

Buccaneers & Bokor

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Captain's Log

A hoy and welcome to the first issue of **Buccaneers & Bokor**, Adamant Entertainment's bi-monthly pdf magazine for use with **Skull & Bones** (or any other pirate- or nautically-themed RPG campaign). Every other month, we'll be bringing you new rules, adventures, source material and other assorted goodies.

In this issue, we have the premiere of two regular columns: *Uncharted Shores*, which describes legendary locations in depth, and *All Hands*, which provides a detailed NPC for use in your campaigns. In addition, our features in this issue include a complete random adventure generation system, rules for Blood Curses and Crossroads Deals, a Pirate's Glossary, and advanced rules for ships.

Glad to have you aboard, and we hope to see you again in December.

Gareth-Michael Skarka
Adamant Entertainment



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Uncharted Shores

by T.S. Luikart

*There will come an age in the far-off years
When Ocean shall unloose the bonds of nature,
When the whole broad Earth shall be revealed,
And the Sea will disclose new worlds:
Nor will the world be utmost bound by Thule.*
—Seneca, Medea

Now this, mariner, the world is still in flux. The Alexandrian, Ptolemy, cast a broad net with his great atlas and though he had the sand to put longitudinal lines upon his charts, they were a lie and he knew it. The puzzle of longitude is not yet solved in this, the Golden Era of Piracy. The Sea keeps her secrets close and no wagenauer, no matter how accurate, knows every shore. Compasses, rudders, trade winds, stars, every and any method to chart the world and steer safely into a welcoming harbor are all employed, yet ships still disappear with all hands lost and islands strange and wondrous find their way onto maps near legends that oftentimes read: *Hic sunt draconis* ~ Here be dragons. So why would a pirate care about such matters? Because every lad on the account knows that there are riches to be had in places where others dare not go, know nothing of, or that the world has all but forgotten...

Welcome to **Uncharted Shores**, an ongoing feature of **Buccaneers & Bokor**. In this column, you'll learn of islands that never were, or might have been. Some of these islands existed in the world you know, but were twisted by legend or cartographical error. Others are merely figments of the minds of sailors, fodder for wishful thinking or terrible ghost stories. We'll also explore a few oft-told sailors' tales, of living storms and legendary passages. One feature that all of the topics will share is the possibility for adventure, for you just may find one of your characters sailing in search of them some day.

All of the entries will, roughly, follow this format:

- ◊ The Island or Place name and/or titles
- ◊ A Brief Description
- ◊ History
- ◊ Options
- ◊ Hooks
- ◊ Real world history, e.g. where the idea came from

We'll also do our best to have some keen maps for your use.

We begin with an ending, the nethermost end of the Earth, that is:



Ultima Thule

Ultima Thule, often called simply Thule, beyond which the North Wind dwells. Freezing Thule, a mere cannon shot from the frozen wastes of the Cronian Sea, the great ice flows of the arctic. Dead Thule, where things that had best be left sleeping dwell in cold tombs under a midnight sun. Ancient Thule, final retreat for a race that was old before humanity stood upright, the dread Maboya, the "Great Snake People" of Caribbean legend. Dread Thule, supposed resting place of the legendary Book of the Black Gulfs, the master grimoire of the magus, Eibon.



Ultima Thule – which can only be found when the stars are right.

Ultima Thule's tale is an old one for it begins in the time from which there are no human histories save scattered oral legends. The few pieces of true knowledge that they may have once held have long since been warped by a hundred generations of embellishment and outright fabrication. The story, as the Arawaks tell it, is that countless seasons ago, there was an empire that stretched from the Caribbean to Ultima Thule that dominated a continent and a series of islands that used to bridge the Atlantic. The Maboya, a race of upright snake men who kept human slaves and traded with various Djab, ruled the empire. A cataclysm of some kind laid waste to the "bridge" continent over 22,000 years ago, and all but destroyed the Maboya. A few survivors made into the tropical jungles of the Caribbean and the Americas, but the rest were thought to have perished.

Sometime around 320 B.C.E. a Greek traveler named Pytheas went on a trade expedition into the Atlantic. He "discovered" England as well as a number of other islands, one of which he named as "Thule". According to Pytheas, Thule lay far to the northwest of England. In his log he stated that the sea surrounding Thule was wholly unnatural. For, "there was neither earth, air, or sea, but a mixture of all three-something like the fundamental material that holds the universe together."

Navigation was all but impossible in that sluggish sea and visibility was completely obscured by a cold and clinging fog. Historians have since suggested that what Pytheas actually encountered was volcanic ash in the air and masses of pumice floating in the water due to volcanic activity. Occult sources quietly suggest that he encountered the outer ring of the Maboya's defenses and that he got off lucky.

The tale picks up again many centuries later with the account of the last survivor of the crew of a Brigantine called the Icy Fortune. An English Naval vessel patrolling along off the Grand Banks found the ship's boat of the Icy Fortune with a single occupant; a withered and raving Irishman named Eoin Waddell. They managed to get enough out of Waddell to eventually get him home to his family, who barely recognized him, for his ordeal had changed him greatly, and he had been thought lost at sea for close to ten years. Waddell was a wreck of a man, prone to violent nightmares that he awoke from screaming obscenities. He was seldom lucid for very long, but two months after his homecoming, he clearly asked for a priest, stating a need to confess himself. A Franciscan monk named Brone Curran took his confession and at Waddell's request dutifully recorded his story. Waddell died of a brain fever less than a week after he'd finished dictating his narrative to the priest.

According to Waddell, the Icy Fortune had been bound for the American Colonies when she ran into a fierce squall. Driven far off course and soon helplessly lost, they eventually spotted what

looked to be a lighthouse in the distance. The seas were rough and full of ice slush, but they eventually managed to come into a strange port that had been hewn from the very rock of the island. The port city was "all wrong" according to Waddell. Its angles were unsettling, so much so that a number of the crew began saying that they should leave at once. The officers were in accord, but said they should at least try to secure some provisions. A small group went into the port to see what they could find... From there, Waddell's account descends into madness. He describes beings of "terrible light" leading crewmen from the ship, intermingled with hours spent in dalliance with beautiful women and men dropping dead "without cause". Time apparently lost all meaning for him and the rest of the Icy Fortune's crew. Waddell claimed that they found a fortune in gold and "red-tinged silver" within the mostly abandoned city, but had lost all desire to spend it elsewhere. Eventually, Waddell "awoke" in a black tunnel fearing for his very soul. He ran to the port quays only to find that the Icy Fortune had long since become a rotten hull. The account of his flight afterwards is unclear, but he refers to escaping "Hell-born Fangs" and the "Darkness that Walks" as he fled the port of Eirenflame. Brother Curran noted in his afterward to Waddell's tale that the "Poor wretch would become hysterical whenever I questioned him about how he knew certain details, such as the various names he gave, and I soon thought it best to leave him be."

In occult circles, there is an old tale about the "Orrery at the Top of the World" which supposedly rested somewhere in the mountains of Ultima Thule. Built by the legendary wizard, Kere Eibon, it could be used to reveal all sorts of astrological secrets and thus, accurately predict the future to a remarkable degree. Far more importantly, at least to occultists, is the rumor that Eibon's final masterwork, the sinister Book of the Black Gulfs, was buried with Eibon in his tomb under the Orrery. The Book describes dozens of Djab as well as many darker pieces of lore. No copy of it exists, only a few flawed translations, and there are many who would pay any price to get their hands on it.

Ultima Thule is hidden by far more than mere fog banks and bad weather. Thule is out of phase with the rest of the Earth. Whether this was caused by the Maboya's cataclysm, Eibon's sorcery, or happens to be a specific property of the island is unknown. What is known is that Thule can only be sailed to "when the stars are right" though the number of sources that give even that obscure bit of information are rare. Thule can be reached four times a year, at the equinoxes and the solstices, when it appears for a single day. Those that manage to sail to Ultima Thule have twenty-four hours to locate what they're looking for and leave. Otherwise, they will be trapped out of phase with the Earth and won't be able to find anything other than endless grey fog banks beyond the island. The inhabitants of Thule are well aware of this phenomenon and do their best to encourage their rare guests to stay, so they can deal with them at their leisure. A Mystic Navigator could 'Sculpt the Sea' to escape Thule, but the DC of the check is 30 and a failure brings about dire consequences at the GM's discretion. Plotting a path through the seas surrounding Ultima Thule requires a Knowledge (Navigation) Skill Check with a DC of 20. Failure indicates no clear path through the ice and pumice can be found. Sighting around Thule is often reduced to a hundred yards or

less.

Strangely enough, Ultima Thule has a relatively humid climate, though it is often cold, hovering around 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Eirenflame is a large and ominous port city carved from black basalt. Feel free to emphasize its alien appearance and unusual angles. A number of buildings that have no recognizable function line the streets, which appear to be made of smooth marble slabs. After spending an hour or more in Eirenflame all characters must make a Will Save with a DC of 10 or become shaken until they leave the port for several hours. Characters that are shaken but refuse to leave have to make a Will Save with a DC of 15 every hour or they become frightened and insist upon leaving Ultima Thule at once. They will eventually have to be physically restrained, or violence will ensue.

Eirenflame represents what is left of the northern-most outpost of the ancient Maboyan Empire. The Maboya are all but gone now. As partially cold-blooded creatures, the present climate of Ultima Thule (it wasn't the same 20,000+ years ago) hasn't done them any favors. The few that remain have retreated into the bowels of the city where it is warmer, or have gone into deep and dreamless torpors, but they do get hungry occasionally. The crewmembers of the Icy Fortune were continually mentally manipulated by the Maboya's mystic abilities to keep them quiescent until their eventual consumption.

Maboya

Medium Reptilian Monstrous Humanoid

Hit Dice: 8d8+24 (60 hp)

Initiative: +5

Speed: 30 ft.

Armor Class: 21 (+5 Dex, +6 Natural), touch 15, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +8/+9

Attack: Bite +13 (2d6+1 plus poison)

Full Attack: +13 (2d6+1 plus poison)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Poison, spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., item-use, scent

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +11, Will +11

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 20, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 20, Cha 16

Skills: Concentration +13, Diplomacy +16, Disguise +10*, Gather Information +10, Hide +12, Knowledge (Arcana) +15, Sense Motive +15, Spot +10

Feats: Negotiator, Quicken Spell-like Ability: Alter Self, Weapon Finesse

Environment: Tropical [No, they don't like what Ultima Thule has become all that much.]

Organization: Solitary, Cell (3-5), or Coil (8-20)

Challenge Rating: 10

Treasure: Double Standard / See Below

Alignment: Neutral or Neutral Evil

Advancement: By character class

These creatures appear to be whip-thin humanoids covered with gleaming green scales. Their eyes are wide set and cloudy blue, almost appearing to be covered in cataracts. They have a ser-

pent's head, though the sharp teeth that line their mouths are far more reminiscent of shark teeth than those of a snake.

Maboya are relentlessly cunning and highly manipulative. While their ancient empire is now nothing more than a dim memory, many among them fully intend to return to dominance one day. The wiser among their number suspect that their time has passed and spend nearly all of their time dreaming cold reptile dreams of better days. The Maboya are not what they would deem "needlessly" cruel, but they regard all humans as tools, playthings, or food.

Combat

Maboya tend to study their opponents for a very long time before they take any aggressive action. From the Maboyan point of view, having to actually physically struggle means you've already lost. Their potent abilities make enslaving the majority of humans child's play to them. Fights with the Maboya tend to take on nightmarish qualities as the terrain about the battlefield twists and buckles with their potent illusions. They are fond of sudden ambushes where they swiftly bite their opponents, charm them, and then erase their memories of the battle.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 17, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Wis. The save DC is Con-based.

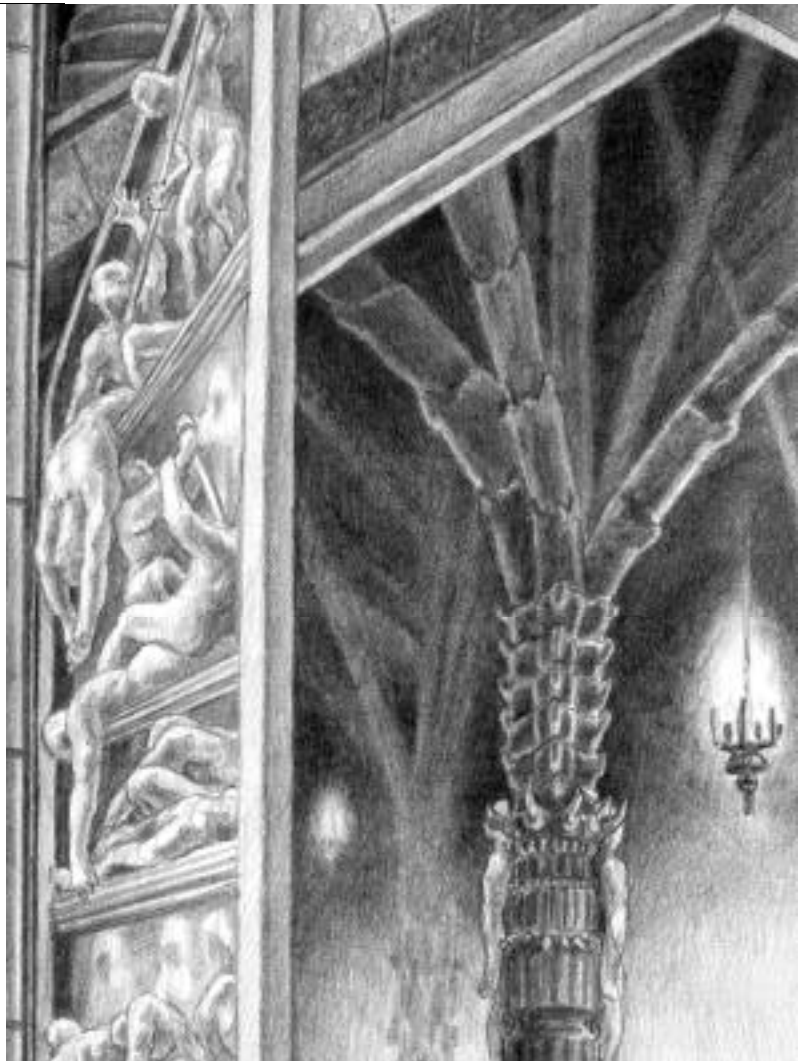
Spell-Like Abilities: At will – Alter Self, Charm Person (DC 14), Comprehend Languages, Suggestion (DC 16); 3/Day – Deeper Darkness, Mind Fog (DC 18), Mirage Arcana (DC 18), Modify Memory (DC 17). Caster level 12th. The save DCs are Charisma based.

Item-use: Maboya always wear a silver ring in the shape of Ouroboros, the serpent that bites its own tail. The rings cause displacement at will per the spell. They have 1d8+2 charges as a 12th level caster if they are taken or, rarely, granted by the Maboya. The rings are worth around 30 doubloons for their intricate workmanship and their ruby eyes.

