Appendix S

There are so many wonderful maritime resources to draw upon for inspiration that Appendix S may become quite lengthy. Here is our first list: some recommended reading for judges wishing to capture the atmosphere of maritime life both ashore and afloat.

Defoe, Daniel: (THE LIFE, ADVENTURES AND PIRACIES OF THE FAMOUS) CAPTAIN SINGLETON, THE PIRATE GOW

DeMille, Nelson: PLUM ISLAND

Forester, C. S.: MR. MIDSHIPMAN HORNBLOWER, HORNBLOWER AND THE HOTSPUR, BEAT TO QUARTERS, FLYING COLOURS; et al. ("Horatio Hornblower" series)

Hodgson, William Hope: THE GHOST PIRATES

Kent, Alexander: STAND INTO DANGER, SLOOP OF WAR, PASSAGE TO MUTINY, FORM LINE OF BATTLE!; et al. ("Richard Bolitho" series)

Mason, Arthur: THE FLYING BOSUN

Michener, James: CARIBBEAN

Nelson, James L.: THE SWEET TRADE; et al. ("Brethren of the Coast" series)

O'Brian, Patrick: MASTER AND COMMANDER, H.M.S. SURPRISE, TREASON'S HARBOR; et al. ("Aubery-Maturin" series)

Perkins, William: HOARE AND THE PORTSMOUTH ATROCITIES; et al. ("Maritime Mysteries" series)

Pope, Dudley: RAMAGE, RAMAGE'S PRIZE, RAMAGE'S MUTINY, RAMAGE'S DEVIL, RAMAGE'S TRIAL; et al. ("Ramage" series)

Powers, Tim: ON STRANGER TIDES

Sabatini, Rafael: CAPTAIN BLOOD, CAPTAIN BLOOD RETURNS, THE FORTUNES OF CAPTAIN BLOOD, THE SEAHAWK; et al.

Steinbeck, John: CUP OF GOLD

Stephenson, Robert Louis: KIDNAPPED, ROBINSON CRUSOE, TREASURE ISLAND

Woodman, Richard: AN EYE OF THE FLEET, A KING'S CUTTER, A BRIG OF WAR, A PRIVATE REVENGE; et al. ("Nathaniel Drinkwater" series)

Published By
Sanctum Media

Written By
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Cover Art
Front: Jonah Skull (Bob Brinkman)
Back: Battle of Zonchio (Anonymous)

Interior Art
Captain Roberts' Crew carousing at Old Calabar River (Charles Ellms)
Saturday Night at Sea (George Cruikshank)
Zodiac Wheel (Anonymous)
Jonah cast into the sea (Antonius Wierix, II)
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The Great Sea Serpent (New York Times staff artist)
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Calling all pirate enthusiasts! Are you interested in contributing content to a future issue? Contact us for details by email at TheCaptain@Sanctum.Media.

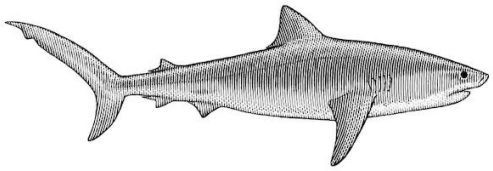
Aquatic: These large behemoths of the deep are reliant on their buoyancy in water to be able to maneuver their colossal mass. If forced into the shallows or washed ashore, the sea serpent's movement is reduced to 1d6-4' per round.

Structural damage: The ramming power of a sea serpent is so great that no mortal man could ever survive such a blow. It is "fortunate", then, that the creature uses its great strength to ram vessels and not men. The damage inflicted by the attack comes directly from the ship's superstructure, just as any ordinary attack (such as cannon fire or mundane collision).

Swallow whole: Plucking a sailor from the decks and plunging them into their gullet is the attack that haunts the nightmares of sailors across nearly every culture. If the sea serpent succeeds in a bite attack, it may immediately make another bite attack that same round and attempt to swallow the target. If the second bite attack succeeds, the target does not take damage but instead plunges down the sea serpent's throat and into the acrid dark of the creature's stomach, where it takes damage each round thereafter equal to 2d14 acid + 1d10 constriction. A trapped creature can try to cut its way out with a weapon (such as a dagger) by inflicting 20 points of damage against AC 18.

Shark, Tiger

These solitary sharks, with a reputation as man-eaters, can grow to over 16' in length and take their name from the tiger-like stripes that run down their bodies.



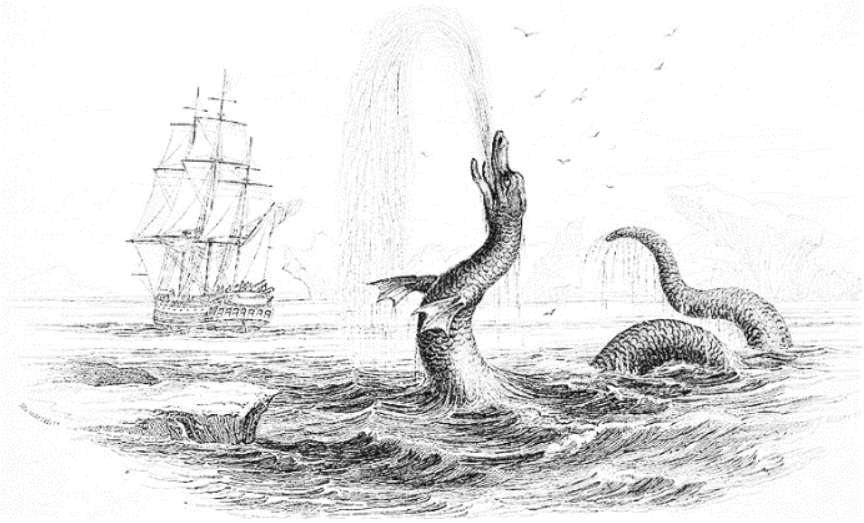
Opportunistic feeders and scavengers, tiger sharks will eat anything that crosses their path including otherwise obviously inedible junk. Their man-eating reputation is relatively well deserved, with the earliest known tiger shark attack in the Americas having taken place over 1,000 years ago, documented in the fossilized remains of its victim.

Shark, Tiger: Init +5; Atk bite +6 melee (1d8+2); AC 14; HD 3d8; MV swim 100'; Act 1d20; SP burst of speed, natural camouflage; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +3; AL N.

Burst of speed: When initiating an attack at the beginning of an encounter, tiger sharks may move up to double its normal move.

