

The Awakening of the Prophet's Cross:

Pirate Plume pt. 2

The Plot

This adventure was written by Juanpas and has been edited from his notes by Revenant with a few clarifications here and there. After uncovering a treasure note in the first part of Pirate Plume the Heroes should have located the booty, but are rudely interrupted by a sail on the horizon. As the pirates close, a second ship appears to save the day. An Explorer vessel, they are searching for a missing companion and entreat upon the characters to aid them.

The search takes them to one of the isles of Syrne whereby they discover the fate of the Explorer and his party. The ruins however, are not as uninhabited as you may think. A bizarre cult has sprung up around it and the Heroes must run for their lives as they dash to safety. The adventure is set upon the isle and throughout the Syrneth ruins, in effect it's a bit of exploration with a chase and several puzzles.

Overview

Theme ~ Exploration & Adventure

Story ~ To locate the whereabouts of an Explorer and escape the clutches of a bizarre Syrne cult.

Act I - Developments

Scene 1 ~ Theus's faithful servant

Scene 2 ~ Under fire

Scene 3 ~ One of our Explorer's is Missing

Act II - Uh-Oh . . .

Scene 1 ~ Religious fervor

Scene 2 ~ Portents of doom

Scene 3 ~ More doom

Act III - Perhaps we should knock?

Scene 1 ~ Okay you first . . .

Scene 2 ~ Traps

Scene 3 ~ Altar

Scene 4 ~ Flee!

Scene 5 ~ Professor Cronenberg, I presume?

Act IV - Battle

Scene 1 ~ Siege

Scene 2 ~ Bird of mystery

Act I Scene 1

The last adventure drew to a close with the characters dragging up a large and heavy chest of booty. This second and bigger chest contains over 10000 guilders in coin, along with a wealthy of gems and jewellery worth roughly half this sum. This is based on a party of four, so increase or decrease as suits your group and willingness to hand over large sums of money. In addition to the cash is a silver, jewel-encrusted Prophet's Cross. It's a fair size and quite garish, though wrought with skill. See the details below on the Prophet's Cross.

Act I Scene 2

Upon the horizon the party notice a sail rounding the headland, the flag is that of a Pirate ship and it's gun-ports are uncovered, her prow bears the name "Parrot's Plume". It's a 15 point ship as far as construction goes, and the crew should look pretty hardy and fearsome. The Heroes have just enough time to run to their ship before the Parrot's Plume catches them in shallow waters. Hot on the wake of this ship is another vessel, "The Shining Sun". This is an Explorer's Society vessel (12 points) captained by Helena Fjor. You can do one of two things as a GM, either start off the naval combat as the Pirate's Plume attacks, then the Shining Sun comes to the rescue and the Pirates tack past the headland and flee. Alternatively if you want to keep the Pirates out of things at this stage then simply have them put on sail as the Explorer's approach and drive them off. This will obviously only be a temporary victory though. The Shining Sun is well piloted and as the ships move about the players should be made aware of the opportunities that her captain has to catch the Heroes with a volley or two. This should announce their peaceful intentions and also display their skill & experience.

Act I Scene 3

The Shining Sun is captained by Helena Fjor, a prominent member of the Vendel Explorer's Society. She is a woman of action, but has been well educated and is quite logical and reasonable. She just prefers to chose solutions that favour action rather than debate. She's got nothing to hide from the characters and is quite happy to entertain them and swap information. She is currently on a mission to locate a missing leader of an expedition. The Kirk offices of the Society wish to discover the location of Michael Cronenberg, a professor who's archaeological team should be in this area. Helena is to rescue them from danger and ensure that him, and his researchers can reach safety if things have gone awry. She knows nothing of the other ship, save that it probably fled when it saw her vessel approach.

She offers to protect the Heroes and their ship as traveling together they offer less of an easy target. Helena is after some short term aid in searching for professor Cronenberg and the expedition. She'll sweeten the deal if need-be by allowing them to retain any common items of value they come across, but points out that none may actually exist. She intends to plot a course for one of the Thalussian Isles, where Michael should be investigating to layout of a ruin as a potential dig site, this is roughly 2 or three days sail away.

