



Buccaneers & Boker

*Issue Six,
Summer 2006*



 **ADAMANT**
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Captain's Log

Welcome to the sixth issue of **Buccaneers & Bokor**-- just in time for the release of the sequel in the most popular series of Pirate films ever made! When your players, fresh with enthusiasm from watching Captain Jack struggle against Davey Jones, tell you that they want to roleplay pirates, you'll be ready!

In this issue, we not only have the long-promised guide to the settlements along the Spanish Main, and the next installment of the "Governor's Prize" adventure series -- but we also have not one, but two cursed ships, and a guide to using the Knights Templar in your piratical campaigns!

Gareth-Michael Skarka
Adamant Entertainment



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Curse of the San Esteban

By Walt Ciechanowski

Introduction

Sailors and shantymen tell tales of an old ship that eternally sails the Caribbean Sea. Its captain and crew search for a way out of the sea, but a curse prevents them from ever sighting land. The ship is doomed to sail within the boundaries of the Caribbean forever. The ship has been sailing for almost two hundred years, yet ship and crew have not aged a day.

Early explorers claim to have met the *San Esteban* on the open sea. Its captain and crew were very friendly, asking for directions to Cathay or even to home. Some sailors' tales speak of boarding the ship and sharing food and company for a while. Still, all of these early stories ended the same way. The *San Esteban* would follow the ship to the nearest port, only to turn away just before land was sighted.

Some pirate tales are even more unusual. Pirates have claimed to have seen a shipmate board the *San Esteban* and kill a crewman, only to see the dying man age several decades as the curse was bestowed on the attacking pirate. Sometimes this pirate would then turn on a friend, just to be rid of the curse.

Lately, tales of the *San Esteban* have turned sinister. Shantymen tell stories of sailors who have been kidnapped by the crew of the *San Esteban* and forced to join them in eternity, often by forcing them to kill a crewman (impaling oneself after wrapping the chosen victim's hand around the blade seems to work). Sometimes, the *San Esteban* will pursue a ship with the intention of replacing its entire crew. The cursed ship is relentless, and the only way ships have escaped was to get close enough to sight land.

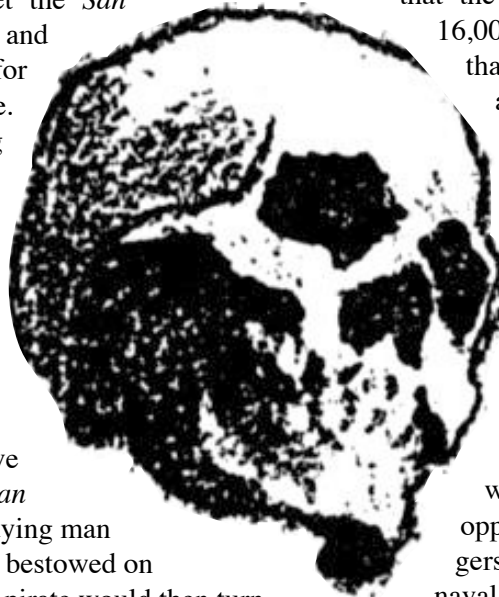
History

The tale of the *San Esteban* begins in the court of King John II of Portugal in 1485. Christopher Columbus made a pitch for support of an expedition to sail west around the globe to Cathay. Columbus believed that he could establish a trade route more profitable than the current methods of using land routes through the Middle East or sailing around Africa.

The King's experts were skeptical. While Columbus claimed that the circumference of the world was almost 16,000 miles, the experts correctly believed that the distance was much longer than that and therefore no ship could complete the trip without running out of supplies and leaving the crew to die of starvation. In addition, Columbus made a number of demands that dissuaded the King to support him. He denied Columbus' request.

Still, as Columbus went elsewhere to make his pitch, King John had a change of heart. It was conceivable that Columbus was correct, and the King feared that an opportunity might be slipping through his fingers. He ordered an ambitious but expendable naval captain to pilot a ship westward to test the accuracy of Columbus' claims. Captain Esteban Cabrera was promised untold riches and rewards if he could establish a route between Portugal and Cathay across the Atlantic. Captain Cabrera outfitted a ship he christened the *San Esteban* after his saintly namesake. The *San Esteban* left Lisbon in 1487.

History recorded Columbus' first voyage, but he actually retraced Captain Cabrera's steps. Due to the secrecy of Cabrera's mission, no one knew where the *San Esteban* was headed. When the *San Esteban* docked at the Canary



Islands for its final restocking, Captain Cabrera claimed that he was looking for pirates.

The *San Esteban* sailed west for two months. Because he was using Columbus' calculations, Cabrera thought he was nearing Japan. Once the crew spotted birds, Cabrera excitedly followed them. Within a day, the lookout spotted land. Cabrera and a few of his men went ashore, confident that they would meet with a Cathayan dignitary. What he found was a primitive Caribbean tribe.

Unlike Columbus, Cabrera was not fooled about his position for long. Once the *San Esteban* had visited a handful of islands, it became clear to the Captain that he was not where he was supposed to be, and that perhaps the King's experts were correct. Still, he continued investigating every island that his lookouts spotted. His frustration grew with each disappointment.

As part of his frustration, Captain Cabrera stopped trying to negotiate with native tribes and began enslaving them, partially to ease the burdens on his crew and partially in the hope of learning where Cathay was in relation to their position. Cabrera killed any natives that he found troublesome.

Unfortunately for Cabrera and his crew, Cabrera's policies got the better of him. He fancied one of the native women and took her to his quarters. When the woman's father protested, Cabrera ordered him killed. When Cabrera finally emerged to question the rest of his prisoners, the woman's uncle, a priest, was brought before him. As Cabrera prepared to interrogate the priest, one of the lookouts in the Crow's nest shouted that he had sighted another island. As Captain Cabrera spat something in frustration, the priest uttered a curse that affected the entire crew. The curse wrapped itself around Cabrera's own words:

"If I never see land again, it will be too soon."

Captain Esteban Cabrera got his wish.

Under the Curse

The exact words of the Caribbean priest's curse are lost to history, but the effect was powerful. The *San Esteban* was doomed to forever sail the Caribbean, never coming close enough to land to spot it. Captain Cabrera and his crew effectively became immortal, but were tied to the ship's fate. The crew also lost all sense of time.

The first ship that the *San Esteban* encountered was the

Gato, a Spanish vessel. Although it was 1547, Captain Cabrera told the Spanish captain that they had been lost for several months, surviving on fish and the remainder of their provisions. The captain of the *Gato* informed them that there was no way to Cathay west of the Caribbean; Captain Cabrera would need to sail south around Cape Horn. Before leaving, some of the crew of the *San Esteban* asked the crew of the *Gato* to take messages back to their families. Once the *Gato* stopped in Lisbon several months later, they were surprised to discover that most of the families had been dead for years. Worse, there was no official record of the *San Esteban* due to its covert mission.

Similar stories would crop up over the next century. A common theme was Captain Cabrera's refusal to acknowledge any ships that had visited before, or that more than a few months had passed since being cursed by the priest. As time went on, some of the crew started to realize their predicament, perhaps because the curse was not as binding on them.

At first, the crew mutinied, locking away Captain Cabrera and heading for the nearest shore. The mutiny lasted until the ship was just about to come within sight of land. Once that happened, the ship mysteriously turned around and Captain Cabrera appeared on deck. He remembered nothing of the mutiny and gave orders as if he had been in control all along. The crew tried it again. And again. And again. Each time, something similar happened.

Some of the crew attempted to steal a rowboat and make their way to shore. Captain Cabrera ordered them found. The fleeing crewmembers found that they could never spot land and remained at sea until hunger forced them to surrender. Captain Cabrera captured them and threw them in the brig. The next day, the crewmen awoke in their own beds and the Captain remembered nothing.

Hope turned to despair. Some crewmen attempted to drown, hang, or even shoot themselves. Each time, the effect lasted only until dawn. At that point, the deceased crewman would wake up in his own bed. If a crewman got another to shoot him or run him through, the offender would be thrown in the brig and both would wake up in their own beds the next day.

In 1600, the *San Esteban* encountered an English vessel, the *Wings of Victory*. A crewman stowed away. Days later, the English captain was at a loss as to why he could not reach Kingston or any other port. The stowaway was discovered and promptly thrown overboard. The ship still could not find a port, and the stowaway returned the next day. He was hung, but the ship still could no longer return to shore. Within a day, the *San Esteban* reappeared to collect its

wayward sailor. When the English captain explained what happened, Captain Cabrera pointed to the sailor who had acted as executioner and claimed him as his crewman. The frightened English crew handed over the executioner and only then was the English vessel able to resume its course and sail into Port Royal.

By 1610, the rules changed. A Spanish vessel, *La Senorita Bonita*, met the *San Esteban* at sea. Without warning, the *San Esteban* fired on the Spanish ship. The *Esteban's* crew boarded the *Senorita* and began throwing themselves onto Spanish-held weapons. As the *Senorita's* captain realized what was happening, he ordered his remaining crew to throw everyone affected by the curse overboard as he steered clear. The *Senorita* lost over half its crew.

Today, all ships steer clear when they sight the *San Esteban*. There are rumors that the crewmen of the old vessel will do whatever they can to get others to take their place, even if they are told that doing so will be a death sentence. Final death is preferable to the living death that they are forced to endure. Sailors have been told that, once the *San Esteban* has you in her sights, head for the nearest shore. Only then can you be sure that you will not fall under the Curse of the *San Esteban*.

Game Effects

While no one is certain what the exact wording of the curse entailed, the following effects of the curse are as follows:

- Captain Cabrera, his ship and crew, are all effectively immortal. They can be fought and killed (or sunk) normally, but they all regenerate.
- Captain Cabrera seems to have no long-term memory. Although he remembers his entire life up to his curse, everything since then seems to be a months-long blur. Captain Cabrera will forget the events of the previous day unless there is an unresolved course of action (besides looking for a way out of the Caribbean) that he needs to finish, such as hunting down a lost crewman or pursuing another ship. Getting close to sighting land will wipe away Cabrera's memory, no matter what is left unresolved.
- The crew does remember everything, although years seem like days to them. They are still subject to the curse and are unable to get close enough to sight any land.
- While Captain Cabrera will not entertain the notion (and the curse can never be lifted from him), the crew will do whatever they can to ensure that someone else will replace

them. The most common method is to get someone to kill them. At this point, the *San Esteban* crewman is freed and the killer becomes part of the eternal curse. Interestingly, only white Europeans (or their descendants) will make suitable replacements. Captain Cabrera will accept no one else as part of his crew. As a result, *San Esteban* crewmen killed by such men or women will simply regenerate.

- Once a crewman is replaced, Captain Cabrera will not pursue the original crewman. Many younger crewmen take advantage of this loophole, stowing away on passing ships after having been "killed."
- Once a former crewman of the *San Esteban* becomes "mortal" again, time catches up with him immediately. His body will accelerate to its natural age. If this takes the sailor past his natural lifespan, he dies.

Rumors

All legends spawn rumors. Some rumors of the *San Esteban* are listed below. These rumors could be true, partially true, or completely false. Shantymen, sailors, and innkeepers may know one or more of these rumors. The GM should feel free to embellish these rumors with varying ship names or circumstances.

1. The *San Esteban* is actually the *Santa Maria*, which did not actually sink as Columbus claimed. The crew was cursed for mutiny. *False. The Santa Maria did sink.*
2. A slave ship crew escaped their fate by offering slaves to replace the *San Esteban's* crew. *False. Captain Cabrera will not accept slaves as part of his crew.*
3. If you can outrun the *San Esteban* long enough to sight land, you are safe. *True*
4. The *San Esteban* has been sailing the Caribbean Sea for about two hundred years. *True*
5. The *San Esteban* only attacks pirate (or other category of) vessels. *Partially true. It attacks all vessels.*
6. You can voluntarily enlist with Captain Cabrera for a period of time, after which you are free to go, never having aged a day. *Mostly false. This is a favorite legend among escaped convicts. While you can voluntarily serve with Captain Cabrera, that commitment will quickly become permanent. The part about aging is also false.*

7. The *San Esteban* only appears at night (or other condition). *False. The ship can appear at any time.*

8. If you escape the *San Esteban* after your natural lifespan, you will age and die. *True*

9. If you are replaced, you can escape the curse by forcing the original crewman to kill you. *True.*

10. Once the *San Esteban* is encountered, your ship will not be left alone until it has given up some of its crew for replacement. *False. Once land is sighted, the San Esteban will leave it alone. Any future encounters are coincidence.*

Modifications

The GM should feel free to modify this legend in order to suit his campaign. Some possibilities are listed below.

The range of the *San Esteban* need not be limited to the Caribbean Sea. The Gulf of Mexico and the Great Bahama Bank are also appropriate bodies of water. The GM could also limit the *San Esteban* to these bodies of water (or any other roughly enclosed body of water), if desired.

The crew of the *San Esteban* is still essentially human. A GM looking for a more horrific event can have the ship manned by zombies, with age determining how much flesh is on their bones. In this case, the zombie ship may simply capture other crews to regenerate their own flesh.

The crew of the *San Esteban* may be as clueless as Captain Cabrera and unaware of their fate or the need to escape it. This works best if the PCs are unaware of the legend. The encounter would be a cordial one, although the PCs may wonder why the crew of the *San Esteban* doesn't realize that Central America is in its way. Of course, the game is up as soon as a PC kills one of the crew and receives the curse.

Captain Cabrera was created as a 10th level character. He and his crew can be moved up or down levels as desired.

Plot Possibilities

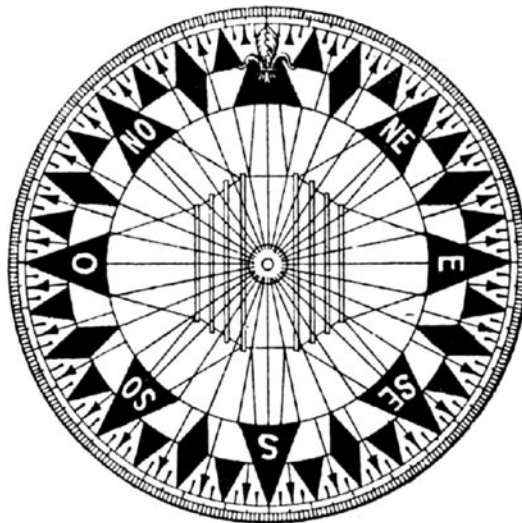
1. A pirate ship encounters the *San Esteban*. One of the *San Esteban*'s crewmen stows away on the pirate ship and forces a crewman to kill him. He then grows old and dies. The pirate ship cannot make it to land without disposing of the now-changed crewman. Unfortunately, whoever dispatches him will acquire the curse. The only way to permanently dispose of him is to take him to the *San Esteban* or replace him with another victim.

2. A pirate ship meets the *San Esteban*. Luckily, the crew recognizes the ship and steers clear. Unfortunately, the *San Esteban*'s crew sees an opportunity and mutinies, locking Captain Cabrera below and chasing after the pirate ship. Unless the pirate ship can outrun the *San Esteban* long enough to sight land, its crew may end up joining Captain Cabrera in eternity.

3. A woman of means has lost her fiancé and will pay handsomely for his safe return. Unfortunately, her fiancé has fallen to the curse and has become part of the *San Esteban*'s crew. Can they find some way to save him?

4. In an unlikely event, two ships cross paths with the *San Esteban* at approximately the same time. One of the *San Esteban*'s crew gets a sailor from one ship to kill him and then stows away on the other vessel. The one boat must track the other before the offending sailor can get lost in the port city (or perhaps the PC's vessel finds itself being fired upon for unknowingly carrying the culprit).

5. The PC's ship picks up a refugee who immediately forces a PC to kill him. The PC is now cursed. How will he remove it before Captain Cabrera comes to claim him? (This works best with an honorable PC).



Captain Esteban Cabrera

Captain Cabrera is a prideful man who runs a tight ship. He is a handsome man with a deep tan from many years at sea. He wears captain's clothes that are two centuries out of fashion and carries a rapier. He has also taught himself how to use a blunderbuss pistol.

Fgt4/SO6, CR 10; Medium-size, 65 hp; Init +7; Spd 30 ft; AC 18 (breast & back + Dex); Atk +10/+4 melee (1d6+2/18-20/x2 rapier), +11/+5 ranged (1d12/x3 blunderbuss pistol); AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +9; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Balance 8, Climb 4, Diplomacy 13, Intimidate 13, Jump 4, Knowledge (Sea Lore) 7, Profession (sailor) 7, Sense Motive 11, Speak English, Speak French, Speak Spanish, Spot 6, Swim 4, Use Rope 8; All Armor Proficiencies, All Shield Proficiencies, Combat Reflexes, Command (Morale Bonus, Readiness), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Leadership, Martial Weapon Proficiency, Negotiator, Quick Draw, Seagoing, Simple Weapon Proficiency, Skill Expert (Intimidate) Two-Weapon Fighting.

Regeneration: One hit point per round.

San Esteban Crew

The crew of the *San Esteban* can be of any European nationality from any period of time since the bestowal of the curse. There is no "crew roster," since most sea captains know how dangerous it is to fire on the *San Esteban*. Each crewman should be treated as an individual. For guidance, two standard crewmen are given here. The first is a "seasoned" crewman who will die if the curse is lifted, and the other is a relatively new crewman. Note that "seasoned" does not necessarily mean "high level," as the crewmen don't feel the effects of time as much as normal.

Seasoned Crewman: Fgt6, CR 6; Medium-size, 47 hp; Init +6; Spd 30 ft; AC 17 (breast & back + Dex); Atk +7/+2 melee (1d6+1/18-20/x2 rapier), +8/+3 ranged (2d4/x3 pistol); AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Balance 5, Knowledge (Sea Lore) 6, Listen 5, Profession (sailor) 4, Spot 5, Swim 6, Use Rope 3; All Armor Proficiencies, All Shield Proficiencies, Agile,

Alertness, Athletic, Improved Initiative, Martial Weapon Proficiency, Quick Draw, Rapid Reload, Simple Weapon Proficiency, Skill Focus (Sea Lore) Two-Weapon Fighting.