*Maboya using Alter Self get a +10 bonus on their Disguise checks.

Maboya seldom carry any treasure on their persons. However, they are well aware of what the lure of gold can do to humans. Each Maboya typically has a stashed horde valued around 500 doubloons, though this is likely broken up into gold, silver and a few gems.

Other than the Maboya, Thule is all but devoid of life, though you may wish to toss some guardian beastie of the Maboya's creation at PCs to keep them edgy. The interior of Ultima Thule is a desolate wasteland, with nearly barren tundra stretching into the distance. The highest peak in Thule's mountain range is around 8,000 feet tall and all of their slopes are snow covered. Emphasize the harshness of the icy wind and the bleak landscape, especially if you're dealing with a group of scallywags from the Caribbean who are used to a very different climate and environs.



The entrance to Eibon's Tomb, as noted on the map, is held within a circle of mountains at the heart of Ultima Thule. The Orrery takes up a room over three hundred feet tall at the top of a mountain that has been partially hollowed out. If you've ever seen Jim Henson's *The Dark Crystal*, you know what the Orrery at the Top of the World looks like. If not, picture a series of whirling brass and crystalline globes that depict the movement of planets and stars on a series of rotating arms that move every which way. The Orrery changes as it moves, seemingly a living construction, with no noticeable means of propulsion.

The Orrery is guarded by a construct of Eibon's devising. Use the stats of a maximized (22 HD) Inevitable – Kolyarut. It politely allows entrance to the tomb and only acts if visitors try to damage the Orrery, or open Eibon's sarcophagus, in which case it attacks till all intruders have fled. It is intelligent enough to recognize a leader figure and if it can, it will try to Geas/Quest such an individual to "Go forth from Ultima Thule and never return."

Anyone with Knowledge (Arcana) has a chance of comprehending the workings of the Orrery. The DC of the Skill Check is 10 to simply comprehend what, exactly, that the Orrery is showing. Once a user has figured out the workings of the device, whole new vistas unfold. After several hours of adjustments, on a suc-

cessful Skill Check of 25, a user can make a Divination per the spell with a 95% chance of accuracy up to a whole season (3 months) away. In practical terms, the Orrery allows a Captain on the account to ask questions like, "Where do we lay by to catch a straggling fully gold loaded Spanish galleon?" and get a useful, if slightly cryptic answer. The Orrery also gives its user accurate information on all celestial phenomena happening within the next year, e.g. eclipses, alignments, etc. which can be very useful to Hougans, Bokor and Mystic Navigators.

Eibon's sarcophagus lies at the heart of his Orrery. It is carved from obsidian and appears to depict a human, which may or may not surprise onlookers. There is no mechanism, no traps, and no catch. {Eibon figured his knowledge was deadly enough.} Inside the sarcophagus lies a large, metal bound book, but no corpse. The covers of the book appear to be made of fire-blackened ivory; the pages are of an unidentifiable black material, scribed with silvery ink. The language is an ancient one, undecipherable without a many months of effort or magical means. The first page reads: "You hold the masterwork of my life. It is perilous. Tread wisely."

So what, exactly, does the Book of the Black Gulfs do? Depends on you, but here are some suggestions:

◇ The Book disturbs the mind. Characters possessing it must make a Will Save at DC 10 + the number of days it has been owned each morning or go insane. Just handing the book off to an accomplice doesn't help; all access to it must be forever eliminated.

◇ The Book allows a PC to take an eldritch character or prestige class from another setting.

◇ The Book allows a non-Bokor to use the Djab's Pact ritual.

◇ The following Djab are named in the Book of the Black Gulfs. This list is, by no means, exhaustive (see *Core Rulebook III* v3.5 for statistical details).

Ubhalaha – A Chaos Beast. Sacrifice: A bucketful of quicksilver (mercury).

Elbros the Collector – Demon: Retriever (14 HD). Sacrifice: Something truly unique and/or irreplaceable.

Narsinha – Planetar (22 HD). Sacrifice: Accepting a quest to restore a lost artifact or the destruction of a great evil. Eibon specifically notes that Narsinha is, "The noblest of beings. Unless your cause be just beyond measure, do not waste his time."

Opanal – Demon: Succubus. Sacrifice: The soul of a man who killed his only love.

Feromar – Genie: Efreeti. Sacrifice: A masterwork wooden carving set ablaze. Burning a grove of sacred trees to stumps. Only the most massive efforts will ever get Feromar to grant a Wish and he will only ever grant one to any given individual. Eibon notes that Feromar is, for his kind, scrupulously honest.

Kainan'gi – Invisible Stalker. Sacrifice: A flawless diamond worth over 100 doubloons.

Cabathia – Rakshasa. Sacrifice: The death of an innocent named by her at the time of summoning.

Yotelho, The Prince in Glass Cloak – Death Slaad (16 HD).

Sacrifice: A prism that has been steeped in a clear liquid for a year, and then shaped into a masterwork figurine.

Atharrael – Devil: Pit Fiend (24 HD). Sacrifice: The left eyes of three living children. Eibon notes that, "To speak with him is to court damnation. Your soul will feel tainted forever after you've felt the hot breath of Atharrael. But oh, he is subtle. Subtle beyond measure and wise beyond mortal ken. His advice, while twisted, is always sound."

Djab, regardless of their abilities, cannot summon other Djab. Damage reduction should usually be changed to -/magic and eliminate spell resistance. The most powerful Djab will generally need some armor class reduction or else your poor swabbies will have a 'ell of time trying to sort them out.

◇ If you have access to a non-OGL D20 game of cosmic horror, the selection of spells from that particular product make an excellent addition to *Skull & Bones* for they're all firmly rooted in our underlying theme of mystic power always having a price.

How does one hear about Ultima Thule? Characters with a Skill Rank in Sea Lore of 5 or greater will have certainly heard of it. The book holding Waddell's tale is known to characters with a Knowledge (Arcana) Skill Rank of 10 or greater. Obviously, the more one knows about Thule, the better the chance of going and returning unscathed.

Hooks:

A Neutral Cell of Maboya wishes to sail to the Caribbean and will help the characters out against their brethren for passage.

A sudden storm takes the character's ship by surprise, but they manage to find a "safe" harbor...

A Bokor hears of the Book of the Black Gulfs and hires a, er, "reputable" crew to help her find it.

A nobleman who wishes to orchestrate a rebellion against his monarch hears about the Orrery and decides to see for himself if the legend is true.

First mentioned by Pytheas, a Greek merchant, circa 325 B.C.E., Ultima Thule is now variously regarded as being Iceland, Norway or the Shetland islands. The descriptions of the seas around Ultima Thule are directly taken from the tale of Pytheas' voyage called "On the Ocean", which is lost to us. The fragments that have survived were quoted by other authors.

The phrase "Ultima Thule" is often used figuratively to describe lands remote beyond human reckoning, which is probably what appealed to H.P. Lovecraft who named Thule as one of the last outposts of the pre-human serpent men kingdoms of Hyperborea. Who am I to argue with Howard?

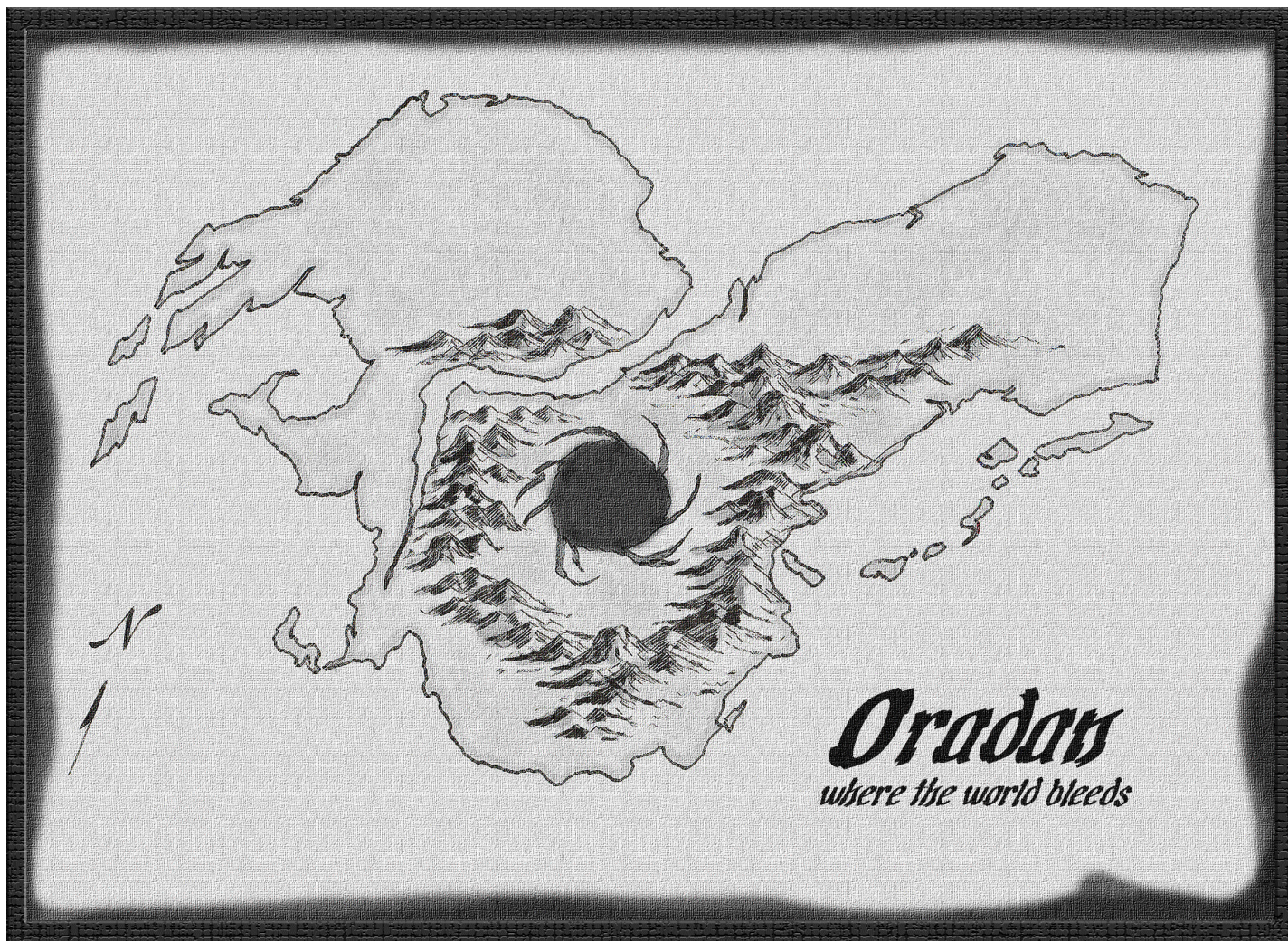
Oradan – Where the World Bleeds

Oradan, where the Earth trembles with the footsteps of creatures thought dead millions of years ago. Oradan, the goal of countless quests for immortality, nearly all of which end in death. Oradan, where the great ley lines of the world cross, and power seeps to the surface in the form of a viscous black sludge that legend says can work miracles. Oradan, where the Earth was injured long ago, yet the wound festers and still bleeds.

Oradan is the subject of many tall tales and all manner of strange myths are attributed to it. A common theme that runs throughout all the stories is that those who purposefully seek Oradan inevitably go mad, but sailors that find it by accident will survive if they keep their wits about them. This isn't all that hard to believe and is likely not far from the truth, for even in the tales, Oradan has little to offer treasure hunters, which means they are far more likely to sail away from it before the various beasts that roam the island do them ill and seekers after the mystic power that dwells at Oradan are far more likely to be insane to begin with.

Many of the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean and Central America have tales describing Oradan that were old long before Europeans ever sailed to the New World. The legends state that there is an island where the "mightiest serpents" still roam guarding a place of sacred power, though to whom or what it is sacred varies with the teller and the audience. Where, exactly, this place resides is always vague and often contradictory. Some tales place Oradan in the center of the Caribbean, others hold that it is to the south of the globe, close to the Straits of Magellan and still others argue that it lies west of the Galapagos, far out into the Pacific.

The first European to seriously investigate the tales of Oradan was the Spaniard, Juan Ponce de Leon. Leon, as a youth, sailed with Columbus on his second voyage. In 1508, he was awarded a commission by King Ferdinand II to explore the isle of Borinquen {Puerto Rico} which he promptly conquered and served as the governor of until 1512. He then set out in search of the isle of Bimini in 1513, eventually finding Florida and exploring her Keys. In 1521, he was mortally wounded by an arrow and returned to Cuba where he died. So lay the facts, but what they miss is that from 1512 on, with all his explorations, Leon fervently sought the Fountain of Youth. In 1512, Leon was 52 years old and feeling the weight of his years. The Caribs that he had recruited to the Christian faith told him stories of a



place that could restore health and youth to those bold enough to seek it. Some tales hold that he found it, but learned that it wasn't truly what he sought. Others, that there was never any such place and that the Caribs deceived Leon out of vengeance for his colonization of their people, and after studying him for a time, that they told him what he wanted to hear so he would squander the twilight days of his life in pursuit of a myth.

In 1617, a French buccaneer named Romain Desforge and a small group of his compatriots were forced to take shelter from a storm upon an island that none of them recognized. They explored a river mouth where, according to Desforge's journal of their experience, lack of supplies forced them to kill and eat, "one the largest lizards I'd ever seen, but not for long." The smell of the hunters' cooking fire eventually attracted other beasts, some of which destroyed their longboats, and the party was forced to flee into the jungle. Desforge describes the event in chilling tones, declaring, "We, who thought ourselves mighty hunters, became the hunted." One by one, his companions were slain by massive reptiles. Desforge claimed that, "Some were the size of men and hunted in roving packs. One beast that I saw was as large as a galleon and the earth shuddered as it ran." Desforge was eventually the only survivor of his band. He escaped a group of reptiles that was hunting him by traveling the edges of a large, black swamp. Desforge notes that the swamp smelled curiously pleasant for such a place and that, despite his toil, he became invigorated and determined to survive. For a month he was forced to outwit various reptile predators while he gathered enough wood to make a suitable raft. When his vessel was complete, he committed himself to God and set out on the sea. He was eventually found by a Spanish ship and taken to Cuba, where he would've been hanged as a pirate; however, his tale so impressed the Spanish governor that he was granted clemency on the condition that he create three copies of his story. The governor was swayed by more than his tale, for Desforge had with him a necklace of massive teeth and vicious talons that he had taken as trophies from his kills. One of Desforge's accounts and a letter opener shaped from a claw that Desforge gave to the governor as a gift remain in the Spanish governor's office in Havana to this day.

