McCreek's Quest: Pirate Plume pt. 1

The Plot

This adventure was written by Juanpas and has been re-written from his notes by Revenant with a few clarifications here and there. The adventure starts in Freiburg, so it should be pretty topical over the coming months. The Heroes become involved in a plot orchestrated by Nicklaus Trägue to pressure the local Montaigne Embassy. With the theft of a large sum of money and documents, the Heroes allow Trägue to blackmail the Montaigne whilst your adventures gain reward and possible a ship. From there further items found with the money point towards the legacy of a dead pirate; his buried treasure.

This would make an ideal scenario for Heroes in Eisen looking to turn their campaign towards the High Seas and the Thalusian Isles. It also gives Heroes a chance to become involved in politics and scheming should they so wish, though it's not the main thrust of the scenario. Below you'll find the scenario broken down into it's various stages, with further detail on each section following. There are also suggestions on which direction you might like to take things, and ideas for treasure, side-line events and clues, etc.

Overview

Theme ~ Conspiracy & Adventure

Story \sim To aid in the plots of a corrupt ruler & follow the tail of treasure to unknown cities.

<u>Act I</u> - An Invitation Scene 1 ~ Logan's stroll Scene 2 ~ Trägue's request

<u>Act II</u> - Plans & Schemes Scene 1 ~ Infiltration Scene 2 ~ River search Scene 3 ~ Street fighting Scene 4 ~ Theft <u>Act III</u> - Let's get to it! Scene 1 ~ Notes & codes

Scene $2 \sim A$ curious lead

Scene 3 ~ Buried bones

<u>Act IV</u> - Portents Scene 1 ~ Look to the Horizon!

Fin? - A brief word on the story

Act I Scene 1

Like many an adventure the players receive an invitation. Situated in the Königreich of Freiburg, under the 'rule' of Nicklaus Trägue, the Heroes are relaxing after their latest exploits. The city is fairly busy and it's late in the day when the adventure begins. If you wish to fore-shadow this then perhaps through in a few rumours regarding a potential visitor of noble birth. Other gossip might include; Trägue is concerned about cash flow, the Montaigne are spending heavily, officials are seeking ways to levy more taxes, etc. The date should be the 26th of the month, but the time of year is unimportant.

To start; party is approached by some very stern and official looking Eisen's. A taciturn individual, Herr Logan Göttschalk Sieger, strides towards them flanked by two Eisen High Guard, all wear the official symbol of Freiburg. Herr Logan is educated and well spoke, being courteous but firm at all times. He is also the son of Erich Sieger. He is here merely to deliver a letter of proposal, and should the Heroes prove difficult or begin to question events, then he will simply return to his lord and seek further instruction.

This messenger will greet the players and hand over a letter of invitation from Nicklaus Trague. The document looks, and is, official. It request the group to travel to Das Wachtturm and attend dinner with Nicklaus Trägue at which time he will offer a business proposal. Herr Logan can provide no further details because he has none, save to say that it is a valid opportunity for business and that he will escort the group to meet with his lord.

The group should simply follow Herr Logan's lead and make their way through Freiburg to Das Wachtturm, the High Guard are their to provide protection and ward of thieves and the like from troubling them. After all, this is Freiburg, and it is getting dark.

Act I Scene 2

Das Wachtturm is a formidable tower of great stature in the centre of Freiburg, almost certainly of Syrneth origin. Try and play this up, but at the same time, despite it's great strength and central nature, it is hardly a centre of governance or Freiburg administration. Suffice to say we'll know more when the Freiburg box set comes out, . . . The group is given a short time to freshen up if they like, but Trägue is certainly unconcerned with their appearances, instead Herr Logan is merely acting as etiquette should dictate. After a while, they are led into his private dining chambers.

Nicklaus has obviously been drinking, but is not actually steaming drunk, yet. He's sitting behind his table on which are various dishes, it's obvious that he's already started his meal and the party should feel slightly awkward at sitting down to join him. Trägue offers them wine or spirits but neglects to direct them to the serving implements or food dishes. He simply has other things on his mind. It can also be easily seen that there are a fair number of pieces of paper and parchment near Trägue that he's scribbling on now and then. He quickly stops and comes straight to the point.

