



PLAGUE FAMINE & WAR I

OSRIC™ COMPATIBLE

Written By Peter Rudin-Burgess

Concept: D M Dskit

Art: Dyson Logos, Peter Rudin-Burgess

This adventure has been writing using the rules and specifically variations of the monsters in the OSRIC rules compendium.

It can be played with most varieties of OD&D and B/X versions of the game.

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SET UP:

This adventure is described in 6 scenes. The arrival and final scenes should be played in order, but the intervening scenes can be played in any order. Depending on your players actions. The characters need to be arriving on a ship, maybe they have been offered work. The first scene takes place on that ship on the last day of their voyage. Land has been sighted and shortly afterwards so are sails on the horizon.

There is very little combat in this adventure unless the characters precipitate it. It is an ideal starting adventure for a group to get to know their characters, how their skills work and for the GM it is a chance to try and set a scene either as a foreshadowing for a greater campaign.

Most scenes feature an optional combat encounter. These can be used if your group or just the session

needs a bit of action or to give combat centric characters their moment in the spotlight.

SCENE I ARRIVAL:

This adventure takes place on a ship carrying paying passengers. On the final day of the voyage land has been spotted and the captain and crew are satisfied with their position. Other passengers are packing up their possessions and talking of their plans after the ship docks. The sun is low on the eastern horizon, shortly after dawn.

As the spreading daylight reveals more a shout of alarm rings out from the crow's nest. A sail has been seen, then the shout changes, many sails, smoke on the skyline and then ship approaching.

The captain calls for battle stations and the crew grab an assortment of weapons. The passengers are

ushered below and the crew will not take 'no' for an answer.

The crew are quite insistent that the passengers are to stay in the hold, other crew members have created a space in the cargo with bales of wool to sit on and packing cases all around. This is the safest place and the passengers must stay put.

Any characters insisting on fighting are told that they can be responsible for looking after safety of their fellow passengers. "If fighting gets hot up there the crew are going to kill anyone we don't know, and it would be terrible if we made a mistake!". That is their final warning before a grill is dropped over the hold and the characters and passengers are trapped in the hold.

The characters will hear all sorts of orders being barked out. This all sounds efficient and there is no panic. The orders call for a gun to be mounted and their orders to a firing crew. Next thing is the shudder of a big gun being fired followed by more shouted orders.

Two more shots are fired before the sounds of many voices join the hubbub from above and this is followed by the clashing of weapons. Before long figures in a general melee can be seen standing on the very grill locking the characters and passengers in the hold.

A sailor no one recognises and slain right over the grill and blood splatters down into the hold before becoming a steady dripping from a limp hanging hand through the grill.

A few short minutes later the sound of fighting has died away and a victory shout goes up from the crew. The dead body is hauled off the grill and it is opened to allow the passengers out.

There are a handful of unknown men and women lying dead of the decks and a handful more in the water around the ship. To the stern the pirates ship lists heavily to port and is sinking fast.

A few of the crew are muttering about stinking pirates but the rest are looking to landward. In that direction there are twenty or more burning wrecks leaning in every direction and bodies pollute the water.

The captain sets a course to avoid all the wrecked vessels and heads to the port. He will not listen to any arguments about looking for survivors.

Notes:

Roleplaying this first scene is all about giving the players a chance to get to know their characters. Characters strong in social skills can be given panicking passengers to deal with. If you want a fight scene you can have someone panic and fight to be let out of the hold. There is an opportunity to use first aid if someone sustains a minor injury. The ship is carrying sheep's wool as a cargo so there is little chance of pilfering anything from the hold.

LANDFALL

As soon as the characters dock it is obvious that there is something wrong both on land and at sea.

The general populace looks shell shocked at the ships out beyond the harbour. There is a tiredness and listlessness about the local people that doesn't seem to justify the heavy guard presence.

It should soon become apparent that the harvests in this region have failed for the second time. The first the city could survive by prudent marshalling of its resources and supplementing grain with fish. This year the fish stocks have let them down and there are no more reserves of grain to share out.

The ships sinking beyond the harbour was a food convoy from a neighbouring country and for many people they have seen their last hope sink beneath the waves.