Regeneration: One hit point per round.

New Crewman: Sdg1, CR 1; Medium-size, 12 hp; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AC 12 (Dex); Atk +2 melee (1d6+2/18-20/x2 cutlass), +3 ranged (2d4/x3 pistol); AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Balance 4, Knowledge (Sea Lore) 2, Listen 3, Profession (sailor) 5, Spot 3, Survival 3, Swim 5, Use Rope 2; Armor Proficiencies (light and medium), Athletic, Close Quarters, Lightning Reflexes, Martial Weapon Proficiency, Simple Weapon Proficiency.

Fortune: Superstitious

Regeneration: One hit point per round.

The *San Esteban* (5th level Legendary Vessel)

While more properly a "nau," the stat block for the West Indiaman is used here for the *San Esteban*. This ship uses the Legendary Vessel rules from *Buccaneers & Bokor*, Issue One.

Draft: 4 fathoms

Structure Points: 60

Hardness: 5

Maneuverability: 0 (-2 Merchantman, -2 size, +4 legendary)

Speed: 150ft./15 knots

Turn Rate: 2

AC: 9 (-2 Merchantman, -2 size, +3 legendary)

Weapons Fore: Demi-culverin x 4

Weapons Aft: Demi-culverin x 6

Weapons Broadside: Culverin x 24

Damage: Demi-culverin 1d4, culverin 2d4

Special Qualities: +4 BAB, Beat to Quarters, Runs like the Devil, Streamlined

Crew: 100

Cargo: 160 tons (pillaged from other vessels, contains only practical items (provisions, extra shot, etc.)



Never Make a Deal with a Pirate

Armed with the key to a pirate's treasure, the characters must travel to the mysterious Yucatan to find this treasure chest before its owner, the notorious Albert de Montblanc, finds them.

This *Skull & Bones* adventure is intended for characters of 2nd or 3rd level. The characters must have possession of their own ship. Stats for the **Fortune**, an appropriate ship, are provided if needed, along with its crew (see **Appendix B**, below).

Though "Never Make a Deal with a Pirate" is intended as part of the "Governor's Prize" series, it is not necessary to play each of the parts of the series, though they should be played in order if possible.

Background

Prior to the start of this adventure, there are a few story elements of which the Game Master should be aware. In order to understand what is going on, the Game Master should be aware of what has transpired already, and what is to come.

If "Never Make a Deal with a Pirate" is being played as part of the "Governor's Prize" series, the characters are in possession of a key that opens a trea-

sure chest known to be in the hands of a pirate named "**Bullhead**" Willows, who is thought to be holed up in **Hell's Cove**, a pirate hide-out on the Mexican coast. Bullhead made a deal with the notorious pirate, **Albert de Montblanc** to watch a captive in exchange for a chest filled with gold doubloons. The catch: Albert de Montblanc was to hold the key until the captive was returned to him. Unbeknownst to Bullhead was that the captive was none other than the Governor of Port Royal, **William Haverford**.

Earlier in the series, the characters found a journal that exposes the current Governor of Port Royal as **James Galloway**, a master of disguise who has been acting as the Governor of Port Royal for a short time. The journal makes mention of a deal between Montblanc and Galloway to take the

actual Governor away from Port Royal and hold him hostage. Montblanc then turned Haverford over to Bullhead Willows in Hell's Cove, and headed back to



Jamaica. On the way back to Jamaica, Montblanc's ship, the **Scarborough**, encountered a nasty storm and the pirate was forced to abandon ship. In the violence of escaping the ship, Montblanc lost the key to this chest. The player characters now have this key in their possession after finding the wrecked Scarborough during the events of GP-1.

If "Never Make a Deal with a Pirate" is being played as a standalone adventure, the PCs have received a mysterious key as well as a map to **Hell's Cove**, a secret pirate hideout on the Yucatan. The key opens a chest that contains a vast store of gold doubloons. Rumor has it that this chest is in the possession of "**Bullhead**" **Willows**, a pirate known to frequent Hell's Cove. The PCs are in **Leogane**, on Hispaniola, and have learned that another pirate, **Albert de Montblanc**, is after them for the treasure.

Setting and Scope

"Never Make a Deal with a Pirate" is set in the Caribbean, during the time period from 1670 – 1690. It does not contain historical figures or references, so the Game Master has some room with which to work in an ongoing game.

Characters start in Leogane, Hispaniola and are about to leave for the Mexican coast in search of Hell's Cove. In doing so, they will cross about a third of the Caribbean, so there is quite a bit of sea travel. The adventure begins in late *April* or early *May*.

The previous adventure, "A Widow, a Necklace, and a Skeleton Key" provided a map to Hispaniola and details regarding this French holding. While it has no real bearing on this adventure, knowing where the characters start play may be of interest to you. In addition, a map of the fictitious Hell's Cove is provided here for your use. Feel free to reuse this setting for other pirate adventures.

Adjusting the Adventure

"Never Make a Deal with a Pirate" is intended for 4 Player Characters of at least 2nd level, with no access to magic. If you want, you can modify the adventure to suit higher-level characters, or to add magical elements to the adventure.

Scaling for higher-level characters is not difficult. The

easiest way to accomplish this is simply by increasing the number of opponents in any of the combat encounters. You can also raise the difficulty by adding other elements, such as weather effects, additional ships, NPC mutinies, etc.

The Hook

At the beginning of "Never Make a Deal with a Pirate", the Player Characters are in Leogane, Hispaniola. If the characters have played through "A Widow, a Necklace, and a Skeleton Key", they can use the same ship from that adventure. Otherwise, if this is their first adventure together, assume they all know each other. The PCs start the adventure traveling in their own ship, and thus must be able to work together to a certain degree. It is important that one of the Player Characters be designated as **Captain**, and owns the ship. Other than that, the other PCs can serve as officers, or have whatever role you choose.

Assume that the PCs have a ship of some kind (a sample ship, the *Fortune*, is provided in **Appendix B**, along with crew), and have enough supplies for a month. The PCs have just signed a green crew who have not worked together before. If the characters have completed "A Widow, a Necklace, and a Skeleton Key", they should have the same crew. You can allow the PCs to acquire additional crew, but there is a short period of time to do this, as the PCs are aware that Albert de Montblanc is hot on their trail.

If this is the PCs' first adventure, and you're not sure how to bring a ship into the PCs' possession, try one of the following:

- One of the PCs had a relative (father, uncle, grandfather, older brother) or close friend to the family who was a pirate, and has just retired (or died) and left the ship to the character in question. If you use this option, make sure the PC's family is in the Caribbean, and that this fits with the character's Background.
- The characters all served together aboard a ship that had a mutiny. A great battle took place on board, and there were few survivors, and among these were the PCs. One of the PCs was named Captain, and they sailed back to Port Royal to hire on more crew (most were killed in the mutiny).

- As a result of a miscommunication, one of the characters was challenged to a duel. The challenger, a pirate, believes this character to have insulted him gravely. This insult can be anything you choose, from insulting his family, or a lady in his presence, or even his ship! In any event, the character defeats the pirate who is forced to give over his ship to the character, but the pirate retains his own crew. This pirate could serve as an Enemy for this character if applicable.
- One of the characters, a clever (and apparently lucky) gambler, has won a small ship in a game of chance. The Captain giving up the ship is not at all pleased, and may serve as an Enemy for that character if applicable.

If the Player Characters have completed “A Widow, a Necklace, and a Skeleton Key”, the second adventure in the “Governor’s Prize” series, the characters should be well motivated to travel to Hell’s Cove and pry the chest of gold from Bullhead Willows. They know that Albert de Montblanc is after them, and should make haste to the Yucatan.

Should “Never Make a Deal with a Pirate” be run as a standalone adventure, the GM must slightly alter the adventure, removing story-based elements that are intended to run as part of the series. Notably, Albert de Montblanc has been setup as a recurring villain, and is involved in a scheme to support James Galloway’s posing as the Governor of Port Royal. You can easily remove that part of the story without obviating Montblanc’s desire to stop the PCs. They are, after all, in possession of a key to his treasure chest, and the pirate has a good idea where the PCs will go to find it.

Though “Never Make a Deal with a Pirate” is intended to be run as the third part of the “Governor’s Prize” series, it can also be run as a standalone adventure. No other changes, other than those mentioned above, need be made to modify the adventure. See the **Conclusion** below for ways in which to propel “Never Make a Deal with a Pirate” into another adventure, or into “Secret of the Island”, the final installment of the “Governor’s Prize” series.

Sway and the Crew

As “Never Make a Deal with a Pirate” begins, the Player Characters have had the same crew for a

short period of time. They may also have hired new crew members to take the place of dead or dismissed ones. Make sure to take this short service time into consideration when it comes time to make any Sway checks. This adventure will involve a great deal of sea travel, so make sure to keep track of Sway, especially if you are considering running the rest of the series with the same characters.

See p. 71-74 in *Skull & Bones* for more information on tracking Sway and making Sway checks.

Encounters

There are six encounters in “Never Make a Deal with a Pirate”. See below for the details of each of these encounters.

The Player Characters begin “Never Make a Deal with a Pirate” in Leogane, Hispaniola. If this adventure is being run as the third installment of the “Governor’s Prize” series, the PCs are about to leave Leogane for the Yucatan and the mysterious Hell’s Cove.

Ambush at the Docks [EL 2]:

Prior to leaving Leogane in search of Hell’s Cove, Soliere Archambeau (see GP-2: A Widow, a Necklace, and a Skeleton Key) approaches the Player Characters. He wishes to give them some advice before leaving port. This scene should take place just as the characters are about to leave – no one should be away from the ship at this point shopping or taking care of other matters.

Solier Archambeau, de facto ruler of Leogane’s criminal underbelly, approaches your ship as you ready to leave port. He is alone, but not unarmed. Archambeau has a smile on his face as he regards your vessel.

“It has been too long since I sailed the high seas,” Archambeau says. “I was once a pirate, you know. This business I find myself in now... the life of a pirate is so much simpler. Count yourselves lucky.”

The French buccaneer nears the gangplank. "Permission to come aboard, Captain? I have an urgent matter to discuss with you and your officers."

He stands. "That is all, my friends," Soliere says. "Good luck to you in your travels. If ever you find yourselves again in Leogane and in search of employment, you have only to ask." The Frenchman shakes your hands and leaves the ship.

Assuming the PCs allow him aboard, continue:

Regrouping in the galley, which is cleared of any rabble (at Soliere's suggestion), the conversation continues.

"Gentlemen, I understand that you sail for Hell's Cove. While it has been long since I have been there myself, perhaps I can offer you some helpful advice about that place. Hell's Cove is a pirate's hideout, and has been in existence for more than 30 years. They are careful about who is let inside, and who is allowed to leave knowing its location and existence."

Solier looks around the galley, examining each of you. "First off, getting into Hell's Cove is deceptively easy. But there is a catch. Once you find the place, there are underwater reefs that would tear this ship's hull apart. I happen to know the way in."

"When you first reach Hell's Cove, you will see several dead ships in the shallows. One of these is a Dutch ship called the *Fluyt Vries*. You will know it because the *Fluyt Vries* is the largest wreck in the area and still flies a tattered Dutch flag. In order to avoid the reefs, tack at a 45 degree angle towards this shipwreck until you can clearly see through the tunnel into Hell's Cove. At this point, steer directly into the tunnel. Approaching from any other tack may damage or destroy your ship entirely."

The French buccaneer takes a swig of his wine. "My second piece of advice is that the people of Hell's Cove are very secretive, and things must be done in certain ways to earn their trust. It is very important that you understand not to try to enter Hell's Cove during the day. Everyone who comes to Hell's Cove enters at night. This makes it more difficult for pirate hunters and Spanish warships to find the place. In addition, there are cannon mounted on the hills outside the place, as well as inside the tunnel. They will fire upon anyone suspicious, or any ship flying a Spanish flag."



If you are running "Never Make a Deal with a Pirate" as a standalone adventure, Soliere Archambeau is a prior employer, who wishes the characters well in their travels. Otherwise, refer to "A Widow, a Necklace, and a Skeleton Key" for his statistics, if needed. He truly wishes the characters well, though he had hoped they could be convinced to stay in Leogane and join his organization.

As the characters prepare to leave port, and the

Player Characters are assembled in the Captain's quarters examining the map to Hell's Cove, there is a disturbance on deck. When the PCs investigate, they find three dozen of **Montblanc's Men** (see **Appendix A**), who are determined to stop the characters' ship from leaving Leogane. These men sailed up to the PCs' vessel in small rowboats on the seaward side, and used rope and grapnels to board. The PCs' crew has been fighting these intruders for a round or two as the PCs approach.

The source of the disturbance on deck is readily apparent. Your crew is doing battle with a slightly better armed group of strangers. These men shout things such as, "Your ship will not leave Leogane!", or "Montblanc will have your heads!". It becomes quite obvious to you all that Albert de Montblanc has found you. Sending his minions ahead to dispatch you is just the first step. You realize that you must quickly leave port, and drive these men off your deck.

This is a combat scene. Refer to **Skull & Bones** pp. 100-101 for more information on how NPC crews work. Essentially, treat each of the groups (the PCs' crew and Montblanc's men) as one character. They act as one character would, in an abstraction of mass combat. If the PCs wish to join the combat, they each act independently.

It would be wise for the Player Characters to end this combat quickly. Not only must they leave port before Montblanc's ship finds them, but deaths of the PCs' crew must be minimized, as they likely don't have much of a crew to begin with.

Once Montblanc's men are dispatched, the PCs can freely leave Leogane without any further trouble. They should not dawdle, however. If the PCs are waiting too long to leave port, have them spot a large ship rounding the port area on the aft side. It is too far away to determine the ship's origin or purpose, but it could very well be Montblanc's vessel.

Perils of the Sea [EL 0 or Varies]:

Once the PCs are out of Leogane, they will head west toward the Mexican coast, and eventually, the Yucatan Peninsula. It is a fairly long trip from Leogane across the Western Caribbean to the Yucatan. This distance runs about 1,000 miles, depending on the route taken. Feel free to reference the excellent map of the Caribbean found in the **Skull & Bones** book p.163, or the Guide to the Spanish Main found in this issue. If you are using this map, Hell's Cove is located between Ambergris Cay and Turneffe on the Mexican coast.

Allow the PCs to plot their own route to Hell's Cove, but remind them of two things. First, the acting Governor of Port Royal wants their heads, so returning there is dangerous. Second, Albert de Montblanc is still after them, so haste is essential. If Montblanc gets to Hell's Cove before the PCs, the French pirate may re-acquire his treasure chest, effectively nullifying the PCs' chance to get it.

This encounter covers the trip between Leogane and just before arriving at Hell's Cove. If you are pressed on time, feel free to handwave any navigation or weather conditions. Otherwise, refer to pp. 108-112 of the **Skull & Bones** book for rules on navigation and weather. There are no specific weather requirements for this encounter, but you can spice up the adventure with the sudden occurrence of a storm or coastal fog, or have the PCs avoid rocky shoals, etc.

You will want to keep track of the PCs' daily progress toward Hell's Cove. Each day, figure how close the PCs are to Hell's Cove. There are some specific events that occur in the next encounter, **Finding Hell's Cove**, that depend on the PCs' proximity to the pirate haven.

If the PCs are taking too long to sail to Hell's Cove, have a member of the crew (someone highly placed, such as the Quartermaster, if that role is not filled by a PC) approach the Captain, inquiring about when the crew can expect to score some prizes (ie., pirate booty). The NPC voices concerns that the crew is getting restless and a good fight or ship capture would do them well.

Finding Hell's Cove [EL 3 or 5]:

This section of the Mexican coast is largely unpatrolled, and is known to be a pirate haven. Aside from Hell's Cove (the PCs' destination), there are many other secluded pirate hideouts, from small coves to larger settlements, such as Hell's Cove.

When the PCs are within sight of the Mexican coast, run the following encounter. The PCs' ship spots a merchantman bearing towards them. It is dusk or nightfall (remember that Soliere Archambeau recommended the PCs arrive at Hell's Cove at night), so keep that in mind for sighting purposes.

The ship they have sighted is the *Hanby Rose* (see **Appendix A**). This English merchant ship is en route from La Bahia to Cozumel, picking up native art objects for sale in England. Having just fought off a pirate attack, the *Hanby Rose* is not particularly in the mood for another fight, but they will not just surrender to the PCs.

Read the following passage as the PCs sight the *Hanby Rose*:

Your spotters have done well. Even in the waning light of another day at sea, your men have seen a ship on the horizon. This ship is close enough to determine that it is listing towards your position, and may not be fully crewed. The more astute among you note that the main sail seems to be damaged, and a few other sails you might expect to see are missing. It is plain that this ship, whatever she might be, has recently seen some action.

As the ship edges closer, calls for communication in an English accent are heard. You notice the English flag flying high atop this as yet unidentified merchantman.

The Captain of the *Hanby Rose* wishes to parlay, simply because he doesn't want another fight. His ship is damaged, and he has lost many men. But he will not surrender to the PCs under any circumstances. If the PCs are flying a Spanish flag or a Jolly Roger, Capt. Nerrington will simply attack once he gets close enough – in that case, he has no need to parlay.

If the PCs don't wish to fight, and they are flying an English, French, or Dutch flag, Capt. Nerrington will invite the officers aboard the *Hanby Rose* for a chat. Under no circumstances will Capt. Nerrington or his crew board the PCs' ship (except for during a boarding encounter). Should the PCs offer Capt. Nerrington a deal to leave the *Hanby Rose* alone for anything 1,500dbl or less, he will take it and wish the pirates well. Any other suggestions will likely lead to a fight.

The next part of this encounter is entirely optional, but could make for a very interesting situation. If you wish to throw in some additional intrigue, another ship, the pirate hunter *Dolor de Santo Domingo*, arrives just as the battle between the PCs and the *Hanby Rose* erupts. The *Santo Domingo*, a Spanish ship, may wait and attack the victor between the PCs and the *Hanby Rose*, or it may join in on one side or the other (or even attack both ships indiscriminately). The *Dolor de Santo Domingo* is a Spanish pirate hunter, so she will attack English and French ships of any kind, as well as any pirates.

