he lost it all after partners cheated him. If it gets nasty, he'll pull a flintlock pistol (2d-1 pi+) or a cutlass (1d-1 imp or 1d+1 cut).

ST 11; DX 11; IQ 10; HT 12.

Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11; Will 11; Per 11; FP 12. Basic Speed 5.75; Basic Move 5; Dodge 8; Parry 10. 5'11"; weight 165 lbs.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Gentleman's); English (Native); Spanish (Accented); Status 2.

Skills: Brawling-13; Guns (Pistol)-12; Savoir-Faire (High Society)-12; Shortsword-14.

Donal O'Connor, the Irish Pirate

Driven to sea by the depredations of ruthless English landlords, his big frame, mane of fiery hair, and Gaelic accent stand out. He relies on strength, using punches (1d-1 cr) or flipping tables. If desperate, he'd usually draw a sword, except he lost his broadsword dicing with Rat-Eared Jack, so he'll pick up a fireplace poker or break off a chair leg to use as a light club.

ST 14; DX 12; IQ 10; HT 12.

Damage BL 39 lbs.; BL 39 lbs.; HP 14; Will 12; Per 10; FP 12. Basic Speed 6.00; Basic Move 6; Dodge 9; Parry 10. 6'2"; 205 lbs.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Attractive; Code of Honor (Pirate's); English (Accented); Intolerance (English gentry).

Skills: Brawling-13; Broadsword-14; Throwing-12.

A Frenchman has his own complaints: “His cooking! Mon Dieu! What fools voted him ship’s cook? Garlic, cheese, and turtle soup! Strong men vomited their guts out.”

Jack also has defenders, as a big man in tattered gentleman’s coat with a cultured accent speaks up: “If you couldn’t take Jack’s cooking, Lucien, I doubt you’re half the man he was!”

“Aye,” says a buccaneer with a hook for hand. “He was a great sailor, a fair cook, and I say you’ll all drink a toast to Jack, my old shipmate!” He raises a flagon of rum.

“A toast?” curses the Frenchman. “That dice-cheating English dog wasn’t fit to lick pig dung off my boots. And neither are you!”

If the PCs don’t do anything to calm the rising tension – a Diplomacy or Carousing roll while offering to buy everyone drinks or the like might help – the one-handed man’s temper gets the better of him, and he flings his grog in Lucien’s face, who will retaliate by launching himself across the table at the buccaneer. The other pirates will join in on either side, with any listening adventurers in the middle of it. Tavern brawl! (See Chapter Two of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 10: Taverns* for some ideas on how to handle this.)

Pirate etiquette is to not to use guns or blades. If the PCs don’t want to fight, the GM should let them try to navigate their way out while requiring Dodge rolls to avoid thrown cups or chairs, flipped tables, and charging drunken pirates!

CHASING THE BLACK WIND

After the brawl, especially if they helped someone, they should be able to get the full story on where Jack went from one of his friends or foes. Something of card shark, Jack cheated a few men out of fortunes at the tavern; when his marked deck was discovered, he left Port Royal in a hurry, signing on as quartermaster for one Captain John Pound’s six-gun sloop, *Black Wind*, on a treasure-hunting expedition.

The *Black Wind* left just the day before the party’s ship got into Port Royal. Pound and his crew were bound for Three Parrot Island, some four or five day’s sail from Port Royal, chasing a rumor of a treasure chest of Conquistador gold lost in a native temple in the interior. The ship has a day’s lead, but treasure hunts take a while. If the adventurers hurry, they could catch her. If the PCs bonded with any of the brawlers, they can take them on; a few days at sea should give them time to recover from any brawl injuries.

THREE PARROT ISLAND

It’s a pleasant sea voyage with scant excitement (unless the party make their own), with good weather marred by a sudden heavy squall and rain shower. Fortunately, the rain clears up after two hours. The next day, the ship reaches the coast of Three Parrot Island.

If anyone asked around or did some digging, an Area Knowledge (Caribbean) or History roll might reveal that Three Parrot Island was originally occupied by Mayans until they were killed off or enslaved by Cortez’s Spaniards in the 1500s. The few survivors who didn’t succumb to smallpox were then wiped out by an invasion of fierce Carib Indians displaced from other islands, who took over the interior. It hasn’t been settled (due to the Caribs) but ships occasionally visit for provisioning.

The island is five miles by four miles, covered in lush green forests and low hills. A sandy cove is on the south side, with a

sheltered rocky bay. The party’s lookout will be able to see the mast of a small ship, likely the *Black Wind*.

Once the party’s vessel gets closer, they can see some signs of camping on the beach, but little activity a strange sail would usually engender. Upon boarding the ship, the adventurers find only two men up on deck, and they’re covered in blisters and lying prone on blankets. The rest of the crew is sick below.

What happened? Well, the captain and half the crew, including Rat-Eared Jack, went ashore after the treasure. The others stayed with the ship and camped on the beach, but after yesterday’s rainstorm, all came down with something like poison ivy, only worse. Now everyone’s sick with a dreadful rash and blisters all over their bodies.

It’s not plague; a successful Diagnosis roll will alleviate any worries about that. If the PCs make Survival, Poisons, or Naturalist rolls, the problem can be easily identified: a plant poison. There’s a grove of trees along the edge of the beach; if anyone asks, they’re the ones the crew sheltered under against the storm. With distinct grayish bark and small apple-like fruit, they’re actually the notorious *manchineel* trees (which the Spaniards call *manzanilla de la muerte*, “little apples of death”). Their bark and sap is toxic, and even sheltering under one during a rainstorm can be dangerous. (HT-2 roll or take 1d-3 corrosion and 1d-3 toxic damage for every hour one was exposed to the tree.) Aside from those growing by the beach, the manchineel trees are relatively rare deeper in the jungle; the PCs will see a few stands but can avoid them if they wish.

Missing Men

Well, that’s half the crew, but what about the rest? Unfortunately, they’ve been missing for most of a day and haven’t come back, and everyone’s too sick to look for them. Maybe the PCs could do that? Fortunately, the captain and a dozen men hacking their way through the jungle left a trail easy enough to follow; the GM should require a few Tracking rolls to make sure the party doesn’t get sidetracked.

After an hour and perhaps a mile of trekking inland, the GM should make Hearing rolls for the party. If they succeed, they detect a muffled moaning noise off the trail.

If they follow the noise rather than ignore it, they’ll come upon a disturbing sight: a European man, stripped to the waist, lashed by thick cords to one of the tall grey-barked manzanilla trees. He’s a 40ish blond man who matches the description of Captain Pound. Like the pirates on the ship, his skin is aflame with a terrible rash, only his condition is far worse thanks to proximity to the tree. There’s also a nasty gash on one leg that’s been crudely bandaged. His eyes are half-blind, and he’s groaning in pain. He’s on the brink of death. If given some water, he can gasp out the following:

“Damn my eyes, it burns! We got the treasure but the cursed Caribs ambushed us on the way back . . . when I took an axe in the leg, I vowed to hold them off, give me men a chance to – urgh – fall back to the temple. Got a couple, but it made them mad! Instead of killing me, they tied me to the poison tree to die slowly! Gods, this tree sap burns like the infernal milk from the teats of Satan’s own cow!”

A successful First Aid or Poisons roll will revive the captain enough to answer a few other questions before he passes out: The pirates found the old temple and dug up the buried chest of gold. Then they were ambushed by 20 Caribs with bows.

They lost eight men in the initial ambush, but killed half the Caribs. Four others (including the quartermaster Rat-Eared Jack) broke through and escaped, fleeing back up the trail. They might be still holed up, besieged by the Indians, who are wary of the crew's muskets.

The Caribs and the Temple

Farther up the trail is a ruined Mayan temple. The remains are dark fallen blocks and tumbled and half broken pillars, all covered in tangled vines and creepers.

Holding out using the temple for three-quarter cover is Rat-Eared Jack, who is protecting two badly wounded seamen, each semi-conscious from blood loss (unable to fight due to being down to HP 1-2 and FP 2-3, and limited to staggering along at Move 2). Jack's also protecting a chest with 42 lbs. of Mayan gold and silver ornaments, worth \$300/lb. If he sees the rescue party advancing to the temple, he'll shout a warning or fire a musket shot, but it may be too late!

Concealed in the forest around the temple are a small party of seven to nine Carib Indians (GM's option), scouts from a larger force that will assemble over the next few days. If the PCs were warned by Pound, spot the Caribs, or take precautions, they can either try sneaking up or initiate a straight-up fight. The Caribs don't want white men on their island, but while brave, aren't fanatics; if they lose half their force, they'll retreat.

If the PCs didn't hear Captain Pound, or ignored his moans, they won't be warned and could be ambushed. Roll a Quick Contest between the PCs' best Per (at -3 if they don't have someone scouting ahead) and the Caribs' Stealth. Losing means the Caribs get the drop on them, firing a volley of arrows from 10 yards away.

Jack will only return willingly if the PCs agree to help bring back both the gold, the injured men, and his hurt captain, though of course, they could just knock him out and carry him back.

RETURNING WITH JACK

If the adventurers bring Jack back alive to the Isle of Cows, it's buzzing with excitement: eight ships and several famous captains ready to join Morgan. The admiral will be delighted to see them.

Once they explain the situation to Jack, he'll agree to Morgan's offer, and tell his story.

"... So I languished in a hellish rat-infested cell where I was flogged and starved and branded. Then I got me a cell mate. He was an old Spaniard: Alfonso de Vara, and by some twist of fate, it was his own cell he was rotting in, for he was one of the architects who had built the original Castillo Sangriento for its original masters. But the castle's current overlord, the cruel Don Carlos, had wanted to take his beautiful young daughter, Maria, as a mistress. When Alfonso refused, he found himself thrown in the cells and tortured to near death. But he knew a way to escape. He was too weak to do it himself - his arms had been broken on the rack - but if I promised to get revenge for him at some time in the future, he would give him a way out."

That way turned out to be the rat pit, a 20' shaft that dropped into a garbage pit filled with hungry rats and bones.

Carib Warriors

Brown-skinned, muscular men, with long, straight hair, wearing loincloths and war paint. They are armed with bows and light clubs.

ST 11; DX 11; IQ 10; HT 10.

Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11; Will 10; Per 10; FP 10. Basic Speed 5.25; Basic Move 5; Dodge 8; Parry 9. 5'6"-6'; 120-150 lbs.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Island Carib (Native).

Skills: Bow-12; Broadsword-12; Stealth-13; Tracking-12.

Gear: Regular bow (1d imp, 2 lbs., \$100); 10 arrows (1 lb.); light club (1d+2 cr, 3 lbs, \$5). All the arrows are dipped in the sap of the local poison apple trees; if hit by one or more, make a HT-2 roll to avoid an extra 1d toxic damage an hour after exposure. A successful Physician or Poisons roll can create a poultice to negate the effect.

Rat-Eared Jack

A roguish pirate with large ears and several facial scars, Jack prefers to arm himself with a flintlock musket (4d pi+) and a cutlass (1d-2 imp, 1d cut).

ST 10; DX 12; IQ 10; HT 14.

Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10; Will 12; Per 11; FP 14. Basic Speed 6.50; Basic Move 6; Dodge 9; Parry 10. 5'5'; 135 lbs.

Advantages: English (Native); Fearlessness 1; Rapid Healing; Reputation +1 (For cool nerves and lucky escapes; Pirates; 10 or less); Spanish (Accented).

Disadvantages: Appearance (Unattractive); Code of Honor (Pirate's); Enemies (Pirates he's cheated; 6 or less); Greed (12); Reputation -2 (Cheat and bad cook; Pirates; 10 or less).

Skills: Brawling-12; Cooking-10; Gambling-14; Gunner (Cannon)-13; Guns (Musket)-12; Holdout-11; Knife-12; Jumping-14; Merchant-11; Seamanship-12; Shortsword-14; Singing-14.

Prisoners too far gone to torture were smeared with grease and rancid cheese and tossed in for the rats to finish off. What *wasn't* known was under the dung and garbage in the south corner was a loose stone, and this stone led to a hidden trap door that opened onto an underground passage and a secret postern gate.

By pretending sickness, Jack was tossed into the pit while still healthy enough to fend off the rats, and burrowed under the dung to find the trap door. He endured the rat attacks to fake his "death" for a few hours until nightfall, hence his scarred face, but the guards never checked the pit - they just left bodies there to rot in the darkness. Then, despite the bites that covered him, he forced open the trap door and vanished down the passage. It led out to narrow tunnel under the castle and out through the cliff side. He found a small rowboat in a hidden chamber at the base of the cliff, and used that to escape, risking the open sea to be picked up by a French privateer. The rest was history.