Natural camouflage: Tiger sharks have a dusky coloration and normally swim slowly, making them very difficult to spot, especially in darker surroundings. Detecting a tiger shark while in the water requires a Luck check by someone actively watching for sharks, with a failure resulting in the shark having moved within striking distance and gaining surprise.

Natural camouflage: Sea devils are well suited to their environment and are difficult to spot when they are motionless beneath the water. Detecting a sea devil waiting to strike requires a Luck check by someone actively on lookout, with a failure resulting in the creature having gained surprise.



Sea Serpent

"Mr. Jackson says he saw the monster with his naked eye a half mile from shore, and also had a view of it when two miles away, though (sic) *Mr. Shaw's Marine glasses.*

He says it was traveling through the water at a great rate of speed, and was about 100 feet long. A number of folds in his body were plainly seen as they rose and fell. At times the monster raised his body ten feet in the air, and it then presented a terrible sight. Mr. Jackson says that, so far as he is concerned, he has no doubt that the object he saw was a genuine sea serpent."

New York Times – September 30, 1885

As long as man has ventured out into dark waters there have been strange sightings of things that cannot be explained. Most fearsome among them are the sea serpents, colossal snake-like beasts that have been known the follow ships and, in extreme cases, even attack them.

In combat, the sea serpent's attacks vary based upon the challenge presented. Powerful ships are rammed again and again in an attempt to sink them, crew upon the decks may be swallowed whole, and sailors in the water may be subjected to a thunderous tail slap crushing them into the depths.

Sea Serpent: Init -4; Atk bite +6 melee (1d12+8), tail slap +0 melee (10d10 / 1d10 structural damage), or ram +0 melee (50d10 structural damage); AC 18; HD 10d12; MV swim 8 knots (eight 15' hexes per round); Act 1d20; SP aquatic, structural damage, swallow whole 1d6; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +4; AL N.

Message in a Bottle

Ahoy there and welcome to the first issue of Skull & Crossbones Classics!

As an entertainer, I've spent the past thirty years portraying pirates on stage. As a swordsman, a shanty singer, hero, and villain, I've walked the walk and talked the talk (and not just the exaggerated English West Country farmer's accent of actor John Newton). I've portrayed a deckhand, a bo's'n, a captain, and even a commodore.

All this time spent as a pirate drove me to research maritime and pirate history and I gradually amassed a maritime research library numbering in the hundreds of volumes. With such a library, one gradually begins to become a source on the subject and I first consulted on a book on piracy in 1998.

As a gamer, this meant that I was thrilled to swing into a number of swashbuckling systems including (but not limited to) *7th Sea*, *Swashbuckler*, *Skull & Bones*, and *Blood Tide*. Since I began exploring the worlds of Dungeon Crawl Classics, the idea of a pirate setting was in the back of my mind. It began to really percolate with the seafaring issue of Rev. Dak Ultimak's groundbreaking zine, *Crawl!* Once I started working on creating a ruleset for naval combat in the DCC tradition, it was only a matter of time until you held this issue in your hands.

Granted, it took just over four years to get this issue to you...but let's not talk about that.

Skull & Crossbones Classics is meant to unfold into an entire DCC-compatible system inspired by the Golden Age of Piracy. The plan for the zine is to introduce a new class every 2-3 issues and to provide general pirate-oriented issues and rules mechanics in between. A great pirate system is of no use if it doesn't help to also capture the flavor and feel of such a setting, and I plan on laying groundwork that anyone can pick up and expand upon.

S&CC is designed to be played in a number of ways, akin to DCC Lankhmar. It may be run "pure", in a completely historical sense for those who are looking to capture the Golden Age of Piracy. For those wishing to introduce elements of the supernatural (and monsters), there will be no shortage of dark terrors and phlogistonic variants available for use. Indeed, this issue introduces a few seagoing creatures fit to add a layer of supernatural menace to your game. Finally, if you so desire, you can just drop the material into your ongoing DCC game and call it good. The material is meant to be 100% compatible.

For the first issue, there was no resisting releasing a S&CC class, and so we present the Jonah. Those who saw the preview in Sanctum Secorum's *2018 Free RPG Day Companion* will notice that the class has undergone a few small changes. This issue also contains material to compliment the introduction of the Jonah into your campaign, dealing with Luck (both beneficial and baleful), and I hope to similarly theme future issues.

So, let's set sail, shall we?

Captain Bob

Character Basics

Alignment: For the purposes of DCC, those who choose to raise the black flag are assumed to be of at least a moderately chaotic leaning by default. While "chaotic" does not automatically imply inherent "evil", it certainly conveys the level of lawlessness that is inherent to piracy. Urban legends of democratic pirate nations notwithstanding, pirates thrived in chaos. Even legally authorized pirates – privateers – were just pirates with a parental permission note from their government.

For S&CC, alignment is more representative of a person's inner feelings rather than their actions. One can certainly be a lawful pirate without being a privateer, but the sailor may well be wracked with guilt over his crimes. In this way, alignment may be used to add greater depth to the role play of the character, rather than dictating their actions.

Armor Class: In a world where armor is a true rarity, characters add both their Agility and Stamina bonuses to their armor class. If armor is worn, the armor's bonus replaces that of the PC's Stamina.

Cultural Backgrounds: Obviously, in a world of humans, there is but a single race. What differentiates humanity is where they are from and how they are raised. These backgrounds are meant to flavor how a character is described rather than impacting their die rolls. A spellcaster might be a student of Doctor John Dee, a follower of the Loas, or even an Inuit angakkuq. Their abilities will be equal, although how they accomplish certain feats may differ wildly. This is a matter of theming and flavor only. "Race as class" does not exist in S&CC.

Players and judges are encouraged to research their chosen cultural backgrounds, as reality offers a richness of flavor that cannot be matched by even well-intended stereotype descriptions.

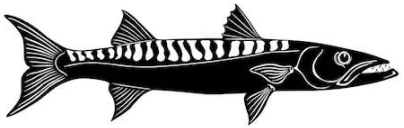
Firearms: Firearms will be covered in depth in a later issue. However, unless otherwise noted or culturally inappropriate, all PCs are familiar with basic firearms.

Sea Beggar's Bestiary

Barracuda

Slender, bordering on snake-like, these snaggle-fanged predators can be found throughout tropical and subtropical waters. The fish are vicious, opportunistic predators with a reputation for biting humans. Growing as large as 5' in length, barracudas are most dangerous to humans while in churned, muddy waters.