If you wish to add this to the encounter, read the following as the PCs and the *Hanby Rose* prepare to do battle:

Your gunners and spotters shout warnings as your vessel nears its target. A third ship, coming from your starboard, approaches the scene. This new ship is a schooner by all appearances, and is ready for a fight. As it nears, you spot the Spanish flag flying atop this new participant.

This encounter can get very complicated. Make sure that you understand the rules governing ship combat. Boarding actions are very likely during this battle, so make sure you understand those as well. Crew and ships for the NPCs are given in **Appendix A**.

Once the PCs are done with this scene, they can proceed to attempt to enter Hell's Cove. According to Soliere's directions, the PCs must find a ship called the *Fluyt Vries*, a wreck still flying the Dutch flag. The PCs come upon a veritable ship graveyard. It is a relatively simple Spot check (DC 15) to determine which ship is the *Fluyt Vries*. Allow the PCs and/or NPC crewmen to aid another for this check. There should be one roll for every 10 minutes of searching.

At this point, the PCs must tack at a 45-degree angle towards the Dutch wreck until they can clearly see into the tunnel leading to Hell's Cove. You can use another Spot check or substitute a Profession (sailor) check, with DC 20. Do not apply darkness penalties to this check (it is built into the difficulty). This check is made by whomever is steering the vessel and no one else. He (or she) must turn at the exact right moment or risk damage to the ship. Failing the check means the PCs' ship has crashed into the *Fluyt Vries* or a rocky outcropping (your choice) to the tune of 2d4 structural damage.

If the PCs successfully navigate into Hells Cove, move onto the next scene. Otherwise, they can try again until the ship breaks apart or they are successful (or they give up).

What Bullhead Left Behind [EL 0 or 2]:

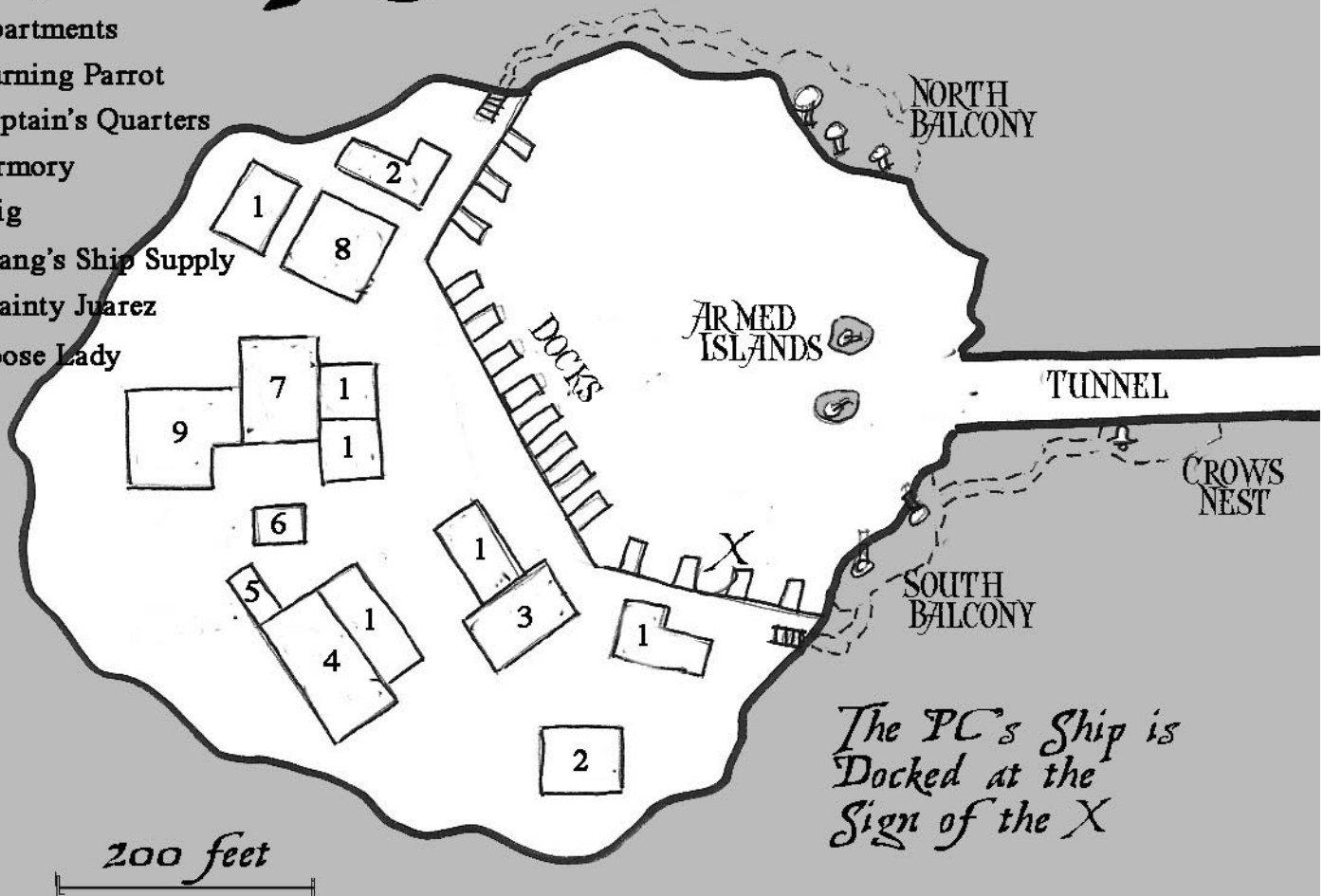
In this encounter, the PCs explore Hell's Cove, looking for Bullhead Willows and his treasure chest. Refer to the **Map of Hell's Cove** for specific locations.

Read the following as the PCs enter the tunnel leading into the hidden pirate haven:

An ominous tunnel greets you as you slowly and silently navigate the treacherous waters of the Mexican coast. Lights within the tunnel are dim, but you can see well enough to steer and not collide with the sides of this natural tunnel.

Map of Hell's Cove

- 1: Storage
- 2: Apartments
- 3: Burning Parrot
- 4: Captain's Quarters
- 5: Armory
- 6: Brig
- 7: Shang's Ship Supply
- 8: Dainty Juarez
- 9: Loose Lady



Passing west further into the tunnel, you can now see brighter lights within, which is obviously Hell's Cove proper. Ahead of you loom two large rock islands. While it would be easy enough to steer between the islands, you take note of cannon emplacements atop each island.

Just as you notice the islands and their armament, a bell rings from above somewhere. You hear activity within Hell's Cove, and as you enter into a huge cavern, you see other cannon emplacements on outcroppings above you on the north and south sides of the cavern. In total, you would guess about seven Culverin are staring you down right now. None of them fire.

A man in garish garb stands on the pier, facing your ship. Using a cone-like device, the man shouts instructions to you on which berth to use. There are 16 berths here, and half of them are occupied at the moment. You head towards the southernmost berths, and dock your vessel.

The PCs' ship docks where indicated on the map. Attempting to dock elsewhere is not a good idea (the cannons can swivel if needed to fire at the dock area).

Read the following as the PCs and crewmen prepare to leave their ship:

Men in nicer clothing than you would have expected rush toward your ship and begin to tie down. They shout various instructions to your crew to assist them in getting your vessel docked.

As you watch, you can now see the entirety of Hell's Cove. The pirate haven is built into a natural cavern. Just past the tunnel entrance are two 'balconies', one on the north side, and one on the south. Each balcony features several cannons pointed toward the tunnel entrance. Hell's Cove itself is a vaguely half-moon shaped platform, approximately 600 feet across from north to south. You have docked in a set of four berths at the southern end. There are 12 more berths along the edges of the platform area. About half of these berths are currently occupied.

Several buildings catch your eye, including a few taverns, an inn, and two warehouse facilities.

There are perhaps three dozen men and women of various occupations seen milling about on the platform area.

A bearded man of Spanish descent comes forth, dressed in mock gentrified fineries. "Ahoy there," he says. "I am Chief Gustavo, and I welcome you to Hell's Cove. State your business or be gone."

Chief Gustavo is an old salt who was once a member of the Spanish navy. His job at Hell's Cove is to watch for any suspicious types, especially military spies. He reports directly to **Captain Vance**, de facto ruler of Hell's Cove (see below). Gustavo has served in many ports, and was once the dockmaster at Maracaibo. Gustavo has an eye for liars and cheats, and is suspicious of newcomers. He has a Sense Motive bonus of +10 (this will oppose any Bluff checks on the PCs' parts).

Hell's Cove generally has a 'don't ask, don't tell' policy when it comes to disputes between pirates. Gustavo and his men don't get involved, and don't stop anyone from arguing, fighting, or killing each other, so long as the cheating or betrayal did not occur in Hell's Cove. In this case, Chief Gustavo and his men *do* get involved, and have some harsh penalties to impose on those who would sully the good name of Hell's Cove (see the **Brig**, below).

Chief Gustavo doesn't particularly care why the PCs are in Hell's Cove. His main concern, as the PCs are newcomers here, is that the PCs aren't pirate hunters or members of one of the military navies of the Spanish, English, French, or Dutch. If asked about Bullhead Willows, Gustavo replies that he has heard the name, but he's not sure where to find Willows. He suggests checking in at the Burning Parrot (a local watering hole), or perhaps at Shang's Ship Supplies.

Once the PCs are done with Chief Gustavo, allow them to roam Hell's Cove. Refer to the Map of Hell's Cove for more information. Descriptions for some of the pertinent locations are found below:

Apartments: There are 13 apartments in total between the two buildings. The north building has 8 apartments, while the smaller southern building has 5. Each building numbers its apartments alphabetically. Bullhead Willows' apartment is C in the northern building.

Armory: This part of the only stone building in Hell's Cove is well-guarded. It contains mostly ammunition for the cannons, although some small arms can be found here as well.

Brig: This is a single cell used to hold prisoners until such time as they are released from custody or hanged for their crimes. Men are put in the Brig for 31 days. After the 31st day, Capt. Vance decides whether to release or hang the prisoner.

The current prisoner, Hugo Jawkes, once served with Bullhead Willows. He will initially be neutral to the PCs, but Diplomacy checks can convert his status to Helpful or Friendly. If so, Hugo will tell the PCs that Willows lives in Apartment C of the north apartment building. He also knows that Willows' ship is named the *Majestic*.

Burning Parrot: This tavern is alive with action. Pirates are found in abundance here, and all sorts of plans and talk can be heard here. The standard fare of alcohol and food is available at the Burning Parrot.

A Gather Information check (DC 15) reveals that Bullhead Willows is a regular at the Burning Parrot, and also at the Dainty Juarez. Willows is a navigator, but also has his own ship, the *Majestic*. Willows kept going on about some treasure chest in his possession, and on more than one occasion, Willows let slip that the chest was cursed. No one here seems to know where Willows can be found, or where he lives.

The PCs can attempt to gain more Crew at the Burning Parrot. One way to handle this is to have one of the PCs make a Diplomacy check (DC 10), and add a bonus for the character's Fame score. Add any bonuses from Backgrounds or Fortunes as well. The total roll over 10 (so, total –10) is how many extra Crew are added. This takes as long and costs as much as a Gather Information check (add bonuses for buying drinks as well – see the Gather Information skill description in the Core rules). No more than 15 extra Crew may be added in this manner from the Burning Parrot (though the PCs can check other places in Hell's Cove).

Captain's Quarters: Adjacent to the Armory, the Captain's Quarters is where Captain Vance rules of Hell's Cove. Vance runs a fairly organized place, and doesn't tolerate a lot of violence inside the cove. He is initially Indifferent to the PCs, but his demeanor can be improved with Diplomacy checks or offers of gold or information.

Vance knows of Bullhead Willows. In fact, Vance and Willows once served on the same ship. Capt. Vance is aware of the chest and its alleged curse. If Vance's attitude is improved to Helpful, he admits that Willows was holding a captive for Albert de Montblanc.

Crow's Nest: This stone balcony is an area used to spot incoming ships. There is a bell here, which is rung whenever a ship is spotted (this is bell mentioned in the boxed text above). This area is staffed at all times.

Dainty Juarez: The other tavern in Hell's Cove, the Dainty Juarez is a little more upscale than the Burning Parrot. Wine is more in favor here, but all types of alcohol can be purchased. The Dainty Juarez does not serve food.

Willows is better known here, and a successful Gather Information check (DC 20) will reveal that Willows indeed has possession of a cursed treasure chest, and that he is intent on lifting the curse somehow. They will also say that Willows owns a ship, the *Majestic*. With a harder Gather Information check (DC 25), it is also revealed that Willows is holding a prisoner for the French pirate Albert de Montblanc. Some say it is the Governor of Port Royal, but no one here really believes that.

The PCs can attempt to gain more Crew at the Dainty Juarez. See the Burning Parrot for an optional way to adjudicate this. No more than 12 extra Crew may be added in this manner from the Dainty Juarez (though the PCs can check other places in Hell's Cove).

Docks: There are 16 berths here along the docks area. About half of these are occupied when the PCs arrive. Ships come and go all the time.

The *Majestic*, Willows' ship, is in dock when the PCs arrive in Hell's Cove. He is preparing to leave as the PCs arrive, but the Player Characters will likely not go straight to his ship (note that the PCs do not even know Willows is still here, nor the name of his ship, so this is unlikely). Willows leaves port just as the characters find his apartment (you can change this timing if you wish, but keep in mind that the PCs should not find Willows before he leaves, or you will lose most of the impetus for the final adventure, "**Secret of the Island**").

If the PCs wish to dock their ship here long-term (more than a day or two), they must pay a fee to Chief Gustavo. The fees are: 2dbl/day for a Small ship, 4dbl/day for a Medium ship, 8dbl/day for a Large ship, and 12dbl/day for a Huge ship. These fees must be paid entirely in advance, and are non-refundable.

Loose Lady: This combination inn and brothel is a very valuable and popular business in Hell's Cove. In fact, it is the most profitable business in the entire cove. Rooms here are 3poe a night, and the girls services' range anywhere from 1poe to 1dbl for a night's company. They do not work by the hour.

Bullhead Willows is known only by reputation here, but his native first mate, Paolo, is much better known. Paolo was here this morning looking for Willows, and asking all sorts of questions. The girls think Willows may have been here too. They know that someone came in early this morning and roused a bunch of customers to join a pirate crew for a short trip.

The PCs can attempt to gain more Crew at the Loose Lady. See the Burning Parrot for an optional way to adjudicate this. No more than 15 extra Crew may be added in this manner from the Loose Lady (though the PCs can check other places in Hell's Cove).

North Balcony: This balcony area, cut right out of the stone face, features 3 Culverin. They generally point at the entrance to Hell's Cove, though the cannons can be swiveled to fire upon the docks area as well (this takes 3 rounds). The cannons fire only when Chief Gustavo commands.

Armed Islands: These two flat, rocky islands feature 1 Culverin each. They cannot be swiveled. These cannons fire only when Chief Gustavo commands.

Shang's Ship Supplies: A Chinaman, known as Shang, operates this ship supply shop. Shang is a retired pirate from the North China Sea, and speaks English and Spanish fairly well. His shop sells pretty much anything a pirate ship would need, including cannons (Culverin and Demi-Culverin only) and ammunition. Repairs can also be made here.

Shang begins as Friendly to the PCs. He knows Bullhead Willows quite well, as both men share an interest in maps and navigation. The Chinaman recently sold Willows a rare Aztec map showing the location of uncharted Rigas Island. This island is fairly unknown to most people, but Shang says it is

entirely populated by natives. He does not know whether these natives are friendly to outsiders.

South Balcony: As the North Balcony, except that there are 2 Culverin instead of 3.

Storage: There are storage units for each of the 16 berths (each ship can purchase one unit for 1poe per day), plus 4 additional units, for a total of 20 available units. Storage units can be rented through Chief Gustavo. The storage unit for the *Majestic* was emptied out this morning.

The PCs' investigations will lead them to Apartment C of the northern apartment building. This is where Bullhead Willows has lived for many years. Strangely, the door is unlocked. Read the following description once the PCs have entered the apartment:

Inside the apartment, you find all manner of strange maps, documents, and charts. It appears that Bullhead Willows was interested in astronomy, and may have been a navigator at one time.

You observe a great deal of native artwork and charms on the walls and floors here. Some of it you recognize, much of it you do not. Willows may be a collector of some sorts, or perhaps a very superstitious man.

After a brief search, you determine that Bullhead Willows has been here very recently. You notice that one map in particular, sitting next to the bed, has the words, 'Rigas Island' scrawled next to a tiny island off the coast to the south. Underneath this are the words, 'Paolo says witch doctor can free curse'.

As the PCs prepare to leave Willows' apartment, a man is at the door. This man, **Paolo**, is Bullhead Willows' former first mate and a Mexican native. He is surprised to see the PCs inside Willows' apartment, but does not act violently toward them. Paolo assumes the PCs are with Montblanc, and are here to find Willows to get the chest. If the PCs explain that they are not with Montblanc, Paolo opens up and is Friendly, even Helpful.

Paolo explains that Willows has taken to sea, most likely heading to Rigas Island, where Willows hopes he can contact a witch doctor to remove the 'curse'

on the chest and get what's inside. If asked, Paolo does not know why Willows left without his first mate, but knows that Willows left just this morning. He is in the *Majestic*, a schooner of English make, and headed south. Paolo suggests that Willows must have but a skeleton crew, and that the PCs could catch him if they hurried. If given a good reason, Paolo may join the PCs on their trip to Rigas Island, though this requires a Diplomacy check (DC 15).

Paolo knows about the captive Governor of Port Royal, William Haverford. The first mate says that he has tried to get Willows to turn Haverford over to Captain Vance, but Willows insisted on keeping the Governor his captive. Paolo assumes that Willows took Haverford to Rigas Island. If pressed, Paolo will take the PCs to the place where Willows was hiding Haverford, and the captive Governor is indeed gone.