Jack agrees it's possible for a small team of raiders to reverse the trick, and get inside. Naturally, as they've demonstrated their resourcefulness in retrieving Jack, Admiral Morgan will ask that they lead the assault on the Castillo Sangriento. Who better?

CASTILLO SANGRIENTO

If the PCs don't want to risk their lives in the initial attack on the fortress, they are given a reward of \$5,000 each for finding Jack. If they decide to join the fight, the GM should prepare plans of the fortress, or wing it. Here are some guidelines.

Porto Calavera is a walled town on a sheltered bay on the Spanish Main (what's now the coast of Panama). Castillo Sangriento rises from a rocky outcropping guarding the entrance to the bay. It's surrounded on three sides by steep cliffs 50 yards high; a narrow road winds half a mile inland to the town. The fortress consists of a square central keep two stories high inside a compound surrounded by a 15-yard high wall. The four corners of the wall flare out into bastions housing artillery pieces: Three corners have batteries of 12-pounder guns. The northwest bastion, facing the bay, has two 74-pounder cannon royal known as the Big Sisters.

The fortress houses Don Carlos and 60 Spanish soldiers (half of them gunners).

Don Carlos

An elegant but lethal fop, Carlos is a *familiar* (secular collaborator) of the Inquisition as well as a commanding officer of the fortress. If ready for action, he has a steel breastplate, (DR 5, torso front), pot helm (DR 4, head), light cloak, and a rapier (1d+1 imp), and flintlock pistol (2d-1 pi+).

ST 10; **DX** 14; **IQ** 11; **HT** 12.

Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 12; Will 11; Per 11; FP 12. Basic Speed 6.50; Basic Move 6; Dodge 9; Parry 11. 5'8"; 135 lbs.

Advantages: Ambidextrous; Appearance (Handsome); English (Accented); French (Accented); Military Rank 4; Spanish (Native); Status 3.

Disadvantages: Overconfidence (12); Sadism (12).

Skills: Brawling-14; Diplomacy-10; Cloak-13; Guns (Pistol)-13; Knife-14; Leadership-11; Rapier-16; Riding-13; Savoir-Faire (High Society)-12; Soldier-11; Strategy-11; Throwing-12.

Spanish Soldiers

Spanish soldiers in the service of Don Carlos, equipped the same as their master but with flintlock muskets (4d pi+) instead of a pistol.

ST 10; **DX** 11; **IQ** 10; **HT** 10.

Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10; Will 10; Per 10; FP 10. Basic Speed 5.25; Basic Move 5; Dodge 8; Parry 9. 5'8"-6'6"; 140-220 lbs.

Advantages/Disadvantages: English (Broken); French (Accented); Spanish (Native).

Skills: Brawling-11; Guns (Musket)-12; Rapier-12; Soldier-10.

Guided by Jack, a small boat could carry a dozen or so raiders by night to the base of the cliffs, to enter through Jack's hidden postern gate. A lengthy crawl up a narrow stairway will open into the rat pit in the lower dungeon. It's up to the GM to decide who's awake – likely a few sleepy torturers and turn-keys in a guardroom, plus several ill-treated prisoners eager for rescue! At night, most of the fortress would be asleep, with only a dozen or so guards on sentry duty, most of them on the walls or guarding key points (like the lord's bedchamber and armory), perhaps a dozen men in all. And maybe Don Carlos, plotting how to spend his cut of the Spanish silver newly arrived in the town's warehouses. Perhaps the lovely daughter of the deceased architect Alfonso is prisoner in his bedchamber?

Sabotaging the gun will involve sneaking from the dungeons of the fortress (making Stealth rolls), taking care not to awaken the garrison while silently killing any guards. The main objective should be the fortress second level, where stairways run outside to connect to the open-air bastions and the gun batteries – unmanned if the castle is not yet alerted. There will be a few soldiers outside on sentry duty that need dealing with, leading to a dramatic swordfight on the narrow ledge over the cliffs, a wrong move meaning a fall 150 feet to the ocean below. Afterward, the goal would be to swiftly spike at least the two big guns (hammering a big nail down the touchholes, then bending it to jam them), and flash a lantern signal from the top of the fort to Morgan's fleet over the horizon. The protagonists could also seek out the fort's powder magazine in the armory to blow it up, but this would be guarded even at night. If they brought Jack, he might want to persuade some raiders to go after his enemy Don Carlos (or rescue Alfonso's daughter), which could lead to a dual with the fort's commander and a few of his personal guards.

The big risk after spiking the guns is getting out of the fort alive if Spanish sentries raise a cry and cut off the escape route. Taking Carlos hostage might be a useful diversion. Alternatively, they might escape through the main gate on stolen horses from the stables, dive into the waters, or hole up until the main buccaneer force arrives!

MORGAN'S RAID

Morgan's attack is beyond the adventure's scope (though *GURPS Mass Combat* may be useful). His eight-ship fleet will sweep into the harbor, some vessels bombarding the fort and others landing 500 pirates to raid the town. If the heroes failed to sabotage the big guns, his squadron is forced back after losing 1d ships and hundreds of men. If the party spiked the guns, the attack succeeds, and the PCs earn 3d × \$5,000 each from their share.

ABOUT THE COLUMNIST

David L. Pulver is a Canadian freelance author. An avid SF fan, he began roleplaying in junior high with the newly released *Basic Dungeons & Dragons*. Upon graduating from university, he decided to become a game designer. Since then, David has written over 70 roleplaying game books, and he has worked as a staff writer, editor, and line developer for Steve Jackson Games and Guardians of Order. He is best known for creating *Transhuman Space*, co-authoring the *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* anime RPG, and writing countless *GURPS* books.

THE QANAT PIRATES OF OLD THAN

BY MATT RIGGSBY

From a distance, the city of Than (the “th” is soft, as in “theft”) is most readily identified by its tall, round towers and many-domed temples built from the region’s rose-hued limestone. Up close, however, Than’s most distinctive feature is a unique magical transit system. Below the city’s foundations, boatmen steer levitating barges through a network of tunnels providing easy transportation in the cool dark beneath the desert.

But no new solution to an old problem comes without new problems of its own. In the long, dark tunnels, a new kind of highwayman has arisen. Pirates raid shipping in the qanats, striking before aid can arrive and fleeing into endless warrens of disused tunnels. Than’s soldiers do their best to guard shipping, but the shallower tunnels are difficult to navigate, and there are worse things in the deeper tunnels than pirates.

ORIGINS

Than sits on a layer of soft limestone, already shot through here and there with natural caves. The city and its region are served by a qanat network bringing water in from the foothills of a mountain range about 50 miles to the northwest. In the construction of the qanats, these natural passages were incorporated into the network where possible and blocked off where necessary. This also provided a substantial portion of the network with very large tunnels, making it easier to access and maintain. Larger chambers were excavated or adapted from natural spaces to serve as local reservoirs, retaining large quantities of water for periods of less runoff from the source aquifers.

Than is criss-crossed with a vast number of Intensity 1 ley lines, and there a substantial number of Intensity 2 lines. (See *GURPS Thaumatology: Urban Magics*, p. 19, for details on the Intensity rating of ley lines.) For obscure geomantic reasons, many of the natural tunnels followed these unusually plentiful ley lines, and when the tunnels were extended by construction, the engineers continued

to follow ley lines to ensure good luck. Though the initial reason for digging the tunnels was to build a water distribution system, another use was quickly developed. Between the size of many of the tunnels and their alignment with natural magical conduits, they were adapted into a transit network. The Ley Float spell (*Urban Magics*, p. 20) was initially used to help haul barges of workers and equipment into the tunnels, and waste stone out. The builders realized that the same barges and tunnels could be used to easily transport goods long distances in a cool, comfortable environment, and so Than got its unique transport network.

What’s a Qanat?

A *qanat* is a subterranean water-control feature developed in Persia, possibly as early as the late second millennium B.C. It distributes water from an aquifer, typically in a hilly region, through a slightly sloping horizontal tunnel, which is accessed along its length through attached vertical shafts to the surface. The underground tunnels carry water long distances from its source while minimizing evaporation, an important consideration in the desert and near-desert regions where qanats are used. The vertical shafts make it easy to use in the countryside, providing wells for drinking and irrigation along the qanat’s length. The tunnels may also supply local reservoirs and, at the end of their course, feed canals on the surface for irrigation farther on.

In addition to the qanat’s primary use, a cooling application was later discovered. Wind can be directed down the vertical shafts into the tunnels of the qanat. As it blows through the partially filled tunnels and local reservoirs, the air is chilled by evaporation and contact with cool underground surfaces. The moving air is then directed up other shafts into buildings built atop them, giving them a cooling breeze.

Like most historical tunnels, particularly those extending long distances, qanats in the real world are generally only large enough to accommodate a single person walking upright, though somewhat larger ones do exist. They’re also vastly shorter than described here. Most only take water a mile or two from their source; even the longest are a little over 40 miles long.

THE NETWORK

A typical navigable tunnel is just over six yards across, including a yard-wide walkway on either side (by law, barges cannot be more than two yards wide). The area is five yards at the height of the vaulted ceiling. The channel between the walkways is rarely very deep, no more than two yards and frequently less. During the rainy season, the water level can come close to the walkways, but in drier months, the bottom of the channel is only under a few inches of water. It is rarely sufficient to float an empty barge, let alone a full one, and fallen rocks can present navigational hazards when the water level is borderline for sailing.

Where tunnels intersect at a sharp angle, there's usually a slightly wider section of tunnel the length of a large qanat barge where they meet to allow barges to change lines. A barge can be pulled into the wide section and turned slightly so that it can go down the intersecting tunnel. Draft animals can pass from one walkway to another over a series of drawbridges spanning tunnels.

Larger chambers are often built where tunnels intersect at less acute angles. They are typically 20 to 30 yards across, to provide space for easy turning. The chambers are also significantly deeper, usually three or four yards deeper than the adjacent tunnels, since they do double duty as water reservoirs. Boatmen sometimes have to dodge buckets on ropes being lowered from above.

The tunnel network is accessed by shafts excavated through the rock. Most, particularly in the countryside, are simple vertical shafts wide enough to pump water for irrigation, but no more than that. However, around population centers, a number of shafts are large enough to accommodate regular human traffic. These shafts are fitted with separate "up" and "down" spiral staircases, though some have a single entrance. They also have a broad (a yard wide or so) vertical shaft for bringing goods up or down, usually by a winch attached to ropes and cargo netting. Porters can usually be found around stations to lift cargo or send it down.

However they're constituted, the shafts lead down to a more or less elaborate, well-lit landing where passengers can get on and off the floating barges. Some barges carry passengers along regular routes for a fee of \$1 to \$2 per person, stopping as necessary to let people on and off. However, individual barges can be hired on a daily basis for \$50 to \$100 a day.

Barges are pulled by any convenient beast of burden or even human pullers. The pulling team, including a human tender, traverse a walkway and pull the barge behind them (or, to be more precise, behind and to the side) on a rope. Boatmen on the barge itself use long poles to push back against the tunnel wall to keep the barge over the channel. By convention, barges keep to the left, allowing travel in opposite directions down the same tunnel to go smoothly. Tunnels are not, as a rule, lit. Rather, barges carry their own light, usually in the form of objects with Continual Light cast on them, or torches for those who can't afford the spell.

MAP OF THAN AND ITS ENVIRONS

On the map on p. 25, the double lines indicate the paths of tunnels with ley lines suitable for navigation. Wide ones are

Intensity 2, while narrow ones are Intensity 1. Natural tunnels branching off of the qanat/ley-line network abound in the region and, though many are the subject of local knowledge, they have never been comprehensively mapped. In addition to Than itself, the map notes the names and locations of major villages, most with populations of 1,000 to 2,000.

THE BARGES

The qanat barge is actually an unremarkable vehicle. It's simply a long, narrow, flat-bottomed, open-topped boat, with the slightly unusual addition of small runners, like the landing skids of a helicopter, to allow the boat to sit easily on a solid surface when not supported by the Ley Float spell. The hulls are water-tight, since they may spend at least some time on the water as well, though they're not particularly agile water craft. Qanat barges are typically rated for a maximum loaded weight of four tons, making them entirely suitable for use along Intensity 2 ley lines. Smaller versions are available for use on lesser lines. If greater weight must be carried, multiple barges are strung together in a train.