Barracuda: Init +7; Atk bite +6 melee (1d8+2); AC 13; HD 2d6; MV swim 100'; Act 1d20; SP burst of speed, natural camouflage; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +3; AL N.

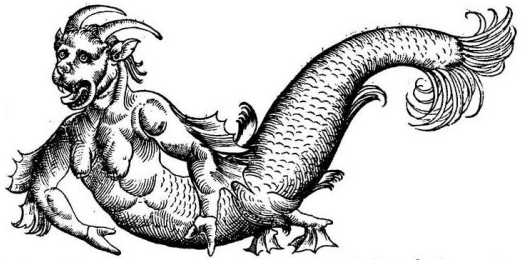


Burst of speed: When initiating an attack, barracuda may move up to triple its normal MV for up to four rounds.

Sea Devil

Gesnerus mentions this monster, whose portrait he had obtained from a painter who had seen him naturally in Antwerp; it had a very fierce expression, with two horns and long ears, and the rest of the body was that of a fish, except for the arms, which were approaching normal. He was captured in the Illirica Sea having thrown himself to shore, as he tried to seize a small child near him, and was chased closely by a seamen who had seen him, stoned to death, and came to die after on the edge of the water.

Abroise Paré – *Monsters and Prodigies*



Sea Devil: Init +1; Atk bite +1 melee (1d4), grab +1 melee (drowning), or head-butt +0 melee (1d7+1); AC 13; HD 2d8; MV swim 100' or crawl 10'; Act 1d20; SP drowning, natural camouflage; SV Fort +3, Ref +2 (-2 on land), Will +1; AL C.

Drowning: Sea devils are fond of dragging their victims into the water and holding them there until they drown. Victims may hold their breath for 6 + Stamina modifier rounds before they begin to drown (losing 1d3 Stamina per round until reduced to zero and slain). Breaking free of the sea devil's grasp requires a DC 14 Strength check.

65	Chum: Sailor's presence aboard attracts man-eating sharks.	83	Mutiny: Sailor enrages captain. DC 16 Will save or be killed.
66	Wanted: Local governor places a bounty on the tar's head.	84	Zzzzzark!: Lightning strikes sailor for 10d6 damage.
67	Nice smile: A brawl leaves the sailor toothless. -1d3 permanent Personality.	85	Smell my finger: Next wound turns septic. DC 10 Fort save or die.
68	Sorry about that: Sailor kills a bystander during a duel and is now wanted for murder.	86	Another lucky shot: All successful blows against sailor are critical hits.
69	Untangling: Knots within 10' of the sailor mysteriously come undone.	87	Hoppy: Tar loses a foot. Move reduced by ½ with a crutch, by 1/4 with a peg leg.
70	A really bad day: Seaman loses (1d6): (1-3) an arm and -2 Agility, (4-6) a leg (see #85).	88	Hang 'em high: Seaman tangled in rigging. DC 18 Ref save or die.
71	Snakes: Next loose rope grabbed is a venomous snake.	89	The Big One: Tar suffers heart attack. DC 20 Fort save or die.
72	Eww-eww gross: Insect burrows into tar's ear, inflicting -1d3 permanent Intelligence.	90	Just a trim: Through a lengthy series of Rube Goldberg-esque events, the tar is decapitated.
73	Crash!: Ship's cannons misfire and dismount near the seaman.	91	Lockjaw: Seaman steps on nail and dies of tetanus in 3d3 days.
74	Nice kitty: Sailor knocks the ship's cat overboard. It drowns.	92	Reclusive: Tar fatally bitten by spider within 24 hours.
75	Big boom: A cannon misfire leaves the sailor deaf.	93	Terribly sorry: Fellow sailor accidentally strikes and kills tar.
76	Seize him: Seaman comes to the attention of the Crown.	94	Chicken Little: Falling object (brick/spar/anvil) kills tar.
77	A bad cough: Shrapnel pierces tar's lung, inflicting -1d3 permanent Stamina.	95	Who left this here?: Sailor trips and drowns in a bucket of water.
78	Anchors aweigh: Seaman falls overboard while tangled in chain.	96	And that guy in particular!: Lightning strike out of clear sky kills sailor.
79	Famine: Food spoils in the sailor's presence.	97	Wheeze: Seaman forgets how to breathe, suffocating to death in 2d3 rounds.
80	Mind your step Pew: Sailor is struck blind.	98	Click-click-BANG: Weapon misfire within 200' slays sailor.
81	Total amnesia: Tar struck on head, Return to level 1.	99	Yum: Tar inhales a gnat and chokes to death.
82	Hang 'em: Sailor captured by pirate hunters, taken to trial.	100+	Armageddon: A fiery meteor immediately flashes across the sky, striking the sailor and killing them.

Gender: While it was uncommon to document a woman sailing as a pirate, such women existed. While only a handful of such examples have ever been recorded, others likely sailed under the black flag without ever being identified. A character's gender should offer no advantage or additional hardship in this setting.

Languages: Unlike many settings and systems, there is no "common" language, only those more prevalent than others. The spread of the British Empire has carried the usage of English across the globe, but that is no guarantee that any given person will be able to speak it. Characters begin play with a starting language determined by their cultural background and may add languages as allowed by their Intelligence modifier. Further, characters begin play illiterate and must choose literacy (if so desired) in place of one of their additional languages.

Some suggested languages include (but are not limited to): English, French, Dutch, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Swahili, Greek, Latin, Arabic, Hebrew, Chinese, Creole, Māori, and Rapa Nui. In fact, any terrestrial language of the period is allowable, although not automatically useful.

Sexuality: Among pirates, there is some evidence that many were accepting of, and even open in, homosexuality. Who a person was tended to have less importance than how well they carried out their duties. Survival was often at stake. Those interested in learning more are encouraged to read *Sodomy and the Pirate Tradition* by B. R. Burg (1983).

Skills: While 0-level career skills can certainly come in handy, sailors are versatile tradesmen by necessity. They are familiar with astronomy & navigation, carpentry, sewing, cooking, cleaning, security, ropework, blacksmithing, and numerous other skills. The majority of these trade skills are placed beneath a single heading: *Seamanship*. Like other skills, the die with which Seamanship is rolled varies. Level 1 sailors begin with a d10, increasing +1d per level through 7th. Additionally, some classes gain a bonus (or penalty) to these rolls.

Star Signs

There are likely as many ways of determining one's stars as there are differing peoples on the earth. Depending on the culture from which a character hails, things will differ wildly. Star signs are used in place of birth augurs and provide both weal and woe, the good and the bad. Below are three star sign charts, drawn from some of the more common cultural backgrounds.