If asked about the map found inside the apartment, Paolo explains that Willows often made many duplicates of his maps. He is quite forgetful, and prone to lose track of what he's doing at any given moment. This is most likely one of those duplicate maps.

If you wish to add some combat or tension to this scene, have a press gang approach the PCs and attempt to subdue them to use as crew aboard one of the pirate ships docked here at Hell's Cove. Use the stats for Montblanc's Men as Characters (see **Appendix A**).

Confrontation and a New Deal [EL 4]:

At this point, the PCs should head to their ship. It is then that a squad of Montblanc's men catches up with the PCs. As the PCs approach the docks area, read the following:

The piers are bustling with activity. You see pirates loading and unloading ships, and various vessels preparing to set out to sea once again. Despite the activity, it is quiet... too quiet...

Just as you and your fellows start thinking the same thing, several armed men jump out from the shadows. Equipped with cutlasses, pistols, and knives, these men, who outnumber you, clearly mean to do you harm.

Instead of attacking, the men wait. Stepping out from the shadows is another man. He speaks. "I am Adrian Locke, sent here by our mutual friend, Albert de Montblanc. It appears you have something that belongs to Montblanc. He sent me and my men here to kill you. I'm not a violent man, and I have no grudge against you fellows. Why don't you hand over that key and I'll forget I saw you here."



Locke is serious. He will indeed let the PCs go if they hand over the key. In the unlikely event that the PCs give Locke the skeleton key, he will let them go (award XP normally as if the PCs had defeated this encounter). Otherwise, this turns into a fight.

There are 16 men here to face the PCs. Use the stats from **Appendix A** (Montblanc's Men as Characters). Locke and his men (treat Locke as just another crewman for this encounter) are not about to fight to the death. As soon as any of them gets to half Hit Points or less, they flee.

Once Locke is either given the key or defeated, the PCs may proceed to their vessel and cast off. But the danger isn't over quite yet...

Showdown with Montblanc [EL 3]:

The PCs successfully cast off, and sail through the tunnel to leave Hell's Cove. As the PCs reach the exit, they notice a ship positioned at a 90-degree angle to the tunnel. As the PCs get closer, read the following:

An English ship, perhaps a merchant ship at one time, sits still in the waters just outside the tunnel entrance to Hell's Cove. The ship flies no flag whatsoever. You note crewmen standing at the ready, perhaps preparing for combat.

As you get a bit closer, you notice a man standing on the aftcastle. Based on what you have heard of him, this can only be Albert de Montblanc.

"Gentlemen," he says in a French accent, "This is where it ends. Surrender now or die!"

With that, a salvo of cannons erupts.

Montblanc is tired of playing games. He has sent men after men against the PCs, to no avail. This is all he has left, and he is a desperate man. Montblanc's ship, the *Vermillion*, is lightly crewed, making this more of an even match for the PCs at this point. See **Appendix A** for statistics.

Because of the reefs surrounding the entrance to Hell's Cove, the PCs will have to steer directly towards the *Vermillion*. This is as Montblanc has

planned. After one or two rounds of ship combat, there should be a boarding action, and you should switch to melee and personal ranged combat.

Montblanc is not interested in capturing anyone. He wants the PCs dead, and he wants to see them die. The French pirate will fight to the very end to get back what is his, and to kill all of the PCs. Play him accordingly.

If Montblanc is killed, the PCs can attempt to stop the battle. Give the PCs' Captain a chance to influence the enemy to surrender. Treat this as either a Diplomacy or Intimidation check (PC's choice; DC 20). If successful, Montblanc's remaining men surrender. The PCs can either dump them overboard, kill them, take them back to Hell's Cove, or attempt to add these men to their own Crew. Adding them to the Crew is surprisingly easy, a Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 10).

The PCs now have possession of Montblanc's ship, the *Vermillion*, as well as his belongings (unless he fell overboard or was set on fire or something).

With Montblanc safely out of the way, the PCs can now continue on to Rigas Island in pursuit of their treasure.

Conclusion

If you are playing "Never Make a Deal with a Pirate" as part of the "Governor's Prize" series, read on. Otherwise, skip this section and see below.

Armed with the map to Rigas Island, and the knowledge the Bullhead Willows is traveling there with the chest and William Haverford, the PCs should now set sail for the uncharted island to the south. The PCs know they are not far behind Willows, and have a chance to catch Willows before he reaches Rigas Island.

This is the impetus for Part Four of the "Governor's Prize" series, entitled, "**Secret of the Island.**" The PCs should be preparing to sail to Rigas Island, where Willows took Gov. Haverford and the chest of gold coins.

If you are **NOT** playing "Never Make a Deal with a Pirate" as part of the "Governor's Prize" series, you will need to come up with a motivating factor for your

next adventure based on the outcome of this one. The easiest way to do this, especially if your next adventure involves traveling somewhere secret, is to have the PCs find a map in Willows' apartment during **What Bullhead Left Behind**. You can leave other clues here as well.

Awarding Experience

Below are suggestions on how you might award experience for this adventure. Feel free to modify this in any way you like to suit your game. Remember to change these values if there are more or less than 4 players (this alters the EL listed above), or if you have added anything significant to the adventure.

Ambush at the Docks: 600xp for defeating Montblanc's men and leaving Leogane.

Perils of the Sea: None. Optional award of up to 500xp for surviving any storm situations (GM's option).

Finding Hell's Cove: 900xp or 1,800xp, depending on whether the PCs dealt with one or two ships.

What Bullhead Left Behind: 600xp for finding Willows' apartment, possibly more for the optional combat encounter (see Core Rules for determining XP awards).

Confrontation and a New Deal: 1,350xp.

Showdown with Montblanc: 900xp for the combat, plus 1,000xp for defeating Montblanc.

Story Award: This is optional. Award an additional 200-400 xp for each character whose player did an outstanding job of roleplaying, planning, or executing the goals of the adventure.

Awarding Fame

Refer to Table 8-2 in **Skull & Bones** for rules on awarding Fame Points. Here are some possibilities in this adventure, separated by Encounter:

Ambush at the Docks: None

Perils of the Sea: None

Finding Hell's Cove: Possibly 2-3 Fame, depending on the outcome of the encounter.

What Bullhead Left Behind: None

Confrontation and a New Deal: None

Showdown with Montblanc: 1 or 2 for defeating Albert de Montblanc, possibly more depending on what happens during this scene.

Dividing the Plunder

The standard agreement that is easiest to calculate is to use the following concepts. First, lump all the booty into one pile and give it a monetary value, even if it's not been sold. Next, subtract any fees for repairs needed for the ship, as well as restocking supplies. Finally, the remainder is to be divided amongst the crew and officers (anyone eligible – see p. 96-100 of **Skull & Bones** for more information on who onboard would be eligible for a share).

Assume that each of the Player Characters receives 2 shares. If for some reason a Player Character would not receive 2 shares, adjust the following formula accordingly. There may be NPCs onboard who also receive multiple shares, so make sure to add them to the total number in the formula. Calculate each share as such: (Remaining Booty) / (Total Number of Shares). The result is how much an individual share is worth. For characters that receive more than one share, or fractional shares, use this as a base.

Characters that receive goods and items in lieu of coins must 'pay' for the value of that item from their share. If the good or item is worth more than the value of their total share(s), the character must either pay the remainder from his or her pockets, or sell the item in question.

Example: There are four Player Characters (each receiving 2 shares), an NPC Navigator (2 shares), and 40 crewmen (each receiving 1 share). The pirates have a total booty after repairs and supplies of 6,000 doubloons. There is a total of 50 shares, so each individual share is worth (6,000 / 50) 120 doubloons. Each crewman receives this as his share, while the Navigator and the PCs each receive 240 doubloons.

Dealing with any extra ships gained in this adventure may be tricky. The PCs need to decide whether they would like to try to crew additional ships, sell unwanted ships, or even possibly store one or more ships at Hell's Cove. Remember that extra ships means more Crew is needed in total to man these extra ships. At this point, it is highly unlikely that the PCs have

enough Crew to effectively man more than one ship. If the PCs would like to store their extra ship(s), see the Docks (in **Hell's Cove**) above.

If the PCs wish to sell one or more ships, Hell's Cove is actually a fairly decent place to do so. Shang, Captain Vance, and other pirates are interested in buying ships. The *Hanby Rose* is worth a base price of 12,000dbl, the *Dolor de Santo Domingo* is worth a base price of 9,000dbl, and the *Vermillion* is worth a base price of 10,000dbl. Feel free to modify these base prices as it suits your game. Remember that any sale of ships is counted as booty for the above calculations.

Appendix A NPCs and Ships

THE HANBY ROSE

English Brigantine (Large Merchantman)

Draft: 2.5 fathoms

Structure Dice: 6d8 (Max 27 sp, Current 19 sp)

Hardness: 5

Maneuverability: -3

Speed: 120 ft./12 knots

Turn Rate: 3

AC: 7

Weapons Fore: None

Weapons Aft: Culverin x4

Weapons Broadside: Culverin x10

Damage: Culverin 2d4

Special Qualities: None

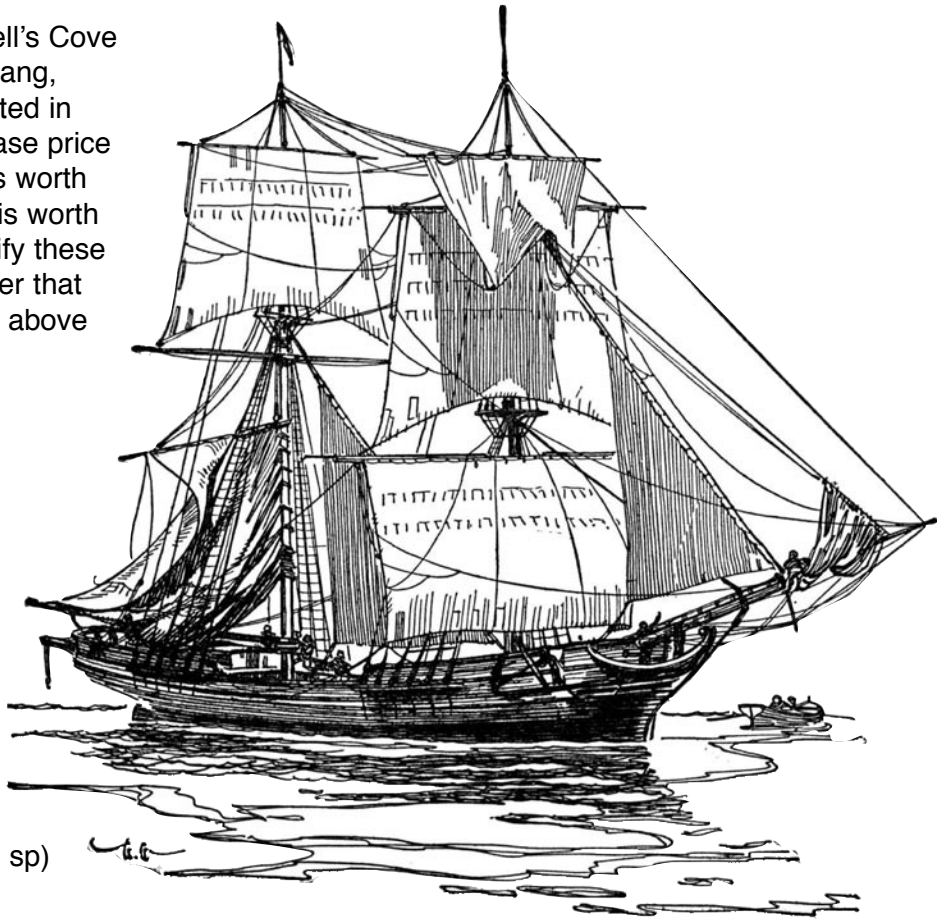
Crew: 56 (Normal 120)

Passengers: 30

Cargo: 100 Tons

Booty: 1,600dbl, 300poe, 16 Boarding Axes, 10 Long Muskets, 4 Short Muskets, 2 Blunderbusses, 4800 Powder/Shot for Muskets, 1800 Powder/Shot for Blunderbuss, 1800 Powder/Shot for Culverin, Navigator's Instruments, Shipwright's Tools, Provisions for 960 Man/Days, 2 Tons of French Bourbon, 2 Tons of Rice, 2 Tons of Salted Beef, 4 Tons of Lighting Oil, 16 Tons of Sugar, and 1 Ton each of Vinegar, Molasses, and Salt.

Note: Because the Hanby Rose is operating with 46% of its crew requirement, she takes a -3 penalty to all actions, and the time required to take actions is tripled.



A proud English merchant ship, the Hanby Rose has on more than one occasion fought off pirates while delivering goods throughout the Caribbean. Her captain, Edward Nerrington, takes pleasure in defeating pirates through strategy and maneuvers, rather than by means of brute force. The Hanby Rose has just fought off such a pirate attack, which took its toll on the ship and its crew.

CREW OF THE HANBY ROSE (CF)

Class: Commoner

Level: 1

Crew Size: 56

Crew Wounds: 56

Attacks: Belaying Pin +0, Dirk +0

Damage: Belaying Pin 1d6, Dirk 1d4

AC: 10

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +0, Will -1

Seamanship: +0

Feats: Obedient

Crew Quality: Average

THE DOLOR DE SANTO DOMINGO

Spanish Schooner (Medium Merchantman)

Draft: 1.5 fathoms

Structure Dice: 4d8 (Max 20 sp, Current 20 sp)

Hardness: 5

Maneuverability: -2

Speed: 120 ft./12 knots

Turn Rate: 4

AC: 8

Weapons Fore: Demi-Culverin x2

Weapons Aft: Demi-Culverin x2

Weapons Broadside: Culverin x10

Damage: Demi-Culverin 1d4, Culverin 2d4

Special Qualities: None

Crew: 50 (Currently 80)

Passengers: 20

Cargo: 100 Tons

Booty: 1600dbl, 800poe, 24 Boarding Pikes, 42 Dirks, 24 Boarding Axes, 16 Broadwords, 10 Cutlasses, 8 Hatchets, 30 Prepared Grenadoes, 40 Long Muskets, 20 Short Muskets, 20 Pistols, 4800 Powder/Shot for Musket, 1200 Powder/Shot for Pistol, 1200 Powder/Shot for Demi-Culverin, 10 Buff Coats, Navigator's Instruments, Shipwright's Tools, Map of the Spanish Main, Provisions for 240 Man/Days, 1 Ton of Salted Beef, 2 Tons of Salt, 2 Tons of Molasses, 1 Ton of Vinegar, 8 Tons of Lumber.

Once a slave ship running the route between West Africa and Cuba, the Dolor de Santo Domingo has been refitted as a pirate hunter. The Dolor scours the Caribbean looking for pirates and, failing to find any pirates, English or French merchant vessels or warships. Her captain, Rodrigo Incarnacion, has no qualms about being a pirate himself, while hunting other pirates, as long as he never attacks a Spanish ship.

CREW OF THE DOLOR DE SANTO DOMINGO (CF)

Class: Commoner

Level: 1

Crew Size: 80

Crew Wounds: 80

Attacks: Belaying Pin +0, Dirk +0

Damage: Belaying Pin 1d6, Dirk 1d4

AC: 10

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +0, Will -1

Seamanship: +0

Feats: Obedient

Crew Quality: Average

NPC: CAPTAIN RODRIGO INCARNACION

[Sdg 5]

[Medium Humanoid]

Hit Dice: 5d10+5 (35 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft.

Armor Class: 14 (touch 12, flat-footed 12)

Base Attack/Grapple: +5, Grapple +6

Attack: Melee +6 (1d6+1, Cutlass) or Ranged +7 (1d12, Blunderbuss Pistol)

Full Attack: Melee +6 (1d6+1, Cutlass) or Ranged +7 (1d12, Blunderbuss Pistol)

Space/Reach: 5x5, 5'

Special Attacks: Close Quarters +2

Special Qualities: Favored Ship – Spanish Ships (bonuses included below)

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +2

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 15

Skills: Climb +8, Craft (blacksmith) +5, Diplomacy +5, Gather Information +5, Intimidate +5, Jump +4, Knowledge (geography) +5, Knowledge (navigation) +9, Knowledge (sea lore) +9, Listen +6, Profession (sailor) +12, Spot +6, Swim +6, Use Rope +6.

Languages: English, Spanish.

Feats: Dodge, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Point Blank Shot, Port Savvy (bonuses included above).

Background: Seaman

Fortunes: Superstitious (from Sea Dog).

Fame: 5

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: As described in encounter listing.

Alignment: Neutral Good

Equipment: Blunderbuss Pistol, 20 Powder/Shot for Blunderbuss Pistol, Buff Coat, Cutlass, 900 Dbl.

Rodrigo Incarnacion, once a decorated and honored member of the Spanish Navy, retired a few years back and purchased a former slave ship, the Dolor de Santo Domingo. He refurbished the Dolor with fancy appointments, as well as updated its guns, and set sail under an agreement with the King of Spain to hunt pirates. The letter of marque enabled Incarnacion to operate as a pirate hunter in Spanish waters, and also gave the Dolor authority to fire upon any ship belonging to a country with which Spain was at war.



THE VERMILLION

English Schooner (Medium Merchantman)

Draft: 1.5 fathoms

Structure Dice: 4d8 (Max 28 sp, Current 20 sp)

Hardness: 5

Maneuverability: -2

Speed: 120 ft./12 knots

Turn Rate: 4

AC: 8

Weapons Fore: Demi-Culverin x2

Weapons Aft: Demi-Culverin x2

Weapons Broadside: Demi-Culverin x10

Damage: Demi-Culverin 1d4

Special Qualities: None

Crew: 40 (Normal 50)

Passengers: 20

Cargo: 100 Tons

Booty: 1800dbl, 600poe, 40 Boarding Pikes, 40 Dirks, 10 Boarding Axes, 10 Broadswords, 10 Long Muskets, 10 Short Muskets, 20 Pistols, 1600 Powder/Shot for Musket, 1200 Powder/Shot for Pistol, 1200 Powder/Shot for Demi-Culverin, Navigator's Instruments, Shipwright's Tools, French Map of the Caribbean, Provisions for 600 Man/Days, 2 Tons of French Wine, 1 Ton of French Brandy, 1 Ton of English Mead, 1 Ton of Crude Rum, 3 Tons of Salted Beef, 1 Ton of Oranges.