The key to making the transit network operate isn't the vehicles themselves, but rather the operators and magical items. A number of magicians in the area know the Ley Float spell at 15+ and do a good business by casting it for boatmen at a fee of about \$30 per barge per day. Enchanters have also created a great many items capable of casting Ley Float, which may be rented for a similar cost (though with a significant security deposit, or just a blood sample to facilitate casting spells on renters who don't return the item in time), or purchased for about \$39,000. Finally, a barge may come with a magical talisman enchanted with Ley Float and a Bane limiting casting to that particular barge, at a cost of \$3,960.

The *Than Qanat Barges Table* (p. 23) lists some typical models of levitating barge. The crew figure indicates the number of boatmen actually inside the barge. This does *not* include an additional person to accompany the animals pulling the barge. The qanat platform is a personal transportation device, the qanat answer to the bicycle. It is simply a wooden circle about a yard across, resembling a tabletop. Once levitating, the rider pushes himself along the tunnels with a long pole.

Barge Variants

Though the size of barges is constrained in a number of ways (width of tunnels, maximum turning radius, weight allowed by the Ley Float spell and available ley lines), their uses are less limited. Here are some modifications to the basic barge designs.

Decorated Barge

Most barges are operated as a business by their owners, and many are painted to catch the eye and help drum up business. Barges may be decorated according to the rules for ornate equipment in *GURPS Low-Tech* (pp. 37-38).

Covered Barge

Though barges are usually open (after all, there's no rain or excessive wind in the tunnels), some, particularly those intended for certain kinds of passenger use, are enclosed. A lightweight wicker superstructure extends over most of the body of the barge and is frequently divided into chambers.

Than Qanat Barges Table

Boating/TL (Unpowered)

| TL Vehicle | ST/HP | Hnd/SR | HT | Move | LWt. | Load | SM | Occ. | DR | Range | Cost | Loc. | Draft | Notes |
|------------------|-------|--------|-----|--------|------|------|----|------|----|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|
| 3 Standard Barge | 47† | 0/1 | 12c | 0.05/5 | 4 | 3.2 | +5 | 14+2 | 2 | F | \$8K | O | 1.5 | [1] |
| 3 Light Barge | 30† | 0/1 | 12c | 0.05/5 | 1 | 0.8 | +3 | 3+1 | 2 | F | \$2K | O | 1 | [2] |
| 3 Qanat Platform | 19† | +1/0 | 12c | 1/5 | 0.25 | 0.2 | +0 | 1 | 2 | F | \$100 | O | 1 | |

Notes

[1] 42' long, 6' wide, typically drawn by an ox, a large horse, or a pair of smaller animals.

[2] 21' long, 3' wide, typically drawn by a donkey or other light draft animal.

Many covered barges are floating commercial establishments, mostly mobile taverns. Though they have a certain novelty appeal, they have an unsavory reputation, since they're a great place to meet people (or eavesdrop) anonymously in the dark. Some people, enamored of the cool tunnels and not minding the darkness so much, have converted barges into homes. The barge is divided into sections for sleeping, cooking, storage, and so on.

A covered barge costs 15% more than a standard barge of the same size. Lwt. remains the same, but the added weight of the boat reduces Load by 5%. One *also* equipped with the furniture and other accessories it needs to serve as a business or residence costs 25% more and has 8% less Load.

War Barge

Inevitably, violence takes place in the tunnels, and the authorities of Than have to take steps. Barges are sometimes adapted to the peculiar conditions of fighting in the tunnels. They are equipped with armored plates fore, aft, or both, to protect the occupants from missile fire (especially thrown weapons); the top and sides of barges are rarely armored, since those angles are almost never exposed to attack. The plates are about 4' high; fighters can crouch behind them for full cover, or stand up to fight from behind partial cover. They provide DR 6 for protected locations.

Adding an armor plate to one end increases Cost by 5% and reduces Load by 2%; double these to protect both ends. Draft animals may still pull the barge with a rope, or they may push the barge using a rigid pole attached to their harnesses. This does not change the barge's cost, but it is clumsy. It halves acceleration and top speed.

Sample Barge Deck Plans

The plans on pp. 26-28 illustrate some common barge uses.

1. A standard barge used primarily for cargo. It has benches fore and aft for the boatmen, but otherwise the deck is bare.

2. A standard-sized covered barge adapted for use as a home. Curtains cover the doorways, and thin dividers define four chambers, two of which have hammocks slung in them. Cooking is done over a portable brazier. Small areas for boatmen fore and aft are outside of the covered area.

3. A standard-sized covered barge adapted for use as a tavern. There are several lightweight stools, a pair of tables, and a fixed counter for customers. The proprietor has a small stove, a cabinet for ingredients and serving vessels, and space for a stack of wine jugs.

4. A light barge. Though set up for passengers, the benches can be removed to load freight.

QANAT PIRATES

Though the precise number of qanat pirates active at any given moment is unlikely to exceed 50, their escapades loom large in the folklore and political concerns of Than.

Like many criminals, qanat pirates are mostly part-time. They may carry out raids and live off the proceeds until they run out and raid again, or they may work at a legitimate occupation but resort to piracy to supplement their income. The pirates are loosely organized into small gangs, usually with shifting membership (see *A Brief History of the Thieves' Guild in Pyramid #3/47: The Rogue's Life* for ideas on how small groups of criminals organize themselves). Their typical method of operation is to find a target with a relatively valuable cargo, eject its crew, and get the cargo to a safe hiding place as quickly as possible, relying on fences to turn any loot they can't use themselves into money.

Pirates almost always attack lone barges rather than the longer trains sometimes organized by larger shippers, since the criminals usually lack the manpower to successfully take on much more. Set-piece ambushes usually happen around intersections, where the pirates can find a convenient corner to hide behind, attacking their target barge during the difficult process of turning. However, they may also use barges themselves, leaping from their barge to their quarry as they pass in opposite directions down a tunnel. Since most are out for loot rather than blood, pirates are usually happy to simply terrify a target's crew into fleeing or give them a quick beating and toss them over the side. However, the profession does attract more than its fare share of people enamored of violence for its own sake, so there's a significant minority of pure and simple killers.

Once the target barge has been secured, the pirates drag it as fast as they can to a place where they can unload the loot. This is remarkably easy, since the region has any number of grottos and even extensive cave networks. Some were sealed off during the construction of the qanat network and reopened by pirates. Some didn't quite intersect the qanat network but were opened by a little bit of new digging. Some were never sealed off to begin with because they didn't interfere with the flow of water or barges.

Pirates take advantages of these side passages to get the loot off the boat and, if at all possible, get it far from pursuers. Small niches are usually disguised with wood or canvas covers painted to resemble rock, often with sand and small rocks glued on. Entrances to bigger warrens may be sealed up by authorities, but reopened by defiant pirates. Large cave complexes are always said to hold pirate dens, though most of the time, difficult-to-find chambers are used to hold loot temporarily, not as long-term storage, let alone a residence.

Pirates rarely keep the barges they hijack. They're often readily identifiable, so anyone caught using a stolen barge is generally considered a pirate. Instead, pirates usually take more care disposing of a barge than they do seizing it so that it isn't found near their hiding place. They drag barges as far as they feel safe staying with it in order to throw authorities off the trail, or even dismantle and sink the ship to keep it from being found.

Though pirates are feared through the region served by the qanat network, there's also respect and even a romantic regard for them. Popular tales tell of dashing pirates who pursue lovely mates, distribute largesse to the poor, and tweak the noses of unpleasant aristocrats. Current favorites include the romantic Haroun al-Aswad, said to have kidnapped and married three beautiful virgins on their way to Than to become priestesses; the audacious Big-Nose Amir, said to give one victim of each of his raids a gold coin (the better to remember him by); and the flamboyant Tariq ibn Bouzenadin, famous for his glittering jeweled cape. They typically come to a spectacularly grisly end, but that doesn't stop children from playing at piracy.

To thwart the pirates, Than has instituted regular patrols in the tunnels to find criminals and stamp them out. Small squads of four to 10 men on foot tromp up and down the passageways, keeping an eye out for suspicious boatmen, while military barges cruise the canals for a faster response. However, since they're easily spotted, law enforcement traditionally has had only a modest impact on illegal activity, at best preventing some attacks of opportunity and rarely apprehending pirates in the act. More often, they track down lairs and capture villains in repose, or follow clues to the criminals' above-ground identities and arrest them there. They're also Than's tenuous first line of defense against threats from the deeper tunnels.

THE DEEPER TUNNELS

There's another danger in the qanat, and one that threatens both the pirates and those who would bring them to justice. The caves under Than are deep indeed, and they are not well explored, but they are the stuff of dark legend.

During the construction of the qanat, there were occasional attacks by monsters from deep underground. Though they rarely strayed so close to the surface, they sometimes came up through the natural tunnel networks and stumbled into workers, with bloody results. Walling off unused side tunnels became a priority. However, with the rise of the pirates, the authorities are unable to keep the qanat network sealed.

Monsters in the qanat are still rare, usually only two or three a year. These are varied, from huge serpents to creatures of animate stone and fire to man-size venomous insects to vaguely humanoid creatures who appear to be made of masses of fungus. There are far more frequent reports of unusual shadows lurking down pirate tunnels or strange sounds echoing from unidentifiable sources. More intriguing are rumors alleged to be handed down from pirates of deeper caverns well below the level of the qanats: caves full of treasures stolen from pirates and honest boatmen alike, tunnels studded with gems, an underground city of monsters, another network of underground canals drawing power from ley lines so deep they can't be detected

from the surface, gateways to other worlds. Most of these are probably fantasies, but there's no telling where the truth lies among them.

ADVENTURES BENEATH THAN

The qanats of Than are in the unusual position of being both a dangerous wilderness and the backbone of civilization. They can provide both swashbuckling adventure in dark, lonely tunnels and the intrigue of either hunting down part-time pirates hiding in plain sight or being a pirate hiding in plain sight while being hunted. The most obvious kind of campaign is one of piracy. Protagonists can start as simple thugs with clubs and staffs, knocking off the odd barge here and there, building up wealth, skills, and reputation as they go. In a higher-point campaign, they could begin as established pirates, still plying their trade while maintaining or trying to avoid the romantic mantle of being a famous bandit.

Conversely, adventurers could be the troops sent down into the tunnels to stop the pirates. They might be the equivalent of beat cops, patrolling for elusive pirates while stopping everyday squabbles, or more like detectives, searching out pirate lairs and tracking down their inhabitants. The two campaign types could even be combined in a drama of conflicting loyalties, so beloved of Hollywood and Hong King cinema. One adventurer is an officer in the guard; another is his pirate brother. Who will choose family over his chosen profession, or will it lead to a flurry of fists and steel in a fatal showdown?

Finally, Than is a gateway to a dungeon-crawling campaign. The tunnels housing pirate lairs constitute the upper levels of a more or less natural dungeon complex. The "monsters," such as they are, are mere humans and the loot is plunder from the qanat barges. Below lie the deeper tunnels, filled with inhuman creatures and more mysterious (and more likely magical) treasure. And if things get too difficult underground, or if the piles of loot grow too large, a town where healing and markets are readily available are just overhead.

