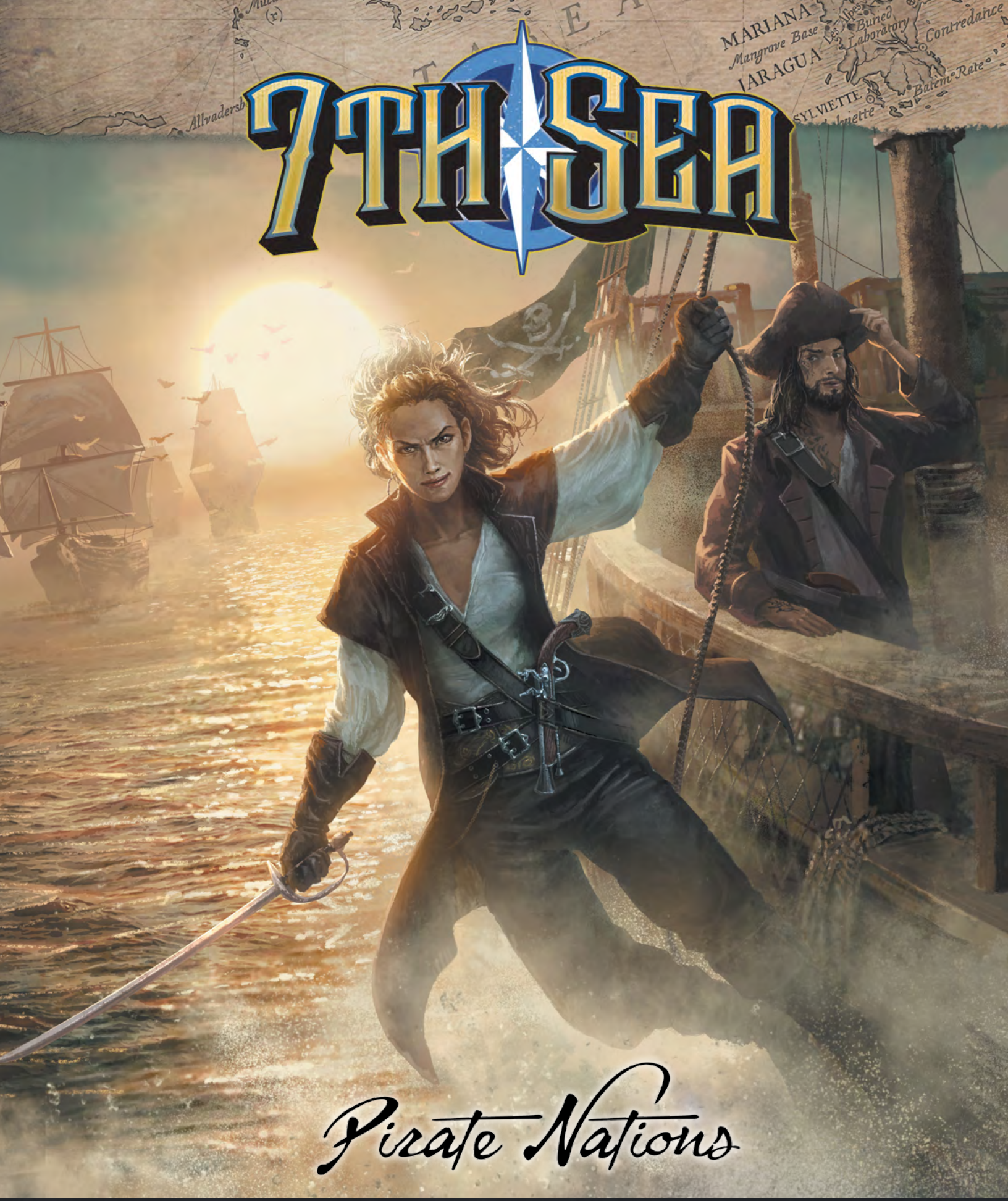

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7th Sea
Pirate Nations

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This book contains material for ***7th Sea: Second Edition*** including new Backgrounds, Advantages, Stories and Sorceries. It also includes five new Pirate Nations:

- **Numa**, the land where legends were born and never left
- **La Bucca**, the once-prison island turned headquarters for international intrigue
- **The Atabean Islands**, where the ghosts of Rahuri ancestors sail alongside native peoples
- **Aragosta**, home of the Brotherhood of the Coast and a pirate paradise
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John Wick PRESENTS

JOHN WICK PRESENTS A SOURCEBOOK FOR 7TH SEA: SECOND EDITION "PIRATE NATIONS"

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A note from John...

There are two truths about pirates: the romantic truth and the real truth. Pirates really did put freedom above all else. They really did turn their ships into floating democracies and live without governments or gods. They signed charters vowing to protect each other, to serve the ship, captain and crew above all else.

They were also thieves and murderers. Yeah. That's the real truth.

But **7th Sea** is far less about reality than it is about romance, and these pirate nations dance a little closer to romance. They are devoted to freedom, to breaking unjust laws and fighting the worst Villains we can imagine. They are adventurers in a world that desparately needs rulebreakers, smugglers and rebels. In short, they are Heroes like any other Heroes in Théah.