There are a number of rituals in old grimoires that offer a great deal of power to one who can successfully invoke them. However, they typically require various ingredients that supposedly no longer exist in the world such as a unicorn's horn or a dragon's heart. However, a few of these tomes refer to the power to be found in the "Black Blood of the Earth" which sounds a lot like Oradan...

Oradan holds, for all intents and purposes, the Fountain of Youth. What that means, exactly, varies by whom you ask. What it means in practical adventuring terms is that there are a large number of dinosaurs from different eras wandering around on Oradan, but very little treasure per se, unless you happen to be mystically inclined or desperate to restore your lost youth. There's a catch, of course. There's always a catch. You have to remain on the island to keep your youth...

Oradan is a tropical island with heavy foliage and a wide variety of vegetation. A small circle of jungle-covered mountains domi-

nates the center of the isle. They form a perimeter around an immense swamp of viscous black mud, which bubbles and seethes though it is cool to the touch. Thick fogs continually shroud her coastline and the exact shape of the island has never been determined. Desforge's tale mentions a large "crack" in the island, but provides few details about it. The isle is inhabited by all manner of unusual creatures, but the mega-fauna most likely to draw a visiting pirate's attention would have to be the dinosaurs. All of the dinosaurs mentioned in *Core Rulebook III* v3.5 are perfect for *Skull & Bones*. Remember to describe those "impact tremors" when one of the larger ones starts wandering near your party. Note also that most of the more dangerous ones have scent, the ability to track, or both, which should make any stay on Oradan fairly lively.

If the idea of pirates desperately shooting at a T-Rex as they run for their lives doesn't do it for you, then alternately, Oradan can be entirely inhabited by giant and/or dire creatures. Think: Serpents of Unusual Size, spiders big enough to eat a monkey {which, in reality, actually exist in the Amazon}, and mosquitoes that could drink a man dry in three gulps, that sort of thing. If there is a place in the world for a Giant Praying Mantis, Oradan is certainly it.

If you wish to have a sentient race on Oradan, I'd be hard pressed to come up with a more appropriate one than the Lizardfolk (as per *Core Rulebook III* v3.5, page 169). In *Skull & Bones*' terms, Lizardfolk should probably favor Fighter or Ranger as a class, though the concept of "parrying" a blow is beyond them.

Several of the Loa have reptilian or serpent connotations and they likely have some Hougan spiritual leaders amidst their number. If you're feeling really crazy (or have a module from another game company you're just dying to use for *S&B*) there may even be some sort of ancient temple near the center of the island. Perhaps out on an inlet in the midst of the swamp? And speaking of the swamp...

The Properties of the Black Blood of the Earth:

Bathing in it once a day slows aging indefinitely. The various inhabitants of the island have long since discovered this and they all make a point of raising their young away from the swamp.

There are certain rituals that require the Black Blood in order to work properly and some powerful Djab that demand a portion of it as a sacrifice.

Imbibing the Blood causes raw energy to fire through a body's sinews. Characters that can manage to do so gain a +4 Circumstance bonus to Strength. In addition, their hit points leap to the maximum possible for their class and level. Both effects last for an hour after imbibing and any hit points lost during that time are taken from the "extra" first. Example: Rufio is a 6th level Buccaneer with a 16 Constitution. His normal hit point total is 41. His total maximum potential is 66 (6d8+18), which is what his hit points leap to for an hour after he downs the Blood. Thus, he nominally has 25



month, but find it entirely absent the next time they go seeking it. A sea dog's fellows will often shake their heads and accuse their mates of pulling at the rum too much when they speak about islands that come and go, but there are enough stories about such places that they aren't entirely dismissed. Then again, Oradan is often wreathed in thick fogs, so getting a really good look at it is often problematic anyway, which leads many to thinking that they just misidentified another island when they find it missing. The convergence of ley lines that causes the Black Blood to well up is not necessarily exclusive to Oradan. Perhaps they move every so often, causing the "wound" to heal and reopen in another location. It is possible that having a spot where the world "bleeds" is a natural safety mechanism for Earth, allowing geo-thermal and mystical energies to escape a dangerous build up. These two concepts may, in fact, both be accurate. The "wound" needs to move around to allow energy to escape in various areas where it has grown volatile and Oradan continually moves with it.

Hooks:

One of your PCs may have known or was related to Romain Desforge who died in 1690 at the ripe old age of what he claimed was 108, despite having looked like he was in his 50s. The present governor of Havana is a descendant of the governor who spared Desforge. The history of one or both families may lead them to seek out the truth of Oradan.

Quite a few bokor would be willing to pay whatever it took to secure a "working" sample of the Black Blood.

There are some scientific societies and a few zoos in the Old World that would pay handsomely for a dinosaur. However, they'd probably want a live one.

"phantom" hit points to draw from. Bokor do not gain the hit point bonus. Instead, any wanga that they cast for an hour following imbibing causes them no damage whatsoever. In the case of Echoes of the Past, it reduces the hit point sacrifice by -2, which may mean that no hit points are lost at all, but the Bokor will not acquire any because of this. Drinking the glutinous sludge always requires a Will Check with a DC of 20, even if a character as ever managed to down it before. If a character fails, they have to wait two hours before they can bring themselves to try again. Black Blood brought from the swamp, no matter how well sealed or preserved, loses its properties after a week as it isn't just the liquid, it is also the energy of Oradan that infuses the swamp. Note: The swamp doesn't actually heal any wounds. A character that is down on hit points and manages to drink from the swamp may effectively "heal" but they are still wounded.

So where, exactly, is Oradan? There is no definitive answer to that question. It depends on your campaign. However, the large amount of power inherent in Oradan may allow its location to "slip" from time to time, which is why some sailors can honestly claim to have found it just off the coast of Grenada one

The tale of Juan Ponce de Leon is essentially accurate, though he was convinced that the Fountain of Youth lay somewhere in either the peninsula of Florida or on the isle of Bimini. There are natural mineral hot springs on Bimini that are said to have restorative properties, but nothing so extreme as instant youth. There are many tales of outsized serpents and yes, even dinosaurs, in various parts of the Caribbean and the Americas, though there never seems to be any physical proof. One of the largest snakes in the world, the Anaconda, can weigh over 500 pounds and reach lengths of over 30 feet. The Caribs called it "Mabohon" the "Great Green Snake". Spanish settlers called it "Matatoro" the "Bull Killer".

Mare Tenebrarum- *The Sea of Darkness*

Young sailors scoff at tales wherein storms seem to have a will of their own and dismiss stories of undamaged ships being found sans crew. Storms at sea are dangerous enough without ascribing supernatural causes to them, they say. Older salts turn to their cups when the subject comes up and will not speak of the Devil's Storm, the Mare Tenebrarum.

The Mare Tenebrarum is a shifting mass of black skies that moves across the face of the Atlantic in a seemingly random pattern. Sailors caught in the Sea of Darkness hear the voices of dead loved ones, and the sounds of cannon fire ringing out from an impenetrable darkness. Men that listen to the voices disappear and are never heard from again.

None can say what causes the "Sea" though there are many tales about it. One legend holds that the Sea of Darkness was caused by a massive sea battle fought in 1623. Dozens of ships went down with all hands in a running naval battle between English privateers and Spanish galleons that lasted three days. Ever since, there have been spectral repeats of the battle, always accompanied by a massive storm.

Natives of the Caribbean maintain that the Mare Tenebrarum existed long before the coming of the Europeans or their wars. Indeed, there are ancient Viking sagas that speak of shrieking black skies and fierce waves that will kill a man and break his soul if he cannot find the courage to defy them.

So what, exactly, is the Mare Tenebrarum? Well, for one, an excellent experience to toss at PCs as they journey from here to there on an otherwise uneventful voyage. Where the "Sea" comes from, though, is a mystery. It may be the creation of a Djab or a powerful bokor. Perhaps it is the preferred feeding method of a particularly ancient and clever kraken.

When the Mare Tenebrarum is first spotted on the horizon, it appears to be an unusual mass of grey black clouds. Anyone that can make a Knowledge (Sea Lore) Skill Check against a DC 15 will notice that portions of the clouds move against the wind. Immediately coming about and setting off on a parallel course will allow a ship to avoid the Sea of Darkness. Those that don't will be enveloped by it in less than an hour.

At first, sound drops away when entering the Mare Tenebrarum. It acts like an unbelievably thick fog, though little to no light penetrates it. Sighting is reduced to a mere thirty feet beyond the ship. Soon, noises start echoing through the stillness. Strange sounds soon filter to sailors' ears. Men and women screaming, gunfire, children's laughter, remembered phrases of old, dead friends, cannonfire and more have been reported. All PCs and NPCs that enter the Sea of Darkness, willingly or no, have to make a Will Save vs. DC 15 or huddle, terrified, below decks. Cannon Fodder automatically fail.



After that, it is up to individual GMs and the needs of your campaigns. Some crews report being swept up into ancient naval battles. Others sail through the Mare Tenebrarum seemingly unharmed, but once they've left it behind and take a crew count, they find hands missing. Occasionally, a crew will sail out of the Sea of Darkness thousands of miles from where they entered it.

Hooks:

A powerful magic worker believes that the Sea of Darkness took one of her loved ones. She needs a stalwart crew to "hunt" the Sea down so she can save her loved one's soul.

A historian believes that a great treasure that was lost in a naval struggle can be found, but he needs to observe the now re-occurring ghostly battle to find the key piece of information that he needs.

The Sea may actually have a mind of its own, and it has decided to settle over the PCs homeport. How, exactly, does one go about getting rid of a living storm?

Scholars often referred to the whole of the Atlantic as the "Mare Tenebrarum". Arabian scholars named the Atlantic the Great Green Sea of Gloom. A shifting mass of unpredictable black skies is an old sailor's legend, though some suggest it to this day as the cause of various 'mysterious disappearances' where entire crews went missing without a trace, though their ships were left unharmed.

On the Dreadful Curses of Blood

by T.S. Luikart

The Wise speak no'on such Things; But were Wisdom your'n then ye would no be on the Account, eh? There be a way to turn your Paynes into Other 's; to take hold of thy Spite and work your Enemies Ill. A Dark and Terrible road tis, for those wot know of the Bloody Curse can Damn a Man unto Death; Know them by their Eyes which Will be as Scarlet as fresh Blood; Know them by their Face which will be White as a Spirit; and Know them by the Fear in your Heart when they Regard you. And ye would keep your Soul, anger Them not or Murder them Quick. – Pirates & the Dark, by Captain Thorndike

The Blood Curse is an ancient legend in the Caribbean, whispered of in sailor's stories that are only told at night, long after more honest souls have sought their beds. The tales vary wildly, but on one point they all seem to agree; the Rites of the Blood Curse are distorted versions of ancient rituals, though whether they began with the Aztecs or the Mayans none now can say. The legend runs that if a man is willing to give up his soul, then he can learn to damn others in his place. Most shantymen will allow that once, long ago, the old rites might have served some purpose other than just to harm, but long years and perverse intents have long since twisted them until they are capable of only inflicting suffering. Most tales involving those that take up the Blood Curse are cautionary and all of them end with the curser finding an unnatural death.

So much for legend. The Rite of the Blood Curse is real and learning it is, indeed, risky. By shedding his own blood, and forcefully directing his malice, a wielder of this dark art can sicken others, drive an enemy mad and even kill if he should so choose. All that know of them fear those that wield the Blood Curse, but they pay a heavy price for that dark respect, for the rites weigh down their souls and corrodes their flesh.

To learn about the Blood Curse, one has to find a teacher. Shantymen who can make a Bardic Knowledge Skill Check with a DC of 25 will know where to look for practitioners and how to direct others there, though many will be loathe to do so without a great deal of encouragement. Upon find-

ing a suitable teacher, a prospective student has to convince him to take on the duties of instruction, which typically involves swearing dark oaths, producing vast amounts of gold and silver, or both. It takes 6 months, less one month for each point of positive Wisdom modifier a character has, with a minimum of 1 month, to learn the Blood Curse. At the end of his instruction, the character acquires the feat, Blood Curse, which takes up his first available feat slot if he doesn't have one open and the character acquires the Skill: Blood Curse at Rank 1. Blood Curse always counts as a class skill and no ranks can be acquired in it, nor can it be used, without the corresponding feat.

Blood Curse is a Wisdom based skill. As a wielder of the Blood Curse acquires greater skill ranks, he becomes capable of directing more powerful curses, per the chart on the next page.



<u>Curse</u>	<u>DC to cast</u>	<u>Cost to maintain</u>
Doom	15	5 Hit Points
Blindness/Deafness	20	10 Hit Points
Bestow Curse	20	15 Hit Points
Contagion	25	15 Hit Points
Feeblemind	25	20 Hit Points
Eyebite	30	25 Hit Points
Insanity	30	30 Hit Points
Finger of Death	35	Sacrifice 1 Con

The spell effects on the chart are equivalent to the spells of the same name from *Core Rulebook I v3.5* with a number of changes; the most dramatic being the duration and the saving throws.

Inflicting a Blood Curse is a standard action. The curser must be looking at the target of a curse and must speak the curse aloud so that the target can hear it, though the target doesn't necessarily need to understand what was said. The curser then cuts himself, typically along the arms, and immediately bleeds away the requisite hit points, whether the curse works or not.

Every Blood Curse has a cost associated with it, which is the same to both cast and maintain it, excepting the final curse on the chart. As long as a given curse is in effect, the Blood Curser's hit point maximum is lowered per the cost on the chart. The curser can stop a curse at any time, which ends its effects, though his hit points recover normally. Casting a *Finger of Death* requires a sacrifice and the Con loss is permanent, which may cause a hit point adjustment. A curser's death automatically ends any curses he was maintaining.

Example: Kaisan is a 7th level Rogue with a Constitution of 14 who would normally have 44 hit points. He was taught the secrets of the Blood Curse by a man that he met in a dark tavern in Tortuga for a price he cares not to recall. A merchant named Forlen angers him one to many times, so he decides to punish him. Kaisan has been diligent with his practice and he has 10 Ranks in Blood Curse, the maximum allowable for his level; he has a Wisdom of 15, which gives him a +2 towards his Skill Check. Kaisan decides he really hates Forlen, and sets about inflicting a *Contagion* upon him, just long enough to destroy his business. He confronts Forlen in a crowded market place and yells that his ill-gotten and diseased wares will be the death of him as he subtly gashes his own thigh under loose pants. Kaisan's hit points immediately drop to 29 as blood pours down his leg and proceeds to unnaturally evaporate. Kaisan's player rolls a 14 for the *Contagion*, giving him a total of 26 (14 for the roll + 10 Skill Ranks + 2 Wisdom), which just barely succeeds. If the curse "took", e.g. Forlen didn't successfully save, Kaisan's hit point maximum will stay at 29 for as long as he maintains the curse.

ting one's throat cut by a target as you lay helpless sure will. If you acquire an affliction because of Con loss while invoking a curse, it will automatically be a "Disfiguring scar".