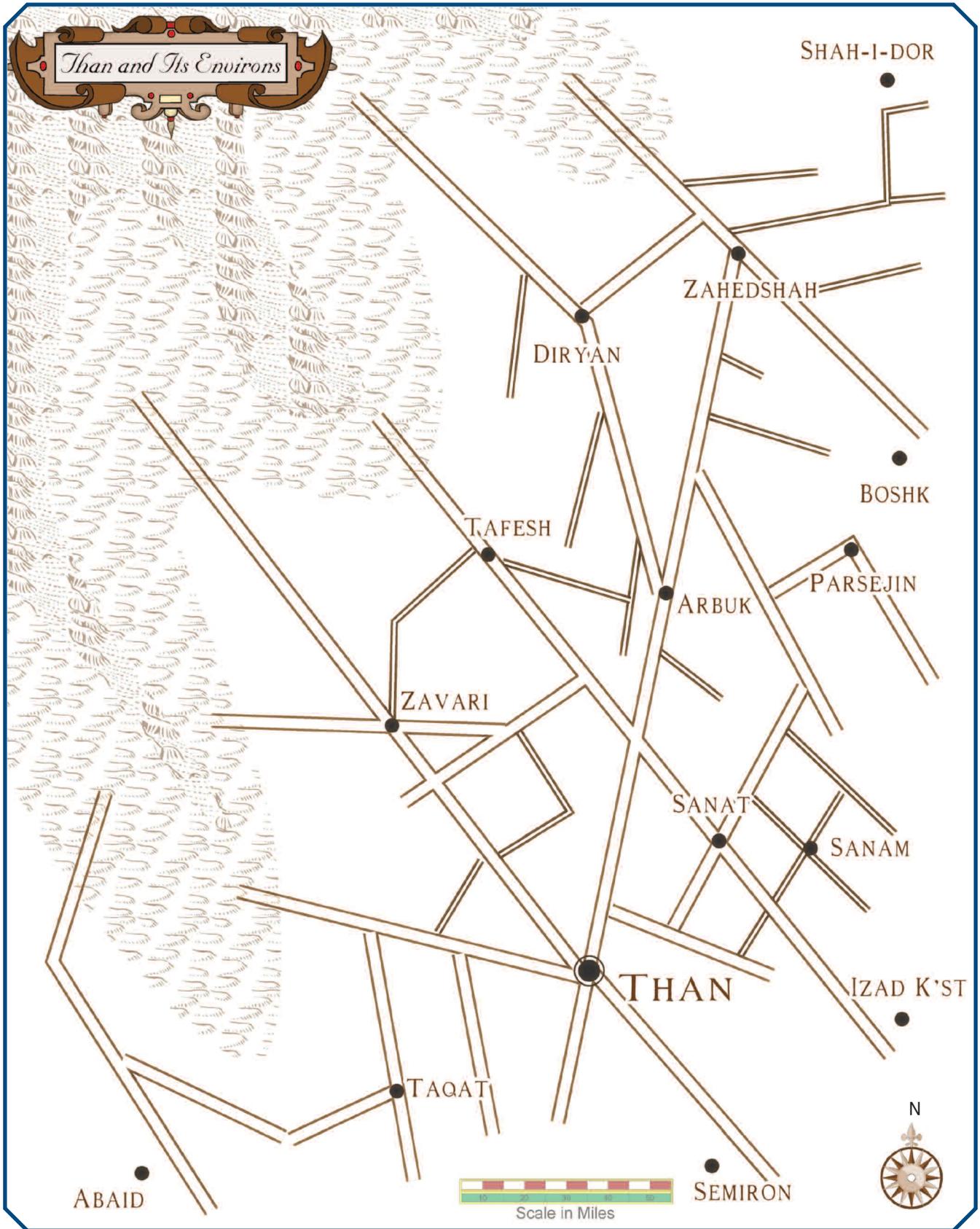
Weapons and Armor

Qanat pirates are mostly a variety of petty criminal, albeit a particularly desperate one. They don't have the money for heavy arms and armor, and generally don't need them. Staffs are common weapons, since they're dirt cheap, and boatmen need long poles anyway; knives are a common backup weapon. A significant minority of pirates carry short swords, while the richest use various fencing weapons.

Government patrols are better equipped. Guards usually wear a thick leather corset and helm, and carry a sword, spear, and small shield. Given the continual darkness, to say nothing of short ranges once one enters the pirates' side tunnels, bows and crossbows are rarely used in the qanats.

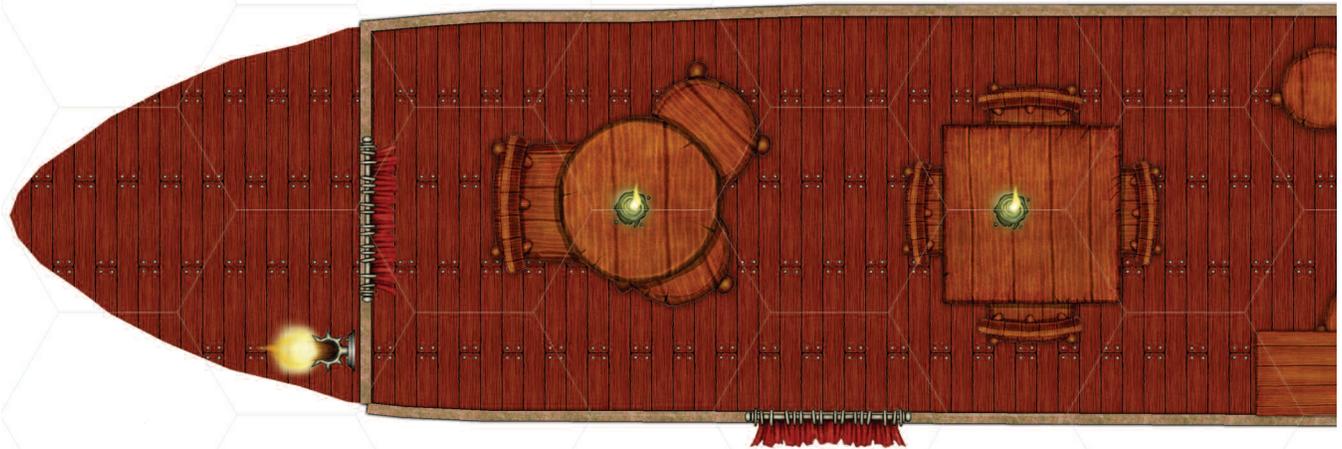
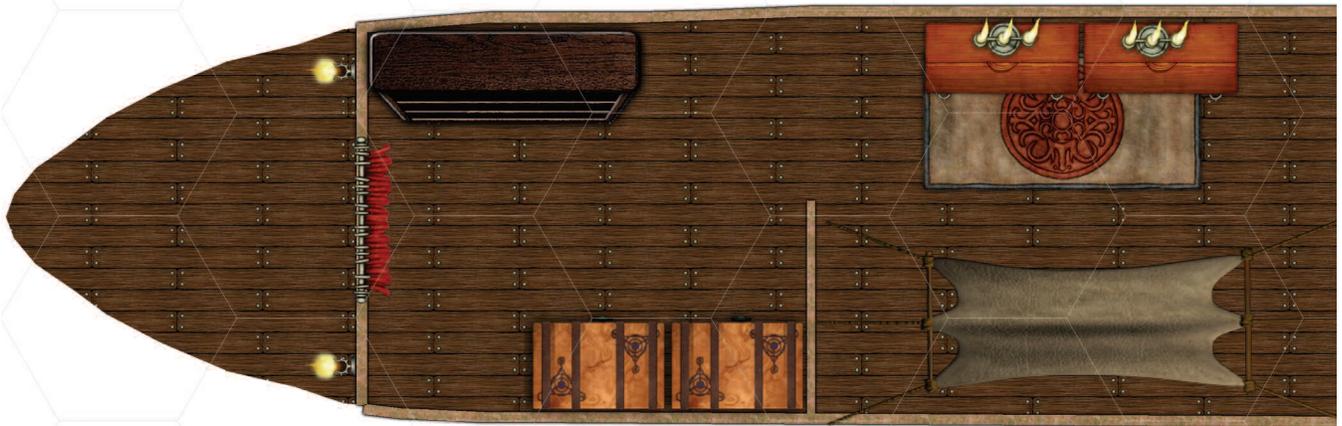
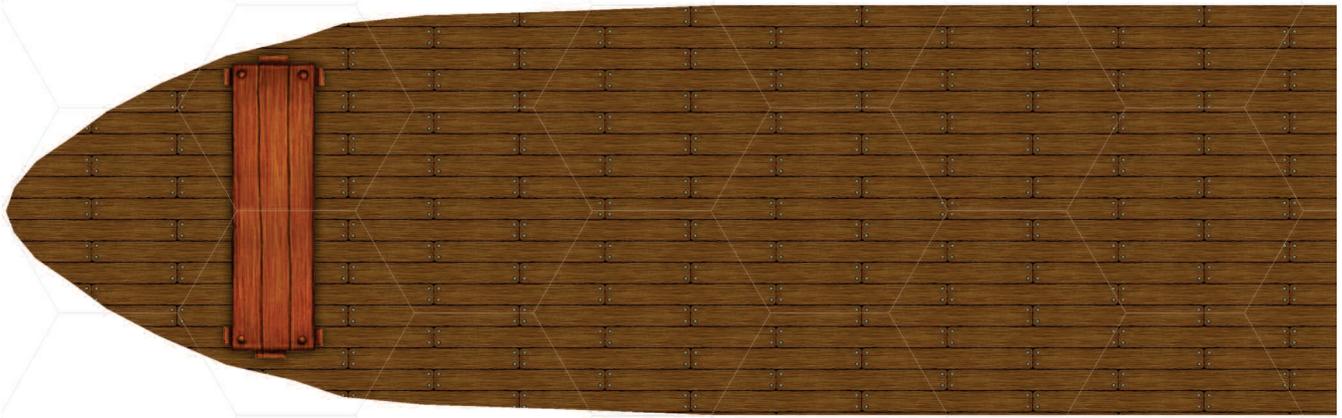
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matt Riggsby be studyin' anthropology and archaeology ere settin' sail for the shores of information technology. He works for a quartermaster for sawbones what spans the seven seas and bunks with a right fearsome first mate, a sturdy cabin boy, and a pack of scurvy dogs what actually be dogs.



MAP OF THAN AND ITS ENVIRONS

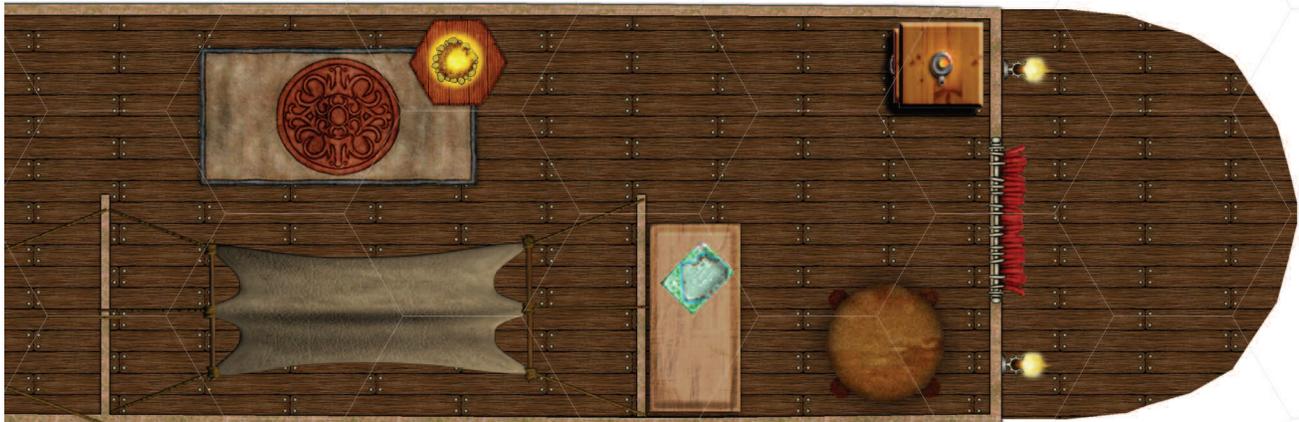
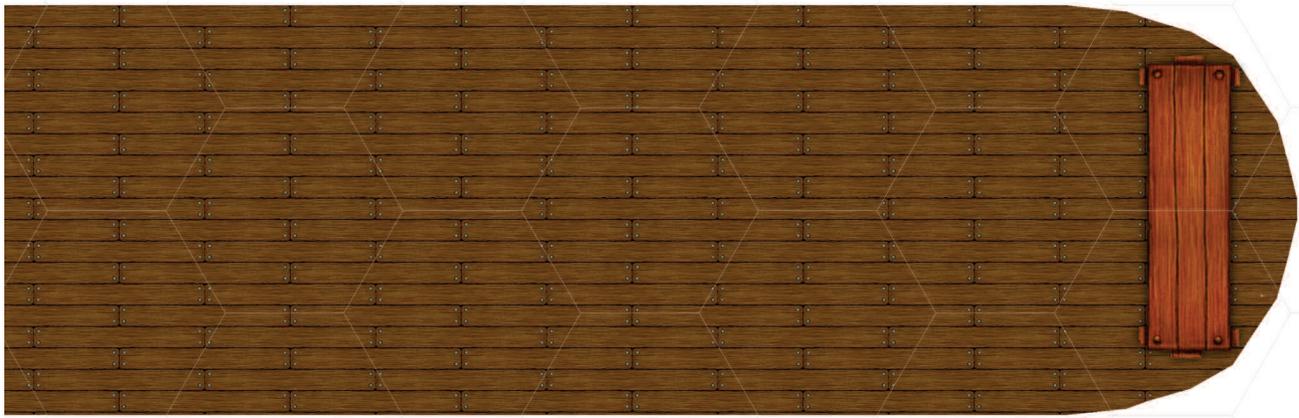
Double lines indicate the paths of tunnels with ley lines suitable for navigation. Wide ones are Intensity 2; narrow ones are Intensity 1. For more details about the map, see p. 22.