Note: Because the Vermillion is operating with 80% of its crew requirement, she takes a -2 penalty to all actions, and the time required to take actions is doubled.

Albert de Montblanc acquired the Vermillion in a game of chance many years ago, and has sequestered the former English merchant ship in a pirate hideout not until Hell's Cove. When the Scarborough was lost at sea, Montblanc got the Vermillion out of dry dock, hastily prepared her for duty, and set sail. The ship is not in the best condition, and has already seen battle.

MONTBLANC'S MEN AS CREW (CF)

Class: Expert

Level: 2

Crew Size: 35

Crew Wounds: 35

Attacks: Cutlass +2, Pistol +2

Damage: Belaying Pin 1d6+1, Pistol 2d4

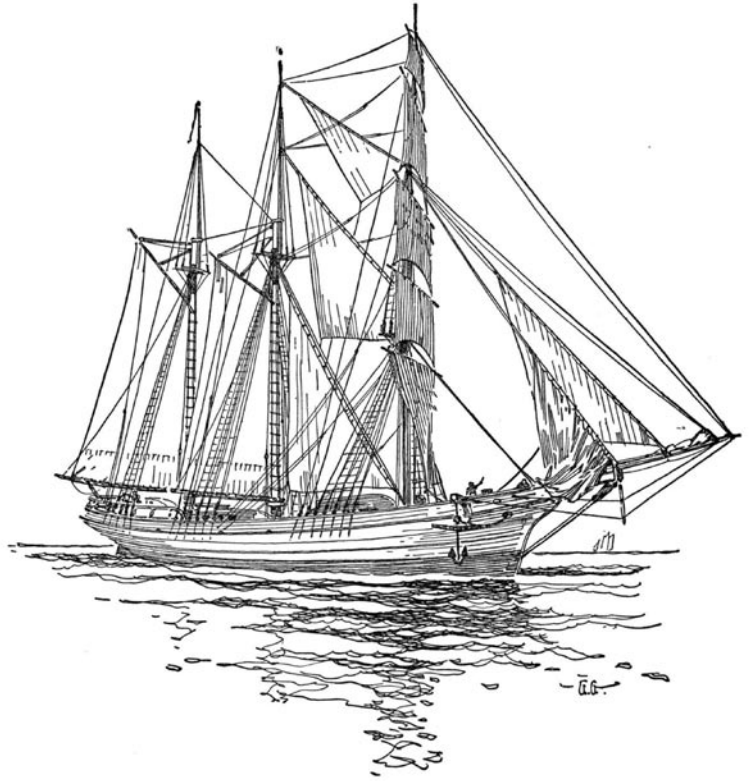
AC: 13

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +3

Seamanship: +5

Feats: Dodge, Point Blank Shot

Crew Quality: Average



NPC: MONTBLANC'S MEN AS CHARACTERS

[Exp 2]

[Medium Humanoid]

Hit Dice: 2d6 (7hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30'

Armor Class: 13 (flat-footed 12, touch 11)

Base Attack/Grapple: +1, Grapple +2

Attacks: +2 melee (1d6+1, cutlass) or +2 ranged (2d4, pistol)

Full Attack: +2 melee (1d6+1, cutlass) or +2 ranged (2d4, pistol)

Space/Reach: 5x5, 5'

Special Attacks: None

Special Qualities: None

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +3

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills: Bluff +5, Climb +5, Hide +6, Jump +5, Knowledge (sea lore) +6, Move Silently +6, Profession (sailor) +5, Search +5, Sense Motive +4, Swim +5.

Feats: Dodge, Point Blank Shot.

Background: Scum

Fortunes: None.

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: See Below

Alignment: Neutral Evil

Equipment: Buff Coat, Cutlass, Pistol, 20 Power/Shot for Pistol, Dirk, and 35 doubloons.

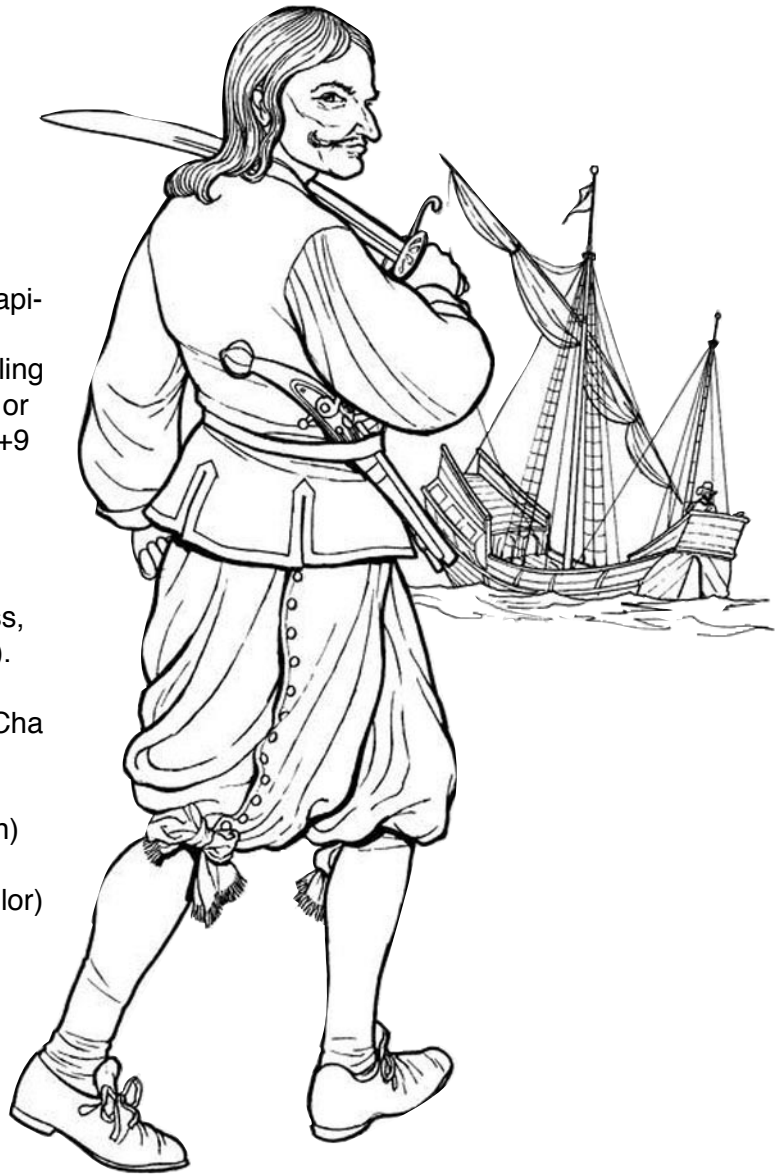
NPC: ALBERT DE MONTBLANC

[Sdg 4, Sof 4]

[Medium Humanoid]

Hit Dice: 8d10+8 (53hp)**Initiative:** +2**Speed:** 30'**Armor Class:** 17 (flat-footed 15, touch 12)**Base Attack/Grapple:** +7, Grapple +9**Attacks:** +10 melee (1d6+2, masterwork dueling rapier) or +11 ranged (1d12, blunderbuss pistol)**Full Attack:** +8/+3 melee (1d6+2, masterwork dueling rapier) and +8 melee (1d4+1, masterwork dagger) or +8 melee (1d6+2, masterwork dueling rapier) and +9 ranged (1d12, masterwork blunderbuss pistol)**Space/Reach:** 5x5, 5'**Special Attacks:** None**Special Qualities:** Close Quarters (+1 to dmg), Command – Morale Bonus, Command – Readiness, Favored – English Ships (bonuses included below).**Saves:** Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +5**Abilities:** Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 16**Skills:** Appraise +7, Climb +6, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (geography) +4, Knowledge (navigation) +6, Knowledge (sea lore) +8, Languages (English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish), Profession (sailor) +15, Sense Motive +3, Swim +9, Use Rope +10.**Feats:** Armed to the Teeth, Crack Shot, Dodge, Mobility, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (blunderbuss pistol).**Background:** Seaman**Fortunes:** Enlightened (from Sea Dog).**Challenge Rating:** 8**Treasure:** See Below**Alignment:** Neutral Evil**Equipment:** Masterwork Breastplate, Masterwork Dueling Rapier, 3 Masterwork Daggers, 3 Masterwork Blunderbuss Pistols, 20 Power/Shot for each Blunderbuss Pistol, 3,200 doubloons, Deed to a small plantation on Jamaica.

Albert de Montblanc began his pirating career as a stowaway aboard an English ship bound for the New World. He had grown up in Marseilles, France, as the son of a fishing boat captain. Unimpressed by the prospects of life as a fisherman, Montblanc hopped the next ship to the Caribbean. He served on board the *Alastair*, a merchant ship, for seven years, eventually working his way up to first mate. The *Scarborough*, a pirate ship, captured the *Alastair* off the coast of Maracaibo, and all survivors, including Albert, were pressed into pirate duty.



Montblanc learned to love being a pirate, and worked his way into a role of prominence among the pirate crew. He served as a gunner, and for a time, navigator as well. Piratical sentiments also seeped their way into Montblanc's mind, and he soon rose up against the captain and took the *Scarborough*, becoming its new captain. Capt. Montblanc raided the coasts of the Bahamas all the way along the Spanish Main before hooking up with James Galloway, a master of disguise, who had an interesting plan.

According to this plan, James Galloway would capture the Governor of Port Royal, William Haverford, and then impersonate the Governor for a time. During this period, Galloway would pardon many pirates, and free them from prison. He would also funnel gold to Montblanc, who would in turn hold Haverford captive until such time as he could be ransomed at the end of the scheme.

Everything was going well until Montblanc decided he didn't like being Haverford's babysitter. The pirate sailed to Hell's Cove and made a deal with Bullhead Willows, a fellow pirate who was known to be a little desperate. Montblanc agreed to pay Willows to watch Haverford so that Capt. Montblanc could continue pirating without worrying about having the Governor of Jamaica aboard his vessel. Montblanc gave Willows a chest filled with gold coins, but Albert retained the key, which would be given to Willows upon delivery of the Governor a few months later. Montblanc warned Willows that trying to open the chest without the key would bring down a terrible curse. This lie was enough to keep Willows from opening the chest.

Unfortunately, it was not enough to keep Willows in Hell's Cove. Hearing that a witch doctor off the Yucatan knew how to remove such curses, Willows left Hell's Cove for a small island. His ship wrecked during a terrible storm, and he never did find this alleged witch doctor. See the next adventure, **GP-4: "Secret of the Island"**, for what Willows found instead.

Meanwhile, during the same storm that wrecked Willows, the *Scarborough* was also shipwrecked. Montblanc was forced to evacuate the ship during a violent storm, and left his key aboard. The French pirate made his way back to Port Royal, and urged James Galloway to arrange a search party to recover the vessel, which is how Montblanc hoped to recover the key. Instead, the Player Characters recovered the vessel and are now in possession of said key. Montblanc knows this, and is hunting the characters down to recover the key and kill them for what they likely know about his scheme with James Galloway.

Magic Option:

If you are using magic in this adventure, add the following wanga to Montblanc's equipment list:

Wanga:

Cure Light Wounds, CL 10, 3 charges

Magic Weapon, CL 10, 4 charges



Appendix B *Sample Ship and Crew*

If the PCs do not already have a ship and crew, here are stats for the *Fortune*, a sloop, and her very green crew. As above, note that these crewmen have just been signed on, so any Sway rolls should take that into consideration for this adventure.

THE FORTUNE

English Sloop (Medium Warship)

Draft: 2 fathoms

Structure Dice: 4d10 (24 sp)

Hardness: 5

Maneuverability: 0

Speed: 130 ft./13 knots

Turn Rate: 4

AC: 10

Weapons Fore: None

Weapons Aft: Culverin x2

Weapons Broadside: Culverin x8

Damage: Culverin 2d4

Special Qualities: None

Crew: 50

Passengers: 10

Cargo: 80 Tons

The *Fortune* is a tad stouter than other sloops found in common use. She was once part of an escort group that traveled with African slave ships making the Middle Passage, but following a pirate attack on the slave ship she was guarding, the *Fortune* found herself in the hands of Jean-Marc Boulanger, a French pirate. She has since changed hands many times, but is still in good condition.

CREW OF THE FORTUNE (CF)

Class: Commoner

Level: 1

Crew Size: 40

Crew Wounds: 40

Attacks: Belaying Pin +0, Dirk +0

Damage: Belaying Pin 1d6, Dirk 1d4

AC: 10

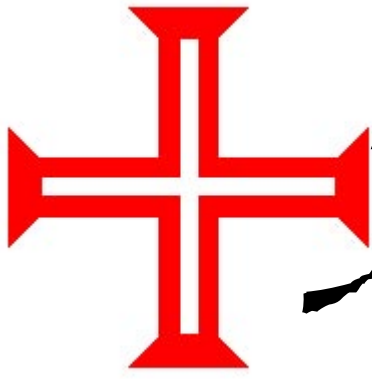
Saves: Fort +0, Ref +0, Will -1

Seamanship: +0

Feats: None

Crew Quality: Rabble

Note that, because the number of crew members (40) is less than the minimum crew numbers required for the *Fortune* (50), all actions taken for the *Fortune* are at -1, unless more crew can be recruited.



Knights of the New World

by Nate Christen

The Order of the Knights of Christ is a Portuguese order of knighthood that arose in the fourteenth century. Its origin can be traced to the legendary Knights Templar, and its influence eventually extended from Europe to the East and West Indies and beyond.

The History of the Knights Templar

In 1118, a band of nine knights traveled to Palestine, an area recently conquered by European forces during the First Crusade. After spending some time in Jerusalem, they decided to found a new order of knighthood, similar to that of the recently established Knights Hospitallers. This one they deemed the Order of the Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon, taking their name in part from the location in Jerusalem where they made their first base of operations. Ostensibly their mission was to protect European pilgrims to the Holy Land, but this motivation has long been questioned; after all, the Hospitallers already existed for such a purpose.

Instead, some have surmised that the Templars from their very beginning harbored some kind of great secret. Speculation as to the nature of this secret has run the gamut from the lost Ark of the Covenant to the Holy Grail, from a secret that could rock the very foundation of the Catholic Church to some kind of profane and diabolical lore.

Whatever the true reason for their foundation might be, the Knights Templar rapidly grew into one of the most powerful organizations in the world. One of the reasons why they became so powerful was that, whenever a new member joined the order, he pledged his possessions to



common ownership by the Templars. This included any land that he owned, providing the order with a foundation from which to draw taxes and other revenues. Somehow the Templars also managed to become entirely independent from every sovereign power in Europe, answering only to the Pope himself. Using their rapidly increasing wealth and this newfound independence, the knights began to serve as bankers to other European powers. They made loans and extended lines of credit, foreshadowing financial developments years ahead of time.

It was this wealth, however, that eventually contributed to their downfall. With the massive defeats that European forces suffered during the last Crusades, the Templars and everyone else were forced out of the Holy Land. This meant that their original purpose, protecting pilgrims, was no longer needed. To add to that, a number of powerful people in Europe had become indebted to the order, and there were the lingering rumors that the Templars had some kind of important and perhaps profane secret. Still, no monarch would have had the authority to challenge the order, if it were not for the fact that the Papacy came under the control of the French throne.

King Phillip IV of France managed to persuade the Pope to revoke the Templars' special protection; Phillip then called for the arrest of all knights in France, and urged his fellow sovereigns to do the same. This occurred with mixed success. Although the French branch of the Order was all but obliterated, many of the knights in other areas managed to escape persecution. Some joined up with other orders, such as the Teutonic Knights of Germany, while others fled to areas such as Scotland that did not follow the Pope's laws. In fact, it is rumored that a contingent of Templars fought alongside Robert the Bruce in the Battle of Bannockburn, when the Scots fought off a numerically superior English army. Tales are also told of the fleet of Templar ships that had been harbored at La Rochelle on the eve of the Order's demise. These ships, along with the massive treasure that had been stored in the organization's Paris headquarters, disappeared into the night.

By 1314 the Order was completely eliminated. The last surviving Grand Master, Jacques de Molay, was tortured and then executed. It is said, however, that, as he went to his death, he cried out that neither the king nor the pope would survive the year; this claim proved to be true.

The Rise of the Order of the Knights of Christ

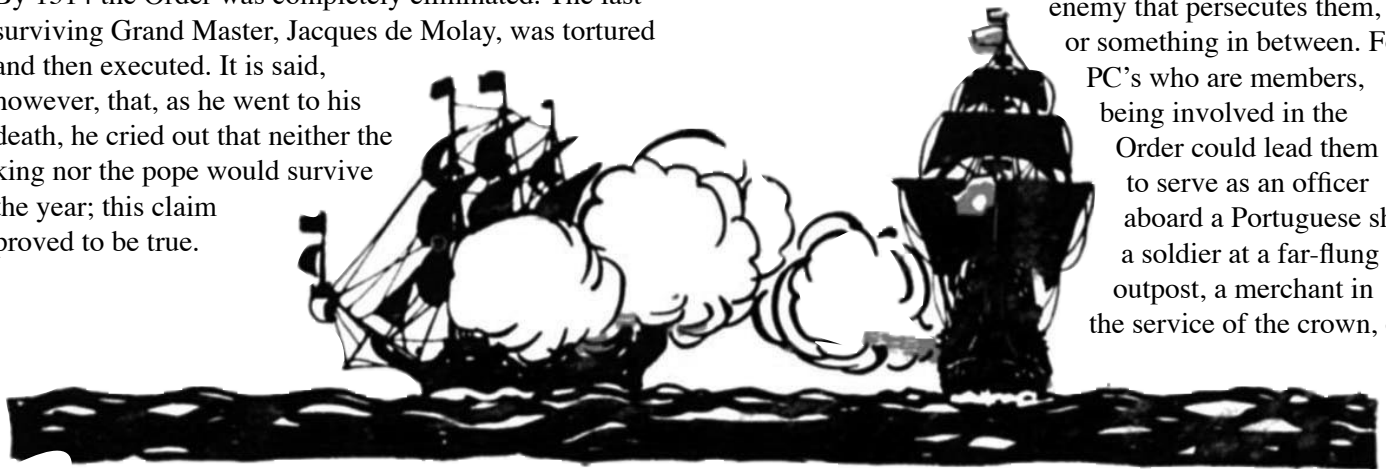
In 1318, King Denis of Portugal established a new military and religious order for those Templars who survived in his realm. He did this in part out of gratitude for the help that the Templars had provided during the reconquest of Portugal from the Muslims in the twelfth century. Denis even succeeded in persuading the new pope to turn over control of all former Templar property in Portugal to the newly created order.