All Blood Curses, regardless of their actual "spell" description, require a Will Save. The DC for the Will Save against a curse is always the curser's Skill Rank + Wisdom modifier. Once a target has successfully saved against a Blood Curse that particular curser cannot afflict them again until gaining 1 or more Skill Ranks in Blood Curses. Note that a person can only suffer one Blood Curse at any given time and a stronger curse will automatically dispel lesser ones. Clever types who think to get out of a lesser curse by having a friend who knows the rites curse them with a greater, then dispel it, are in for a bit of a rude shock when they discover that freely accepting a Blood Curse makes it permanent, without the need for a curser to maintain it.

So why doesn't everyone learn this useful and nasty art? Well, aside from the fact that it is considered to be evil and soul damning, which certainly wouldn't faze a number of the Caribbean's inhabitants, there are two reasons.

First, if a Blood Curse is broken by anyone other than the Blood Curser who inflicted it, e.g. a hougan, bokor or Djab dispels it, the curser loses half of the hit points needed to maintain the curse, rounded down, **permanently**.

Second, the tales of sailors are not all wrong – as Blood Curses work their art, it is reflected in their countenance, but especially in their eyes. Cursers grow paler and gaunter with every curse they cast and the whites of their eyes are slowly filled with blood streaks. After the first time he successfully levels a curse, a curser acquires a -2 Circumstance penalty to all non-Intimidation Charisma checks whenever he deals with anyone who can see his eyes. Once he reaches 12 Skill Ranks, the penalty rises to -4. When he reaches the 18th Skill Rank, the irises of his eyes seem to onlookers to be floating in pools of bright red blood and his skin is like alabaster. The Charisma penalty becomes a -8 and most people will assume that he has become, or is possessed by, a demon.

Summary:

To Invoke a Blood Curse: Skill Rank at Blood Curse + Wisdom Modifier + Die roll against specific curses' chart DC.

To Resist a Blood Curse: Will Save vs. a DC = Curser's Skill Rank + Wisdom Modifier.

Obviously, it is very dangerous to invoke a Blood Curse when one is already injured. A Blood Curse that causes a curser to drop below 0 hit points causes Con damage and requires a Will Save to stay conscious per the normal *Skull & Bones* rules. Going unconscious from blood loss doesn't end a curse, but get-

All Hands...

Every issue of **Buccaneers & Bokor** will feature an installment of “All Hands”, which will give **Skull & Bones** game masters a fully-detailed non-player character (NPC) for your players to encounter.

This issue, we present a rare find:

Longrin Sterk

Medium Sized Human

5th level Shantyman / 11th level Bokor

(16th level NPC)

Hit Dice: 5d8 + 11d6 (65 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 30 ft

Armor Class: 13 (+3 Dex), touch 13, flat-footed 10

Base Attack / Grapple: +8 / +7

Attack: Horizon (+3 *keen* cutlass) +15 melee (1d6+2 / 15-20) or masterwork side by side double barreled pistol +11 ranged (2d4 or 4d4 / x3)

Full Attack: Horizon +15/+10 melee (1d6+2 / 15-20) or masterwork

Side by side double barreled pistol +11/+6 ranged (2d4 or 4d4 / x3)

Space / Reach: 5 ft / 5 ft

Special Attacks: Vaporing, Wanga usage

Special Qualities: Bardic Music, Bardic

Knowledge, Contacts, Djab's Call*, Djab's Pact*, Fame Tale, Wanga usage

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +10, Will +14

Abilities: Str 9, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 20

Skills: Appraise +4, Balance +7, Bluff +9, Concentration +15, Gather Information +10, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (Arcana) +6, Knowledge (Navigation) +7, Knowledge (Sea Lore) +13, Perform +15, Profession (Sailor) +11, Sense Motive +6, Sleight of Hand +8, Speak Language: English, Spanish, French, Swim +5, Tumble +8, Voodoo Ritual +18

Feats: Crab's Rush, Create Drogue, Dodge, Iron Will, Mobility, Song of the Deep*, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (Cutlass)

Fortunes: Been-Round, Loa Patron (Agwé), Wanted (Spain)

Fame: 13

Challenge Rating: 16

Treasure: See Below

Alignment: Neutral

Advancement: By character class



Longrin Sterk was born to a small New England family who christened him Mathias Gabriel Stark. His father was a successful carpenter and his mother an occasional seamstress, but it was his roving merchant uncle that was to prove the greatest influence on the young Mathias. He grew up on tales of high sea adventure and the daring exploits of the Sea Dogs. Never once in his formative years did he miss a ship coming into port or talking with her crew afterwards. When Mathias came of age, he took to sea on a merchantman and never looked back. Young Mathias was popular with his crewmates, for he was an entertaining traveling companion and always quick with a good tale. He saw more of the world than most dare to dream over several years of successful voyages till pirates off the Grand Banks crossed his path. The circumstances of the meeting were such that he was given the choice to joining the pirates as their Shantyman or joining the fishes as their supper. Mrs. Stark raised no fools.

Mathias soon found that he liked life on the account. A year or so later, in a running battle with a Spanish warship, a bullet tore a gash from Mathias' mouth clean through to his ear, leaving him with a vicious scar. His shipmates promptly christened him “Long-grin”. Fortune can take odd turns indeed, for less than

six months later; the newly named Longrin met up with a bokor in a small port tavern in Portobello who was looking for a new apprentice that he had seen in a dream. The bokor declared that he was seeking a man with an “endless smile” and once again, Longrin signed on for a new adventure. Longrin spent years wandering the Caribbean, until chance brought him to the attention of the Loa, Agwé. Despite the usual distaste for bokor among the Loa, Agwé admired Longrin’s bright spirit and became his patron. Longrin’s life had already taken so many unusual twists at that point that one more didn’t even faze him. He now roams the Caribbean getting into trouble or enacting Agwé’s will, often both at once.

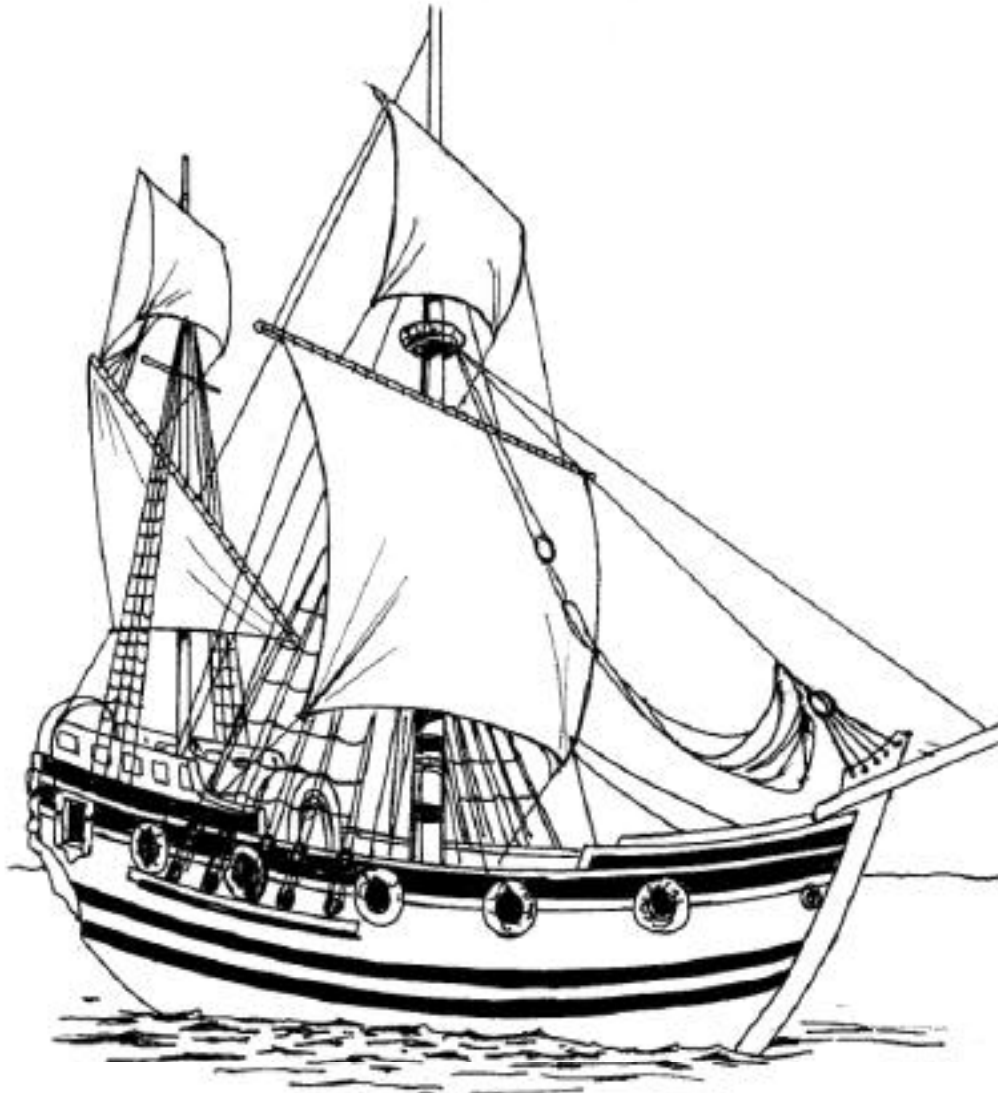
Longrin, though a generally affable fellow, is a dangerous foe. He prefers to talk his way out of trouble and is happy to look the fool if that will settle a dispute. Once his blood is up though, his enemies find out that he is an even more dangerous bokor than he is a competent shantyman. His treasured cutlass, Horizon, is made of a shimmering bluish metal exactly the color of the air where the sea touches the sky. Horizon is a +3 *keen* cutlass and was a gift from Agwé, though Longrin will not speak of such things to anyone other than a hougan. Longrin has a pendant carved from mother of pearl that is a *drogue* with 3 charges of *stoneskin*. He typically carries around 3000 Doubloons worth of gems secreted on his person along with 30

or so pieces of eight worth of mixed coinage. Money doesn’t mean a lot to Longrin and he commonly pays very well when he hires others out to assist him in doing Agwé’s bidding. After all, it isn’t that hard for the Lord of the Sea to dredge up treasure for his trusted servant.

Wanga Per Day (Su) – 4/4/3/2/1

**Song of the Deep* (Su) – New / Special Feat: In light of the many services that Longrin rendered him, Agwé taught his servant how to use the bokor rituals in a new way. Longrin can now summon creatures from the sea instead of Djab with his Djab’s Call and Djab’s Pact abilities. Creatures that are summoned come from the same Hit Die range as the standard Djab rituals. The Song allows Longrin to readily communicate with sea creatures that he has “sung up” and while they will not kill themselves for him, they will attempt to do whatever he asks of them.

The Song is effectively the Loa Agwé’s “patron” gift. At the GM’s discretion, PC bokor may take on Agwé as a patron, in which case they, too, can learn the Song of the Deep. Agwé expects honorable behavior from his servants and forbids his bokor from ever making long-term pacts with Djab.



A

Account, To Go On The: to embark on a piratical cruise--It actually meant that no wages were to be paid, but that compensation would be paid to the sailor's "account" after prey was taken.

Acts of Pardon or Grace: general amnesty under which a reformed pirate could surrender, in return for having their record wiped clean.

Ahoy: a call used in hailing, as in "Ship Ahoy!"

Articles: a contract or joint venture amongst a crew, drawn up and signed before going out on the account.

Avast: a call meaning stop, hold, cease, etc.

B

Barkadeer: A small pier or jetty.



A brief glossary of piratical and period nautical terms,
for use as flavor in your campaign.

Pirate's Glossary

Barque: a style of ship, having three masts, the foremasts rigged square, and the aftermast rigged for fore and aft.

Bilged on Her Anchor: A ship whose hull is holed or pierced by its own anchor.

Boom: a spar to which a sail is fastened to control its position relative to the wind.

Boot-topping: a partial careening (q.v.) done usually as a hurried, stop-gap measure when there is no time or place for the full work.

Bowsprit: a spar projecting from the bow of a vessel used to carry the headstay as far forward as possible.

Brotherhood of the Coast; Brethren of the Coast: initially referred to a self-styled confederacy

of the buccaneers based on Tortuga, but later used as a general term for Caribbean pirates as a whole.

Brought A Spring Upon Her Cable: came round in a different direction.

Brulot: the French term for a Fire Ship (q.v.).

C

Careen: to draw one's vessel into shallow waters, and haul it over upon it's side in order to expose the bottom for repair or cleaning (removing barnacles and other growth which reduces speed).

Careenage: a place to careen a vessel, usually a sheltered bay or cove.

Chase Guns: weapons that fire in the foreward arc of a ship, used during pursuit.

Corsair: another word for pirate, usually referring to a Frenchman or a Turk.

Crimp: someone who swindles seamen.

D

Dance the Hempo Jig: to be hung.

Davy Jones' Locker: Davy Jones was an evil spirit who lives in the sea, according to sailor's superstitions. His locker was the

ocean, where he gathers the bodies of dead sailors.

Dead Men Tell No Tales: phrase referencing the practice of killing captives to get rid of witnesses.

Droger: a West Indian coastal vessel.

E

Execution Dock: the usual place for pirate hangings, on the Thames in London near the Tower.

F

Filibuster: another term for pirate. The word is an English bastardization of the French word “filibustier”, which itself is believed to be a bastardization of either the Dutch word “vrijbouter” (meaning plunderer, from the Dutch words for free and booty) or the Dutch word “vlieboot” (or fly boat, a term for a fast, shallow-bottomed boat).

Fireship: a vessel loaded with explosives and flammable goods, ignited and set adrift towards the enemy.

Freebooter: see Filibuster.

Flying jib: the jib furthest forward and a vessel with two or more jib sails.

From the Sea: the answer a pirate ship would give in open waters when asked from where they hail.

G

Guarda Costa: a vessel fitted out in a Spanish or Spanish-colonial port and commissioned by local governors to enforce Spain’s trade monopoly. Essentially a privateer.

Grommet: name given by British sailors to an apprentice sailor or ship’s boy. Derived from the Spanish, *grumete*.

Guineaman: a ship engaged in the slave trade, from the Guinea coast of West Africa.

H

Heave to: to turn a vessel.

Hogshead: a large cask used mainly for the shipment of wines and spirits.

I

Interloper: an illegal trader or smuggler.

J

Jack: a small banner or flag flown at the ship’s bow, to show nationality or act as a signal.

Jolly Roger: the flag of a pirate--usually a black or red flag with some emblem symbolizing death. Each captain had his own unique design.

Conflicting stories exist as to the source of the name, ranging from a reference to the Devil (“Old Roger”), a sarcastic reference in French (“jolie rouge”-pretty red), to a bastardization of the muslim corsair term “Ali Raja”.

K

Keelhauling: naval punishment in which the victim is hauled either across or along the keel, the lowest lengthwise timber of a wooden ship. Painful

and often lethal, even when going across rather than lengthwise, due to the sharp barnacles cutting the victim’s flesh.