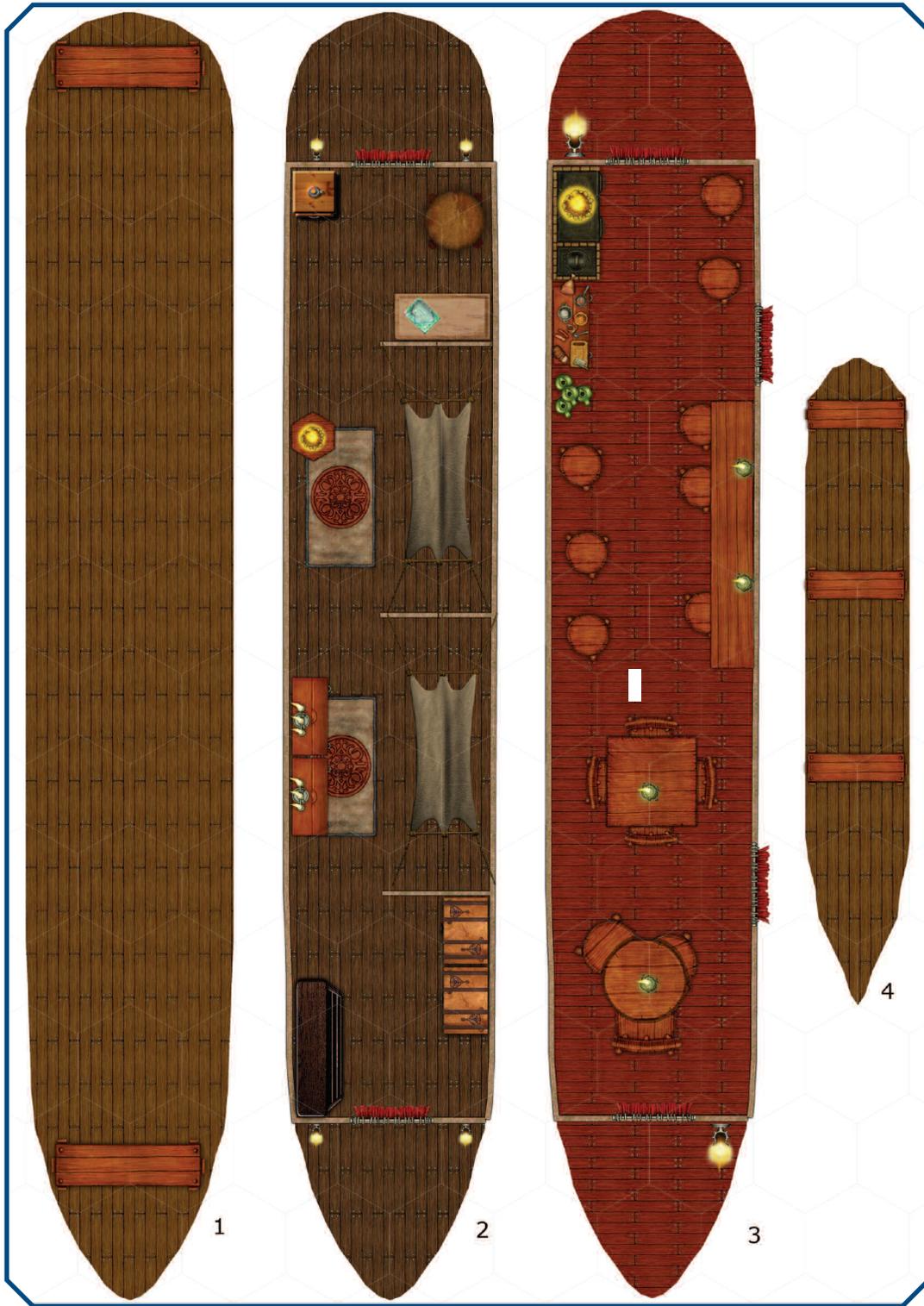


SAMPLE BARGE DECK PLANS (DETAIL)

Top to bottom: Standard barge for cargo; House-barge; Tavern-barge; Light barge.
For details of barges, see p. 23. For overviews of the deck plans, see p. 28.

Scale: 1 hex = 1 yard





SAMPLE BARGE DECK PLANS (OVERVIEW)

For details of barges, see p. 23. For larger views of the deck plans, see pp. 26-27.

Key

1. Standard barge for cargo 2. House-barge 3. Tavern-barge 4. Light barge

Scale: 1 hex = 1 yard

SAILING THE OPEN SKIES

BY CHRISTOPHER R. RICE

*The captain was dead. What was left of his brains was leaked onto to the cabin's floor as the ship trembled. Outside the porthole, Ileala could see the bluer-than-blue glowing skin of a Cloud-That-Hungers. The natives of High-Isles-In-The-Mist stayed far away from places that contained the skystone that **Dawnseeker** and her crew had come after. With good reason.*

"Where's the captain, Lieutenant Surreyas?" asked a sailor.

Ileala pointed to the corner. The sailor's face became grim. "Who'll pilot the ship? All the other mindsingers but you and the two below are dead."

"I suppose . . . I will. Though I am nowhere near the singer the captain is . . . was." Ileala set her jaw and went to the crystalline tank where the captain's corpse floated half in and half out. With some help from the sailor, she flushed the tank's salt-water, refilled it again, and stepped in, attaching various wires, crystals, and straps to her body.

Closing her eyes as the systems came under her command, Ileala could feel how damaged the ship was.

Sailing on the high seas can be the height of any adventure. But what about sailing the skies? Thanks to video games like the *Final Fantasy* series, wonderful books like Terry Brooks' *The Voyage of the Jerle Shannara* or Jules Verne's *The Clipper of the Clouds*, the film *Stardust*, or comics like Phil and Kaja Foglio's *Girl Genius*, airships have increased in popularity.

Now you can create your cinematic, magical, and steampunk airships with these experimental rules. They make heavy use of **GURPS Spaceships**, **GURPS Spaceships 4: Fighters, Carriers, and Mecha**, **GURPS Spaceships 7: Divergent and Paranormal Tech**, *Alternate Spaceships* from Pyramid #3/34: *Alternate GURPS*, and *Mecha Operations* from Pyramid #3/40: *Vehicles*.

For the sake of brevity, the term "airship" is used interchangeably with "spaceship." New systems and options are not restricted to just airship designs and might be found in any divergent craft.

DESIGN NOTES

The following advice, design options, and new systems are fairly standard for fantasy airships.

It's time to sail the skies!

SIZE AND CONSTRUCTION

Airships can be built at any size, but most real-world sailing vessels don't exceed SM +11. These are just general guidelines and won't apply to all ships. By default, **Spaceships** ship designs have three hit locations. For ships created like sailing vessels (typical of most airships), the front section would be the poop deck, quarterdeck, and the forecastle; the central section would be the upper, middle, and lower gun decks; and the rear would be the hold and orlop.

If the GM desires, he can assign vehicle hit locations (p. B463). Most airships will only have mast and rigging (M) and large superstructure (S) hit locations; some might have an open cabin (o) like a Greek *pentecoster*; ships with turrets

count as an independent turret (t); those with helicopter rotor systems (**Spaceships 7**, p. 10) have helicopter rotors (H); those with outriggers or Polynesian-style boats would have a small superstructure (s); while those with the winged option (**Spaceships**, p. 30) add wings (Wi).

COMBAT AND MOVEMENT

Depending on the campaign, the GM might find it easier to create an airship with the **Spaceships** rules, but use the *Basic Vehicle Movement* rules (pp. B463-467) – and might similarly decide to rely on the *Basic Vehicle Combat* rules (pp. B467-470). If sticking with the **Spaceships** combat system (**Spaceships**, p. 48), use the optional *Airplane-Style Dogfights* (**GURPS Spaceships 4: Fighters, Carriers, and Mecha**, p. 33) for all environments *except* space (or hyperspace).

NEW SPACECRAFT SYSTEMS

Divergent ships that are meant to be used on water often have one or more oar or sails systems. Steampunk ships might also have one of the new power plants, but this is not required.

Oars (TL2) [Hull]

Oars provide surface water movement: One system gives Move 1/3, two systems provide 1/4, and three (the maximum) grant 1/5. This assumes nautical lines (*Spaceships* 7, p. 21); multiply these values by 0.8 with normal streamlining or 0.5 with no streamlining. Oars only can be installed on SM +7 or smaller ships.

For simplicity, assume the Handling and Stability Rating in water is the base Hnd/SR shown on the *Hull Size Table* (*Spaceships*, p. 9), ignoring all other modifiers (including TL).

Oars require manual operation by the number of crew members indicated on the *Oars Table*, below. Crew operating the oars must be in passenger seating in the same hull section as the oars. To propel the ship, they must constantly row, moving the oars to interact with the surface water (or air if you have the aerial oars/sails design switch; see p. 32).

Oars are targeted using the *Targeting Exposed Systems* rule (*Spaceships*, p. 66), but at the vehicle's SM-2. When using the *Basic Vehicle Combat* rules (pp. B467-470), the GM might wish to add the optional *Ramming* rules from *GURPS Low-Tech Companion 2: Weapons and Warriors* (p. 36).

In cinematic campaigns, the GM might allow stronger crewers to function as more than one rower. To calculate this, assume that each oar requires a BL of 20 to operate. For every doubling of BL 20, treat that character as one more rower. For example, an ST 20 crew member counts as three rowers, not one.

For campaigns using other oar-like propulsion systems, vessels may incorporate ocean-going oars for an additional cost equal to 1/5 times the normal cost of this system.

Oars Table

| SM | +5 | +6 | +7 | +8 or more |
|--------------------------|----|----|-----|------------|
| Additional Required Crew | 4 | 12 | 40 | – |
| Cost (\$) | 1K | 3K | 10K | – |

Repair Skill: Carpentry.

Steam Engine Power Plant Table

| SM | +5 | +6 | +7 | +8 | +9 | +10 | +11 | +12 | +13 | +14 | +15 |
|------------|-----|------|------|----|----|-----|-----|------|------|-----|-----|
| Workspaces | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 10 | 30 | 100 | 300 |
| Cost (\$) | 30K | 100K | 300K | 1M | 3M | 10M | 30M | 100M | 300M | 1B | 3B |

Repair Skill: Mechanic (Steam Engine).

Use one-third the cost for a simple steam engine and listed cost for an advanced steam engine. Double final cost for efficient engines.

Sails (TL2) [Hull]

This system represents a mast, sails, and rigging. It provides propulsion, but requires an atmosphere with some wind. The ship must have the top deck design feature. Up to three systems may be installed, representing either multiple masts or a single large sail.

On water, one system provides Move 1/5, two give 1/7, and three allow 1/9. This assumes nautical lines (*Spaceships* 7, p. 21); multiply these values by 0.8 with normal streamlining or 0.5 with no streamlining.

Sails may not work at all in a “calm”; they are dependent upon the direction of the wind for propulsion. See *Sailing*

For double the cost, the oars can be automated, removing the need for additional crew, but requiring a Power Point per system to operate. For triple the cost, the oars can be operated manually or mechanically (as above). Switching between modes requires a minute.

Power Plant, Steam Engine (TL4) [Any]

These power plants burn fuel to heat a boiler, which in turn produces steam that moves pistons (TL4-5) or spins a turbine (TL6+), creating mechanical power.

Simple Steam Engine (TL4): Uses a single cylinder; once the steam is exhausted, it dissipates either into the atmosphere or into a condenser. Produces one Power Point per two systems installed. Internal fuel provides three hours of operation. Additionally, each fuel tank of wood or coal consumed by the engine lets it operate for three times that duration.

Advanced Steam Engine (TL6): Uses pressurized steam from a high-pressure cylinder that then enters a lower pressure cylinder to turn a turbine. Produces one Power Point per system installed. Internal fuel provides eight hours (TL6), 10 hours (TL7), or 12 hours (TL8+) of operation. Additionally, each fuel tank of wood or coal consumed by the engine lets it operate for eight times that duration.