He speaks in simple terms and with clarity of purpose, but it could be seen that he's hardly well-educated. The Heroes, being men & women of adventure, are in a enviable position in that they have but themselves to think about, Trägue wishes that he was in a similar position. Unfortunately he's not and has weighty matters to concern him. To ease his worries he wishes the players to curb the actions of the local Montaigne and better his financial position into the bargain. He explains that he wants them to carry out what is

plainly a criminal act, but one which would aid him in the administration of Freiburg and allow it's continued free trade and neutrality. He explains that every month the excessive Montaigne ambassadors and their entourage run up great debts with their lavish lifestyles. This irritates him, but they always receive a shipment of Guilders at the end of the month to pay off these debts and finance staff and the like. This sum, say 15,000 - 20,000 Guilders, arrives on Redi 28th by ship. It's always Le Dophin du Mare, and carries the money along with the mail to the city, then by secure carriage to the Montaigne Embassy.

Trägue wants them to steal it and hand it over to him, he can then bring pressure to bear with local money lenders and creditors to ensure the Montaigne enter into various arrangements, plus he can use the cash himself to further his personal projects. In return for this dangerous & daring act, he'll reward the Heroes with a gift; a ship from the Freiburg harbour. See below for details of these vessels and further explanation. Nicklaus knows little else, it'll obviously be heavily guarded but as far as route, numbers and times goes, he says that it's for them to discover and plan as they see fit. He's only after the cash. He will get Herr Logan to liaise with them to arrange for an exchange of prizes and to conclude matters. Trägue then lapses into deep thought as he starts to drink heavily. No papers are signed, nor guarantees provided, the players are free to take it or leave it.

The opening gambit is now concluded and the party should feel free to leave and conduct things as they see fit. Upon leaving Das Wachtturm they may request Herr Logan to escort them back through the dark streets, but as Heroes are unlikely to make such a request feel free to throw a small but interesting event at them as they go. Perhaps they get caught up in an attack upon a Vaticine or Objectionist, maybe some thugs take them for easy pickings, or smugglers drop of contraband with them only to want it back when the heat is off later.

Act II

The scenario should now unfurl at the pace chose by the players. They should now start to plan for the theft of a sizable sum from Montaigne officials which is due to arrive in two days time. There are several ways to go about the task and also plenty of opportunities to find out information about the schedule & whilst none of it should be easy, without several pointers and given a break or two, the theft may go badly for the group. The following 'scenes' provide information on the various options and methods open to the Heroes, so obviously not all will come to fruition.

Firstly they need to uncover the facts about the delivery of the prize to the Montaigne Embassy, the obvious source of information is the Embassy and it's staff. The party should be looking for information on the time & place of arrival for the delivery, how it is transported once the ship docks, number of guards, passwords if any, and the like. The following information is up for grabs.

There is an important dignitary due with the mail and payment, this is Dominique Montegue du Montaigne with her maid, Anna. they are traveling in secret and could be part of a bigger GM story.

The cash will be in a very secure strong box, but it is cash and not bonds or promissory notes. This is mounted upon a sturdy 'palette' and watched over at all times.

Le Dophin du Mare is a 15 point vessel, so fairly small and built for speed rather than firepower. It is well crewed and will have a contingent of 40 marines onboard along with 6 Musketeers.

The ship makes port during the morning and the money is lifted from the hold onto a sturdy carriage drawn by four horses. The marines and Musketeers escort this through Freiburg to the Embassy.

Special documentation is always prepared beforehand to cover the transit of the goods & passengers from Montaigne into Eisen. These go to the harbour master the evening before.

The trip across Freiburg takes 45 minutes or so, most of which is through main streets and well known thoroughfares, but for a few minutes they must cross an old sturdy bridge amongst some narrow and quiet streets.

Act II Scene 1

The players may chose in infiltrate the Montaigne Embassy to spy and conspire. There are three main ways of doing this; through an open invitation or legitimate business, by disguise and misdirection to gain access, and finally through downright sneaky methods involving rope, sleeping draughts and a great deal of ingenuity. In the end I suspect that a mixture of all three may be tried.

The first is the easiest, it should be fairly easy to gain an invite on the pretext of official trade or political business. Though it offers the smallest chance of finding out solid facts. The players will have to fish for info from their hosts, taking risks in open view to look at documents, and gossip for details of the delivery. Failure though merely results in a loss of reputation and social standing.

The second method is a bit trickier, but should yield more knowledge. A good bet is to sneak in with morning deliveries, pretending to be servants, official clerks and the like. If caught then the local authorities may be called in, which might present a problem depending on how you play Trägue. If successful though they Heroes can sneak about and watch preparations for the delivery, view troop movements & logistics, plus listen to discussions revolving around the visitors.

Lastly your party may chose to just break into the Embassy and run amok in the hope of not getting caught. Such an activity is bound to mean the deal is off with Nicklaus if they get caught, and are not disposed of in this liberal city. They'll have to avoid a large number of guards (50?) and alarms, and find a method of entry, such as sewers, postern gate, secret entrances no-one uses, etc. They will however, be able to steal documents and even interrogate clerks to find out solid details.