Knights of Malta: an order of knights (the former Knights Hospitalers) expelled from Rhodes by the Ottoman Empire in 1522, who took up residence on Malta in the Mediterranean, and then practiced piracy against muslim merchant ships as well as other corsairs until the 18th century.

L

Letters of Marque and Reprisal: a commission, usually granted by the admiralty of a country’s government, to the commander of a civilian vessel, allowing him to cruise against and take prizes of enemy ships, in return for which a small percentage would be paid to the crown.



Lubber: an old name for a clumsy, stupid person. Sailors used it to describe someone unfamiliar with life at sea who behaved in a “lubberly” fashion.

Strike Colors: to bring down a ship's flag as a sign of surrender.

Sweet Trade: piracy.

M

Maroon: in addition to being the word for the act of abandoning someone at sea, it originally came from the Spanish *cimarron*, meaning wild or untamed, which was a word for an escaped slave. A group of escaped slaves called Maroons lived on the island of Hispaniola, and many became pirates.

N

No Purchase, No Pay: expression used by privateers which meant that nobody is paid until purchase (or loot) is found. Pirates often changed this to “No prey, no pay.”

No Quarter Given: no mercy (quarter) is to be shown, no prisoners will be taken. Historically, a red flag meant that no quarter would be given, a black flag would mean that prisoners would be taken.

P

Press: to recruit for naval or military service by forcible means.

Prize: a ship captured intact by pirates or privateers.

S

Salmagundi: a favorite meal of pirates. A stew of anything the cook has on hand, usually including seafood, limes, hard-boiled eggs, salted meats, chopped vegetables, and spiced with everything imaginable.

Shiver Me Timbers: an expression of surprise or shock, referring to the effect of a cannonball on the oak timbers of a ship (blowing dangerous splinters, or shivers, through the vessel).

Soft Farewell: when one group of pirates slips away in the night to avoid sharing treasure with another group with whom they've been sailing, the deserters are said to have bid the other ship “a soft farewell.”

Spanish Main: the mainland of Spanish America (the Central and South American coastline).

Spike: to render a gun useless by blocking the vent or touchhole with a nail or spike, later a reference to blowing the gun itself up.

V

Vice-Admiralty Courts: courts established in the British colonies for trial of maritime offenses.

W

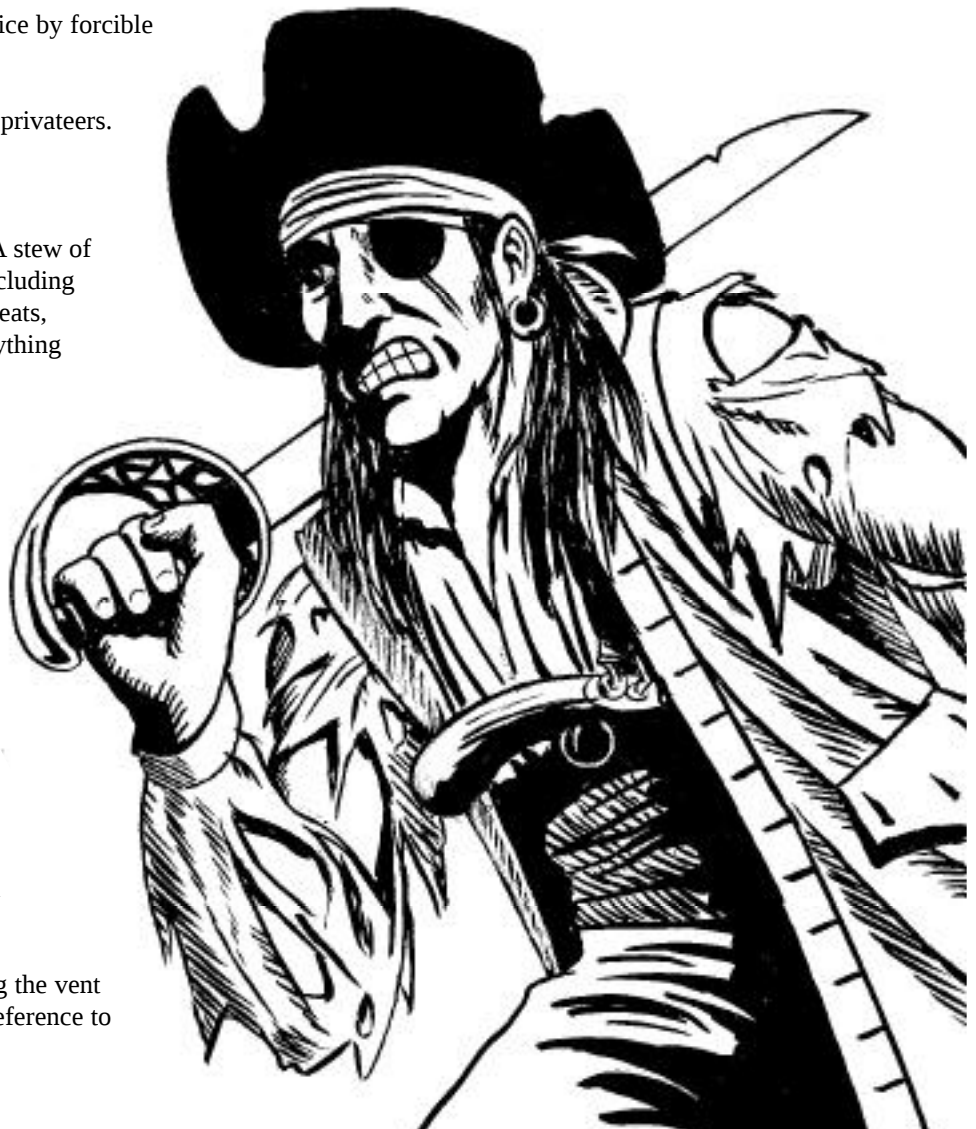
Walking the Plank: a method of killing prisoners at sea--contrary to popular belief, not a common practice among pirates.

Warp: to move a vessel by hauling on a rope tied to a stationary object ashore.

Weigh: to raise a vessel's anchor.

Y

Yards: the spars slung from the masts of a square-rigged vessel, used for suspending sails.



“This was told me by my teacher, Chirwa-Roots-That-Crack-the-Stones and he was told by his teacher, Ileo-Sings-to-Stars. Ileo claimed he stood witness to a Deal and swore the legends were true. I tell you this so that you know that I have not seen it and it may not be so.

This also you must know, as long as man has hewn roads, crossroads have been. They be places of power, part of the world, yet apart. Walked by all, but they belong to nobody, for who can lay true claim to a road?

The gods of the crossroads be many and every one be wise and every one be a trickster. A man of letters told me that a once mighty tribe he called ‘Row-mons’ put carved stones at the crossroads to honor their Loa Mercury and he had no reason to lie.

Whatever might have been, in the Caribbean now, you cut a Deal at the crossroads it be with Maître Carrefour. Take you a black chicken to your chosen crossroads, one on the outside of a town be best, every night for nine days. You must be there every night with your chicken. You make certain the ninth night be moonless. On that last night you set afire to that chicken at midnight

and let it run on fire. You do this as I tell you, then Carrefour, maybe he come to you. Then you make your Deal.

Your soul? Ha! What does Carrefour need your gros-bon-ange for? He seen plenty in his day. I heard tell he only take a single piece of silver. I also heard he takes the life of one in three so fools don’t pester him. Carrefour teaches what you ask for if he likes what you got to give and that’s that. You see him, you give him my regards, eh?”

– **Tamsanga, Hougan of the Old Ways**

Stories about crossroad deals have existed for as long as humanity has had crossroads. The tales usually go that if a supplicant follows certain rules, they will meet a supernatural entity at the crossroads that, for a price, will be willing to teach them up to an unprecedented level of talent at certain skills. The price is generally held to be the trainee’s soul, though accounts vary wildly in that regard.

It is, indeed, possible to cut a Crossroads Deal in *Skull & Bones*. Tamsanga is correct; all such deals made in the Caribbean are always made with Maître Carrefour. Other regions of the world may have other entities

and/or work differently at the GM’s discretion. Once an interested character has learned of the existence of the Crossroads Deal, they have to find one of the proper ways to perform it. This requires either a hougan or a bokor with a Voodoo Rituals Skill Rank of 10 or more. However, since there are so many contradictory stories about what it takes to make a Deal, the hougan/bokor still has to make a Voodoo Rituals Skill Check with a DC of 20 to describe a “working” version of the Deal. A Shantyman who makes a Bardic Knowledge roll with a DC of 25 can also describe a Deal. Neither the player who wants to make the deal, nor the “deal describer’s” player if they’re a PC, should be aware if the roll was a success or not.

Most versions of the Crossroads Deal are not particularly hard to perform, though the ingredients that they require may be difficult to secure. However, every one of them always stresses that from the time a character has assembled all ingredients and is ready to make her deal, it will take nine consecutive nights and must be performed at a four-way crossroads.

If a character assembles the proper ingredients, the original Skill Check was a success, and mechanically, has a Feat Slot open, Carrefour comes. If

A Deal at the Crossroads

by **T.S. Luikart**

not, the character has to start from scratch, searching for a different version of the Deal.

Common ingredients include casks of rum, black furred or feathered creatures, candy, tobacco, graveyard dust, and mint leaves. Rare ingredients include such things as gold dust, rubies, the heart or skull of an enemy slain by the character’s own hand, and the horns or talons of a supernatural entity. Most Deals require two of the common ingredients and one of the rares. GM’s prepared to allow a PC to make a Crossroads Deal should allow them to leave one Feat Slot unassigned in anticipation of a successful Deal.

Carrefour manifests as a large black man and by this, we mean “black” as in “the color of a totally lightless room.” Even his eyes are black, showing no whites at all and he wears entirely black robes. The only spot of color on him is his brilliant white teeth, but he smiles rarely. This is one of the only times that any of the great Loa ever manifest without a horse or govi, which is part of why so many preparations are needed to bring it about. Carrefour’s personality is described in the *Skull & Bones* rulebook on Pg. 84.

Carrefour teaches excellence in one of the following skills:

Balance, Climb, Craft (choose one), Disguise, Escape Artist, Forgery, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Open Lock, Perform (choose one instrument), Profession (Gambler), Sleight of Hand, Tumble, or Use Rope.

After several hours of instruction, the Deal making character acquires the *Feat, Crossroads Deal*. Forever after, regardless of any other factors, the recipient of the Deal can always *Take 20* on any and all Skill Checks related to the skill he received in the Deal. This ability to *Take 20* only takes a single action and counts as being *extraordinary*.

The Crossroads Deal doesn't grant any levels in the chosen skill; rather, it gives the ability to always perform as flawlessly as a character's natural Skill Ranks allow. Any given character can only ever make one Deal at the Crossroads in their life.

So what, exactly, does a Crossroads Deal cost?

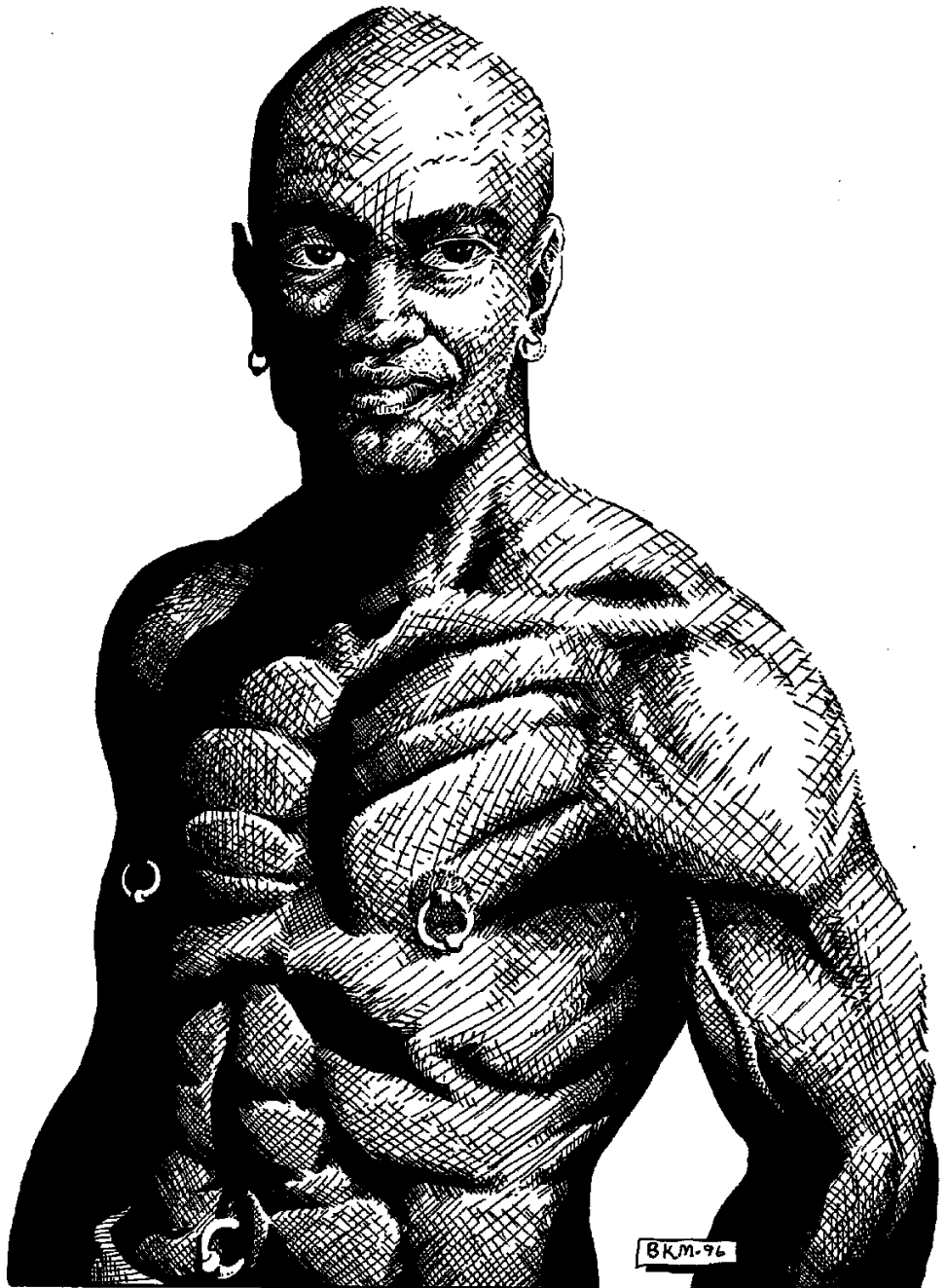
A single piece of silver. A character's last piece of silver, to be precise. In fact, the last bit of wealth the character owns.