Unless otherwise noted: a positive Luck bonus provides the positive benefit, negative the ill, and those with no Luck modifier gain/suffer a 1-point bonus/penalty.

Table SS-1: Traditional Western Zodiac

d12	Sign	Weal	Woe
1	Aquarius	Skill checks	Morale checks
2	Pisces	Healing checks	Will saves
3	Aries	Ranged damage rolls	Healing checks
4	Taurus	Melee damage rolls	Fumbles
5	Gemini	Will saves	Fortitude saves
6	Cancer	Reflex saves	Ranged damage rolls
7	Leo	Morale checks	Skill checks
8	Virgo	Ranged attack rolls	Melee damage rolls
9	Libra	# of Languages	Ranged attack rolls
10	Scorpio	Melee attack rolls	Reflex saves
11	Sagittarius	Critical hits	# of Languages
12	Capricorn	Fortitude saves	Melee attack rolls

Western Zodiac: Stemming from Greco-Roman beliefs and culture, one's "Sun Sign" is determined by their date of birth.

Table SS-2: Chinese Zodiac

d12	Sign	Weal	Woe
1	Rat	Will saves vs. fear	Morale checks
2	Ox	Strength checks	Fort saves vs. spells
3	Tiger	Melee damage rolls	Fort saves vs. poison
4	Rabbit	Reflex saves vs. traps	Strength checks
5	Dragon	Spell checks	Corruption rolls
6	Snake	Reflex saves vs. spells	Stamina checks
7	Horse	Stamina checks	Reflex saves vs. falling
8	Goat	Fort saves vs. spells	Reflex saves vs. spells
9	Monkey	Reflex saves vs. falling	Will saves vs. fear
10	Rooster	Melee attack rolls	Melee damage rolls
11	Dog	Morale checks	Melee attack rolls
12	Pig	Fort saves vs. Poison	Reflex saves vs. traps

33	Hey Doc: Tar offends ship's surgeon, suffering -1d to healing.	49	What?!: Sailor goes deaf in one ear.
34	Where's that cat: A plague of rats focused on the sailor infests the vessel.	50	Mmm, bacon: Sailor wakes up on fire (again) suffering 1d6/round until extinguished.
35	All in: Sailor incurs gambling debts he cannot pay.	51	Again?: Firearms always misfire in the sailor's hands.
36	Seized: Sailor pinned to hull by line; 3d3 damage.	52	Duck!: Tar enrages cooks'n and loses an ear to a flung cleaver
37	Nice shot: Foes gain +1d to critical hit rolls.	53	Bridal shower: Sailor wakes up married to a barmaid.
38	We always get our man: Sailor is wrongly arrested by local officials and jailed for 1d7 days.	54	They really don't like you: Angry crewmen put glass in the tar's food inflicting 1d6 damage and a loss of 1d4 Stamina.
39	Hey peasant: Ship's officers take a dislike to sailor.	55	What a night: Sailor wakes with no money and a vile hangover.
40	Dingos: Seaman mauled by a pack of wild dogs, suffering 2d12 damage.	56	Justice is served: The seaman is rightfully arrested and jailed for 1d3 weeks.
41	Vertigo: Tar develops vertigo when up 30'+ or higher; DC 12 Will save or fall.	57	Hold this: Sailor loses a hand below the elbow. 1d6: (1-3) dominant hand; (4-6) off-hand.
42	Throw the bullet: Sailor angers gunner's mate and is never issued powder.	58	Maybe I have a problem: Tar wakes in an alleyway ashore, utterly naked and lying in filth.
43	Montezuma: Sailor drinks bad water. DC 14 Fort save or "ill" for 1d7 days.	59	I can't swim: Seaman falls over-board and begins to drown. Consult drowning rules.
44	Is something burning?: Upon discharging a firearm, the sailor takes a powder flash to the face. DC 12 Fort save or struck blind.	60	Do you know who I am?: Tar offends a legendary pirate captain (such as Blackbeard or Edward Vane).
45	Firestarter: Sailor drops an open match and starts a blaze aboard ship.	61	We've got your back: Tar's fellow crewmates mistakenly follow them into a failed mutiny.
46	Can't have nice things: Sailor loses a random weapon.	62	Shush you: Sailor is struck dumb for 1d30 days.
47	8 lives left: Sailor knocks the ship's cat overboard. It lives.	63	Can't have nice things: Sailor loses a random weapon.
48	Don't blink: The unfortunate tar loses an eye (and depth perception). -1d to attack rolls.	64	Hey Mary: Sailor contracts Typhoid. -1d3 permanent Strength. DC 14 Fort save or die.