In 1417 Prince Henry the Navigator became the new Grand Master of the order. Henry used money from the Order's treasury to found a school for navigation at Sagres, one in which new cartographical information could be assembled following successful voyages of exploration, allowing navigators to correlate information in a much more useful manner. The influence of the order and its members continued to grow; in 1460, the Knights of Christ were even granted a 5% share of all revenues gained through Portuguese trade with Africa. Vasco de Gama was sent on his voyage around Africa to India by the Order's grand master in 1497, and Christopher Columbus himself had connections to the order through his father-in-law.

Some say the Portuguese promoted such exploration because they hoped to find the realm of Prester John, a Christian king rumored to live somewhere in the mysterious east, but more practical reasons included the lucrative trade in spices and other goods from India that could be established with the discovery of a safer trade route.

Using the Order in Your Campaign

Depending upon the nature of the campaign, the Order of the Knights of Christ can provide either an organization to which the PC's belong, an enemy that persecutes them, or something in between. For PC's who are members, being involved in the Order could lead them to serve as an officer aboard a Portuguese ship, a soldier at a far-flung outpost, a merchant in the service of the crown, or



perhaps as a spy involved in any number of conflicts or conspiracies.

those who crave power might stop at nothing to promote themselves and sabotage the chances of rivals.

Rules of the Order

Of course, any characters who become members of the Order must follow its rules with strict adherence. Prior to the year 1492, this means that no sort of sexual activity is permitted for any knight. After 1492, sexual relations were permitted, but only with one's legal spouse. This rule changed again in 1627, when marriage (and therefore sex) were permitted only with special permission from the Pope himself. Moreover, following 1627, any new members were required to be of noble birth, and to have served either two years at one of the Order's outposts in Africa or three years with the fleet. For anyone who wanted to attain the rank of Commander, this was increased to three years' service in Africa or five years' service with the fleet. It should also be noted that, following the election of Henry the Navigator as Grand Master of the Order, members of the Portuguese royal family became titular heads of the organization.

Guidelines for Promotion

In game terms, the GM has a few different options for determining how characters are promoted in the Order. One is to use a character's Fame score to adjudicate promotion. For every four points of Fame that a character amasses, he or she could be promoted one rank. Another possibility is to simply use the advancements as rewards for specific assignments or deeds. For example, a ship's captain might be promoted for completing a particular mission on behalf of the Order. Alternately, rank and promotion in the Order could be a cause of much intrigue for members. After all,

History and the Order

The timeline below chronicles events of importance to the Knights of Christ, spanning the years from Columbus' first voyage of exploration until 1720.

1493-4: By the order of Pope Alexander VI, reinforced by the Treaty of Tordesillas, the New World is divided between Spain and Portugal. Portugal receives Brazil, while Spain keeps the rest of South and Central America.

1495: Manuel the Fortunate becomes King of Portugal.

1497: Vasco da Gama rounds the Cape of Good Hope on his voyage to India.

1500: Pedro Alvares Cabral claims Brazil for Portugal.

1502: Da Gama founds a Portuguese colony in Cochin, India.

1505: Portugal begins founding factories on the east coast of Africa.

1509: The slave trade with the New World begins.

1514: Portuguese ships enter Chinese waters for the first time.

1519: Ferdinand Magellan (of Portugal) leaves on his voyage to circumnavigate the Earth.

Grade	Adornment
<i>Knight</i>	<i>A badge of the order on a plain ribbon, worn on the left side of the chest</i>
<i>Officer</i>	<i>The badge, above, with a rosette added to it</i>
<i>Commander</i>	<i>The badge and rosetted on a necklet, along with a silver star of the order worn on the left side of the chest</i>
<i>Grand Officer</i>	<i>The same as for a Commander, except with a gold star</i>
<i>Grand Cross</i>	<i>The badge of the order on a sash from the right shoulder, along with the star mentioned above</i>

1521: John III (“the Pious”) assumes the throne of Portugal; Ferdinand Magellan is killed by natives while in the Philippines.

1523: The Portuguese are expelled from China.

1531: The Inquisition begins to operate in Portugal.

1543: Portuguese forces make landfall for the first time in Japan.

1549: A central government is established in Brazil.

1557: Sebastian I becomes King of Portugal.

1578: King Sebastian I is killed during an attack on Morocco.

1580-1: Spanish forces, led by the Duke of Alba, invade and conquer Portugal.

1587: Portuguese missionaries are banned from Japan.

1588-9: The Spanish Armada sails from Lisbon and is defeated; Sir Francis Drake leads a counterattack but fails to take the city.

1594: English merchants begin to cut into Portugal’s trade monopoly in India. (The English East India Company would be founded in 1600.)

1597: A second Spanish Armada sails for England but fails due to an encounter with storms.

1606: Luis Vaez de Torres explores the South Pacific.

1615: The English fleet defeats the Portuguese off the coast of Bombay, India.

1630: Dutch forces manage to capture part of Brazil, but lose it in 1654.

1632-3: The Portuguese are driven out of Bengal; England begins trading there in the following year.

1637: The Portuguese are expelled by the Dutch from the Gold Coast; Portugal eventually cedes it to Holland in 1642.

1640: Portugal regains its independence from Spain under King John IV; from this point onward, England is a Portuguese ally.

1656: Alfonso VI becomes King of Portugal.

1665: Portugal allies with England to defeat the Spanish at Montes Claros and Villa Viciosa, helping to defend Portuguese independence. (This is officially recognized with the Treaty of Lisbon in 1668.)

1667: Alfonso VI is banished to the Azores; his brother Peter (II) takes over as Regent, then as King.

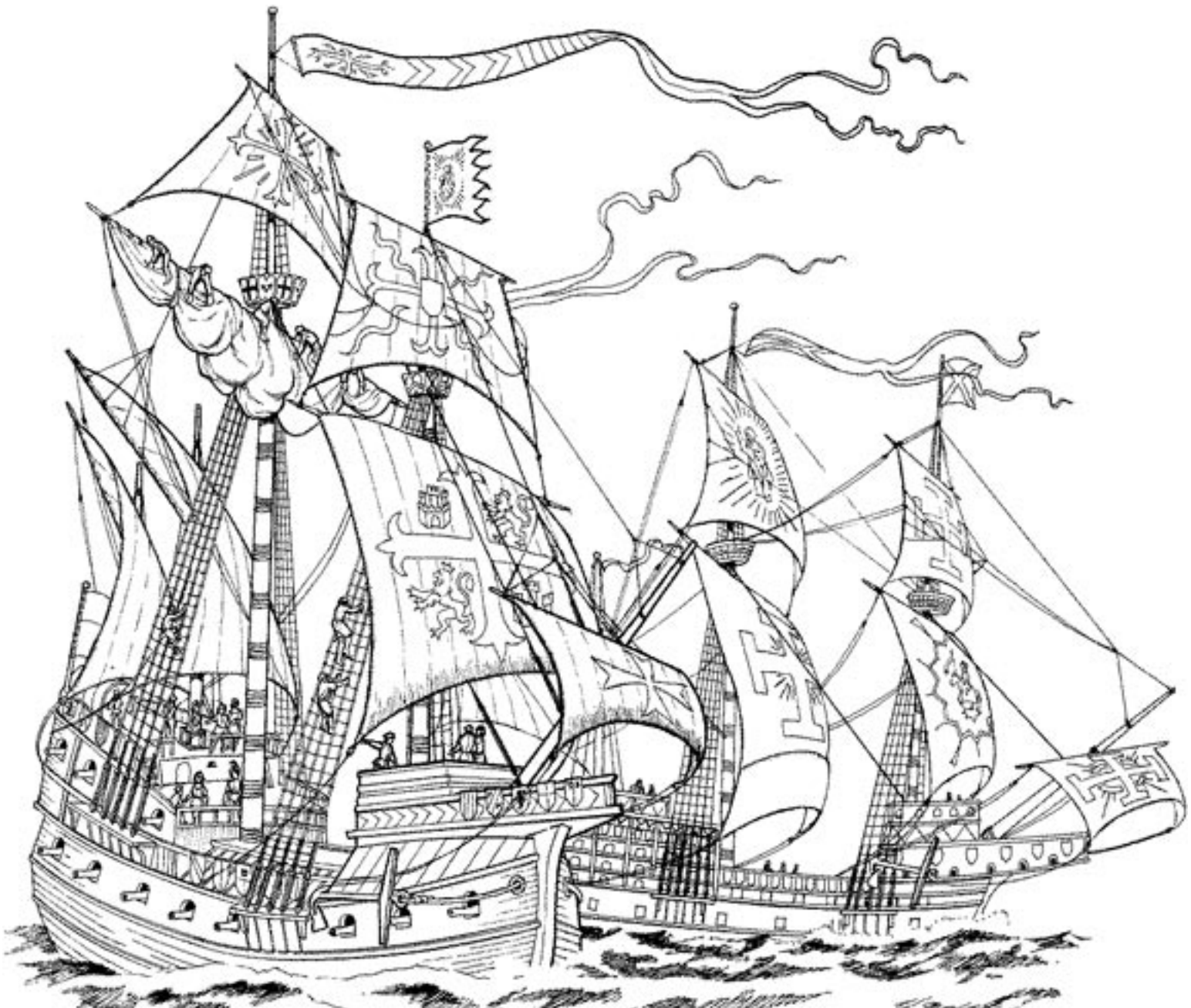
1707: Peter II dies and is succeeded by John V.

Adventure Hooks

The following ideas can provide ways in which the Order contributes to the adventures in a campaign.

- According to one legend, a knight by the name of Gualdim Pais hid the Holy Grail itself inside the Templars’ Convento de Cristo in Tomar, Portugal.
- With the rapid exploration of the Knights of Christ, the Order could have all kinds of different tasks for which they’d need a capable ship’s crew. These might include venturing into previously unexplored territory to bring the teachings of Christianity to heathen natives, delivering valuable cargos to any number of ports throughout the Americas, Africa or Asia, or perhaps even apprehending pirates who have interfered with the Order’s business.
- After the 1627 decision that any newly joining members must be of noble birth, a power struggle erupts in the Order; the noble steadily gain in power, while old members of lower birth gradually become the minority.
- Any of the voyages of exploration could provide opportunities for members to travel to strange new realms.
- Members of the Order could become embroiled in any of the conflicts that Portugal experienced with other countries, be they with English or Dutch merchant interests, hostile Spaniards or unfriendly natives.
- Particularly during hostilities with Spain, knights of the Order operating in the Caribbean (perhaps using Brazil as a base of operations) could be called upon to disrupt Spanish shipping lines so as to prevent the transportation of valuable goods—in essence, to commit acts of piracy.

- Again, while under Spanish control, knights might become embroiled in the conflicts that saw the Spanish Armada sail twice into battle. In this case they might loyally serve their Spanish rulers, or they might act as spies and saboteurs.
- Alfonso VI, as King of Portugal, served as Grand Master of the Knights of Christ; his banishment would leave a tremendous power struggle in the Order.
- Since the Order is, ostensibly, a Catholic organization, members could be drawn into conflict with members of other religious sects—particularly Dutch Calvinists, Anglicans and French Huguenots—whom they encounter throughout the course of the travels.
- Another potential source of conflict for members of the Knights of Christ is the old persecution of the Templars by the Inquisition. Since rumors that the Portuguese order inherited some sort of great Templar secret, agents of the Inquisition are sure to come looking for answers.
- The nature of the secret Templar treasure could also be a source of adventure. If the Order inherited it, whether it be the Ark of the Covenant, one of the many versions of the Holy Grail or some other powerful relic, any such item is likely to draw a great deal of unwanted attention.



THE BEAST OF THE MIDDLE PASSAGE

by Walt Ciechanowski

First Mate Thomas Smith's worst fears were realized as the Lady's Favour sailed into a storm only two days out of Barbadoes. He had tried to warn the captain that the skies looked angry, but Captain Nate Reed wouldn't hear of delaying the journey to Charleston any longer. "We have to get the rum to Charles Town before Spanish pirates beat us to it!" he'd argued. As Thomas watched the churning waves splash water across the deck, he'd wondered if they'd ever see Charleston, much less beat other rumrunners to it.

Captain Nate cursed the storm as he barked out orders through the pouring rain. Thomas could hear the top mast creaking; he hoped the improvised repairs would hold. Captain Nate had promised to get it replaced when they got to the Carolinas. He gazed up at the crow's nest, doing his best to shield his eyes from the vicious pelting of raindrops. Slim John was still up there, gesturing wildly toward the starboard side. He was probably shouting as well, but Thomas couldn't hear him through the din that assaulted his ears. He shouted back at the captain.

"We've got a sighting on the starboard side, Captain! Must be another ship!"

Captain Nate nodded and pulled out his scope. Before he could get a look, Thomas caught the familiar flash of a cannon out of the corner of his eye, followed by the sound of shattering wood. The top mast toppled over, dropping Slim John into the angry waves.

Captain Nate ordered a response as a succession of cannon balls ripped into the lower decks. Thomas almost lost his footing while trying to organize Slim John's rescue. He turned to see a large pinnace displaying its port side. There were no flags to identify it. Thomas heard another volley of cannons, relieved to see that they were his own. He smiled in satisfaction as he watched the cannonballs rip into the enemy vessel.

And then his hairs stood on end.

Thomas wanted to believe that his ears were playing tricks on him, that some combination of the wind, rain, and voices of his crewmen had combined to confuse his senses. But he knew he was wrong. He had heard a sound, but he was certain that it came from the other ship. More to the point, it was the other ship. Thomas could not believe his ears, but another volley confirmed it. It happened every time a cannonball smashed into its hull.

The ship was screaming.

Thomas had little time to dwell on it as another volley from the mysterious ship ripped into the starboard hull. Screams from below indicated that the ship was taking in water and was sinking. Captain Nate gritted his teeth, not wishing to surrender. After a few more volleys, they had little choice. The white flag was hoisted as the enemy ship prepared to board.

The color drained from Thomas' face as he saw the enemy crewmen for the first time. They were no longer men, but decaying corpses with no pupils in their eyes. And as the ship drew close, Thomas was sure that he saw bits of blood where the cannonballs had pierced the hull, although they were being washed away by the rain and sea. Thomas heard something else as well, something that disturbed him even more than the unearthly screams.

He could hear the rhythmic beating of a heart, somewhere deep within the belly of the ship.

As the rotting corpses began to board on planks and ropes to greet the shocked Englishmen, First Mate Thomas silently drew his pistol and put the barrel to his own head.

Decades ago, a botched ritual turned a slave pinnace into a living horror. This vessel now roams the Middle Passage, raiding ships and settlements for the materials it needs to go on living. While brought about by a slave ritual, the living ship knows no allies and will indiscriminately hunt anyone.

Those who have survived encounters with the ship tell tales of a flagless vessel with a crew of living, rotting corpses.

The Last Voyage of the Zwarte Ridder

In 1650 the Dutch pinnace *Zwarte Ridder* (Black Knight) purchased 400 slaves from a small West African kingdom. Captain Pieter Meys hoped to trade them for tobacco in the Caribbean. Fortunately, the African king had just won a war with a neighboring tribe and had many prisoners available for sale. Unfortunately for Captain Meys, the king also used the opportunity to rid himself of the enemy's bokor, as simply killing him may have invited the wrath of the Loa.

Unbeknownst to the captain, one of his slaves had actually been to the Caribbean before and told horrible stories of the fate that awaited them. The bokor convinced most of the slaves that he could strike down their captors and free them all if they would participate in a ceremony with him. The slaves eagerly agreed, and the ceremony started, 400 strong.