In effect the character must give "all" the wealth he or she has to learn the skill. Giving all of one's riches to a friend who intends to give it back after the Deal pisses Carrefour off no end. Individuals that try it end up being one of the "one in three" that Tamsanga refers to in the opening description.

When the PC meets Carrefour, he can only own the clothes on his back, a weapon to defend himself with, and if the skill requires a tool such as an instrument, lock pick or rope, one of those, along with a single piece of silver. This giving of wealth to Carrefour is "metaphysically" permanent, e.g. the character effectively acquires the Fortune: Wastrel, though they may not have that sort of personality and it doesn't take up a Fortune slot. The character can always have a little money and a few possessions, but all great wealth will inevitably slip from his fingers, no matter what he does to hold onto it.

Once it has been made, there is no way to "reverse" a Deal. Carrefour doesn't require or even expect devotion to the Voodoo faith in those he teaches. However, he looks askance at anyone that takes what he has taught them and uses it against his people.

On occasion, Carrefour's bokor need assistance against certain foes, inevitably dangerous supernatural ones, and since most PCs tend to be extremely resourceful, Carrefour will expect his former pupil to help out his servant. PCs that do so without grumbling and manage to survive tend to find out that they can hold onto a bit more wealth than those that complain or dare to refuse their assistance.



Random Adventure Generation System

By Gareth-Michael Skarka



It's a tale often told: a little bit before dinner time, and you get a call from your playing group. They're all coming over, ready to play...tonight. However, for whatever reason, you've got nothing prepared. You haven't had time to come up with anything, and you certainly don't have a lot of time now.

To generate an adventure idea on the fly, use the following tables, which will give you a basic outline, and enough information from which to proceed. Pepper the idea that you generate with some NPCs (returning characters, if available--players always enjoy a sense of continuity in their character's lives, and you're ready to go.

The basic format for a random adventure is taken from the dramatic core that is used in the art of screenwriting: "the main characters must **[do something]** but have to contend with **[complications]**, while being confronted by **[opposition]**."

This makes a good structure for any story, whether it is written, filmed or even role-played. However, we'll spice it up a bit

more for *Skull & Bones*, adding a variable for **[location]** as well, since exotic locales are very much a part of the genre at hand.

So, our structure will be: "the PCs must **[do]** **[something]** at **[location]** but have to contend with **[complications]**, while being confronted by **[opposition]**."

Each category marked in brackets will be determined by a random roll on the tables provided--and you'll notice that I've divided **[do something]** into **[do]** and **[something]**, giving us a wider variety of results. This is the focus of the adventure, after all.

Consider these examples: "Rescue the Lady", "Find the Treasure" and "Defeat the Bokor." Each would

make a fine focus for an adventure, but by splitting into more than one variable, we not only get these results, but also "Find the Lady", "Find the Bokor", and "Rescue the Bokor", which present some interesting adventure opportunities.

This can also give you some decidedly odd results, such as "Defeat the Treasure," but you have to admit that the phrase, as bizarre as it sounds, begins to generate all sorts of ideas. What is the treasure? Why must it be defeated? How in hell do you defeat a treasure, anyway? Before you know it, you're developing an adventure where your pirate crew has to struggle to overcome a malevolent magical ring...perhaps journeying to drop it into a volcano. Hmmm. There's probably a good story there.

Each of the five categories in this system have a table of their own, which is read by cross-referencing two rolls of 1d8. This gives each category 68 possible results, meaning that this adventure generation system allows for more than 1,073,741,824 possible combinations, which should be more than enough to give the game master something to work with!

"The PCs must **[do]** **[something]** at **[location]** but have to contend with **[complications]**, while being confronted by **[opposition]**." The tables begin on the next page.

Do

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Fight	Defeat	Rescue	Protect	Retrieve	Hunt	Betray	Battle
2	Aid	Talk to	Find	Attack	Assist	Defend	Take	Join
3	Arm	Sell	Buy	Combat	Guard	Save	Watch	Create
4	Escort	Chase	Oppose	Meet	Ally	Resist	Kill	Sink
5	Entreat	Journey with	Rally against	Check	Investigate	Support	Destroy	Change
6	Move	Track	Amuse	Enchant	Dispel	Injure	Drop	Comfort
7	Conceal	Duel	Reveal	Race	Spy on	Trade	Observe	Plunder
8	Steal	Revenge	Free	Discover	Survive	Assault	Carry	Manipulate



Something

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Lord	Lady	Treasure	Buccaneer	Monster	Creature	Island	Town
2	Sailor	People	Colonist	Hougan	Magic	Boat	Navy	Merchant
3	Maroon	Guild	Enemy	Object	Officer	Bokor	Spaniard	Gold
4	Animal	Pirate	Secret	Native	Leader	Shantyman	Item	French
5	Dutch	Slave	Woman	Loa	Prize	Fish	Chest	Inn
6	Surgeon	Djab	Navigator	Rebel	Criminal	Castaway	Zombi	Governor
7	Assassin	Corpse	Priest	Ship	English	Spirit	Weapon	Stranger
8	Lover	Spy	Thief	Soldier	Man	Child	Location	Fencer



Location

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Anguila	Antigua	Aruba	Bahamas	Barbadoes	Barbuda	Bonaire	Caymans
2	Cozumel	Cuba	Curacao	Dominica	Grenada	Grenadines	Guadelupe	Jamaica
3	Margarita Mart.	Montserrat	Nevis	Porto Rico	Saba	St. Kitts	St. Domin.	
4	St. Lucia	St.Mart.	St. Vincent	Santo Domingo	Tabago	Tortuga	Trinidad	Virgin Is.
5	Port	Sea	America	Europe	Ocean	Island	Cave	Ship
6	Hell	Lair	Fort	Uncharted Is.	Inn	Town	Vault	Storm
7	Cove	Swamp	Africa	Graveyard	Plantation	Dock	Church	Supernatural Location
8	Fleet	Market	Base	Court	Spanish Main	Hideout	Jungle	Underwater

Complications

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Mistaken Identity	Disaster	Crime	Legal Trouble	Misdirection	Lack of Info	Government Influence	Magic
2	Betrayal	Squabbling	Abduction	Lost Equipment	Weather	Monster	Trickery	Intrigue
3	Animals	Riots	Duplicity	Theft	Fear	Loa	Mystery	Survival
4	Power Struggle	Politics	Ship problem	Physical feats	Mental feats	Naval trouble	Gangs	Getting lost
5	Insanity	Sidetracked	Traps	Vendetta	Ambush	Old Enemies	Pirates	The Unknown
6	Bokor	Corrupt Officials	Favors	Threat of War	Drunkenness	Slave uprising	Voodoo	Pirate Hunter
7	Assasins	Creature	Storm	Rivalry	Church Influence	Shipwreck	Desertion	Mutiny
8	Djab	Friend in Need	Hougan	Matter of Honor	Becalming	Revenge	Duel	Famous Pirate

Opposition

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Enemy	Pirates	Bokor	Hougan	Buccaneer	Governor	Shantyman	Monster
2	Officer	English	Dutch	French	Spanish	Portugese	Famous Pirate	Navy
3	Lord	Native	Loa	Inventor	Rebel	Sea Dog	Djab	Rival
4	Former Ally	Criminals	Ruler	Soldier	Themselves	Madman	Thief	Friend
5	Supernatural	Disaster	Stranger	Company	Cult	Spy	Recurring Villain	The Law
6	Priest	Corrupt Officials	Merchant	Non-human	Spirit	Privateers	Politician	Pirate Hunter
7	Assassin	Creature	Group	Roll twice	Historical Figure	Crew	Secret Society	Smuggler
8	The Crown	American	Castaway	Nature	Curse	Master of Fence	Cutthroats	Roll 3 times

Examples of Use:

Let's run through a few examples, just to get a look at how the process works.

Example One:

"The Characters must (1,3) rescue (7,3) a priest at (5,3)Porto Rico, but have to contend with (6,3) favors, while being confronted by (4,4)soldiers."

This gives me an idea for an adventure which features a priest who has been captured by the authorities in San Juan (let's make him a Puritan, who the Spanish think is a spy). An NPC that the characters owe a favor to demand that they rescue the Puritan from the fort at San Juan, which is guarded by many Spanish soldiers. (Mulling over this idea as I write this, it occurs to me that this could be a blast if the Puritan turns out to be Robert E. Howard's character Solomon Kane)

All I need to get this one going is a rough sketch of a fort (the actual layout of several historical forts in San Juan--"El Morro", San Cristóbal, and San Gerónimo--is available online from several tour websites), a stable of cannon-fodder NPC soldiers, and write-ups of the puritan and a good villain (perhaps a Spanish inquisitor with a few levels of Diestro).

Example Two:

"The characters must (5,2) journey with (1,6) a creature to (2,8) Jamaica, but have to contend with (7,3) a storm, while being confronted by (5,5) a cult."

24 Flipping through the *Skull & Bones* book for an appropriate

creature, I come up with the following adventure idea: the players are secretly approached by a man who has rescued a Cynocephali (Dog Folk) from the clutches of a group of fanatics, the Cult of Anubis, who believe the creature to be a messenger sent to them by the Egyptian god. The man says that the Dog-man was captured in the Cockpits, the rugged mountain plateaus of Jamaica. He wants the characters to help him get the creature back to his home, all the while avoiding the clutches of the Anubian cult.

This adventure will require NPC write-ups for the Cynocephali, the man (although I'd probably make him Cannon Fodder so he can be killed early on, leaving the PCs with the responsibility of returning the Dog-man to his home), and the Cult of Anubis (which could go on to make an excellent recurring group of villains).

Example Three:

"The characters must (2,7) take (7,7)a weapon from (6,2) a lair, but have to contend with (8,1)djab, while being confronted by(1,3) a bokor."

This one is pretty straightforward. The player characters steal an enchanted weapon from a bokor's lair, only to have the bokor summon a Djab (most likely Carisona or Shimerack the Chitterer) to hunt them down and retrieve the weapon.

As you can see, with a few rolls of the dice and a little bit of thought, these tables can generate more than enough ideas from which to flesh out a full-length adventure, or even an entire *Skull & Bones* campaign.



Advanced Ship Rules

By Gareth-Michael Skarka

The crash of timbers and the roar of cannons. The whip-crack of sail-cloth and the creak of ropes and wood. A pirate's life is a life on the sea, despite time spent in port or on remote islands. The pirate and his ship are joined--as falls the ship, so falls the pirate.

The rules starting on page 96 of the *Skull & Bones* core book are detailed enough to cover the basic needs of most campaigns, but what follows are advanced and optional rules for those who want more detail, governing such things as repair, customization and legendary vessels.

Value

First, we'll have a look at the value of a ship. Since most characters will never see the kind of money needed to commission a new vessel, this figure is primarily used to determine the sale value of captured prizes. In general, ships seldom are purchased for their true value. Purchase prices fluctuate wildly, based on the size of the port where the sale is

attempted (you'll get more at a larger port, for example), and the current needs of the buyers (in times of war, a military vessel will bring a higher percentage of its value than a merchantman, for example).

The value of a vessel can be determined by the following formula:

**100 Doubloons per ton of cargo space
+ the cost of any cannons.**

For example:

Sloop - 8000 Doubloons + 2700 Doubloons (18 Culverin) = 10,700 Doubloons

Schooner - 10,000 Doubloons + 3360 Doubloons (20 Culverin, 4 Demi-Culverin) = 13,360 Doubloons

Third Rate - 12,000 Doubloons + 12,100 (32 Culverin, 10



Demi-Culverin, 32 Demi-cannon) = 24,100 Doubloons

The above costs are simply estimates for **Skull & Bones** - they aren't completely historically accurate, but they'll do. No two ships are ever a like. Most ships larger than a sloop will never be for sale, your PCs will have to have it constructed. Ship yards generally take around 4 to 5 months to produce a new ship. Most ship builders are busy with honest work, and they'll want to know what the ship is going to be used for. Finding a ship builder could be an adventure in and of itself.

A GM whose players bring such a prize to port should use that as the base sale price, and modify from there based on the needs of the buyers, etc.

The amount of money changing hands during the sale of such items is so huge, that you'd seldom see the sale carried out with actual cash. The purchase would be made with a combination of coin, goods and booty equal to the total sale price. Occasionally, purchases would be made through the issuance of Letters of Credit, but such niceties are seldom used in legally questionable markets frequented by pirates—although some Colonial ports, notably New York, had a scandalous reputation for dealing openly with pirates, even to the point of issuing Letters of Credit and inviting pirate captains to dine with the Governor.

Repairs

It happens to everyone, sooner or later. You limp away from an engagement with a number of Structure Points missing. The time has come for repairs to your vessel.

When a ship is damaged, there are several varieties of repairs that can be attempted: Battle Repairs, Sail Patching, Field Repairs and Port Repairs.

Battle Repairs

Battle Repairs are repairs that occur during the combat itself (pumping, patching of holes, quick lashing of broken spars and rigging), and can only be attempted if:

- 1) The ship has a Carpenter on board who is a 5th level Warrant Officer (Wof), thereby possessing the special ability "battle repairs," and
- 2) The ship has currently taken no more than 50% of its Structure Points in damage. More significant damage requires more extensive work than is possible under battle conditions, and requires either Field Repairs or Port Repairs. Note that this restriction is not cumulative--it only reflects the current damage. If a ship has 40 s.p., Battle Repairs can be attempted only if it has taken 20 points or less in damage. If the Ship's Carpenter repairs 16 of those points, the ship is considered to have only taken 4 points of damage for the purposes of this restriction--meaning that it can take another 16 before Battle Repairs are impossible.

3) If the ship has taken more than 50% of its Structure Points in damage, the Carpenter can only patch (not truly repair), and this will "heal" no more than 25% of the total damage taken. Further repairs (Field or Port) will be needed.

To effect Battle Repairs, the carpenter must make a Craft (carpentry) roll. This roll can also be modified by the Seamanship rating of the ship's crew. Divide the roll total by two to determine the amount of damage that is repaired.

Use Table 10-13 on page 114 of **Skull & Bones** to determine the amount of time those repairs take (don't forget to take into account the modifiers on table 10-3 (page 103), if the ship is operating with a skeleton crew). Divide the total amount of damage repaired by the number of rounds, and return that amount of s.p. to the ship per round (rounding all remainders up).

Damage that is in process of repair, but not yet in effect, does not count towards the 50% restriction...it is counted as repaired for this purpose. (However, if a ship drops to -10 s.p., even with pending repair, the ship is destroyed...the damage simply got ahead of the repair crews)

Example:

The sloop *Lucky Jack*, (22 s.p.) is fighting a Spanish frigate, and takes 10 points of damage. This is below 50% of her total s.p., so the Carpenter (Craft (carpentry) +7) makes a roll for repairs, modified by the *Jack's* Average crew (Seamanship +6). The Carpenter rolls 15 +7 +6, for a total of 28. 28 divided by 2 is 14, so all 10 points of damage will be repaired. The result on Table 10-13 indicates that an Average crew has a base time of 10 rounds. Dividing 14 points (even though only 10 is needed...the extra results will make the repairs go more quickly) among those 10 rounds means that the ship will recover 1.4 points a turn, rounded up to 2 points.