What becomes apparent is that the visitors stand out like a sore thumb. The locals have sold everything of value last year to buy what food was available on the black market, now they have nothing, they are emaciated and hollow cheeked and most have had their spirits broken by having to bury too many children.

What food there is is being distributed by the army. People are expected to form orderly queues but everyone one knows that the people at the back of the queues are unlikely to get anything.

It will only take an hour or so before someone points an accusing finger at the characters and accuses them of stealing food or queue jumping.

Strangers are resented here anyway because they are eating food that

should go to residents, they are also resented because they have the chance to leave but the locals lack the means to leave and have nowhere to go.

When the fight starts the characters will be rescued by the soldiery. There is not much fight in the locals, this is just a venting of despair.

The characters will be taken to a gate house where they can clean up and check that they are not seriously hurt.

It is here that the characters will meet Mara Lindwurm, a naval officer.

She has a proposal.

Out amongst all the wrecked ships it appears that there is one that is still barely floating. What she wants is for the characters to join a salvage operation.

Why the characters?

Because feeling are running pretty high right now and if the characters were the ones who 'heroically' brought a stricken ship full of food into the harbour then they would be able to sleep a lot safer at night. The food is desperately needed anyway and if the people got a belly full of food it may help them last out a bit longer until another food convoy get here, it can save some lives and cool some tempers.

There is a tug in the harbour that can do the job but the captain won't work with the guard as his only son was killed in a food riot and he blames the guard for his loss.

All the characters need to do is go on the tug and help affix lines to the merchant ship and then come back.

The only complication is that the merchant ship was rammed by one of

the pirate ships and both ships are locked together.

The tug has a slave crew of rowers and can pull both vessels if they have to but if there are any pirates still alive on either ship the slaves will be no use.

The characters are both hired muscle and protection.

If the characters refuse the mission, then they will soon here of a band of foreign visitors who took a tug from the harbour and rescued a merchant ship full of flour. The other guys are heroes.

If the characters accept the mission then they will be taken in a covered cart to the dock where they will be introduced to Franz Hellmann, tug owner and captain.

SCENE 2 THE MISSION

BEGINS:

The characters will be ferried to the tug by cart. The tug is a squat barge type of vessel with three banks of oars on each side. There is a wheelhouse in the centre and a variety of A frames used with block and tackle for guiding cables. There are also large spools of rope and a hefty looking capstan.

The wheelhouse is roomy enough with a small cast iron wood burner and kettle for making a hot drink and keeping the shed-like structure warm. The wheelhouse doesn't have glazed windows, but each window space can be shut with a shutter and bolted in place to block the prevailing wind if needed. This does of course reduce visibility and is something that is only done when the tug is at anchor.

Most of the time the characters are on board they will be exposed to the elements, which thankfully right now are calm with an onshore breeze.

Behind the tug are towed two rowing boats that could old half a dozen people. These will be used for getting the ropes and cables to the merchant ship.

Below deck there is room for 96 slave rowers, 24 to a side in three banks of eight oars each and two slaves per oar. These slaves are from all nations and are surprisingly looking better fed than the general population.

The reason for this is that half the fish in the fish soup are not species that most people would consider eating and as the first boat to meet any incoming merchants captain Hellman is not above a bit of black-market trading. He also recognises

that without his slave workers he has no livelihood.

Captain Hellman is not particularly welcoming, but he is prepared to do the job. He tries not to engage with the characters beyond grunts. To him the characters are foreigners, stooges of the guard, landlubbers and probably being paid more than him. There is nothing he likes about them and he is not particularly open to being won over.

The tug will set out as soon as the characters are on board. They don't have to wait for the tide as they are driven by oars. The sooner they can get the merchant ship secured the better. They may have to wait for a high tide to get it into the harbour but that is neither here nor there if the thing sinks in the meantime.

The tug makes good time heading out. In total it is nearly a mile from dock to merchant ship. As they get close it become obvious that the pirate ship is unlike anything anyone has seen before. It is round, almost bulbous in shape and made of a grey ribbed material, certainly not wooden planking. The outer hull is covered in ropes, there must be a hundred of them, each about 20' long and ending in a knot.