Whatever they try, the players should probably discover the rough time of arrival and and estimate of the number of troops. At best they can steal uniforms, a route map, key for the strongbox, and whatever else meets their devious schemes.

Act II Scene 2

Moving away from the Embassy and a confrontation along the streets of Freiburg, the party may gain results by checking informants at the docks and along the river. It's fairly simple to question dockhands and sailors, moving through the taverns is bound to yield some results. They can easily discover some of the following, maybe all of it with a bit of hard work and bribery.

Le Dophin du Mare is expected in at just after dawn on the 28th, she'll be carrying the mail for wealthy Montaigne residents and a large sum of cash.

The ship is piloted into the docks by the harbour master himself, who also oversees the transfer of the strongbox to the dockside.

Common labourers are used to unload the mail, but no-one other than the officials, marines & Musketeers may go near the strongbox.

Special documentation arrives the evening before from the Embassy to cover transit & customs etc. The harbour master keeps this and checks it along with the captain & Musketeers upon arrival.

The players may see ample opportunity for a switch, misdirection, or other such dupe at the dockside. They can pose as dockhands or sailors, maybe even as soldiers of Montaigne depending on their previous successes. Stealing or forging documents will alter the course of events and perhaps allow the group to set up other actions. However, what with the large amount of people at the port during the unloading of the cash and mail, things will need to be very tight to manage the theft and escape without causing a massive incident to break out.

Another opportunity exists up river, roughly 50 miles away the Heroes could stage a daring ambush as the ships travels the wide river through rough and high terrain. There are numerous small islands and cliffs from which to launch an attack on the ship, should the Heroes be brave enough. This will involve a pitched battle on the enemies home territory, and with the crew, captain & guns as well as the marines and Musketeers, things

could go very badly. However, there is a good chance that if they survive they will get away with it due to the remote location. Of course, there can be no survivors . . .

Act II Scene 3

The third possible avenue of attack is in the narrow streets of Freiburg. If the Heroes have learnt of the route the carriage takes they may well realise that it travels through an area ripe for an ambush. The location is near to the Embassy, but as such the soldiers may well be lax. The streets are quiet and narrow, with lots of older buildings crammed together, and a small but sturdy bridge, is used to cross a narrow water course. Here the group could stage an attack which cuts off the marines in part from the carriage. Perhaps they have access to gunpowder and can destroy the bridge or drop the strongbox into the water to make a river getaway. Whatever they chose, it should probably involve a messy street fight with milling troops, scared citizens, smoke, whirling horses and alley chases.

You can see that the information which the players will probably dictate the direction they go in for the theft. So if you have a particular favourite then filter the information to make this more appealing to the group. Personally I like the idea of a street battle in the middle of Freiburg, but this will cause major repercussions and might not sit well with some GM's. A battle down the river is ideal for those who wish to keep things lo key and give the group a better chance of getting away with it, especially if they have allies. For cavalier and suave players who think they can pull of a great stunt right beneath the eyes of the cities' nobility, then stealing the money right out from under the eyes of Dominique and her Musketeers in the harbour has got to be the favourite option.

Act II Scene 4

However the Heroes pull off the theft they will end up with a large sum of money, and probably on the run from the Montaigne authorities. The scenario is not meant to revolve around Dominique or Anna, however their presence should be taken into consideration, especially as Montegue's wife is 4 or 5 months pregnant. If the player's ignore them then all well and good, but things might get desperate and she could be taken hostage. Her loyal companion will try to dupe them into making them believe she is the real daughter of L'Emperuer, but the two will not act overly rash and if treated with courtesy and a dashing smile, they may be lenient in the future. The Musketeers are primarily present to protect Dominique and will fight to their deaths to protect this lady.

The treasure captured by the Heroes is as follows;

15,000 Guilders + (1d10x1000) Pistoles.

A Parchment which reads as detailed below.

A paper note written in Montaigne that says;

This parchment was found in a secret compartment of the dead pirate, Captain James 'Red Parrot' McCreek. No decipher yet. Inside was also found one red plume. Maybe the Captain's parrot. This is known to be a red bird that always said "Hanged All".

Monsieur Jacques du Crieux, 12th Primus 1668 Anno Veritatis

In effect this is the end of the scenario. The group meets up with Herr Logan and they carry out the deal. Trägue holds up his end of the bargain and supplies the players with a

ship, he'll have it located wherever the party wish, but not before the deal is completed. The adventure does continue on with the party following the parchment and note hooks provided with the booty. These are outlined below, but some GM's may want the action to end here for a while due the way this scenario turns to the high sees and exploration.