If the *Lucky Jack* had taken more than 11 points of damage, the Carpenter and the crew would only be able to repair at most 25% of the total damage taken, and the rest would have to be more extensive repairs undertaken either in the field or at port.

Example Two:

Say that while the Carpenter and the crew are repairing those 10 points of damage (say 3 rounds into the repairs) the ship takes another hit, and this one does 16 points of damage. At this point, the effective s.p. of the ship is (22 original, -10 damage from the first volley, +6 from the 3 rounds of repair) 18, so this attack brings the ship down to 2 Structure points, and is also much more than the 11 point limit for Battle repairs, so only 4 points of this additional damage can be repaired. Assuming the ship takes no further damage, the ship's s.p. at the end of this process will be (4 for the remaining points of repair from the first batch, +4 for the additional repair) 8 s.p. the other 14 points of structure must be recovered through either Field Repairs or Port Repairs.



Sail Patching

The procedure for repairs to sheets and rigging is handled differently. Any damage taken to the sails, as detailed in the description of Chain shot or Bar shot on page 119 of *Skull & Bones* is taken as a reduction in speed. To repair this damage requires that the holes and tears in the rigging be sewn and mended. There are no special rules for this, as the crew of a sailing vessel make these sort of repairs as a matter of course, even during normal use. Repairing damaged sails is not possible during battle. Assume that repairs to sails are completed within a day.

This is only possible if the ship's speed has been reduced by no more than 50%. Any more than that, and the sails must be replaced, either by stealing sails from a prize vessel, or by purchasing new sails (roughly 25 Doubloons).

Field Repairs

More extensive damage requires more extensive repairs. There are two ways this can be done--by the ship's crew, in the field, or in port by a combination of the ships's crew and any ship

builders that can be hired.

If a crew wants to engage in a Field Repair, lumber needs to be gathered. Large trees have to be felled and cleaned to create lumber which are used for hull, decking, masts, etc.

The vessel is run aground on a secluded beach, the cargo and fittings are off-loaded, and the repairs made (even to the point of pulling the vessel over onto it's side to repair the bottom of the hull--a process known as Careening).

Any of the islands described in the main rulebook certainly have enough lumber for this. If the crew is forced to make landfall on a smaller, uncharted island, it will only have enough lumber for repairs on a roll of 4 or higher on a d6.

If the entire crew is put to work on repairs, and an island is chosen with enough wood for the needed supplies, the repairs will take 1 full day of work (working during the daylight hours--12 hours) for every 5 s.p. of repair (this represents not just the repairs themselves, which actually don't take up much time, but rather the finding and felling of trees, the planing of the wood, the offloading of the vessel, the careening, etc.). If the vessel does not have a full crew, or if less than the full crew is available for the work, the repairs will take additional time, based on the time penalty for skeleton crews listed on table 10-3 on page 103 of *Skull & Bones*.

The Ships Carpenter makes a Craft (carpentry) roll, with a DC equal to the total amount of damage needing repair. The amount by which the roll exceeds the DC is the number of hours by which the process is reduced. (The expertise of the Carpenter makes the job easier). If the roll fails, the amount by which it fails is the number of hours of additional work required.

After the time has passed, the repairs have been made, and the ship is back up to its normal Structure Point total.

Port Repairs

Repairs in Port are much quicker, although much more expensive, and may also attract attention of the authorities. Port facilities will repair 15 s.p. a day, and cost based on the value of the vessel: take the value of the vessel (as figured via the formula at the beginning of this section), and divide it by the total number of Structure Points the vessel has when fully repaired, and this will give you the cost to repair each point of damage.

The cost can be reduced by the repair crews taking more time. Taking 3 times as much time (reducing the rate to 5 s.p.) per day will reduce the cost by 50%.



Example:

The *Lucky Jack*, from our previous example, needs to repair 14 points out of 22. The *Jack* is a Sloop, and worth 10,700 doubloons. This means that each point of structure is worth roughly 486 doubloons. This means that the repairs on the *Lucky Jack* will cost 6,804 doubloons, but only take one day of work. Spending 3,402 will have the repairs completed in 3 days.

Modifications

Pirates often modified their vessels, adding more weapons, streamlining the hull and generally fitting out the ship to be more suited for combat and larceny on the high seas than the shipwrights ever intended.

The following is a list of available modifications, their benefits, and any costs.

Adding Guns

A vessel can be over-armed up to 20% above the specs listed in the basic stat block, by reducing cargo space by 20%. These guns can be placed anywhere the ship's owner wishes. The costs for guns are calculated as listed in the Weapons list (Table 6-5) on page 56 of *Skull & Bones*.

Upgrading Firepower

Often, a ship would have its guns replaced with larger bore weapons--however, due to the added weight and, more importantly, the unbalancing effects of the larger blasts, no ship can

carry weapons larger than 1 size higher than the normally-outfitted gun it replaces (for example--a culverin can be replaced with a demi-cannon, but not a cannon). In addition, the ship's maximum speed is reduced by 1 knot (10 ft.) and maneuverability is reduced by 1 for every 5 replacements or fraction thereof. The costs for guns are calculated as listed in the Weapons list (Table 6-5) on page 56 of *Skull & Bones*.

Streamlining

A captured vessel would sometimes have its rails cut down, its decks lowered and some of its heavy superstructure beams removed in an effort to make the ship faster. This process requires a Ship's Carpenter with Craft (carpentry) of at least +5, and will increase the top speed of a ship by 1 knot (10 ft.) for every point of Structure lost, to a maximum of 3.

Careening

The hull of a wooden sailing vessel would become fouled with barnacles and other growth which increased drag on a vessel. A ship which undergoes careening (see the Pirate Glossary for details) can add 1 knot (10 ft.) to its top speed...although that extra speed will disappear after 3 months, requiring re-careening.

Hull Reinforcement

Reinforcing a ship's hull with heavier wood makes the ship harder to damage, but heavier and slower. Using the rules for repair (including costs, if done in port), a ship can add up to 5 s.p. for a reduction of 1 knot (10 ft) per s.p.

Crew Improvement and Replacement

Improvement

A ship's crew can improve, just like any other characters. The simplest way to represent this is to increase the crew's Seamanship rating by +1 for every month of active sailing (if the crew spends a month in port, doing nothing, no increase is merited, after all).

Replacement

Replacing crew losses is a major factor of life on a pirate vessel, and there are two methods by which this is accomplished: Hiring On, and Press Gangs.

Hiring On

This method entails simply putting out the word that you're hiring crew while in port. The result is determined by a Charisma roll by the Captain, modified as follows:

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Modifier</u>
Captain's Fame is 10+	+1
Captain's Fame is 15+	+2
Captain's Fame is 20+	+3
Current Sway 5 or less	-1
Current Sway 10 +	+1

No pay is offered to pirate crews, instead they are considered to be going "on the Account" (see Glossary), although if an amount of money is offered as a signing bonus, that further modifies the roll:

<u>Bonus</u>	<u>Modifier</u>
less than 1 dbl	0
1-5 dbl	+1
6-10 dbl	+2
10+ dbl	as above, +1 for every 5 dbl.

Note that this bonus must be paid to all.

The roll is made against a DC based upon the desired number of crewmen needed:

<u>Number needed</u>	<u>DC</u>
less than 10	10
10-20	15
20-50	20
50-75	25
75+	30

Add a modifier equal to the desired Seamanship rating of the crew.

Example:

The *Lucky Jack* has lost some crew during the last battle, and is in Port Royal looking to hire. They need 17 crewmen. The captain's fame is 10, his Charisma is 16, and his current Sway is 6, and he is looking for crew equal in Seamanship to his current members (Seamanship +6). He's offering a signing bonus of 10

dbl per man. He has to make d20 roll at a modifier of +6 (+3 Cha, +1 Fame, +2 signing bonus) against a DC of 21 (15 (for 17 crewmen, +6 for their desired Seamanship rating.)

Press Gang

This method entails sending armed men to essentially kidnap unwilling sailors to join your crew. It is always successful, but unwilling sailors are always Rabble, at Seamanship rating +1. Remember that Seamanship is based on the average scores of the crew's Profession (sailor) skill, so bringing in more Rabble will lower your overall crew quality

Another method of pressing sailors into service is to offer positions to the crew of a captured vessel. The crew members that agree to join come over with their current Seamanship rating intact. Use the tables for Hiring On, except with no signing bonus modifiers (these people were just fighting against you, so an offer like that wouldn't be believed), and with the DC modifier based on the actual Seamanship rating of the crew, rather than any desired rating. Double the Captain's charisma bonus if he showed mercy to the captured ship. No more than 50% of a captured ship's crew will join.

Example:

Instead of Hiring On, the *Lucky Jack* instead attempts to press 17 crew members from the ship they just took. The captured crew's Seamanship is +5. The Captain has shown mercy. He must make a roll at +7 against a DC of 20.



Legendary Vessels

There are ships which have become famous in their own right--legends of the sea. Blackbeard's ship, *The Revenge*. Kidd's ship, *The Adventure Galley*. The ghostly *Flying Dutchman*. All of these vessels have taken on a life of their own. In ***Skull & Bones***, these vessels have become NPCs, and gain levels and feats as they advance in legendary power!

To become a legendary vessel, a ship must meet the following criteria:

- 1) Have a crew with a quality of Average or better.
- 2) Have a captain with a Fame of at least 10
- 3) Have all players aboard agree to donate 10% of their future experience awards directly to the ship.
- 4) Flies a flag of unique design, which clearly identifies the vessel.

Once these criteria are met, the ship becomes a 1st level Legendary Vessel (Lgv), and from that point onward, draws 10% of it's player-character crew's experience as its own.

As the ship gains levels, it gains bonuses to Armor Class, Base Attack Bonus and Structure Points (note that these bonuses are not cumulative).

At 1st, 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th and 10th level, a Ship Feat may be chosen. A list of Ship Feats (and full details on the feats) can be found starting on the next page.

A legendary vessel that comes under the control of a new captain and crew will retain the benefits of the NPC class, as long as the new owners maintain the tithe of 10% of their experience awards, and the ship keeps its name and unique flag. Changing the name of a sailing vessel is generally considered to be unlucky...and in this case, that's true--the benefits of Legendary Ship status would be lost.

The Legendary Vessel

Level	AC Bonus	Base Attack Bonus	SP Bonus	Special
1	+1	-	-	Initial Ship Feat
2	+1	+1	-	Ship Feat
3	+2	+2	+1	-
4	+2	+3	+2	Ship Feat
5	+3	+4	+3	-
6	+3	+5	+4	Ship Feat
7	+4	+6	+5	-
8	+4	+7	+6	Ship Feat
9	+5	+8	+7	-
10	+5	+9	+8	Ship Feat



Ship Feats

A feat is a special feature that gives your vessel a new capability or improves one that it already has. A Legendary Vessel gets to choose 1 feat at level 1, one at level 4, one at level 7 and one more at level 10.

Some feats have prerequisites. Your ship must have the indicated statistical score, feat or other quality listed in order to select or use that feat.

Note that although these are called Ship Feats, some of them apply more to the crew than the ship--however since these feats are part of the Legendary Ship, they exist independently of the crew itself, as long as they meet the quality requirement for a Legendary ship. For example, any crew of at least Average quality serving aboard a ship with the Expert Gunner feat would have that feat available, even if they were all newly-hired.

BEAT TO QUARTERS[SHIP]

The ship is always ready for action, and often gets the jump on its opponent.

Prerequisite: Wave Dancer

Benefit: The ship's maneuverability score has a +4 bonus

BEARING DOWN [SHIP]

The ship is brutally efficient at ramming other vessels.

Benefit: When ramming another vessel, this ship gains a +4 bonus on the attack roll, rather than the standard +2. (The AC reduction for a ramming vessel remains at -2, however, as described on page 116 of *Skull & Bones*). Additionally, this ship only takes 1/4 of the listed damage, instead of 1/3.

BOMBARD [SHIP]

The ship's weapons have a greater range than expected.

Prerequisite: Expert Gunners

Benefit: The ship's guns have their range increments (found on Table 10-3 on page 114 of *Skull & Bones*) increased by 25% (multiply the range increments by 1.25).

BRISTOL FASHION[SHIP]

The ship is very well built.

Benefit: The ship has an extra die roll's worth of Structure Points, which are added as soon as this feat is taken. (For example: a Sloop (which uses 4d10 to determine its normal Structure Points), would roll 1d10 and add it to s.p.)

DROGUE SHIP [SHIP]

The ship itself can be used as a drogue by a Houngan or Bokor

Benefit: The ship has been enchanted--ververs carved into the keel of the vessel, etc.--and can be used as a drogue, storing arcane wanga or divine spells which can be used by its captain.

EVASIVE ACTION [SHIP]

The ship is capable of avoiding incoming fire.



Prerequisite: Wave Dancer

Benefit: During your action, you designate an opponent, and receive a +2 bonus to Armor Class against attacks from that opponent. You may select a new opponent on any action.

EXPERT GUNNERS [SHIP]

The ship's guns can be reloaded very quickly.

Benefit: The base reload time for your ship's guns is 2 rounds quicker than normal (as per table 10-14 on page 115 of *Skull & Bones*).

EXPERT TOPSMEN [SHIP]

The ship's sails can be reset quickly and efficiently.

Benefit: The crew counts as one quality level higher for the purposes of base sail change time (as per table 10-13 on page 114 of *Skull & Bones*).

FLAGSHIP [SHIP]

The ship is primarily used as the vessel in command of a fleet.

Prerequisite: Captain of Sof4 or better

Benefit: When this ship is sailing in consort with others, all vessels in the fleet use this ship's maneuverability rating for purposes of initiative in combat. In addition, the crews on the other vessels can be affected by the Captain's command abilities (as per the class description on page 48 of *Skull & Bones*), as long as they are within sight of his ship.

FLUSH-DECKED [SHIP]

The ship's forecastle has been lowered to the level of the main deck, providing a larger fighting platform for boarding actions.

Benefit: Occasionally, pirates would remove the forecastle of a sailing ship, to give the main deck more space. More space meant that more men could be given an unobstructed fighting platform--a clear way to board an enemy. A flush-decked vessel has a +2 modifier for Boarding Attacks.

IMPROVED EVASIVE ACTION [SHIP]

The ship is capable of avoiding incoming fire from all directions, weaving in and out of danger like a living thing.

Prerequisite: Wave Dancer, Evasive Action

Benefit: Your ship receive a +2 bonus to Armor Class against attacks from all opponents in a combat.

LOA'S FAVOR [SHIP]

The ship is magically defended.

Prerequisite: A Houngan in the crew, performing regular rituals on board.