The ram at the front of the ship is shaped like an ant's head complete with jaws, that are embedded into the merchant ship's stern.

Floating in the sea around the merchant ship are the weirdest looking beast you have ever seen. They are 8' across at least and look like spiders with massive insect-like wings. They are just floating there inert in the sea. From the tug the characters can see twenty to thirty of the things.

OPTIONAL ENCOUNTER:

A gently spinning arachnid body will float towards the tug, bumping into and lodging in amongst some of the oars. At some point in the scene the body will free itself and may be caught on a set of oars. This creature is trying to gain entry to the ship. If anyone does try and clamber over the side to free the oars the beast will attack. See monster stats for the creature, if it is of the class 'soldier'.

NOTES:

The characters may try to board the merchant ship, Scene 3, the strange pirate ship, scene 4 or bring an arachnid on board for closer examination, Scene 5. They may also ignore all of these and just try and attach tethers to the ships, scene 6.

SCENE 3 THE MERCHANT

"DIE MAGD DER KÖNIGINNEN"

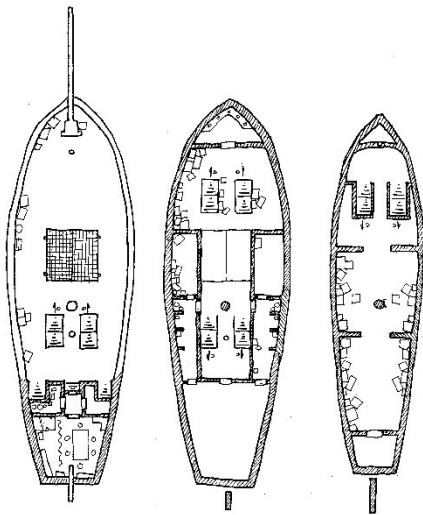
Boarding the merchant ship is easy, there is no one around to interfere. There are tell-tale signs of a previous conflict, a cutlass buried into a gunwale here, a bloody trail leading to the side of the ship there. Ropes that should be secure as swinging in the breeze and a door somewhere opens and closes with a slight squeal in the breeze. There are crossbow bolts lodged in woodwork but there are no bodies to see.

The ship is slightly bow high with the weight of the rammed ship pressing down on the stern. The breeze caught in the highest sheets are making the mast and decks creak under the tension.

At the wheel is another of the arachnid creatures lying inert atop a tangle of ropes.

To the stern of the ship is the strange pirate ship that attacked the merchant still locked in place. The 'jaws' or mandibles of the insect-like ram are obviously designed to be used as both ram and boarding bridges. Closed hatches can be seen on the pirate ship from the deck of the merchant.

Everything is made from this strange greyish material that is hard as wood and has many little ridges, like the grain in wood is one uniform colour all over and has no joins or planks.



Die Magd der Königinnen

Below decks the ship is in darkness but is dry. If anything the ramming and interlocking of the ships has lifted her higher in the water than normal.

There is no sign of any crew, or passengers until the characters reach the hold. You should use this for all its horror potential.

The ships' crew have been wrapped in thick spider webbing until completely cocooned and secured to the ceiling of the hold. On examination they are completely drained of bodily fluids and shrivelled into dry husks.

OPTIONAL ENCOUNTER:

The spider-like creature by the wheelhouse is not dead. It is playing dead so it can spy on the characters. If it is left alone with just a single character then it will try to kill them, with surprise and any advantage it can get.

It will only stand so much abuse, if anyone tries to cut it up or set it on fire, or anything like that it will respond by trying to kill that person.

If it is left completely unguarded it will try and sneak up on the characters and get one on its own to kill.

NOTES:

Apart from the single optional encounter the merchant ship is deserted. It should provide lots of tension and exploration but little threat to the characters. The bodies in the hold should warn the characters of what is to come.

SCENE 4 THE HIVER SHIP:

The spider creatures are called **Hivers** and from now on the Pirate ship will be called the **Hiver ship**.

There are two options for entering the Hiver ship. The first involves some heroics to grab a trailing rope and then climb the outside of the vessel and get to the two ports at the front.