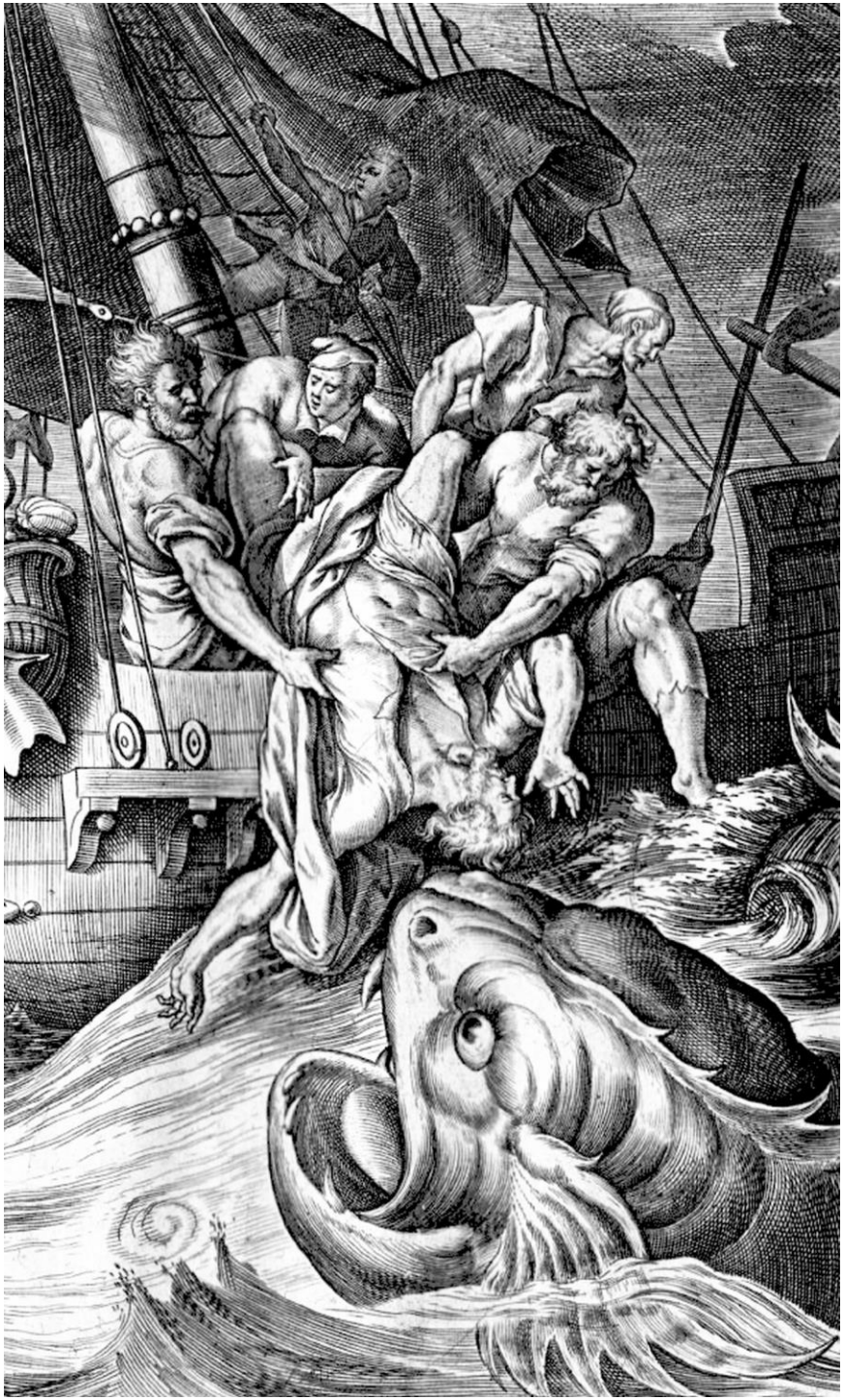
Table J-3 — Bad Luck			
Roll	Result	Roll	Result
1	Uncoordinated: Sailor immediately trips and falls prone.	17	Hot-hot-hot!: Sailor is scalded with boiling water, suffering 1d4 damage.
2	Just sat funny: Tar's leg goes numb for 1d4 rounds, inflicting a -5' Move penalty.	18	I see the eclipse: Tar develops sun-blindness and suffers -10' to vision range.
3	Butterfingers: Seaman drops whatever is in his hands.	19	Hold this: Sailor is framed and flogged for 2d8 damage.
4	Sliver: Sailor suffers 1d2 damage from a shard of wood slipping into their skin.	20	Land-sick: Tar loses his land-legs requiring a DC 10 Ref save daily or -10' Move.
5	Absentminded: Tar permanently misplaces 1 item rolled at random.	21	Hey squinty: Tar's sight worsens; -1d to ranged attack rolls.
6	I don't like your face: Fellow crewmembers take a dislike to the sailor.	22	Monkeyshines: An enraged monkey tears out clumps of the tar's hair, inflicting 2d3 damage.
7	Friendly fire: A stray shot grazes the sailor inflicting 1d3 damage.	23	Timber: A falling spar strikes the tar for 1d12 damage.
8	Here kitty-kitty: The ship's cat hisses and scratches the sailor for 1d2 damage.	24	Pretty Polly: A parrot bites the sailor's face, inflicting -1 Personality.
9	You look familiar: Sailor draws the interest of pirate hunters due to a case of mistaken identity.	25	Hand me the saw: Sailor loses 1d8 fingers suffering -1 Agility for every 3 fingers lost.
10	Dance!: Seaman loses 1d10 toes, suffering -1' Move per toe and -1 Agility for every 5 toes lost.	26	Hey slappy: A flying fish strikes the sailor in the chest for 2d4 damage.
11	Get THAT guy: In combat, the tar's foes gain 1 extra attack action against them in the initial round.	27	Crackle-crackle: Tar leans over candle and catches their hair inflicting 1d6 + burning.
12	Accident prone: Sailor suffers a +1 penalty to fumble rolls.	28	Kong: A rolling barrel strikes the sailor for 2d5 damage.
13	Hold still damnit: Seaman suffers a -1 penalty to melee attack rolls.	29	Hey peasant: Ship's officers take a dislike to sailor.
14	Over there: Seaman suffers a -1 penalty on ranged attacks.	30	Nice shot: Foes gain +1d to critical hit rolls.
15	Wimp: Sailor suffers a -1 penalty to damage rolls.	31	Can't have nice things: Sailor loses a random weapon.
16	I just twisted it: Sailor injures a knee and suffers -5' Move penalty.	32	Ancient Mariner: Tar accidentally kills an albatross (see pg. 18).

Chinese Zodiac: Simplified here to the associated animals, the Chinese zodiac draws upon the yin and yang of the five elements (wood, fire, earth, metal, and water), a heavenly stem, and an earthly branch (all based on one's year of birth).

Table SS-3: Polynesian Zodiac			
d12	Sign	Weal	Woe
1	Makalii	+1 starting Agility	-1 Armor Class
2	Kealo	Strength checks	Reflex saves vs. falling
3	Mahimahi Kaulua	Melee damage rolls	Reflex saves vs. traps
4	Nana	Swimming, bonus x 10'	Will saves vs. fear
5	Welo	+1 starting Strength	Spell checks
6	Ikiiki	Reflex saves vs. spells	Ranged attack damage
7	Kaaona	+1 Armor Class	Personality checks
8	Hilinaehu Ku	+1 starting Intelligence	Corruption rolls
9	Mahoe Mua Pele	Fort saves vs. fire	Will saves
10	Mahoe Hope	+1 starting Luck	+1 on Recovering the body
11	Ikuwa	+1 starting Personality	Melee damage rolls
12	Welehu	Ranged attack rolls	Melee attack rolls

Polynesian Zodiac: Simplified here to the associated spirits, the Polynesian zodiac links one to an ancient Polynesian spirit, drawing upon their strengths and weaknesses.

These are offered by way of example, and judges are also encouraged to create their own lists. Other star sign systems will be explored in greater depth alongside their various cultures in later issues.



Ill-Fortune

It was bound to happen eventually, that last Luck point was spent. Depending on the judge, that might place the PC's Luck at 3, or even worse – zero. Having so little luck is certainly tantamount to having "bad luck", and the following table gives plenty of fodder for what to do when someone's luck runs out.