Benefit: The ship itself gains the ability to roll Saving Throws against magical attacks. The ship's saving throw is equal to that of the ship's Hounagan.

RUNS LIKE THE DEVIL [SHIP]

The ship is wickedly fast.

Benefit: The ship's maximum speed rating is 25% higher than normal (multiply by 1.25 and round up)

SPRING WHEEL [SHIP]

The ship can turn much more quickly than normal

Benefit: The ship's turn rate has a +2 bonus

STORM-BORN [SHIP]

The ship is capable of riding out the worst storms

Benefit: The ship uses a d4 instead of a d6 to determine damage taken in a storm (see page 110 of the *Skull & Bones* core book). In addition, it only takes critical damage on a roll of 4, and rolls on the critical damage table on page 122 are taken at a -3.

STREAMLINED [SHIP]

The vessel's lines are crafted in such a way that it slices through the waves like a knife.

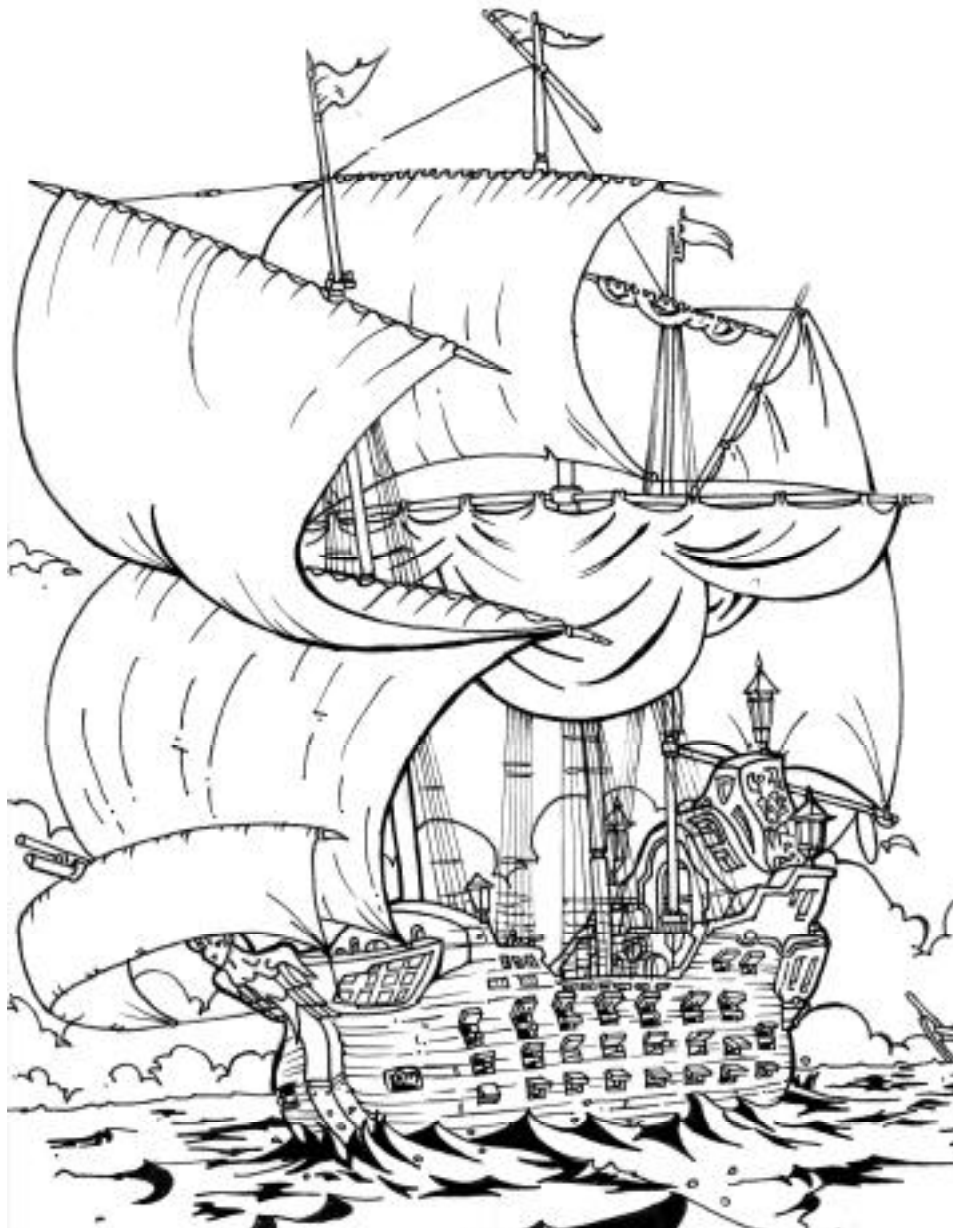
Benefit: On table 10-7 (page 109 in the *Skull & Bones* core book), the ship's crew counts as one quality level higher for the purposes of determining the speed modifier.

WAVE-DANCER [SHIP]

The ship is exceedingly maneuverable, and handles better than other ships of its class.

Benefit: The ship's maneuverability score has a +2 bonus.

Further ship feats will be presented in articles and adventures featured in future issues of *Buccaneers & Bokor*.



Templates

Just like a monster, a Legendary Ship can also have a template applied to it. Any of the templates from *Core Rulebook III v3.5* can be used. Slight modification may be needed, which are at the discretion of the Game Master.

Here's an example: We'll add a Ghost template to a Brigantine:

The Lady Rose

Large Undead Merchantman

Draft: 2.5 fathoms

Structure Dice: 6d12 (38 sp) (*Ghost changes Hit Dice to D12*)

Hardness: 5

Maneuverability: -3 (-2 Merchantman, -1 size)

Speed: 120 ft./12 knots, sailing or 30 ft./3 knots, flying (*Ghost adds flying*)

Turn Rate: 3

AC: 7 (-2 Merchantman, -1 size) (*As per Ghost, only for ethereal encounters*)

Weapons Fore: None

Weapons Aft: Culverin x4

Weapons Broadside: Culverin x 10

Damage: Culverin 2d4 (*but, as per Ghost, these are not physical attacks--they can only effect ethereal creatures*)

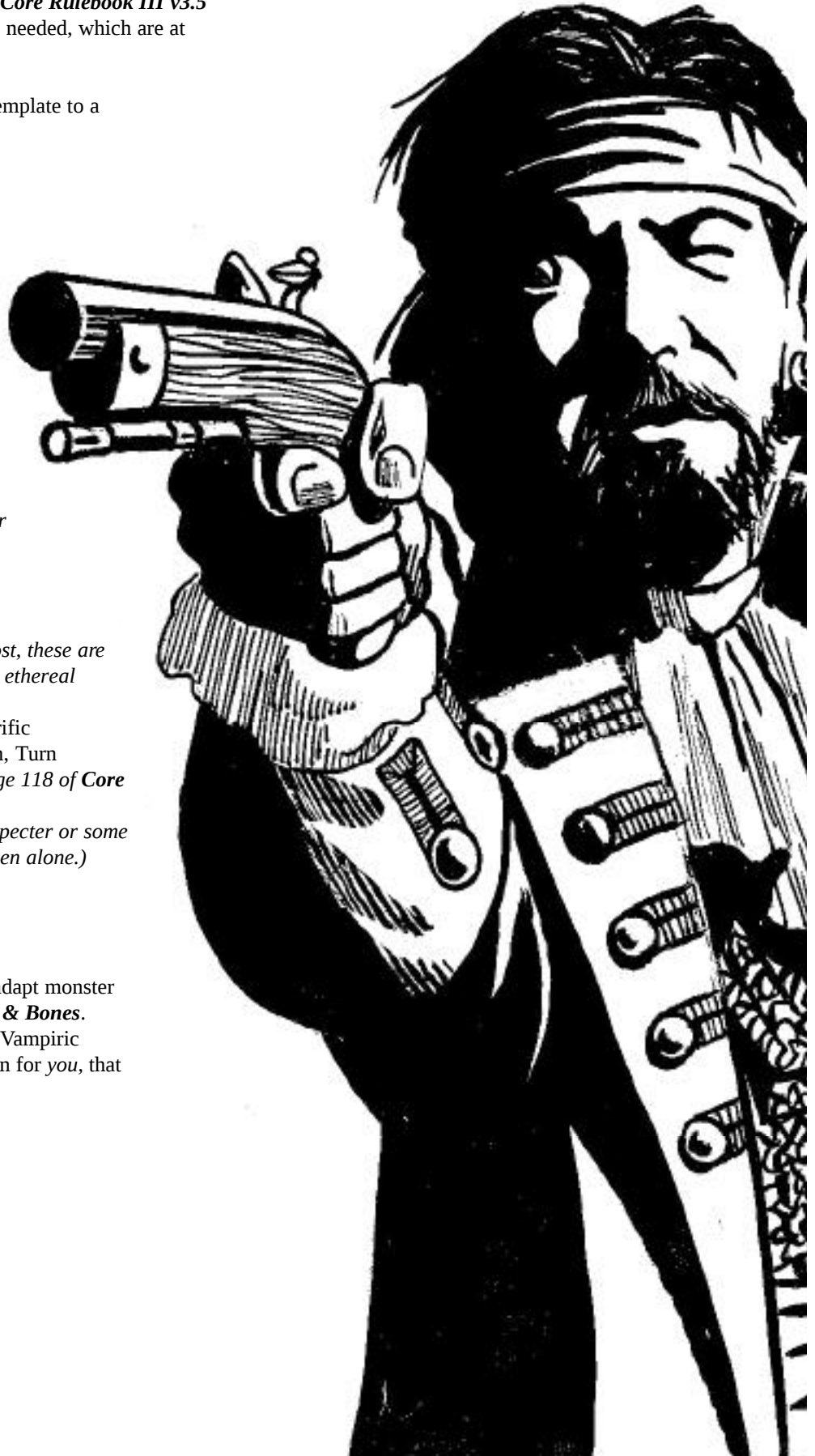
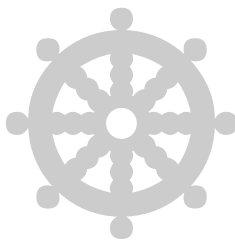
Special Qualities: Frightful Moan, Horrific Appearance, Manifestation, Rejuvenation, Turn Resistance (*as per Ghost template on page 118 of Core Rulebook III v3.5*)

Crew: varies (*Personally, I'd place a Specter or some other undead nasty on board, perhaps even alone.*)

Passengers: none

Cargo: varies

This is just an example of how you can adapt monster templates to the ship stat blocks in *Skull & Bones*. Imagine the fun of your players facing a Vampiric Pinnace, or an Infernal Frigate! (Well, fun for you, that is.)



Nary a Drop

by T.S. Luikart

Burlinson looked over his ragged crew. They'd been caught in irons for near onto two weeks and all of them could feel the Thirst's onslaught. Hell, he'd had to stop Grog from swilling bilge water. The Restless creaked and groaned more than usual as her boards complained of the relentless sun. He turned to his navigator, Kroft, and made a sweeping gesture towards the listless ocean.

"Time's come, pilot."

The Dutchman nodded slowly. "Send someone you won't miss."

"Aye."

Kroft sought his narrow wooden cabin--and it was his. The Captain's quarters were frequently invaded and its occupants came and went; though Burlinson was better than most, but still, Kroft's hold was let be. Part reverence, part fear, he suspected. His walls were so covered with charts and maps that the wood beneath was buried.

He placed a fat tallow candle upon his small table and removed a false panel from behind his bunk. A cracked-leather tome and a cloth wrapped bundle were slowly pulled from their resting spot. He reverently placed the book at the center of his desk and ran his hand over the slightly raised symbols that adorned its surface.

Two men dragged a chain-bound brute inside and, with fearful glances towards Kroft, departed.

Kroft surveyed the wreckage of a man before him, whose name was Veddick. It takes a certain courage to steal from pirates, and to his detriment, Veddick had it. His dark eyes glared back at Kroft and he only looked away once to spit at the floor.

"Would you like a drink?" asked Kroft.

Veddick blinked in surprise, then nodded slowly. "I'd take one." He slightly lifted his arms, but Kroft shook his head. "I'll hold it for you." He reached underneath his bunk and produced a sealed earthen jar. When he removed the cork, the sweet smell of warmed rum filled the cabin. He poured a full cup and held it to Veddick's lips, who drank greedily. When the cup was empty, Kroft set it aside and asked:

"Do you know why you are here?"

Veddick snorted. "Aye, theft."

"No. You're going to save us all."

Veddick laughed, deep and spiteful. "Why would I do that?"

Kroft leaned back in his rough-hewn chair and stared towards his cabin's single porthole. "Have you ever considered what it takes to make a map, to chart a shore?"

If Veddick was confused by the question, he didn't show it. "Can't say as I have."

"Time. Time and patience. That, at least, is what the world believes." Kroft leaned toward the chained man, his pale blue eyes suddenly intense, "What if I told you that what it takes is will? That the world is what a strong spirit dares make of it? That maps are not of the world, they change the world, or, perhaps, set the world in place."

"Aye, and me mam's coming for tea."

Kroft snorted. "Greater men than you have died to learn what I just told you."

Kroft turned and picked up the old book from his table. "This is my Wagenaer. My Master gave it to me, and he had it from his."

Veddick nodded. "I've seen them before."

"Not like this one." Kroft opened the book to a blank page and set it down. He unwrapped the cloth bundle from about an object he held up for Veddick to examine. A strange pen, seemingly made of a blending of ivory and metal met Veddick's eyes. It was covered with odd runes, and at points, holed as if it were a flute.

"This is carved of a narwhale's horn and bound with true-silver."

"So, are you going to play me a jig?"

Kroft looked Veddick in the eye. "No. I'm going to kill you, boy."

He stabbed the stylus into Veddick's neck and twisted it, once. The big man's mouth moved soundlessly. He tried to reach for his killer but his chains held him fast.

Kroft removed the pen and moved to the table as Veddick's body slumped to the floor. He swiftly began tracing lines across the page with the dead man's blood.

"There is an island," he whispered, sweat already beading upon his brow, "where water flows pure and clear." He quickly sketched the outlines of a small isle, adding reefs and shoals as he went. His hand cramped as the hours wore on, but he didn't stop until a cry echoed down to him from high above: "Land! Land to starboard."

"It also takes sacrifice, Veddick" he whispered, and then fell into a deep slumber.



Next Issue...

- ◇ **Uncharted Shores:** Featuring Frisland - Resting place of the legendary artifact 'the Heart of Ice'; and Alashur - Home of the Mako people.
- ◇ **Afflictions Revisited:** - An expansion of the Afflictions chart, including a whole new section on mental afflictions.
- ◇ **For Love of Rum:** An adventure involving a master rum brewer press-ganged by a tee-totaler.
- ◇ **All Hands:** More NPCs for your campaigns
- ◇ **Ho-ho-ho and a Bottle of Rum:** a holiday-themed adventure, just in for Christmas!

...and much more, coming your way in late December.