Act II Scene 1

The trip to the Thalussian Isle should be quite bizarre for the player who is carrying around the Prophet's Cross. Initially the wearer feels pious, but is happy to keep his own beliefs to himself, this changes during the journey. Two things of note happen; firstly he gains the ability to lay on hands, and secondly becomes more intense and overt in his belief. The first might become evident when a sailor gets lashed by a rope snapping or some such accident on board the vessel. As the Hero rushes to aid him the ability comes into effect much to everyone's astonishment. The second is more difficult as it actually takes away the role-playing of the player's character to some extent. This should be kept toned down so that events don't become too comic. The Hero is still reasonable, but wishes to convert others to his faith and will go to increasing lengths to do so. It's important to remember that the character should be feeling holy and hold great belief in the works of Theus, he has not become an avenging crusader or fanatical inquisitor, i.e. try to distinguish true faith from religious dogma. On the whole the journey should be fairly uneventful.

Act II Scene 2

The actual island itself is a warm temperate climate, and it's quite small in comparison to some of the others. It's interior looks to be a mixture of bushy vegetation, a few wooded areas with a few inland lakes and rivers, and the island is flatter, with a central rocky eruption, but more of a gentle raised slope. There are numerous coves and small beaches, and you can assume that wherever the Heroes chose to weigh anchor, it will be the same spot as chosen by Michael Cronenberg and his unfortunate party. Just in from the beach is the remains of a campsite. Helena will reveal that the expedition was made up of several academics, plus a couple of dozen helpers, porters and labourers. There were no shield-men as the expedition was for mapping and evaluation of the site only.

The campsite has been ransacked, and done in a rather destructive manner. It looks like nothing has been taken, but things are strewn everywhere. Tents have been ripped apart, utensils crushed, a few sheets of paper strewn around and valuable digging tools lay discarded and exposed. Investigating the site leads to the conclusion that the campsite came under a surprise attack at night and a skirmish took place. Pistols were shot and there is blood in evidence but no bodies. This happened roughly two-three weeks ago. Of more importance though is the Diary of Michael Cronenberg sitting in a small iron box in the remains of his tent along with a few personal effects. Michael is obviously not here and so Helena wishes for the party to travel further inland and search for him. To the ziggurat it is . . .

Act II Scene 3

Traveling to the ziggurat is pretty straightforward, though you may well want to build up the fear factor and the exploration atmosphere with some additional little problems. Some examples of such are; One of the sailors traveling with them contracts a strange disease and the rest of the crew become fearful and wish to head back. A rockslide destroys a large amount of food or water, which could make things difficult, should they press on or return for more supplies? A curious talisman is discovered on a thick broken cord (think watery Aztec), it seems to bring good luck to the explorer who takes it, until they are beset by horrific nightmares that sap their strength. Snakes, beetles, quicksand and the like would all fit in well.

Finally the group should arrive a short way off from the site of the bizarre building itself, and the second campsite is easily found. This has not been touched, merely packed up quickly and abandoned as the expedition retreated to the beach. There are a few signs of weathering but that's about it. If the diary was not found earlier, then you may want to place it here with a re-arranged layout of events.

Act III Scene 1

The ziggurat is a great building, similar in shape to a pyramid, but with some curious twists that don't look right and angles which the eye finds hard to follow. It's covered in ancient vegetation and random carvings that seem to make no sense to the group. There are two doorways, both with large stone doors blocking them, only one of which can be opened in this adventure. The door is sizable and difficult to shift, on the wall besides it are three stone relief shapes; circle, square and triangle, only by depressing the circle can the door be swung open. You might want to add some for of other event if they Hero's touch another shape. This key will probably be written in the diary. The entrance should be revealed in a unique way such as the door splitting and retreating. The idea is to a) try to distance this from a dungeon-hack, and b) to illustrate the other-worldly nature of the ziggurat. Inside the passageway is dark and the walls twist curiously as the corridor heads into the unknown. In the distance the sound of drums begin to echo from the exterior . . .