In steampunk campaigns or those that assume steam power is the most advanced form of power production, the GM may allow either engine to be especially efficient. These efficient engines require superscience and produce double the normal Power Points per system.

These systems assume coal is being used, which costs approximately \$1,200 per ton. Wood can be used instead of coal, but lasts only 1/4 as long and costs \$500 per ton.

Neither system works in the absence of air (e.g., in a vacuum or underwater). Additionally, even the smallest engine requires at least one crewmember to be constantly loading fuel, stoking the fire, etc., and thus always requires at least one workspace.

Against the Wind (*GURPS Low-Tech*, p. 141) for suggested modifiers to movement. They also require additional crew beyond whatever else the ship needs to operate them (see *Sails Table*, p. 31).

Sails are targeted using the *Targeting Exposed Systems* rule (*Spaceships*, p. 66), but at the vehicle's SM.

This is an intentional generalization of actual sailing-ship movement! For simplicity, assume that Handling and Stability Rating in water is the base Hnd/SR shown on the *Hull Size Table* (*Spaceships*, p. 9), ignoring all other modifiers (including TL).

For campaigns using other sail-like propulsion systems, they may incorporate ocean-going sails for a additional cost equal to 1/5 of this system's normal cost.

Sails Table

| SM | +5 | +6 | +7 | +8 | +9 | +10 | +11 | +12 or more |
|--------------------------|----|----|-----|-----|------|------|-----|-------------|
| Additional Required Crew | 1 | 2 | 5 | 10 | 20 | 50 | 100 | – |
| Cost (\$) | 1K | 3K | 10K | 30K | 100K | 300K | 1M | – |

Repair Skill: Carpentry or Sewing.

For double cost, the sails can be “retractable.” If retracted during combat they are targeted at -4. For quadruple the cost, the sails can be automated, removing the need for additional crew.

EXISTING SPACECRAFT SYSTEMS

The following are new options for existing systems.

Control Room

see *Spaceships*, p. 14

Ships with this system can swap out three control stations for an *integrated station*. This can represent biological computers, advanced neural networks, or even crew stations where operators are temporarily incorporated into the ship. Integrated stations function identically to the sapient brain system (*Spaceships* 7, p. 18), except that their Comm/Sensor level is equal to SM-6 due to reduced brain and nervous tissue. Furthermore, integrated stations may be designated as *psionic* – such systems provide one psionic Power Point. Additional integrated stations do not increase this amount.

Habitat (TL7) [Any]

see *Spaceships*, p. 17

Small Space (2): Similar to the open space system (*Spaceships*, p. 19), but much smaller. It has enough room for up to 10 people to congregate.

In settings where psychic abilities are abundant, *psionic life support* might be available, which functions identically to magical life support (*Spaceships* 7, p. 9).

Magical Power Plant (TL[^]) [Any]

see *Spaceships* 7, p. 13

Some magical power plants rely on the energy of one or more dedicated casters to function properly. The following new system represents that.

Amalgamation Engine (TL[^]): To function, this power plant requires a minimum number of mages who perform ceremonial magic, channel magical energies, and so on. This is in

addition to the system’s workspace requirement. The GM may allow powerful mages to count as two or more individuals. Every level of the Magery advantage counts as one person; Magery 0 counts as 0.5 people. If an Emergency Power task (*Spaceships*, p. 52) for the plant fails, the plant is disabled *and* the mages powering it are reduced to 1 FP at the start of the next turn. On a *critical* failure, each mage must immediately roll against HT + Magery; success results in unconsciousness for 1d hours, while failure causes a coma (p. B429). The amalgamation engine does not require fuel and generates four magical Power Points if installed in an SM +5-6 ship, and two if installed in an SM +7 or larger ship. The *Magical Power Plant Table* (below) shows the number of mages that are necessary (modified as detailed above). Plants that need two or more mages, but have fewer than the required number, work with half the required mages and generate only one magical Power Point. Those with less than half don’t function at all.

Elemental Furnace (TL[^]): As the steam engine (p. 30), except it contains bound air and fire elementals (or is enchanted with air and fire magic). It requires no fuel, is completely self-contained, and can function in vacuum. At TL[^] it provides one magical Power Point, while at TL7[^] (or higher) it provides two magical Power Points. Elemental furnaces can also be made efficient, doubling the amount of Power Points generated, but also doubling the cost.

*Was it a flour-mill that had
anchored on it during the night?
It looked like, with its wings and
sails – motionless and mysterious
in the gathering gloom.*

–Jules Verne,
The Clipper of the Clouds

Magical Power Plant Table

| SM | +5 | +6 | +7 | +8 | +9 | +10 | +11 | +12 | +13 | +14 | +15 |
|------------|------|------|----|----|-----|-----|------|------|-----|-------|-------|
| Workspaces | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 10 | 30 | 100 | 300 |
| Mages* | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 10 | 30 | 100 | 300 | 1,000 | 3,000 |
| Cost (\$) | 100K | 300K | 1M | 3M | 10M | 30M | 100M | 300M | 1B | 3B | 10B |

* The mages that an amalgamation engine requires to generate full Power Points. See also the description (above) the effects of fewer mages than the required number.

Repair Skill: Mechanic (Magical Power Plant). Elemental furnaces also require Mechanic (Steam Engine). Double cost for amalgamation engines.

Maneuver Enhancement (TL[^]) [Hull]

see *Spaceships 7*, p. 11

This system can also be used to enhance water or ground performance. It represents mass devoted to reduce drag (allowing better performance in water), or sensitive servomotors that provide better haptic feedback. Each system installed adds +1 to water or ground performance Handling. For double the cost, a single maneuver enhancement system can give a bonus to two environments, or triple the cost for all three by using “smart” technology to shift mass, change shape slightly, etc. See *Spaceships 7* (p. 11) for more details.

Maw (TL8) [Front Hull]

see *Spaceships 7*, p. 12

For +400% cost, a maw can be especially powerful, doing more damage than a vessel of its size otherwise could. For the purposes of maw attacks only, double the spaceship’s dST to determine damage inflicted. For +100% cost, a maw inflicts either impaling or corrosion damage instead of crushing (or it can switch between both for +200%). If this system has more than one damage type, add the cost of all modes together to determine final cost; only *one* damage type may be used at a time.

Weapons

see *Spaceships*, pp. 26-29

Sonic Disrupter (TL9[^]): A concentrated burst of sound that causes corrosion damage (sAcc -6, Range R0, Rcl 2). Cannot be used in vacuum, but *can* be used underwater at no penalty.

Robot Arm

see *Spaceships*, p. 24

For +50% cost, an arm may be made flexible. This allows multiple arms to reach and work with other arms, regardless of the ship’s positioning, general layout, or “right” and “left.”

Solar Panel Array (TL[^]) [Hull]

see *Spaceships*, p. 25

Normally, the solar panel array system is technological, but it can be made a magical or psionic system. This costs the same as a regular Solar Panel Array, but produces magical or psionic Power Points (*Spaceships 7*, pp. 20-21) instead.

NEW DESIGN FEATURE

Factories (*Spaceships*, p. 16) can be further enhanced with this new design feature.

Optimized Factory

Ships can have factory systems that specialize in a particular type of goods. Doing this allows for more-specialized tools that are better equipped to handle a distinct kind of product. You must specialize by a generalized type – all parts for the ship the factory system is on, all land vehicles, etc. Doing this allows the factory to achieve *double* the normal rate per hour. Optionally, you can further specialize by a specific

item – MK-23 amphibious assault craft, destroyer robots, etc. A narrowly specialized factory can multiply the normal rate per hour by 20. Both versions come at a price: While a factory can still create other items, the rates are halved (or quartered), and they require 10% (or 20%) more parts or mass. See *Spaceships* (p. 18) for more details on factories.

NEW DESIGN SWITCHES

These new design switches can be added to specific types of crafts, or be applied to the entire setting.

Aerial Oars/Sails

Realistically, ships can’t navigate through the air by sails or oars alone. With this design switch, they *can*. If your ship can float due to contragravity, etherwood, gasbags, etc., you can “sail” or “row” on the air as well as the water. Choose one of the options below. In all cases, the propulsion provided is not cumulative with that from other systems, and top air speed cannot exceed 500 mph. Two or more systems give +1 to Handling in the air.

Modest Performance: Each sail system provides 0.01G acceleration; each oar system gives 0.001G. This provides speeds comparable to most fantasy ships, though slow compared to spacecraft.

Cinematic Performance: Each system (of either type) gives 0.1G, the equivalent of similar “ether” systems (from *Spaceships 7*).

“Realistic” Air Sails: In theory, a “vectored sail system” might be able to overcome the rudderless challenges of air navigation. The GM may choose to apply one of the options above to sails *only*, but for three times the cost per system.

Anachronistic Systems

Some spaceships might have systems that are of a higher or lower TL than their baseline. For each TL by which the listed TL of a system exceeds that of the campaign, *double* the cost. This doubling is cumulative. Lower TL systems may be purchased as well; each TL below the campaign’s reduces the cost by 20% (minimum of 20% or 1/5 listed price). For example, a system that is two TLs higher than the campaign’s TL is $\times 4$ cost, while one that was three TLs higher would be $\times 8$ cost.

Divergent Comm/Sensors

Spaceships designed based on alternate technology paths, magic, or psionics might feature control rooms or comm/sensor arrays (*Spaceships*, pp. 14-15) based on different scientific principles or relying on esoteric tech. For instance, a magical comm/sensor array might use crystal balls for communication, divination magic for sensing nearby objects, and so on. Such systems are full price and may be available at a lower or divergent TL. They also follow all the rules associated with their divergent tech. For instance, a control room that uses crystal balls for communication wouldn’t be able to tap them in a no-mana zone, could have them disrupted by a large-area dispelling spell, and so on. Finally, if the Comm/Sensor rating is 0 or less, this option cannot be applied.

EXAMPLE AIRSHIPS

All vehicle statistics are for travel within an atmosphere; statistics for space travel have been purposefully omitted, as they are not common in settings that also feature fantasy airships.

CLOUD-THAT-HUNGERS

Though technically not an airship, this monstrous creature can be used in a variety of ways, including a precious resource (see the *Stormrider* airship, pp. 35-36). It resembles a cross between a jellyfish, a cuttlefish, and an octopus, and is the bane of airships. The creatures are especially attracted to vessels that use skystone armor (*Spaceships 7*, p. 6), which is a key part of their diet (their shell is almost completely composed of skystone). While not sapient (IQ 5), they are clever – setting up ambushes, using terrain to their advantage, applying guerilla tactics, and so on. They achieve flight via a form of psychokinesis (for thrust) and a reaction from ingested raw skystone and their own stomach acid, which is siphoned into their cuttlebone (for lift). They use a psychokinetic force field to protect themselves, which can also hide them.

As an adult, it has a streamlined 100,000-ton (SM +12) body, 900' long. The beast is 15% skystone by mass (representing its tough outer shell). While the rest of the creature *can* be eaten, its meat tastes foul.

Clouds-That-Hunger are hermaphroditic. When two meet, they “fight” using a special organ and try to spear one another. The loser carries the winner’s genetic material. The “production line” represents a reproductive tract that “manufactures” its young. Once “created,” the young then move to the spawning pouch (the hanger bay), which holds one SM +9 immature squidling.

Front Hull System

- [1] Organic Armor (20 dDR).
- [2] Skystone Armor (15 dDR).
- [3] Maw (40d cutting damage or 4d cutting dDam).

Front Hull System

- [4!] Digestive System (corrosive).
- [5!] Tertiary Battery (30 turrets with very rapid fire lightning cannon 10 MJ; psi-powered).
- [6] Reconfigurable System (Defensive ECM (Area Jammer) to Heavy Force Screen, dDR 300, or dDR 600 with two Power Points, cloaking, energy only, psi-powered).
- [core] Psionic Sapient Brain (comm/sensor 9; one psionic Power Point).

Central Hull System

- [1] Organic Armor (20 dDR).
- [2] Skystone Armor (15 dDR).
- [3] Gasbag (antigravity gas).
- [4-5] Orgone Power Plants (total four psionic Power Points).
- [6] Hangar Bay (3,000 tons, optimized for SM +9).
- [core!] Fabricator: Bio-Tech Production Line, Specialized, Cloud-That-Hungers spawn (\$20M/day, 1 ton/day).