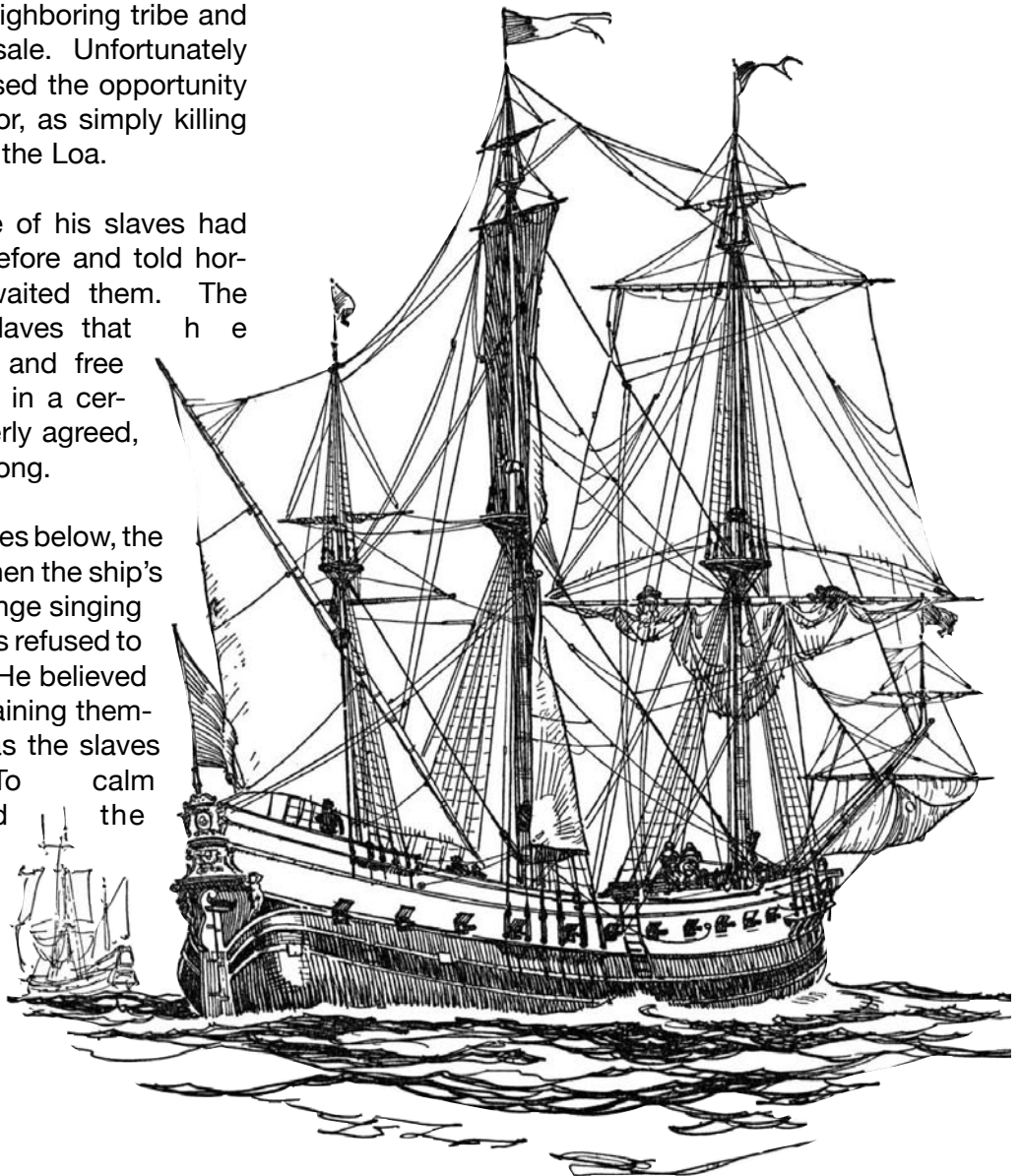
Due to the crew's neglect of the slaves below, the ceremony was almost complete when the ship's captain was alerted about the strange singing and chanting. At first, Captain Meys refused to believe that anything was wrong. He believed that the slaves were simply entertaining themselves. Still, the crew panicked as the slaves grew louder and more animated. To calm his crew, Captain Meys identified the leader of the ceremony and shot him dead. After an astonished outcry, the slaves quieted down in despair. Satisfied, the captain returned to the spar deck.

The captain, however, had acted

too late. The ritual had been partially completed. Four hundred voices had succeeded in summoning a great creature, but the bokor was killed before he was able to complete the binding ritual that would control it.

As he was conversing with his navigator over the best route to sail, Captain Meys heard screams from below. Frustrated, the captain sent the First Mate and a few men below to see what was the matter and do anything necessary to quiet them down. There were still more screams, and suddenly the door from below decks opened, revealing freed slaves with a soulless expression. Captain Meys ordered them shot and was horrified when he realized that some of these soulless creatures were his own men!

In short order, Captain Meys, his crew, and his prisoners became part of the creature that was once the *Zwarte Ridder*.



The Beast of the High Seas

The creature that took control of the ship was a powerful Djab whose name was lost with the death of the bokor that summoned it. This Djab was capable of manifesting part of itself on the ship, using the vessel's structure as its "skin." This Djab could also take control of the dead and turn them into a specialized form of zombi. These zombi are connected to the Djab, performing tasks to keep its body (the ship) in working condition.

Many of the original slaves were crushed and their remains pasted along the inside of the hull. This fleshy paste keeps the hull intact, even when blown through by cannonballs. The paste will "bleed" to plug the hole until the zombi can repair it. Since the paste is psychically connected to the Djab (and therefore the zombi), the entire zombi crew will scream in unison when the ship is damaged. This scream has no effect on their performance (it will not stun or incapacitate them). Periodically, the zombi will touch the paste to transmit nutrients that it has consumed to the paste.

The bokor that summoned the Djab received a special fate. His heart became the vessel of the Djab, who slowly incorporated the bokor's remains into it, causing the heart to grow. Once the bokor's body was used up, the Djab used a number of other bodies until it had a heart that filled part of the lower deck top to bottom. Snakelike veins and arteries are attached to the hull paste, enabling the heart to strengthen it and take in nutrients from it. This heart beats loudly, distracting mortals that approach it. The beating is loud enough to be heard from outside the ship.

The cargo hold contains items of value to the Djab in its current state. Spare parts and lumber stripped from other vessels fill most of the hold, along with cannon ammunition. There are also discarded items here, left from former victims and ignored. Very rarely will living humans be held down here to await their fate as a meal (most are consumed upon capture).

When grievously injured, the Djab will submerge so that the zombis can work on repairs unmolested. The Djab can still "steer" beneath the ocean, although it

moves at a much slower rate. When the ship resurfaces, water is blown up and out of the vessel through the Djab's magic. This sometimes results in fish and other marine creatures flopping around on the decks.

Battle Tactics

The Djab's usual "feeding ground" is the Middle Passage, the slave route between Africa and the Caribbean. The Djab particularly enjoys attacking slave ships because of the number of victims. The Djab has also been known to attack coastal villages, dropping its zombis into the water and having them walk ashore. Victims are often killed and brought back to the Djab for consumption.

The zombis also carry back raw materials such as wood, gunpowder and cannonballs. The zombis can man boats left in port to ensure that gunpowder isn't ruined on the way back to the Djab.

While the Djab has been known to attack West African villages, it prefers to raid South American and Caribbean settlements. This is due to lessons learned. Africans tend to flee and hide at the sight of a European vessel, or at least be cautious in dealing with it. New World settlements, on the other hand, often don't realize the threat until the zombis are upon them. New World settlements also tend to have more cannons and gunpowder.

The Djab flies no flag and strikes as soon as another vessel is in range of its cannon. It will relentlessly pound its opponent with cannon as it tries to get close. Once it is close enough, the Djab will send its zombis across to secure the vessel. Since victims do not have to be alive in order to provide sustenance, the zombis ruthlessly cut down all members of the vessel.

While difficult, it is possible to win against the Djab. A few captains have actually claimed to have killed the "Beast of the Middle Passage." Unfortunately, these captains have confused "sinking" with "killing." If the Djab's ship takes enough damage to reduce its structure points to zero or less, the ship sinks. The Djab will recall its zombis beneath the waves to start the process of rebuilding. If the heart is destroyed, all zombis will drop and the ship will become a floating ghost ship until it can regenerate.



Rumors

There are quite a few stories about the Djab known as the Beast of the Middle Passage. Some of these rumors are listed below. These rumors could be true, partially true, or completely false. Whenever the PCs go searching for rumors (or the GM feels like putting some in their ear), the GM can use the following:

1. The Beast of the Middle Passage is a zombi ship commanded by a powerful bokor. *Partially true. The heart was constructed from the bokor's body, but the ship is actually a Djab.*
2. The Beast follows the Middle Passage. It has never been sighted in the Caribbean Sea. *True.*
3. The Beast has a preference for slave ships. It is a protector of the African people and returns them home after slaughtering their captors. *Partially true. The Beast does prefer slave ships, but it will consume the slaves just as hungrily as the captors.*
4. The Beast is dead. *False. While some cunning captains have sunk the Beast, it has always regenerated from its wounds.*
5. There is no Beast. It is a scheme perpetrated by a cunning pirate. *Partially true; see Plot Hook #5.*
6. The zombis of the Beast share the same mind. They aid and support each other. *True.*
7. The Beast of the Middle Passage is a creature made up of the souls of those it's killed. *Partially true. It is made up of their flesh.*
8. If the Beast is attacking you and you are close to the Caribbean Sea, set sail for it. The Beast will not follow you in. *False. While the Beast only roams the Middle Passage, it has no qualms about following its prey. It will simply return to the Middle Passage at the earliest opportunity.*
9. The Beast remains in the Middle Passage because of the souls of dead Africans calling to it from below. *Unknown. While this is as good a theory as any, no one has confirmed it.*
10. The Beast is an immortal Djab. It can only be driven from the world by a powerful voodoo ritual. *True. See Plot Hook #4.*

Plot Hooks

1. The PCs meet the Beast of the Middle Passage on the high seas. Can they escape a bloody fate?
2. One of the Beast's victims had an important document with him when he died. That document now rests in a pile of discards in the belly of the beast. Can the PCs get onboard and retrieve it without becoming dinner?
3. The Beast is a cunning creature and it is only a matter of time before it learns the value of flying flags. The zombis begin to collect flags and raise the matching one whenever they spot another ship. Urged on by this success, the Beast may become even more cunning and start collecting uniforms.
4. A new slave claims that there is a hougan that knows a ritual to destroy the Beast. This hougan and the remnants of his tribe fled deeper into Africa's interior when the slavers came. The PCs must be willing to take the risk of traveling into hostile African territory to find him and convince the hougan to use the ritual. Once they have an agreement, there is still the small matter of baiting the Beast.
5. Smiling George, a resourceful pirate captain, has taken to impersonating the Beast with his own ship. He flies no flag and his crewmen wear make-up and torn clothes to look like zombis. A few of his crew rhythmically drum in unison while they attack. This usually results in panic from the victimized ship, whose crew abandons ship in the hopes of escaping a horrible fate (leaving Smiling George to pillage the cargo with no resistance). One victim learns of the scheme and hires the PCs to help him track down Smiling George. When the PCs finally spot the flagless vessel, is it Smiling George or the Beast?

Modifications

The Beast of the Middle Passage is presented as a 12 HD creature inhabiting a pinnacle. GMs can easily scale the Beast by choosing a different ship (the zombi crew will always be a little shorter than the crew listed) or by scaling its hit dice. Since the Beast has no inherent attacks, adjusting the ship type will have more of an impact on the PCs than a change of hit dice.

The Beast of the Middle Passage

Large Outsider (*Djab, Chaotic, Evil*)

Hit Dice: 12d8+84 (160 hp)

Initiative: +5 (+1 Int, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: ---

Armor Class: 17 (+0 Dex, +8 natural, -1 size)

Base Attack/Grapple: +12/+7/+2

Attack: None

Full Attack: None

Space/Reach: None

Special Attacks: Through ship

Special Qualities: Control Zombis, Frightful Presence, Regenerate

Saves: Fort +15, Ref ---, Will +12

Abilities: Str ---, Dex ---, Con 24, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 20

Skills: Bluff +20, Craft (ship) +21, Heal +16, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (Middle Passage) +24, Spot +16, Search +15, Survival +25

Feats: Diehard, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Self-Sufficient

Environment: Ship

Organization: Unique

Challenge Rating: 12

Treasure: Ammunition, Discards from previous victims

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Advancement: ---

Level Adjustment: ---

The Beast of the Middle Passage is a Djab that needs to inhabit a vessel in order to survive. It also controls a crew of 150. The Beast's physical form is a large heart that sits below deck, filling the center of it top to bottom. Organic tendrils connect the heart to a thin coating of flesh that covers the inside of the hull. The Beast can speak through its zombies, but it prefers not to. The only time most men hear its voice is when it screams.

The Beast gets sustenance through its zombies. The zombies consume human flesh and use some of it to regenerate themselves, passing the rest through to the Beast by touching the fleshy wall that covers the hull of the ship. The Beast telepathically orders its zombies what to do, although the zombies do have a degree of independence in carrying out their orders (although the Beast can retake direct control at any time).

The Beast does not need sails. It can move the ship in any direction it wishes, which allows it to patrol the Middle Passage in either direction. The Beast does keep the sails in good order, however, to aid in its deception.

Combat

The Beast of the Middle Passage has such a gruesome reputation that anyone who recognizes the vessel for what it is must make a Will save (DC 18) or become frightened for 5d6 rounds. Even those who have not heard of the legend must make the Will save as soon as the Beast's unnatural presence is apparent (the zombies, bloody holes, the screams, the heartbeat, etc).

The Beast cannot fight for itself. It can only operate through its zombies.

Any critical hit against the ship applies the same amount of damage to the Beast. The Beast can regenerate 10 hit points per round (or one structure point). This regenerative ability can also plug holes (one structure point per round).

Zombis of the Beast

Hit Dice: 4d12+6 (30 hp)
Initiative: +4 (Improved Initiative)
Speed: 30 ft
Armor Class: 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+5
Attack: Slam +4 (1d6+3), by weapon, or Bite (1d4+3)
Full Attack: As above
Space/Reach: 5 ft/5 ft
Special Attacks: ---
Special Qualities: Regeneration, Undead Traits, Weapon Use
Saves: Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +4
Abilities: Str 17, Dex 12, Con ---, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 1
Skills: ---
Feats: Improved Initiative, Toughness
Environment: The Ship
Organization: Crew of the Ship
Challenge Rating: 1
Treasure: None
Alignment: Chaotic Evil

The zombis created by the Djab are actually vessels under its direct control. By their outward appearance, they look like simple zombis (and GMs can refer to their description on p.150 of **S&B** for further information). In reality, they are puppets in tune with the Beast of the Middle Passage.

These zombis are programmed with the abilities of the original crew of the *Zwarte Ridder*. They know how to keep the ship in good repair, and they know what to look for in order to repair it. These zombis also eat human flesh. Each pound of human flesh consumed regenerates one hit point to the zombi. Excess points are given to the Beast.

Combat

The zombi can and does use weapons in combat, including gunpowder weapons. The zombi is automatically considered proficient with any weapon it is holding.



The Zwarte Ridder

Draft: 3 fathoms
Structure Points: 8d8 (60 hp)
Hardness: 5
Maneuverability: +1 (-3 Merchantman, -1 size, -1 circumstance, +5 djab)
Speed: 110ft./11 knots
Turn Rate: 3
AC: 7 (-2 Merchantman, -1 size)
Weapons Fore: None
Weapons Aft: Demi-culverin x 6
Weapons Broadside: Culverin x 12
Damage: Demi-culverin 1d4, culverin 2d4
Special Qualities: None
Crew: 150
Cargo: 120 tons (mainly building materials, extra ammunition, victim discards).

SETTLEMENTS OF THE SPANISH MAIN

by Gareth-Michael Skarka

During the period covered by *Skull & Bones* (1690-1720), Spain controls approximately 90% of the colonized land area of the New World. They are a superpower, in every sense of the word. Allied to the Vatican, Spain's influence is spread by Catholic Missions in the New World, stretching from Texas and California in the North

American continent to the coastal settlements of South America. Collectively, Spain's holdings in the New World were known as the Spanish Main, although that phrase gradually began to refer to the coastal settlements in Mexico, Central and South America.

The settlements along the mainland were divided into three Viceroyalties, similar to American states -- each was under control of a Viceroy, who answered directly to the Spanish Royal Court. The three Viceroyalties were: **New Spain**, **New Granada** and **New Andalusia**. From these Viceroyalties, the wealth of the New World, in silver and gold, was shipped east to Spain.

Naturally, this concentration of wealth made the area attractive for pirates, but plundering Spanish treasure fleets was not the only way to make money on the Spanish Main -- a more common, if only slightly less profitable, method was smuggling.

Spain's colonies in the New World operated under a tax known as the *Averia*, which was levied on imports and exports by the throne of Spain to pay for escort ships to protect the treasure fleets. The *averia* resulted in many prices being greatly inflated.

Spanish noblemen wanted the luxury goods that they were accustomed to at home, but the goods were heavily taxed, making them cost





much more than they normally would. These nobles, however, are the very people responsible for collecting and enforcing this tax. Naturally, corruption ran rampant, with nobles turning a blind eye to ship captains that could bring them the goods that they wanted, with payment “off the books.” Smugglers could make a fortune in the larger ports of the Spanish Main.

Headings

As per Chapter XIV of the *Skull & Bones* rulebook (which covers the islands of the Caribbean), the entries in this article provide locations that we hope can offer environments and inspiration for a variety of campaigns and adventure types.

The entries for each settlement are broken down as follows:

SETTLEMENT NAME: This entry is the name by which Europeans know the settlement in question. Unlike the island entries in the main rulebook, these entries do not include a [Controlling Power], since all of the settlements described herein are Spanish.

PRODUCE: This indicates all the commodities that are made or harvested at the settlement, and that will typically be available for sale.

DEMAND: As with all colonies in the New World, the settlements of the Spanish Main have constant need of flour, beef, pork, fish, timber, shingles, corn, peas, beans, rice, poultry, horses, oxen, sheep, hogs, tar, shipbuilding materials (masts, spars, and so on), soap, wool, candles, iron, manufactured goods (stoves, pans, kettles, nails, guns, and so on) and luxury goods (perfume, hats, clothing, shoes and boots, etc.). Few are even close to self-sufficient. An entry of “None” indicates that there is no particular commodity that the settlement requires more than any other. Any goods listed here are those commodities that are in short supply, and will command a premium price (list price plus 1d6 x 10%).

SCENARIO HOOKS: Some of the settlements have one or more adventure ideas relating to them. The Game Master can use these hooks to generate adventures

based on the ideas listed.

The Settlements of New Spain

New Spain was the largest and arguably the most important of the Spanish Viceroyalties in the region. New Spain encompasses all of modern Mexico, Arizona, New Mexico, southwest Texas, and southern California. The capitol of New Spain was Mexico (now Mexico City), located in the old Aztec capitol of Tenochtitlan (which lies far to the north, and hence outside the scope of most *Skull & Bones* campaigns).

CAMPECHE

One of three settlements lying just off the map on page 38, Campeche is the second most important port on the Gulf coast of the Yucatan peninsula. Founded in 1540 by Spanish conquistadores atop the preexisting Maya city of Canpech. Originally, the Spaniards lived inside the walled city, while the natives lived in the surrounding barrios of San Francisco, Guadalupe and San Román.