The second option is to board the *Die Magd der Königinnen* and use the boarding ram to get to the same ports.

Either way the characters will reach the same point. The entrance hatches are sealed with a slightly translucent wax. Normally, the hiver creatures soften this wax using their saliva before mounting an attack. In the time since the attack on the ship the hatches have been sealed. This is

simple to smash through with any blunt instrument or can be cut through. There is nothing magical or resistant about it. It really is just a grey bees wax.

The chamber inside the hatches is a circular chamber with walls and floor of the same grey ridged material as the outer hull. The room is 20-foot diameter and the ceiling nine or ten feet high. The ceiling is the same colour but has clear concentric circles that meet in the centre of the ceiling and a white sticky bulge.

Anyone spending more than a few minutes in there will realise that the ceiling gives occasional movements and seems to flex. The white bulge is getting longer, meaning it is protruding into the room.

After 10 minutes the white bulge will be 2 feet tall and ten inches diameter. At that point it will drop to the floor and a new white bulge will start to form as just a tiny white patch on the ceiling.

These are eggs being laid and one will be laid every 10 minutes. They take 14hrs to mature and hatch. If the characters do not interfere the egg will be taken into the main body of the ship by a worker.

The ceiling of this room is actually filled by the Hiver Queen. She will remain here laying eggs as long as there are workers around to carry them away and feed them. She fills the space about the characters making her twenty feet across and about eight feet thick blob of organic spider-matter inside a stiff chitinous shell.

If she is attacked, she will convulse and fold in within herself and her legs will emerge, it is almost as if she turns herself inside out before dropping to the floor and engaging

the characters. See the monster section for stat of the "queen".

The hatch from egg chamber to the main bulbous body of the hiver ship is also sealed with wax.

The main body of the Hiver ship is a single large space filled with the pupating cells.

There is no natural light in this chamber but if the characters have a light source the bottom cells, each is six sided like honeycomb are opaque. There are hundreds or possibly more in this chamber.

As they look up at the tiers of cells there are less on each row until they all come together to a single cell directly above the centre of the floor.

The top 19 cells (the central one plus two concentric layers of 6 and then 12 cells) have transparent windows of wax and through them spider-like faces can be seen staring at the characters and the sounds of agitated wings buzzing fills the chamber.

Between the floor and ceiling the cell fronts become gradually less opaque.

OPTIONAL ENCOUNTER:

If the characters have fought one or more Hivers already, they will realise what a threat this hive is. If the characters try to kill a single pupating Hiver the most mature will burst from their cells in the ceiling. The number of Hivers emerging will be equal to the number of characters. This number will emerge from the top rows of cells every 30 seconds as they break through their glass-like wax seals of their cells. The flood of Hivers will not stop until the characters flee or are slain. There are a total of 55 mature soldiers on the top rows. There are 89 cells in the next section but these will take another hour

before they are mature enough to emerge. The middle section has 144 cells, then the cells just about the characters heads number 89 and the floor level is another 55. Each row is one hour behind the next until they mature.

NOTES:

The Hivers in this adventure are mutants. Normal Hivers have four genders Drone, Worker, Soldier and Queen. These mutants are different. During their life cycle they will pass through all four genders. This gender fluidity works in both directions as the individual sees the most need. If the colony queen dies another will pupate and become a queen. If the colony is under threat, workers and drones will pupate and become soldiers. In peaceful times the colony will want more workers and drones. It takes six hours to pupate.

The egg that has been laid, or will, be is intended to be a new queen to be placed in one of the sacks of flour in the merchant ship.

The main body of the merchant ship is full of the Hivers mutant army. These are about to complete their pupation period.

The dilemma for the characters is that they cannot bring the food to port without bringing the Hivers. They cannot leave the food here because the town needs it.

If the characters, try and kill the pupating Hivers the most mature ones at the top of the abdomen will break out and protect the hive.

SCENE 5 THE TETHERS:

The most obvious way to attach the ropes to the merchant ship is for one or more characters to row across to

it, climb on board and then someone throw them a rope to attach.

Getting this close to the merchant ship will require all of Captain Hellmann's attention and he will be constantly barking orders to his slave rowers to keep the tug steady.