Act III Scene 1

The players first need to decipher the code of the Parchment which then requires them to unearth it's meaning. Hopefully this should be fairly straightforward, but skills rolls may be required for particularly dense players! Once done they should head to the Thalusian Isles. Through in whatever you like on the way, none of it will have much of an effect on the rest of these adventures.

Act III Scene 2

The Isle which the characters should head towards is the smallest of the Thalusian Isles, roughly 10 miles across, and about 3 wide. Make the terrain what you will, but it should be overgrown, with natural hazards and the like. Perhaps a small encounter with random beasts of the jungle, plants, rock falls, ravines etc to spice up the journey to the treasure.

Act III Scene 3

Once the party has uncovered the mysterious location of the treasure they are free to unearth it. Digging about 6 feet down will uncover two corpses of human sailors, fairly old. With them will be a small chest with a sum of money it it. Make it mixed in currencies and of a value to suit your players purses, say 1000~2000 Guilders worth. However, this is not the 'real' treasure and the party should dig further . . .

If they do so then they discover a truly bounteous prize. A massive chest that requires six string men to remove lies in the earth. All of a sudden the party should hear a warning shot or shout as a crewman rushes to warn them of danger. A pirate ship has been seen on the horizon, and they should leave quickly. What about the massive chest?!

Fin?

This concludes the scenario, with the second part leading directly on. To carry on with this the treasure can be taken or left as the players chose, but they should take one item for this to progress. It's an ornate, jewel encrusted silver cross of the Prophets Church. I realise that this last part of the adventure is rushed over somewhat, but that's the way in which it was given to me. In effect the initial activities of the party are entirely separate from the events involving McCreek's' treasure, and this last 'Act' forms a link between the earlier and later stories. The follow-on adventure by Juanpas involves the approaching pirate ship, uncanny artefacts and a temple of the Syrneth. With any luck I'll have it written up within the week.

The Ships

Nicklaus Trägue offers the Heroes a choice of ships from his harbour as a reward for their acts, and also as a means for them to escape the wrath of the Montaigne. It is also really needed should the party continue on to the rest of the adventures, unless they have a ship of their own.

The three vessels on offer are all different. They are 15, 17 & 20 point ships designed as suits your party. However, certain things should be noted.; the first is of Vendel origin and has a captain and fine crew. The second, also from Vendel, has no captain at present, and the crew are of poor quality, but the ship itself is good. The last, constructed in Vodacce, has only a couple of officers, such as purser and quartermaster, no other crew and is haunted by a Notturno Maschera. This is why it has no crew, though again the vessel is sound and the best of the three.

The Parchment

This is a fairly weathered piece of old velum, and holds the key to buried treasure. The treasure in question looks like it belonged to Captain McCreek and reads thus;

"Hanged all. On Thalusian Isles. The minor jewel hides the greatest. Northwest by the teeth, four miles. Inside the wolfs-head you will see with the eyes of death a large amongst small. Third dead arm. The bird squawks as it flies for the last time to the Void."

This is not simply written out, but is in code. The one suggested is that it is difficult to explain but fairly straightforward. The words "Hanged all" are represented on two lines, thus;

hNnFeUaWlP EaUgAdElR

The words are split over two lines, and alternate from top to bottom line with every other word being nonsense. This is illustrated above with the actual message in small italic letters and the nonsense words being in normal capitals. So as it's not too easy for the players I would suggest they are all the same;

hnnfeuawlp eaugadelr

Of course the map is a set of directions to the buried treasure. The important part is the Thalusian Isles reference, for it is to here that the players should be heading. From there the rest unfolds like this;

"The minor jewel hides the greatest." The smallest Thalusian Isle holds the treasures location.

"Northwest by the teeth, four miles." On one of the beaches on this isle are a set of rocks, and they should head Northwest four miles from here.

"Inside the wolfs-head" At this point they should be looking for a rock formation in the shape of a wolves head, this hides a cave.

"you will see with the eyes of death" There are lots of bones lying about the cave, some of which are human. Holding up one such skull, with the back removed, like a telescope you can look through it.

"a large amongst small." In effect the Heroes should be looking out of the cave mouth with the skull, when they can see a dense group of trees, one of which is much larger than the rest.

"Third dead arm." The third branch of the tree, from which hangs the skeleton of a parrot.

"The bird squawks as it flies for the last time to the Void" The Heroes need to cut down the parrot. As they do so it squawks the place to did for treasure. I.e. 6 paces north, fifteen west, etc.