Due to the constant attacks of both English and Dutch buccaneers and pirates such as Francis Drake, John Hawkins, Henry Morgan and Rock Brasiliano, in 1686 the government started to fortify the city. The wall surrounding the city of Campeche forms an irregular hexagon around the main part of the city, with eight defensive bastions on the corners

PRODUCE: Sugar, Meat (beef, pork and goat), Grain.

DEMAND: Luxury goods.

SCENARIO HOOKS: Rumors say that a high-ranking government official is willing to pay a handsome sum for occult relics.

VILLAHERMOSA

One of three settlements lying just off the map on page 38, Villahermosa is a small settlement on the Gulf coast of the Yucatan peninsula. Founded officially

on 24 June 1596 by Spaniards between the banks of Grijalva and Carrizal Rivers, the village also features many lagoons, including *La Laguna de las Ilusiones*—the “Lagoon of Illusions.”

PRODUCE: None

DEMAND: None

SCENARIO HOOKS: The locals say that *La Laguna de las Ilusiones* is enchanted, and that visitors to its shores will receive visions.

VERA CRUZ

One of three settlements lying just off the map on page 38, Vera Cruz is a thriving port city on the Gulf coast of the Yucatan peninsula -- the main port in all of New Spain, where silver from the mines of Mexico is loaded onto the Spanish treasure fleets for shipment to Spain.

The port was founded by Hernán Cortés, who first landed there in 1519 at the start of his quest to conquer Mexico for Spain. It was named *La Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz* (“The Rich Town of the True Cross”).

The importance of the port and the presence of the treasure fleets have made the city a target for pirates. In 1683, the citizens of Vera Cruz were trapped in the city when the pirate Laurent de Gaff held it under siege. In response to such dangers the fortress of San Juan de Ulúa was built on an island in the harbor, beginning in 1565 and substantially expanded several times later.

PRODUCE: Tobacco, Silver, Copper, Sugar

DEMAND: Slaves, Luxury Goods

SCENARIO HOOKS: Secret tunnels are said to exist under the city, and local lore has it that they were built by a countess who used them to engage affairs with men in different locations in the city while her husband was away.

One nobleman approaches the PCs to say that the truth is far darker -- the countess is a vampire, who uses the tunnels to move about during the day. He lost his brother to the vampire’s insatiable hunger, and wants

to hire the PCs to venture into the tunnels to put an end to her evil.

PUERTO CABALLOS

A small settlement in the southern part of New Spain, originally named for the presence of a ranch that raised horses for the Spanish settlers in the area.

PRODUCE: None

DEMAND: None

SAN PEDRO

A small village built on the shores of *Lago de Atitlán* (Lake Atitlán), in the shadow of Volcán San Pedro, a dormant volcano.

Lake Atitlán is the deepest lake in Central America -- the local Maya Indians say that it has no bottom. Why the Spanish built a settlement here is anyone’s guess.

PRODUCE: None

DEMAND: None

SCENARIO HOOKS: The settlement of San Pedro was entirely the work of a single religious group, calling themselves *Los Pescadores* (the fishermen). Rich noble patrons, and the out-of-the-way nature of the settlement, have led the Church to turn a blind eye to the group...but rumors abound that the group travelled from Spain specifically to commune with some dark thing which dwells in the depths of the Lake.



The Settlements of New Granada

New Granada is the region covering modern central America, Peru, Chile, and Colombia, and is the center of Spain's quest for native gold and silver. Many important nobles and clergymen have settled in the area, especially in the capital city, Panama.

New Granada has seen a much more violent breed of Spanish adventurer and the natives are less inclined to bend as the Spanish push south and east. The natives are notoriously aggressive and the areas outside the settlements are considered dangerous for Europeans. The Spaniards have therefore stopped expanding the settlements in New Granada and are now concentrating purely on mining for gold (and stealing the gold of the natives). Gold is shipped to Panama, and then portaged overland to Nombre de Dios and Puerto Bello. From Puerto Bello, treasure makes one final trip to Cartagena where it is stored until it is ready to be shipped to Spain.

GRAN GRANADA

One of a number of small fishing towns in the northern reaches of New Granada. Founded in 1519, Gran Granada, despite its grandiose name, boasts little in the way of luxury. The majority of the population is comprised of Aztec and Olmec tribesman, with a small minority of Spanish landowners.

PRODUCE: Fish

DEMAND: Cotton, Manufactured Goods.



SAN LORENZO

A small settlement on the Caribbean side of the isthmus of Panama, San Lorenzo had hoped to become the port which would carry gold from Panama to Cartagena, but lost that distinction to Nombre de Dios. When Nombre de Dios was plundered, San Lorenzo saw its opportunity, only to have its hopes dashed by the construction of an entirely new port, Puerto Bello, built expressly for the purpose.

PRODUCE: None

DEMAND: None

SCENARIO HOOKS: The true reason for the bad luck of San Lorenzo is an Aztec curse placed on the region, that will forever doom all European efforts in the settlement to failure. An enterprising merchant might try to hire the Player Characters to lift the curse...

PUERTO BELLO

Constructed in 1597 as the exit point for treasure heading towards Cartagena, Puerto Bello is a moderately sheltered and well fortified port on the northern coast of isthmus of Panama.

In 1668, pirate Captain Henry Morgan led a fleet of privateers and 450 men against Puerto Bello, which despite being well fortified, was captured and brutally plundered for 14 days--stripping the city of nearly all its wealth, and resulting in the rape, torture and murder of many of its citizens.

A full garrison of Spanish troops now defends the port from Fort San Lorenzo, on the point overlooking the harbor.

PRODUCE: None. (Although the treasure fleets sail from here to Cartagena)

DEMAND: Manufactured Goods, Luxury Goods, Slaves.

SCENARIO HOOKS: Puerto Bello is where the Spanish treasure fleet is loaded before shipment to Cartagena. Seems like an obvious choice for an adventure, doesn't it?

NOMBRE DE DIOS

Founded as a Spanish colony in 1510 by Diego de Nicuesa, Nombre de Dios ("Name of God") was the first European settlement on the Isthmus of Panama, and was the starting point of a series of rivers and footpaths by which ships could go from the Caribbean across the isthmus to the Pacific ocean (ships would travel upriver, and then be carried short distances overland by their crews).

Formerly the preeminent port for Spain's treasure fleets, Nombre de Dios was situated near an unhealthy swamp, and was nearly impossible to fortify. Francis Drake sacked the colony in June of 1572, and ambushed the Silver Train, a mule convoy carrying a fortune in precious metals, in March of the following year. By the 17th century Nombre de Dios had been all but abandoned by the Spanish, and its importance to the treasure fleets had been surpassed by Puerto Bello.

PRODUCE: None

DEMAND: None

SCENARIO HOOKS: A tribe of pygmies call the swamps near Nombre De Dios home -- and legend has it that in 1573, a group split off from the Silver Train, trying to avoid Drake, became lost in the swamp and fell victim to the pygmies. The tribe now holds the treasure carried by that group...almost worth venturing into a disease-ridden swamp to retrieve.....

PANAMA

On the southern coast of the isthmus of Panama lies the city of the same name. Panama, the capital of the Viceroyalty of New Granada, overlooks the Pacific Ocean and was founded in 1519 by Pedro Arias Davila. Within a few years of its founding, the city became a launching point for the exploration and conquest of Peru and a transit point for gold and silver headed back to Spain. Ships from Peru and Chile are off loaded at Panama and the cargo is carried 50 miles overland to Puerto Bello, a seven day journey on foot, through jungle paths.

In 1671, Welsh Privateer Henry Morgan, under orders from Jamaican Governor Thomas Modyford, sacked and destroyed Panama with a force of 2,000 men and 36 ships. Morgan was made a Lieutenant Governor of Jamaica for this and other actions in the name of England.

Panama suffers under the *Averia* and all goods are heavily taxed-- but smuggling into Panama is a difficult task at best due to the overland journey.

PRODUCE: None (Although it is a major port for the Spanish treasure fleets)

DEMAND: Slaves.

SCENARIO HOOKS: Slaves who are used to carry the cargo from Panama to Puerto Bello tell stories of a race of lizard men who live in the jungle and prey upon the unwary. An enterprising pirate might decide to make use of these lizard men to hold the route hostage, charging a toll on all traffic through the isthmus.

CARTAGENA

250 miles to the east of Panama, on the northwest coast of South America, lies the citadel of Cartagena. Pedro de Heredia founded the city in 1533, in an area where the native tribe called the Mocanáes lived; Spanish accounts describe them as fierce and warlike, and point out that even women fought on a par with men.

Cartagena is the departure point for the *Flota*, the Spanish treasure fleet. The Flota carries the riches of the South American tribes to Europe late every summer. The treasure fleet sails from Cartagena west to the coast of New Spain and then north along the coast to Cape Catoche (The extreme northeast of the Yucatan), where it turns to east by northeast and sails for Havana, where it waits for the winds to change to favor sailing to Spain.

The city was built into a deep sheltered harbor, and is home to the largest fortification in the New World. The Spaniards designed a defense plan in which the main strategy was the construction of a walled military fortress to protect the city against the plundering of English, Dutch and French pirates.

San Fernando and San José forts are located strategically at the entrance of the bay, able to attack any pirate vessels approaching from the sea. On the land side of the city, the fortress San Sebastián de Pastillillo and the Castillo San Felipe de Barajas defend from any overland attacks, and provide troops for the defense of the city (and the Flota, obviously).

Cartagena is extremely wealthy and is home to a great many Spanish noblemen living in the New World.

On February 5th, 1610, the Spanish court and the Vatican founded the Inquisition Holy Office Court in Cartagena by a Royal Decree issued by King Philip II. The Inquisition Holy Office Court is the center of the Catholic Church's power in the New World, officially charged with rooting out heresy, overseeing the conversion of the native population, and safeguarding the souls of the Spanish colonists.

PRODUCE: Pearls, Silver, Gold, Sugar, Ginger, Game, Rubber.

DEMAND: Slaves, Grain, Iron, Copper, Cotton, Meat, Manufactured Goods, Luxury Goods.

SCENARIO HOOKS: The citadel of Cartagena, as the seat of Spanish power and wealth in the New World, is rife with intrigue and a good source for urban adventures of any sort, as a change of pace from the shipboard adventures common in *Skull & Bones* campaigns.

For example: Cardinal Silverio de Bocanegra, of the Office of the Holy Inquisition, is a very powerful man. Rumor has it that he has studied the magic of the Bokors, and now acts under the thrall of a powerful Djib. If this is true, he must be stopped...but is this nothing more than an attempt by his rivals to bring down a powerful man?

SANTA MARTA

Santa Marta was the second settlement founded in South America after Cumaná. It was founded in July 29, 1525 by Spanish conquistador Rodrigo de Bastidas. It is a small settlement, primarily a fishing and logging community.

PRODUCE: Wood

DEMAND: Cotton, Livestock

SCENARIO HOOKS: The logging activity of Santa Marta has brought the settlement into conflict with a tribe of Amazons (see page 140 of the main *Skull and Bones* rulebook) living in the interior jungle. The Amazons are isolationist, and are considering drastic action to protect their home.

RIO DE LA HACHA

In 1535, a German explorer named Nicholas Federmann, working on behalf of Spain, founded a city with the name *Nuestra Señora Santa Maria de los Remedios del Cabo de la Vela* (Our Lady Saint Mary of the Remedies of the Cape of the Candle) in a harbor protected by a thin cape.

The Spanish discovered a vast amount of pearls in the city's area, which made the city a constant target for pirates. After the city was destroyed by a pirate raid, the city government relocated the city further back away from the cape, at the mouth of the Rancheria River, in order to confuse the pirates, and hopefully give the city time to rebuild before the next attack.

The new city, named *Nuestra Señora de los Remedios del Río de la Hacha* (Our Lady of the Remedies of the Ax River) expanded peacefully for a short time in its new location, but pirate attacks soon resumed. A major attack, led by famous English Pirate Francis Drake, took place in 1596, when Drake pillaged the city searching for gold and pearls.

PRODUCE: Pearls

DEMAND: Manufactured Goods

SCENARIO HOOKS: Divers at Rio de la Hacha have dug up a huge pearl, larger than any before seen. The pearl is magical -- the wielder is able to *Control Weather* as a 12th-level sorcerer. Two parties are currently trying to secure the pearl for themselves -- a Bokor, and a representative of the East India Trading Company -- both of whom would use the power of the pearl for their own benefit.

The Settlements of New Andalusia

The Viceroyalty of New Andalusia includes modern Venezuela and Guyana, and is the least important of Spain's settlements in the New World. Many of the cities, such as Cumana and Caracas are thriving, self-sufficient ports, but New Andalusia is not considered of critical interest in the eyes of the Spanish Royal Court, mostly due to lack of gold and silver produced in the region.

MARACAIBO

Halfheartedly settled by the Spanish at the narrow straight separating the Gulf of Venezuela and Lake Maracaibo, Maracaibo is a less-than-thriving port -- set too far back from the main trade routes to attract much traffic at all.

PRODUCE: None

DEMAND: None

SCENARIO HOOKS: Word has reached the PCs that a notorious pirate has settled in Maracaibo, "lying low" and intending to live out the rest of his days in quiet comfort in an out-of-the-way settlement. However, the pirate is believed to be the only surviving member of a crew that once buried a fantastic treasure somewhere in the Caribbean. The PCs will have to travel to the backwater settlement, find the old pirate, and get the information.

GIBRALTAR

If Maracaibo is an out-of-the-way settlement, then Gibraltar (named for the city in southern Spain) is truly the "back of beyond." A tiny fishing village on eastern shore of Lake Maracaibo, Gibraltar is home to a small mission whose priests minister to the natives of the interior.

PRODUCE: None

DEMAND: None



SCENARIO HOOKS: The brothers of the mission in Gibraltar are actually Knights of Christ (see page 26 of this issue), who stand guard over a secret Templar treasure that they have hidden here, away from the prying eyes of the world.

CORO

The name "Coro" is believed to be an indigenous word meaning "wind", and the full name of the settlement is Santa Ana de Coro. It is located to the Southwest of the thriving Dutch island settlement of Curacao, and a good amount of illicit trade goes on between the two settlements, with Coro often providing Curacao with slaves captured from the native tribes of the Venezuelan interior.

To the north of the settlement lies the only desert in the Spanish Main: Los Medanos de Coro. Sand dunes that have grown into roughly 80 square miles in area, rising up to 25 feet high, and constantly shifting due to the winds coming in off the sea. It is rumored



that many pirates have buried treasure under these shifting sands.

PRODUCE: Slaves

DEMAND: Meat, manufactured goods.

SCENARIO HOOKS: The blowing sands of Los Medanos de Coro have uncovered an ancient stone temple, built by an unknown race thousands of years in the past. What treasures lie within....or what horrors?

PUERTO CABELLA

A small settlement on the northern coast of New Andalusia that does brisk business with the smugglers and black marketeers of Curacao and Tortuga. The colonial government turns a blind eye to most of these activities, because it keeps such undesirable traffic out of Caracas and Cumana -- plus, the smuggled

goods allow them to circumvent the *averia* tax, allowing the nobles to purchase the items they want for far lower prices than in larger settlements. As a result, nobles and merchants from Caracas and Cumana often make journeys to Puerto Cabella for the express purpose of shopping.

PRODUCE: None

DEMAND: None

SCENARIO HOOKS: The son of a wealthy Spanish noble has gotten it in his head to become a pirate, and has run away to Puerto Cabella in the hopes of finding passage to Curacao, where he hopes to sign on with a pirate crew. The boy's father is willing to pay a handsome sum for his return, safe and sound.

BORBURATA

One of the original settlements in the area, founded 1526, Borburata has dwindled over the past few de-

cedes, as the population has slowly migrated to Caracas, a much busier post. All that remains now are a few logging and farming operations.

PRODUCE: Wood, Fruit, Tobacco

DEMAND: None

CARACAS

Caracas, the capital of the Viceroyalty of New Andalusia, is a large port, surrounded by tropical forests and lush farmlands, and is one of the preeminent trading ports on the Spanish Main.

Caracas was officially settled in 1567 as *Santiago de Leon de Caracas* by Spanish explorer Diego de Losada, and gradually grew as the majority the population of Borburata migrated there to take advantage of a sheltered, deep harbor and a steady supply of fresh water from mountain streams and inland lakes. Caracas is vitally important to the economy of New Andalusia and is steadily growing in power.

PRODUCE: Iron and Copper

DEMAND: Sugar, Manufactured Goods, Luxury Goods (circumventing the *averia*)

SCENARIO HOOKS: A tribe of Island Giants (see page 144 of *Skull & Bones*) lives in the Cerro El Ávila, a mountain that stands between most of the city and the sea. They have begun to resent the disturbance of their home by the settlers, and have started hurling rocks from the mountain down into the harbor. The city is willing to pay adventurers to journey up into the mountain passes to get rid of the threat.

CUMANA

The easternmost port in New Andalusia, Cumana is the oldest settlement in South America. Founded

in 1503 by the Spanish as a plantation, Cumana is the largest producing tobacco colony for the Spanish and is therefore heavily taxed to help pay the cost of colonization and escort ships. Dutch smugglers have taken advantage of this and routinely smuggle entire shiploads of tobacco out of Cumana.

Cumana's harbor and the coastal sea bottom is an ideal ground for pearl production as well, which has brought wealth (and attention from pirates) to the area.

To protect the pearl fisheries, defend eastern New Andalusia and combat pirates smugglers, the Viceroyalty has stationed a garrison at Cumana and built a pair of forts to guard the harbor.

PRODUCE: Tobacco, Furs, Pearls

DEMAND: Manufactured Goods, Luxury Goods

SCENARIO HOOKS: The willful daughter of a Dutch merchant was caught smuggling tobacco out of Cumana, and is currently imprisoned in one of the forts, awaiting execution. Rescuing her would not only be a slap in the face of the Spanish, but would also leave her father indebted to you....not to mention that she's beautiful....