Ill-Fortune

When a PC's Luck score hits 3, roll d100 on the following table. For each point of Luck below 3, add +10 to the result rolled (max +30). A Jonas rolling on the ill-fortune table rolls twice, taking the higher result.

While some results are clearly instant in effect, others are not. Judges are encouraged to not immediately reveal the results of the roll, depending on the situation. Instead, the judge should be certain to use the ill-fortune at a very inopportune, but appropriate, time. Take your time, let the player worry.

Some effects on the table are ongoing (as opposed to being permanent, such as the loss of a limb). Should the PC's Luck rise above 3, their run of bad luck ends – but, if the PC's Luck rises above 3 prior to the rolled event having a chance to take place, it will still occur at a time of the judge's discretion. One does not toy with the Fates.

Blasphemy

Even those who leave a "drink for the devil" are wary about blaspheming while aboard ship. Such behavior is often forbidden under ship's articles, subject to a small penalty. Those who tempt fate by potentially drawing the gaze of the divine to their vessel, at the judge's discretion, should roll 1d5 (modified by Luck) on the table to see what sort of ill-fortune is visited upon them for their folly.

Bad Luck

Should a PC engage in, or be victims of, circumstances deemed to bring bad luck, at the judge's discretion they should roll 1d10 (modified by Luck) on the table to see what sort of ill-fortune befalls them.

Curses

Should a sailor be struck by the evil eye or some other form of powerful curse, at the judge's discretion they should roll 2d10 (modified by Luck) on the table to see what woe befalls them.

Seabirds: Time spent at sea is time spent away from land, where birds traditionally nest. It is no wonder then, that some seabirds took on mythical properties in the eyes of some sailors.

- Albatross: Despite now being perceived as ill-fortuned, the albatross was caught and eaten by many sailors. There were, however, those who thought the massive birds were the souls of sailors lost at sea, and that killing them would bring bad luck. It was not until Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* that the albatross became universally seen as bad luck across popular culture.
- Flying Bo's'n: Otherwise known as the bird-of-paradise, these colorful birds were believed to be the souls of dead sailors. To have one land aboard a vessel was a sign of an impending death.
- Gulls: Gulls were sometimes said to be the souls of dead sailors but the sight of them also meant that land was likely to be near.

Sharks: A shark following a ship was an omen of an imminent death.

Smoking: To light a pipe from a candle or lantern was to kill a sailor.

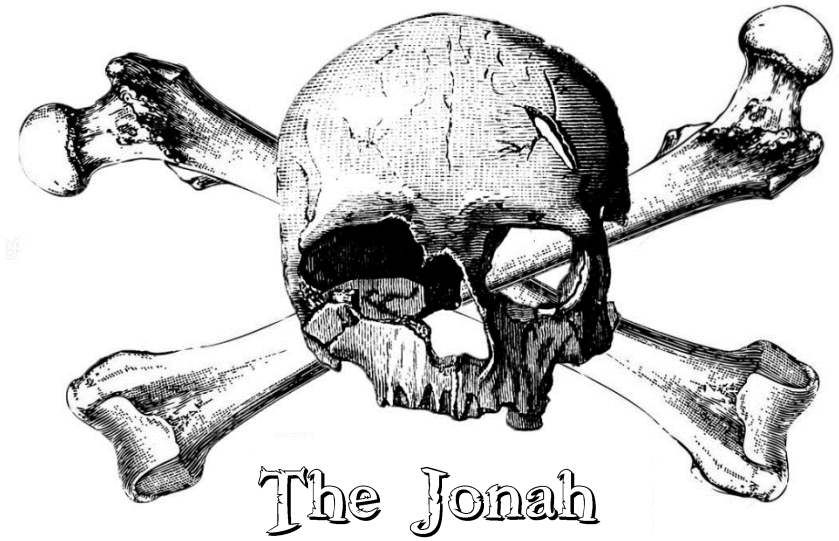
Tattoos: There are countless superstitions about sailors' tattoos (enough to warrant an article in an upcoming issue). An example was having the crucifix tattooed across one's back. It was said that it would lessen the sting of the lash, as the lash would refuse to strike the image of Christ.

Unlucky Days: Traditionally, there are several days that were considered marked by bad luck. Some examples are:

- Candlemas Day (Feb 2): Setting sail on Candlemas Day was said to lead to disaster. Far beyond mere bad luck, such voyages risked shipwreck...or worse.
- Fridays: Described by Admiral William Henry Smyth as "The *Dies Infaustus*, on which old seamen were desirous of not getting under weigh, as ill-omened," setting sail on a Friday was said to bring grave misfortune.
- Mondays: Irish fishermen refused to light the pipe of another on Monday, lest they surrender their luck to the other sailor for the entirety of the coming week.
- New Year's Eve: Believed to be the day that Judas hung himself from an elder tree, setting sail ensured that someone would die upon the voyage.

Weather: A number of forces could impact the weather.

- Dawn/Dusk: "Red sky in morning, sailors take warning. Red sky at night, sailor's delight."
- Whistling: Whistling or singing into the wind would "whistle up a storm". It was not uncommon to find even a ship's officers to be whistling softly though, should the ship become becalmed.
- Windselling: There are tales of Vinland witches who enchanted ropes bearing three knots. Untying the first knot generated a pleasant breeze, the second released a stiff wind, and the third unleashed a gale. These legends are old, and few "modern" sailors believe them.



The Jonah

Living Bad Luck Charm

Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.
(Jonah 1:11-12)

With the snapping of a line, sailors begin to murmur to themselves; their furtive whispering grows louder should someone be injured. Bad luck, misfortune, and woe are the hallmarks of there being a Jonah aboard ship. Named for the biblical sailor who disobeyed the wishes of the Lord, there are few who feel sympathy for those so cursed – only for those who share the Jonah's misfortune.

Whether the ill-fated sailor ran afoul of an islander curse, angered the spirits of the sea, or was simply born under an unfortunate sign, none of that matters. The Jonah is a curse to all around them, a burden only ever grudgingly borne. Sailors are not fond of bad luck, ill omens, or the tempting of misfortune...a Jonah least of all.

Unlike other classes where the PC's class is known both in and out of character, the Jonah should fiercely protect his identity in character. Since suspicion of the presence of a Jonah aboard can lead to the sailor in question being tossed overboard to drown (in accordance to the instructions of the Bible), a Jonah should always be ready with an excuse or scapegoat to cover their trail.

Additionally, since there is a penalty to a party which includes a Jonah, forethought should go into playing one with the knowledge that the PC might be killed by their companions at any moment.