Rear Hull System

- [1] Organic Armor (20 dDR).
- [2] Skystone Armor (15 dDR).
- [3-4] Robot Arms (flexible).
- [5!] Reconfigurable System (Hot Reactionless Engine, psi-powered, 2G acceleration, to Screw Propeller, psi-powered, see statistics).
- [6] Tail (impaling).

It is biological with energy-phasing surface, psi shielding, self-healing, slower industrial systems, and total automation. It has nautical lines and is winged. It has no crew.

TL *Spacecraft* **dST/HP** **Hnd/SR** **HT** **Move** **LWt.** **Load** **SM** **Occ** **dDR** **Range** **Cost**

PILOTING/TL^ (HIGH-PERFORMANCE SPACECRAFT)

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|-----|------|----|--------|---------|-------|-----|---|-----|---|---|
| ^ | Cloud-That-Hungers | 300 | +4/6 | 14 | 20/350 | 100,000 | 3,000 | +12 | - | 35* | - | - |
|---|--------------------|-----|------|----|--------|---------|-------|-----|---|-----|---|---|

* Plus dDR 200 force screen vs. energy attacks (dDR 600 if reinforced with a second Power Point).

Move is 0.5/17 on a water surface or 0.5/22 underwater; with two Power Points dedicated to propulsion, these become 1/20 and 1/28, respectively. Hnd/SR is -2/5 on or under water; crush depth is 583 yards.

CLOUDCLIPPER-CLASS AIR SKIFF (TL3+1^)

Air skiffs are small sailing vessels crewed by only a handful of people. *Cloudclippers* are one of the more popular designs. With a sleek etherwood hull (*Spaceships 7*, p. 5) created for both water and air, it is often found as the captain’s launch on a larger vessel. This sailpunk design is built using a 100-ton (SM +6) streamlined hull that is 90' long and has nautical lines. It also features magical sailcloth that can transform sunlight into

energy, which powers its rotary reactionless drive. In addition to its core crew (see below), it can carry 12 rowers. Unlike most other low-tech ships, it does not have the lacks automation feature. Instead, various clockwork devices and magically enhanced springs help a small crew perform routine tasks.

Front Hull System

- [1] Etherwood Armor (dDR 1).
- [2] Control Room (one control station, pre-radio, no computer).

| <i>Front Hull</i> | <i>System</i> |
|-------------------|--|
| [3] | Sails (0.01G acceleration in atmosphere; water surface movement 1/5; automated). |
| [4] | Solar Panel Array (one magical Power Point). |
| [5, 6, core] | Habitat (magical life support; one luxury cabin, two cabins, briefing room, office). |

| <i>Central Hull</i> | <i>System</i> |
|---------------------|---|
| [1] | Etherwood Armor (dDR 1). |
| [2] | Passenger Seats (magical life support; 12 seats). |
| [3] | Oars (magic-powered; switchable automation; water surface movement 1/3)*. |
| [4] | Secondary Battery (6 hidden fixed mounts with 8cm guns; 2 tons cargo). |
| [5] | Maneuver Enhancement (+1 Handling in air or water; anachronistic). |

| <i>Central Hull</i> | <i>System</i> |
|---------------------|--|
| [6, core] | Habitat (magical life support; one bunkroom, one craft shop (Carpentry), one sickbay). |

| <i>Rear Hull</i> | <i>System</i> |
|------------------|--|
| [1] | Etherwood Armor (dDR 1). |
| [2] | Engine Room (one workspace). |
| [3] | Rotary Reactionless Engine (magic-powered; 0.1G acceleration). |
| [4-5] | Cargo Hold (10 tons capacity). |
| [6] | External Clamp. |

* Can be used manually (requiring 12 rowers) or mechanically (requiring one Power Point).

The ship has aerial sails, nautical lines, and a top deck. The usual crew is a captain (who is typically a mage) and a single navigator/gunner.

| <i>TL</i> | <i>Spacecraft</i> | <i>dST/HP</i> | <i>Hnd/SR</i> | <i>HT</i> | <i>Move</i> | <i>LWt.</i> | <i>Load</i> | <i>SM</i> | <i>Occ</i> | <i>dDR</i> | <i>Range</i> | <i>Cost</i> |
|-----------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
|-----------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|------------|------------|--------------|-------------|

PILOTING/TL4 (HIGH-PERFORMANCE SPACECRAFT)

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|---------------------|----|------|----|-------|-----|----|----|-----|---|---|----------|
| 3+1^ | <i>Cloudclipper</i> | 30 | +2/4 | 14 | 1/100 | 100 | 13 | +6 | 10A | 1 | - | \$2.316M |
|------|---------------------|----|------|----|-------|-----|----|----|-----|---|---|----------|

On a water surface, water speed is 1/5 for sails or 1/4 for oars, and Hnd/SR is +1/4.

Only a handful of shipwrights understood the mechanics of ambient-light sails, radian draws, and diapson crystals well enough to build the vessels that could utilize them.

*—Terry Brooks,
Ilse Witch*

SAND FLEA-CLASS LSA MECHA (TL3+2^)

Land, Sea, and Air (LSA) mecha are highly versatile craft capable of combat in nearly any environment, though they are not limited to military. Their sturdy frame is perfect for explorers, rescue workers, or even technicians.

The *Sand Flea* is a sleek craft, incorporating a compact elemental furnace (p. 31) to power it. Two ducted fans can be shifted between surface and underwater propulsion. On land, its multiple clockwork-driven legs provide swift travel, even in rough terrain. A favorite tactic of pilots is to fly above a target, bring all of its legs together, and then *drop* atop the victim, spearing it with its legs.

This design is built using a 30-ton (SM +5) unstreamlined hull, and is 30' tall.

| <i>Front Hull</i> | <i>System</i> |
|-------------------|--|
| [1-2] | Orichalcum Armor (total dDR 8). |
| [3] | Reconfigurable System (Maw, powerful, 4d cutting or corrosion dDamage (41d-1 damage), to Major Battery, fixed mount 10MJ magic-powered sonic disruptor). |
| [4-5!] | Reconfigurable System (Screw Propellers, magic-powered, see statistics, to Helicopter Rotors, magic-powered, total 100 mph). |
| [6] | Maneuver Enhancement (+1 Handling in air, on land, or in water; anachronistic). |
| [core] | Efficient Compact Elemental Furnace Power Plant (four magical Power Points)*. |

| <i>Central Hull</i> | <i>System</i> |
|---------------------|--|
| [1-2] | Orichalcum Armor (total dDR 8). |
| [3-4] | Robot Arms (clawed). |
| [5] | Reconfigurable System (Submarine Ballast Tank to Maneuver Enhancement, +1 Handling in air or on land and anachronistic). |
| [6] | Reconfigurable System (Striking Tail, 2d+1 crushing dDamage (23d damage), to Major Battery, fixed mount on tail, 3MJ magic-powered Heat Beam). |
| [core] | Control Room (magical; one control station, no computer, emergency ejection). |

| <i>Rear Hull</i> | <i>System</i> |
|------------------|--|
| [1-2] | Orichalcum Armor (total dDR 8). |
| [3-6!] | Robot Legs (magic powered; Move 10/40; † taloned). |

* Volatile system. See *Pyramid #3/40: Vehicles* (p. 7) for more details.

† Only one Power Point needed for all legs.

The ship has biomorphics, making it vaguely resemble a crustacean. Typical crew is a single pilot.

PILOTING/TL4 (HIGH-PERFORMANCE SPACECRAFT)

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|------------------|----|------|----|------|----|-----|----|-----|----|---|----------|
| 3+2^ | <i>Sand Flea</i> | 20 | +1/4 | 12 | 1/50 | 30 | 0.1 | +5 | 1SV | 8* | - | \$4.136M |
|------|------------------|----|------|----|------|----|-----|----|-----|----|---|----------|

* Hardened.

Move is 1/9 on a water surface or 1/5 underwater; with four Power Points dedicated to propulsion instead of two, these become 2/13 and 2/7, respectively. Hnd/SR is +1/4 on or under water; crush depth is 4,00 yards. On the ground, it has Move 10/20 and Hnd/SR +4/5.

SEAHORSE-CLASS AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT CARRIER (TL3+2^)

Seahorse-class battleships are powerful, well-armed, and well-armored vessels. They combine the best aspects of defense, offense, and speed into a compact shell. Instead of sails, they have magically powered propellers that allow them to function in the air, on the surface of a body of water, and underneath the water. It is built using a 10,000-ton (SM +10) streamlined hull that is 450' long and has nautical lines.

The vessel carries a contingent of *Sand Fleas* (see pp. 34-35) or similar small mecha for ship-to-ship or amphibious assaults. Because the carrier contains a specialized production line and hundreds of tons of spare parts, a common tactic against a large number of foes or a single powerful one is to maneuver a *Sand Flea* close so that it can clamp onto a target with its robot arms. The pilot then ejects after setting the auto-destruct on the mecha's power plant, causing massive damage.

Front Hull System

| | |
|--------|---|
| [1] | Skystone Armor (dDR 7). |
| [2] | Orichalcum Armor (dDR 18). |
| [3] | Habitat (magical life support; 44 cabins, 15 luxury cabins, three clinics, one briefing room, one gym, one office (as library), one ops center, and one small garden).* |
| [4] | Tactical Array (magical; comm/sensor 6).* |
| [5] | Control Room (magical; ten control stations, no computer; comm/sensor 4).* |
| [6] | Hangar Bay (300 tons capacity, optimized for SM +5).* |
| [core] | Cargo Hold (500 tons capacity). |

Central Hull System

| | |
|---------|---|
| [1] | Skystone Armor (dDR 7). |
| [2] | Orichalcum Armor (dDR 18). |
| [3-4!] | Secondary Battery (each has 10 turrets with a 300 MJ sonic disrupter, magic-powered).* |
| [5] | Habitat (magical life support; 105 bunk-rooms, five cages, and five craft shops).* |
| [6] | Hangar Bay (300 tons capacity, optimized for SM +5).* |
| [core!] | Production Line: Specialized, <i>Sand Flea</i> mecha (\$2M per day production for mecha, \$25k per day for all others; anachronistic).* |

Rear Hull System

| | |
|--------|--|
| [1] | Skystone Armor (dDR 7). |
| [2] | Orichalcum Armor (dDR 18). |
| [3-4] | Efficient Elemental Furnace Power Plant (two magical Power Points each).* |
| [5-6!] | Reconfigurable System (Screw Propellers, magic-powered, see statistics, to Helicopter Rotors, magic-powered, total 50 mph due to nautical lines).* |

* 10 workspaces per system.

The ship has nautical lines, a top deck, and lacks automation. Typical bridge crew consists of a captain, commander, navigator, comm/sensor officer, purser, surgeon, and eight midshipmen. Additionally, each shift consists of 20 gunners, 130 technicians, two medics, and 10 ops-center crew, plus the personnel required to operate the *Sand Fleas* (or similar small craft) carried aboard (typically 20).

PILOTING/TL4 (HIGH-PERFORMANCE SPACECRAFT)

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|-----------------|-----|------|----|------|--------|---------|-----|--------|----|---|--------|
| 3+2^ | <i>Seahorse</i> | 150 | -1/5 | 15 | 1/25 | 10,000 | 1,155.8 | +10 | 558ASV | 25 | - | \$568M |
|------|-----------------|-----|------|----|------|--------|---------|-----|--------|----|---|--------|

Move is 1/17 on a water surface or 1/22 underwater; with four Power Points dedicated to propulsion instead of two, these become 2/21 and 2/28, respectively. Hnd/SR is -2/5 on or under water; crush depth is 833 yards.

STORMRIDER-CLASS AIRSHIP (TL3^)

The *Stormrider* airship's design physically resembles that of an actual sailing vessel, though its sails are placed on the side of the boat rather than on deck. Each ship's hull is made using the bones from a corpse of a Cloud-That-Hungers (p. 33), its gasbag is taken from the creature's cuttlebone, the ship's psychotronic power plant is taken from the creature's internal

organs, the sail cloth is taken from its tanned hide, and so on. Using latent psionic energies, specially trained psychic ship-builders imbue energy within the very hull of the vessel, allowing it to repair itself and respond to a living mind.

This design is built using a 1,000-ton (SM +8), streamlined hull that is 150' long and has nautical lines. Most of the crew serve as technicians for the many psionic systems aboard the craft, though at least a quarter of them act as gunners and loaders for the cannon.