Act III Scene 2

Inside the ziggurat the passages twist and turn towards the heart of this building. Reaching that point however is far from simple, and there are three types of obstacle in the way of the Heroes. The circle/square/triangle motif is prevalent throughout the building; doorways, walls and the floor. Juanpas suggests floor tiles with these markings on and similar 'keys' upon the walls depicting the sequence in which they should be walked upon. These should be obvious at first as unimportant rooms are passed by, then perhaps the key is to be reversed, or an earlier key required to be stepped upon in conjunction with a latter, as the rooms become more critical. The second factor are the walls themselves, which are made of a dark green viscous substance, and if a Hero looks carefully the bodies of various expedition members can be seen. They have suffocated and so will the characters if traps are touched or the walls investigated too closely. Use the Drowning rules for this. Lastly is a curious junction room which appears to be pitch black, like a void, it is freezing - as evidenced by a dead sailor - and lacking an atmosphere, but there is an exit on the other side which the Heroes must get to. Have no fear for it is but a hideous nightmare, one which requires a TN 20 Resolve check to banish though. Realising the situation is illusory grants a Free Raise. Feel free to throw in one or two Ruin Monsters, plus a few unconscious sailors, some curious but impotent finds and so forth, but no actual inhabitants.

Act III Scene 3

Arriving at the centre of the ziggurat the party finally uncovers the heart of this bizarre culture. The room itself is vaulted, so much so that the ceiling is beyond vision, surely a trick of the eyes. The walls are carved stone and jade, depicting a semi-human race offering worship to the sun and moon, and other such vague references to the Seventh Sea. In the centre is a pedestal alter, upon which is a small and intricately carved statue. It is solid gold (I'd probably make it jade though to carry on the green theme). It's eyes are gems and the general shape is that of a phoenix, a creature that the Heroes may not be aware of. Whosoever is carrying the Prophet's Cross thinks that it demonic and an affront to Theus. There are three other exits to the room, a twisty passage to the second stone entrance door, one up to the room and finally down to some very unnerving dungeons. All should be dark, bizarre, dangerous and with Ruin Monsters. Although if they lift the statue they

won't get a chance to discover this as the floor gives way beneath them and the doors all slam shut.

Act III Scene 4

As the floor breaks when the statue is removed the Heroes should be plunged down into the cold darkness of a sliding ramp, as they descend great slots in the walls open and water begins to pour out. They are quickly dumped into a square, water-filled, chamber with ornate mesh drapes hanging along the walls, but there is little time to discuss the decor whilst water begins to fill their potential coffin. However the drapes are possibly the key to their salvation. If the players are particularly intuitive then they might discover that these cloth adornments allow them to breathe through water if wrapped around their throats. Odd, but they might get it, perhaps some watery/air decoration on the drapes might aid in the discovery of this curious property. Water is not their only concern though, for this room also houses two inhabitants of the ziggurat; the Ioutun. They'll attack the characters, but will dive into the depths and flee when they become crippled. The Heroes will have to follow suit and dive under the water to escape, lest they get cunning and manage rise up then climb back to the collapsed altar chamber. This swim should take about 30 minutes and is quite chilly, so Resolve checks are in order. Eventually they'll come to a split in the tunnel; left or right?

Act III Scene 5

Should the players take 1 direction, say left, the tunnel will carry on until it runs out into the sea. You may wish to have the odd Ioutun scavenger or even a couple of Sirens which the party runs into. In the other direction a short way on they come to a natural cavern, and on a slippery shelf there sits a sturdy wooden cage with three occupants. These captives are Michael Cronenberg and two of his exploratory team. They are all malnourished and fairly sick. You might want to have them guarded, for they are to be eaten at a ceremony to be held soon by the Ioutun. Perhaps they have some contagious disease which occurs later on to one of the characters, and there is also the problem of how they are to swim out unless the players have thought to carry spare drapes with them. They need not carry on much further anyway as the tunnel rises into a small cave above ground with some moveable boulders blocking the entrance. In the distance are the rumble of drums and angry Ioutun as they head for the campsite.