Hit Points: A Jonah gains 1d7 hit points per level.

Weapon Training: Jonahs, like all ordinary sailors, are familiar with common weaponry: dagger, short sword, club, and firearms.

Armor Bonus: Jonahs may substitute their current Luck modifier for either their Agility or Stamina bonus for the purposes of armor class. Unless 0, the modifier always grants a positive increase to armor class. The further down on their Luck a Jonah is, the harder they can become to hit.

Alignment: Fortune favors the bold, but misfortune? She flirts with all comers.

Lawful Jonahs suffer their ill luck due to some form of transgression that they carried out, sometimes wholly unknowingly. Whether it was the killing of an albatross, whistling on deck, or some other malignant action, these Jonahs have run afoul of forces greater than themselves and are being punished for their actions... and they know it. They are those aware of their crimes and suffer in penance for what they have done.

Neutral Jonahs bring bad luck through no doing of their own. Some of these cursed individuals were simply born under an unfortunate star while others might be part of a lengthy lineage bearing an ancestral curse. All of them are innocent victims but doomed nonetheless. They are the hopeless and helpless bemoaning the cruel nature of the universe and denouncing the fates.

Chaotic Jonahs are aware of the vagaries of fortune that follow them, carrying with them potential for both weal and woe. Embracing the uncertain nature of the universe, these sailors delight in the alteration of probability that surround them and are eager for others to share their plight. They are akin to gremlins, sharing woe with a quiet glee – inflicting their luck on those who they feel have wronged them, or in ways they feel will benefit them. A petty slight might mean enduring a losing night at cards while a grave insult might lead to a line snapping and dropping the offending sailor to the deck below.

Bad Luck Charm: Party members accompanied by a Jonah suffer a +2 penalty to all Luck checks. This penalty extends to checks for rolling the body.

Flash in the Pan: When using firearms, Jonahs have a higher than average chance of suffering from a misfire, damp powder, or even a muzzle failure. Firearm fumbles occur on a natural result of 1-3.

Luck: Jonahs recover their level in Luck points each night.

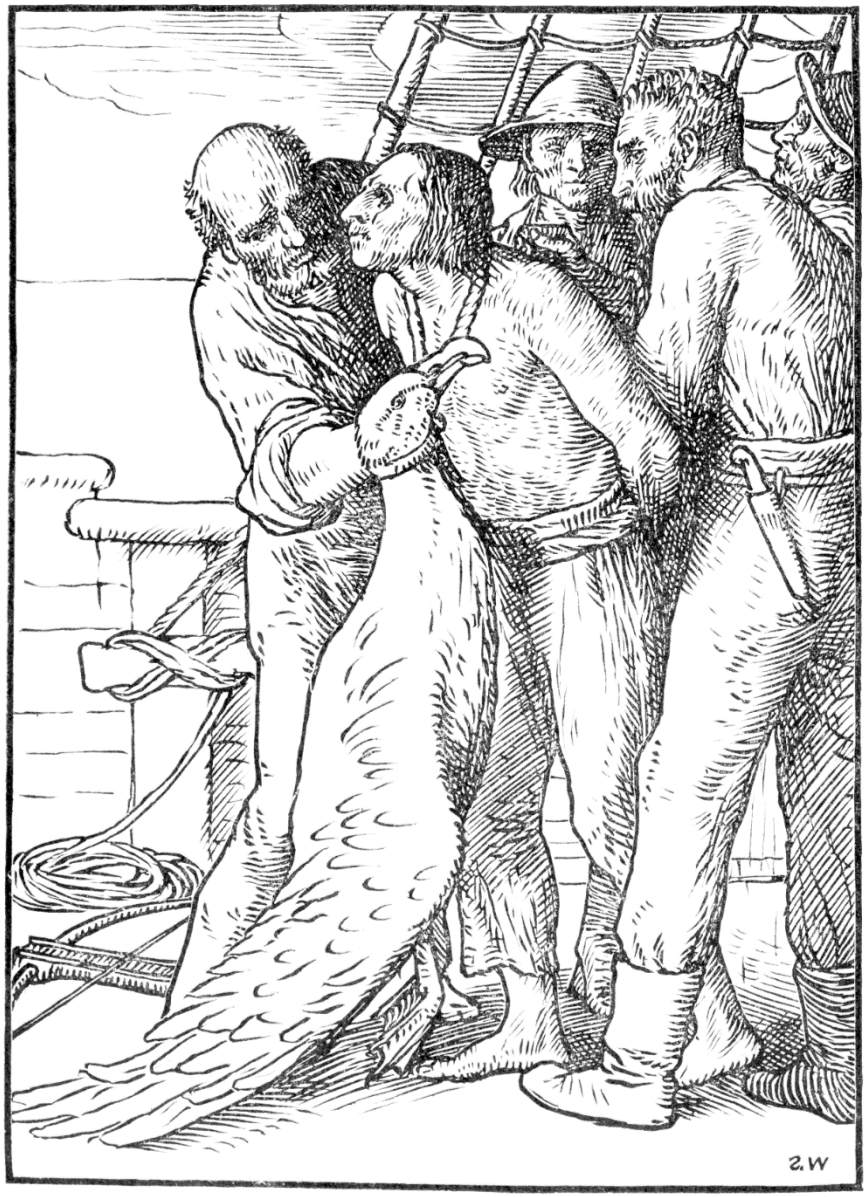
Movement: A Jonah has a base movement speed of 30'. Like most sailors, Jonahs cannot swim. Why bother? Sharks would just eat them anyway.

Re-Align the Stars: Upon failing a luck check, the Jonah may target a party member and draw upon their luck in an attempt to negate their bad luck. This allows the Jonah to make a second Luck check. Failure indicates that both individuals suffer from the misfortune of the failed roll (or some other calamity – at judge's discretion).

Names: Even the naming of the ship itself could bring misfortune.

- Christening a ship and naming it was very serious business to some. Many believed that renaming a ship would bring disaster, but it is worth noting that many pirates routinely renamed vessels that they took as prizes.
- Ships with names ending in the letter "a" are considered to be unlucky vessels.

Porpoises: Porpoises around a ship were a sign of protection and good luck.



Sailing Superstitions

Sailors are a superstitious lot, although just how much so is a subject for a debate. What some claim to be superstition, others will pick apart as modern legend. Without making a point for (or against) authenticity, below is a collection that judges can use to set the crew on edge for fear of misfortune.