It also means that the tub will bump into more of the floating spider creatures in the water. These will try and attach themselves to the sides of the tug. If any sort of battle breaks out, then they will swarm up the sides of the tug and attack from all directions.

If there is no fight, then they are hoping for a free lift back to the port where they will try and disappear into dark spaces in the town.

Other than the subtle movements and plans of the hivers in the water the beasts will make no moves to interfere with the characters securing the merchant ship. This is exactly what the hivers want, they are not going to stop it.

You can challenge the characters with physical challenges of getting from rowing boat to merchant ship, securing the ropes and getting safely back to the ship.

If they spot the hivers manoeuvres in getting attached to the tug, then they may force a fight. The hivers are certainly not looking for a conflict at this time.

SCENE 6 RETURNING

HOME:

By this point the characters must have seen the spider creatures in the water, they may have seen at least one of the merchant ships, the dead crew of the ship as well and they may

have fought one or more of the beasts.

It is possible that they have seen the horde of creatures maturing inside the bulk of the hiver ship.

What they do next is up to them.

The most sensible course of action is to get the guard out here and have them fight and kill all the hivers. Captain Hellmann may even be able to be convinced to carry the soldiers if he has seen one of the hivers alive.

The hivers want to get at least one of their number on shore. There it will try and find a quiet place to build a nest and then pupate into a new queen and start playing eggs. If the ship full of hivers makes it to shore then an almighty battle is going to break out as there will be more than a hundred mature hivers ready to

burst out of the ship. They will be in their soldier form so able to fly throughout the city to hunt and kill at their discretion.

If this battle ending can be avoided the hivers have a more subtle plan in mine.

The eggs of the queen are sticky and not particularly large. These they will try and hide in sacks of flour to have them carried from the merchant ship and into the city. Some will even be put on carts and carried to other towns and villages in from the coast.

This is how the hivers plan to start their colonisation of this land.

This ends Plague Famine & War I. There will be future PF&W instalments coming soon.

NPC ROSTER

MARA LINDWURM

2nd Level Fighter, AC5 (Chain), HP 15,
Attacks by weapon.

FRANZ HELLMAN

0th Level Human, AC 7(leather), HP 5.

HIVERS

The hivers are a unique species of intelligent insectoids. One of their unique features is that they can create a cocoon and pupate at will and move back and forth through different forms. These forms are not life stage related but are dependent on the needs of the community.

WORKERS & DRONES

The only difference between a worker and a drone is that drones have wings.

	Worker	Drone
frequency:	Rare	Rare
no. enc.:	1d100	1d100
Size:	Man-size	Man-size
move:	120 ft	180 ft fly
armour class:	3	3
hit dice:	2	2
attacks:	1	1
damage:	1d6	1d6
Special att:	None	None
Special def:		
MR:	Standard	standard
lair %:	10%	10%
Intelligence:	Average	Average
alignment:	Lawful Evil	
Level/xp:	2/30+1/hp	

SOLDERS

Soldiers are more formidable. They have the wings of the drones but with sharp claws capable of rending a foe.

frequency:	Rare
no. enc.:	1d100
Size:	Man-size
move:	120ft/180ft fly
armour class:	3
hit dice:	2
attacks:	1
damage:	2d4
Special att:	None
Special def:	

MR: standard
lair %: 10%
Intelligence: Average
alignment: Lawful Evil
Level/xp: 2/30+2/hp

QUEEN

frequency: Rare
no. enc.: 1
Size: Large (10 ft+)
move: 120 ft, 60 ft climbing
armour class: 2
hit dice: 3 to 8
attacks: 1
damage: 3d6
Special att: Squirt acid
Special def: None
MR: Standard
lair %: 100%
Intelligence: Average
alignment: Lawful Evil
level/xp: Variable

A colony queen lays eggs at a rate of one per 10 minutes and these eggs take 14hrs to mature and hatch.

If the queen is killed another Hiver will pupate as soon as it is safe to do so and become the new queen. If the queen is kept fed then they will gain 1 hit die per day until fully grown.

A queen can spit acid that does 3d6 on a successful hit and 1d4 each round afterwards until washed off.

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