Act IV - Scene 1

As the party makes it's way back to the campsite with the professor, they are probably hoping to find Helena & the crews waiting for them expectantly. Instead as they approach the beach a large gathering of Ioutun, lead by an enraged shaman/elder are rushing towards the sleepy campsite. The idea should be for the Heroes to raise the alarm and dash to their companion's side as the Ioutun start the battle. Obviously this may not happen, and the ideal finish of the players and their explorer / sailor companions fighting tribal Aztec Sea Trolls on a midnight beach may not appeal to all. Should the players decide not to warn their friends then have Helena Fjor and the crew be overwhelmed and either killed, or carried off for food, depending on how generous you feel. Should they lead the camp inhabitants to the boats, then have the shaman /elders begin some ritual which culminates in the summoning of a giant water spout deity thing. This should make short work of their ship unless the shaman concentrating on the shore is quickly dispatched, it's such a shame that his elite guard is protecting him!

In the end it should be a temporary victory that the Heroes enjoy as the Ioutun flee into the island interior. This should give them time to gather their possessions and leave with their rescued charge; Cronenberg. He'll be able to tell them more about the tribal Syrneworshipping race and perhaps hint at the possibilities of the Seventh Sea and just what the statue does.

Act IV - Scene 2

Juanpas suggests this; if the statue is bathed in blood, the gold becomes like flesh and the ship enters the Seventh Sea, wherein which one hours travel takes them perhaps one hundred miles.

As the vessels finally begin to head for home, it becomes noticeable that the Pirates Plume is following them from a distance, and he continues to do so for several days. McCreek is indeed on board and seeks both his treasure and the Prophet's Cross. Whilst he'll try to avoid a naval battle if he feels he could lose, McCreek will try to board them during the night or seek some other way to punish and slay them. The Explorer's Society would like to take the Phoenix Statue, and they wish to leave the party of characters for further tasks. If this is the case then a bizarre twist takes place as they sail away. The Crimson Roger is seen approaching, which should put fear into the characters and their crew, however Reis and his vessel make straight for the Explorer's ship, which promptly fades out of existence as a bubble forms around it takes it off into the Seventh Sea. And that, is that.

The Prophet's Cross

This cross is the key to the third part of this set of adventures, though at present I'm not sure what that may be. Although I can reveal what the item currently does. Whosoever touches it first gains the answers to their religious questions and becomes a devout follower of the Vaticine Church. He permanently gains the Faith Advantage, +1 to their Traits (to a maximum of 5) whilst in possession of the Cross, and will defend with his life the Cross against the impious and heretical. The player will only give over the cross to another devout member of the Church who is of a senior position and has the Faith Advantage.

Laying on Hands

This is a Miracle based upon the rules in the Castille Sourcebook, though it is fairly potent due to the Prophet's Cross, so I wouldn't recommend it as a normal ability, although having just read them again, maybe not ;-). The Hero lay's his hands upon the wounds of the injured and makes a Resolve roll Vs TN 20, if successful then he heals 1 Dramatic Wound. Juanpas doesn't seem to have put a limit on this, but you should probably cap it at around Resolve or 2 x Resolve per day.

The Professor's Diary

This diary is the only real evidence remaining of the events surrounding the doomed party of Explorers. The last entry was made 15 days ago by Michael Cronenberg. Prior to that it details how they arrived and made the beach campsite, then after a couple of nights they could clearly hear drums off in the distance. This prompted them to mount an expedition further into the island to investigate, the prospect of finding beings was too much for the professor to ignore. They discovered a strange ziggurat of obvious Syrne design some 5 miles away towards the centre of the Isle, hear they made a second camp. They chose to investigate it and entered the ziggurat, and some details are give as to it's general layout and presence of traps, (plus perhaps a few clues or indications on how some of them may be solved, if you're feeling generous). The professor finally chose to take the cautious option and they broke camp to head back towards the beach. The last entry tells of the sound of approaching drums in the darkness.