For campaigns featuring *Stormrider* vessels, the GM may decide that it attracts any nearby Cloud-That-Hungers on a 6 or less on 3d.

| Front Hull | System |
|------------|--|
| [1] | Wood Armor (dDDR 1). |
| [2] | Skystone Armor (dDDR 3). |
| [3-4] | Sails (0.02G acceleration in atmosphere; +1 Handling in air; water surface movement 1/7). |
| [5!] | Medium Battery (3 turrets with rapid fire lightning cannon 10 MJ; psi-powered).* |
| [6] | Habitat (psychic life support; four hibernation chambers, two cabins, two sickbays, one bunkroom, one briefing room, one luxury cabin, one office, one teleport projector).* |
| [core] | Control Room (psionic; one control station, one psionic integrated station, no computer; Comm/Sensor 0 (or 2 for the integrated station); one psionic Power Point).* |

| Central Hull | System |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| [1] | Wood Armor (dDDR 1). |
| [2] | Skystone Armor (dDDR 3). |
| [3] | Gasbag (antigravity gas).* |

| Central Hull | System |
|--------------|---|
| [4] | Secondary Battery (10 fixed mounts with 12cm guns).* |
| [5!] | Light Force Screen (dDDR 70; cloaking; energy only; psi-powered).* |
| [6-core] | Habitat (psychic life support; 11 bunkrooms, four cabins, four hibernation chambers, two craft shops, one small garden, and one cell).* |

| Rear Hull | System |
|-----------|---|
| [1] | Wood Armor (dDDR 1). |
| [2] | Skystone Armor (dDDR 3). |
| [3] | Habitat (psychic life support; 48 hibernation chambers).* |
| [4!] | Standard Reactionless Engine (1G acceleration, psi-powered).* |
| [5] | Psychotronic Power Plant (two psionic Power Points).* |
| [6] | Cargo Hold (50 tons capacity). |

* 2 workspaces per system.

The ship has aerial sails, nautical lines, psi shielding, self-healing abilities, and a top deck. It lacks automation. Crew consists of a captain, two officers (one of whom is a psi, to operate the integrated station), a surgeon, 10 sailors (who also serve as loaders), 13 gunners, 22 technicians, and six psis who operate the psychotronic power plant in eight-hour shifts.

| TL | Spacecraft | dST/HP | Hnd/SR | HT | Move | LWt. | Load | SM | Occ | dDDR | Range | Cost |
|----|-------------------|--------|--------|----|--------|-------|------|----|-----|------|-------|----------|
| 3^ | <i>Stormrider</i> | 70 | +2/5 | 14 | 10/250 | 1,000 | 56.4 | +8 | 66A | 4 | - | \$82.29M |

On a water surface, Move is 1/7 and Hnd/SR is -1/5.

She Be Mine, by Blood, Sweat, and Tears

While *GURPS Spaceships 2: Traders, Liners, and Transports* provides rules for buying, financing, and owning a ship (pp. 26-27), these might be too complicated for some games. For such games, the following option might be available.

Signature Gear

see p. B85

Since spaceships can cost in the millions of dollars, characters wanting to acquire them via signature gear have to spend a *lot* of points. The following makes this much easier and fits effortlessly in a cinematic campaign.

New Special Enhancement

Deep Pockets: Instead of each point of Signature Gear counting as goods equal to 50% of the average campaign starting wealth, look up the level of your advantage on the *Size* column of the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550), read across to the "Linear Measurement" column, and use that number as your Signature Gear level to determine the maximum amount your gear can cost. For example, Signature Gear 10 (Deep Pockets, +200%) in a TL8 setting would allow you to own a piece of gear worth up to \$1,000,000. This *cannot* be combined with the Consumable Signature Gear rules from *GURPS Supers* (p. 81). +200%.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher R. Rice flies in his dreams – almost as much as the monsters eat him. From Portsmouth, Virginia, his goal is being able to write full-time one day, or at least eke out a living doing it. He wishes to thank L.A., his own personal muse, as

well as the rest of his gaming group; Beth "Archangel" McCoy for her amazing patience and snarkitude; David Pulver for his guidance; and his good friend Antoni Ten Monró, Douglas Cole, and Patrick "Celti" Burroughs, for being most excellent sounding boards.

RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

BUT WE'RE GOOD PIRATES!

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

If you had a time machine and went to an American household in 1968 – a month or two after the Tet Offensive – and asked how long it would be before a *fun* war movie came out again, you'd probably get met with shrieks about how you shouldn't use time machines to sneak into people's homes. Getting past that, the residents likely wouldn't even be able to understand the question: Having seen the horrors of the Vietnam conflict beamed vividly into their living rooms and plastered on their newspapers for years at this point, they might think that it'd be decades before a "golly gee willikers, it's fun to kill bad guys" type of movie could find a mass audience again . . . if ever.

In fact, it took just nine years from the time of the Tet Offensive. It was barely two years since the fall of Saigon before the nation found itself no longer licking its wounds, and instead found pleasure in a heroic war film.

It just so happened that the war took place a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away.

The impact of the first *Star Wars* film cannot be understated in many ways. However, one of the more overlooked aspects of its influence was in how successful it was in reigniting the American love affair with war films. It did so by an odd-but-effective moral trick: It simply ignored the bits it (and its audience) didn't want to deal with.

Blood and guts? Gone; faceless goons fall over bloodlessly after being shot.

Moral quandaries? None here; instead, there's a black-and-white ethos, where evil is a palpable force.

Unsure objectives? Replaced with schematic diagrams that show exactly what needs to happen, with immediate consequences for success or failure.

Counting Alderaan, one would be hard-pressed to see a best-selling film with a higher death count. But it's faceless and bloodless, so it's okay.

This brings us to piracy.

A PIRATE'S LIFE FOR ME

Fans of the past who are familiar with what historical pirates actually *did* might consider them an unusual choice for a Disney theme park ride – murder, assault, plunder, and other atrocities often don't translate well to most children's fare.

Strictly from a historical point of view, pirates are most definitely not a logical choice for a "put your feet in these shoes" type of role. But something changed that . . .

This is probably traceable to Robert Louis Stevenson's 1883 classic *Treasure Island*, which is responsible for codifying much of what we think of as pirate-y: treasure maps, parrots on shoulders, and much more. The kid-friendly aspects of piracy were further cemented in the early 1900s, when the popularity of Peter Pan (in its various forms) meant that – in any good playground row – *someone* had to be the pirates.

Pirate tales and *Star Wars* thus have something in common that can be invaluable when trying to devise a game based on historical precedent or extrapolation: What are we going to choose to forget, or pretend doesn't happen? The biggest issue the group needs to resolve early on (ideally *before* the game begins) is how the campaign will handle the less savory aspects of pirates. For players who don't want to reenact the more unsavory aspects of life on the seas – or other undesirable acts in a game – two possibilities spring to mind.

*Now and then we had a hope that
if we lived and were good, God would
permit us to be pirates.*

– Mark Twain

IGNORANCE IS BLISS

Star Wars tackles the ickier aspects of war largely by ignoring them: fired weapons result in bloodless wounds, genocide against billions is treated with the same emotional gravity as killing a mentor someone's known for a few days (at most), etc. (As another extreme example of this, any cozy mystery show such as *Murder, She Wrote* downplays the actual violence inherent in most homicide; the trace evidence of blood from 12 seasons of that show could fit in a shoebox.)

Amid the seven seas, this is also the approach largely taken by the classic computer game *Sid Meier's Pirates!*

Yes, there's mayhem and plundering and killing of innocent sailors on nearby ships and sacking of towns, but we don't zoom in to see the "real" human cost. Since it's either off-screen or mostly pixels, it doesn't really register as "wrong," especially since there is no law-enforcement voice of morality outside of those pesky authorities, who are more obstacles than a voice of social opposition.

Of course, when trying to figure out the level of moral detail to zoom in on, make sure *all* players' expectations mesh, including the GM's (see box below). Otherwise, you might have one player wanting to explore the moral ramifications of kidnapping while the rest of the group wants to convert the governor's daughter into a sack of cash and move on to the next victimless arson spree.

JUSTIFY YOURSELF!

Another popular technique that allows a bit more flexibility for storytelling is to come up with a reason for nefarious deeds: Yes, you're a pirate (or soldier, or bounty hunter . . .), but you're a *good* pirate/soldier/bounty hunter. Again, the original *Star Wars* trilogy handled this masterfully; the heroes' actions seem so justified – complete with "Light Side" and "Dark Side" forces – that it wasn't until over a decade later when Kevin Smith pointed out that maybe blowing up an incomplete military project full of conscripted mooks and contractors might not be the most morally justifiable action.

In a lot of ways, that's what the "swashbuckling" genre is: "pirates" with the icky bits justified or filed off. Even if the players want to be more pirate-y in their approach to life, it's still fairly straightforward to come up with justifications as to

why their heroes are morally acceptable (or at least approachable). Yes, we live on the high seas and engage in ship combat and swordfights, but we're pirate *hunters* . . . which – as Sid Meier reminds us – is a lot like being a pirate, but with a national sponsor. Sure, we loot other innocent ships, but we have a strict "no killing" policy.

Justifications can be as elaborate or plain as you desire. As one example, the 2003 board game *Break the Safe* has an amazingly elaborate backstory that casts the players as *heroic* safecrackers, needing to break into the bad guys' lair to steal documents . . . and disarm a time bomb that the *heroes themselves* activated. (There's something about safecracking that brings out the worst in justifications; the computer adventure game *Traitors Gate* casts the player as an agent who must break into the Tower of London and replace the Crown Jewels with fakes before a *real* bad guy breaks in and steals them.)

So with the right justification, it's entirely possible to be really pirate-y, and still be heroic. Some off-the-cuff ideas include:

- In a grim dystopian world where all hope has been drained from the populace, the heroes are pirates who decide to reawaken hope by making people feel something other than numbness . . . and if that means scaring villages and taking their stuff while doing battle with Dystopian Vessels . . . well, that's a small price to pay to bring feelings back to humanity.
- The heroes are cursed ghost pirates, forced to roam the seas and do battle with other ethereal vessels.
- The PCs are virtual-reality pirate constructs in a fictional world. Yes, they feel compelled to engage in aquatic crimes, but they also earnestly desire that – in so doing – they might someday reveal the truth about what is behind the curtain.

As another possibility – which can work in tandem with these other options – you can simply lampshade various immoral actions. "Yes, I was (and am) a pirate. Yes, we do unsavory things. Let's get on with adventure!" (An amalgam of these outlooks is how we side with Jack Sparrow in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie series.) This isn't ignoring them, per se, but it's also not dwelling on them; it's handwaving away the morality *in game* rather than from without.

In 1968, it seemed like war would never be fun again. It took until 1977 to prove that guns-a-blazing combat could be perfect popcorn fare, in the right long-ago-and-far-away context. By 1983, an animated G.I. Joe cartoon showed the world once again that even modern-day warfare could be a perfect kid's cartoon, provided you structure the action to make the heroes justified and ignore the moral bits that make conflict messy. Yes, "real" piracy might be hard for modern audiences to stomach, but a sufficiently recast or sanitized version can let the players have what they love about life at sea while sidestepping the bits they'd prefer to overlook.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Steven Marsh is a freelance writer and editor. He has contributed to roleplaying game releases from Green Ronin, West End Games, White Wolf, Hogshead Publishing, and others. He has been editing *Pyramid* for over 10 years; during that time, he has won four Origins awards. He lives in Indiana with his wife, Nikola Vrtis, and their son.

Expectations Versus Reality

There was perhaps no greater global disconnect between gamer expectations and reality than with the original *Vampire: The Masquerade* from White Wolf (and, to a lesser extent, much of the rest of the World of Darkness line). The creators of that game clearly intended it to be a horrific exploration of a doomed attempt to cling to humanity while being forced by urges and temptations into a downward spiral of monstrosity. Many, *many* gamers instead treated it as an opportunity to play kewl-powered awesome-looking blood-drinking amoralists.

The exasperation could be seen as the creators attempted to redirect fan interest toward the game they were making, which usually resulted in conversations that resembled:

"What kind of powers would I have if I were a werewolf who was bitten by a vampire?"

"Well, you'd be a pitiful, self-loathing rage-filled monster who longed for death every unwaking moment."

"Yeah, yeah . . . pitiful freak, right. But what would my powers be?!"

Neither approach is necessarily "wrong" (scads of people had many hours of fun playing *Vampire* in a way its creators didn't intend), but it's important to make sure the game you want to *run* is the same one the rest of the group wants to *play*.

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