Boarding: Always board a ship right foot first. To do otherwise would bring sorrow on the voyage.

Butterflies: Having a butterfly land on the deck before the ship cast off was said to ensure a prosperous voyage.

Cats: Having a cat aboard was considered lucky, but there are...conditions.

- Approaching: A cat approaching a sailor was considered good luck, but if it should cease its approach and depart, the sailor would soon die.
- Overboard: If a cat fell overboard (or worse – drowned), it would bring nine years of bad luck to the ship.
- Weather: Cats were said to contain storms within their tails. If a cat was seen cleaning its fur against the grain, it signified a coming hailstorm, while a cat sneezing was thought to predict rain.

Cauls: Being born with a caul (a thin, harmless membrane) over one's face was thought by some to be proof against drowning. Because of this, the caul of a new-born child was sometimes brought aboard as protection against drowning for the entire ship's crew.

Flowers: Flowers brought aboard ship would be used to make a funeral wreath during the voyage.

Good Luck Charms: Sailors had a wide variety of charms and petty incantations said to ward off bad luck.

- Crossing their fingers
- Iron nails to ward off witchcraft
- Spitting into their hats
- Spitting into their left palm

Jinxed Ships: It was said that a ship cursed with ill-fortune was jinxed. Small craft, dinghies, dories, and the like might even be burned to "release the death in her".

Knives: Stabbing a knife into the mast of a ship was said by some to bring bad luck, others to bring good luck. Either way, it likely upset the ship's officers.

In the case of a second failure, this power may not be chained into multiple attempts beyond the initial target. Only one re-roll is allowed per original failed roll.

Seamanship: Being ordinary sailors, Jonahs receive no bonus to skill checks involving Seamanship.

Spreader of Misfortune: The Jonah may spend Luck to reduce the effectiveness of any roll by any target not warded against misfortune. This power must be spent prior to the die being rolled. It can negate critical successes and can cause a "natural" fumble on a modified result of zero or less. The amount if misfortune inflicted is applied for each point of Luck spent and increases by level.

Table J-1: The Jonah

Level	Action Dice	Misfortune	Crit Die/Table	Attack Bonus	Ref	Fort	Will
1	1d20	1-1	d6/I	0	-1	-1	-1
2	1d20	2-1	d6/I	0	-1	-1	0
3	1d20	d3	d8/I	0	-1	0	0
4	1d20	d4	d8/I	+1	0	0	+1
5	1d20	d5	d10/I	+1	0	+1	+1
6	1d20	d6	d10/I	+1	+1	+1	+2
7	1d20+1d16	d7	d12/I	+2	+1	+2	+2
8	1d20+1d16	d8	d12/I	+2	+2	+2	+3
9	1d20+1d20	d10	d14/I	+2	+2	+3	+3
10	1d20+1d20	d12	d14/I	+3	+3	+3	+4

Table J-2: Title by Alignment

Level	Lawful	Neutral	Chaotic
1	Ill-Fate	Ill-Star	Jinx
2	Tribulant	Wretch	Gloom
3	Misery	Star-Crosser	Hex
4	Albatross	Tragedy	Woe
5	Jonah	Curse	Doom

The Devil's Own Luck

The fortunes of a sailor ebb and flow like the tide, but pirates and cutthroats seem especially blessed. Indeed, it is said that they enjoy the "Devil's Own Luck" – and fortune does seem to favor them in the hardest of times before abandoning them completely in the best of times.

Old Scratch does indeed take delight in the works of hardened seadogs – murder, theft, combat...what isn't there for the Devil to love? Thus, he encourages those who fly under a black flag, with bonus Luck that flows fast and free (until it doesn't).

These points of Luck will never become permanent Luck, and players should be encouraged to spend them quickly, lest the tides of fortune suddenly turn.

Gaining the Devil's Own Luck

As a rule, the judge should not be stingy with the Devil's Own Luck. After all, it is given to help fuel the sort of deeds that make sailors into pirates and pirates into legends.

PCs may curry favor and gain the Devil's Own Luck in a number of ways:

- All PCs begin each session with a point of the Devil's Own Luck.
- Rolling a fumble in combat.
- Suffering a critical hit in combat.
- Succeeding in some particularly reckless and/or ruthless action where failure meant near certain death.
- Acting in such a fashion to truly emphasize the setting and theme of the game (speaking in dialect, singing shanties, etc.).
- Generally violating three or more of the 7 Deadly Sins or the Ten Commandments.

Using the Devil's Own Luck

The Devil's Own Luck may be spent like any other Luck, with a few notable additions:

- The Devil's Own Luck may be spent, on a one-to-one ratio, in the same way that the PC can spend their natural Luck. This means that for PCs with a Luck die, or other means of increasing the value of their Luck, it may spend as more than one point.
- The Devil's Own Luck may be spent on behalf of any PC in the party, so long as they are visible to the character spending the Luck.
- If the use of the Devil's Own Luck pushes a roll to 20 or higher, or 1 or lower, those results are treated as natural rolls resulting in critical success or failure. Keep in mind, critical successes have a negative impact on this infernal fortune.
- Lastly, the Devil's Own Luck may be spent to reduce the result of a Luck check made for the purposes of rolling the body. This Luck may only be spent by the sailor in question, on their own roll.

Losing the Devil's Own Luck

Easy as it is to gain, the Devil's Own Luck can vanish just as quickly:

- Rolling a critical success causes all of the Devil's Own Luck on the table to be cast away. Old Scratch is not fond of being shown up through the vagaries of chance.
- Acting in a particularly kind-hearted or pious fashion. Goodness is not a pastime encouraged by Old Scratch.
- Entering holy ground for reasons other than pillage. Pirates don't attend confession; confessions most often lead to hangings.
- This Luck may also be lost, at the judge's discretion, when PCs directly interfere with the machinations of outer powers (such as the Loas or the sea itself).

Wagering the Devil's Own Luck

If there is anything folklore teaches us, it is that the Devil is always open to a wager. There are times when the chips are down, and everything is on the line, and when a single extra point of Luck just isn't going to be enough. It is in times like this in which a sailor might gamble with his soul. Once per session a sailor may attempt one of the following:

- A point of permanent Luck may be bet against two points of the Devil's Own Luck on a contested roll of a d6. High roll wins.
- A point of permanent Luck may be bet against four points of the Devil's Own Luck on a contested roll of a d10. High roll wins.
- Two points of permanent Luck may be bet against six points of the Devil's Own Luck on the result of the roll of a d12. The sailor must correctly guess the outcome before the roll.