The book wouldn't have been the same without Ben Woerner's attention to detail and his vast nautical and piratical knowledge. Mark Diaz Truman served as the pilot, getting us through some treacherous waters. This book was also a first-time voyage for Lenny Balsera, our new Creative Director. He got thrown into the deep water. But, that's the only way you learn how to swim! And of course, the art was managed by Marissa Kelly, as usual. Our writers really pulled it together, sometimes at the last minute. Thanks to all of you!

This book is the first step beyond Théah into the larger world of **7th Sea**. There are hints and whispers of what lays beyond the Atabean. If you keep your eyes peeled, you may spot land that no other Théan has ever seen before...

—John Wick

Special Thanks

I would like to thank John and Mark for letting me become a professional pirate consultant. Many thanks to my wife, Emily, and my children, Morgan and William, for putting up with Dad always working on that pirate book. Also, my writing staff, from the first time landlubbers to the salty able seamen: you were fantastic, and I'd sail with any of you on another voyage. Finally, thanks to you, the fans, for making this dream of mine a reality with your hard earned doubloons. There would be no **7th Sea: Second Edition** without you. Now cast off and set sail! For we seek treasure 'pon the Atabean!

—Ben Woerner

I'd like to thank every last damn crewmember that made **Pirate Nations** happen. This book spans more territory than nearly any other 7th Sea source-book, from the shores of Numa to the edge of the New World, and it's been a hell of a journey to get it to print. Special thanks to Marissa Kelly for putting up with all of my art requests, Danielle Lauzon for making La Bucca sing and Lenny Balsera for keeping the book on track when it needed it most. You all are a fine crew, and I be lookin' forward to sailin' with ya again in the future!

—Mark Diaz Truman

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Revenge & the Crow

by Jennifer Mahr

The bar stank of sour whiskey, sea air and the heavy press of tobacco. *Just like home, then,* Marisol thought as she let the front door close behind her. It was mid-afternoon, and Mother Meg's was nearly empty. That would change in a few hours' time when the sun went down and sailors of all stripes came out, their work finished for the day.

Even in port, there was plenty to be done while the sun rode the sky. Sails wanted patching, supplies and ammunition needed re-stocking. During the day, the myriad ships and businesses in Sylviette did a bustling trade. But come nightfall, the daylight businesses would shutter, and places like Mother Meg's would come to life. For now, the sunlight outside just served to deepen the shadows indoors.

Sadly, Marisol's ship and crew wouldn't be around to join the nighttime revels, which was what brought her 'round to her crew's favorite drinking hole to begin with.

"Meg," she shouted. "I'm here to pay my tab!"

"An' bless your heart for it, dear." Meg herself emerged from a trapdoor hatch behind the bar, carrying a cask that likely weighed half of what she did, and Marisol shook her head.

"Haven't you got staff to do that kind of work?"

Meg thumped down the cask with a hrrumphing sound. "Nothin' I can't do myself. If I start sittin' back and doing nought all day, they'll no doubt be carryin' my casket before long. I can manage some wine." She wiped her hands on her apron, spreading new dust streaks over old stains, before pulling back her frazzle of gray hair and securing it with a bit of leather. "Now what's this I hear about you havin' money for me?" she asked with a fond smile on her lined face.

Marisol pulled a leather pouch from underneath her coat. "We're pulling out tonight. I think I owe you for one or two drinks my crew might have had."

"Hah!" Meg slapped a hand on the bar. "One or two, yeah, or maybe a couple more. Hold on then. I'll get you a sum." The older woman dug beneath the bar before pulling out a slate full of tally marks. She gave a number and Marisol gave more of the contents of her purse than she'd have liked, but that was nothing new.

"Hey, before you go." Meg tapped her hand against the bar as Marisol was turning to leave. "I heard a bit of somethin' might interest you."

Marisol turned back, glancing around the dimly lit room while Meg did the same. A trio of sailors were deep in a game of cards in the far corner, and an old

man slept in a chair by the fire, empty mug tucked in beside him like a sweetheart. None were near enough to hear Meg's lowered voice as she said, "There's a merchant vessel, the *Falcon*, what headed out on this morning's tide. It's a brig flyin' Montaigne colors. They're meant to be carryin' sugarcane in trade for wine they brought, but I heard a reliable rumor that they're carryin' twice the weight o' that in gold they were paid for more wine and goods they brought in that weren't never on their roster. Now, I'm not one to gossip. But you're a sweet girl, and you always pay your bills on time. And it seems to me that cargo like that could pay for a lot of rounds for a thirsty crew." She winked one eye, and Marisol laughed.

"Meg, you're too good to me. And you're not wrong. What can I give you for the information?"

"Oh dear, you don't need to do any such thing. You're in here payin' your tab, and that's gold enough on its own. Besides..." Meg patted Marisol's hand and gave her a fond glance. "You remind me of my own girl, you do. Smart and tough. You do with that knowledge as you think is best. I don't need nothin' for it." With that she turned back toward the hatch to the cellar and let herself carefully back down into the darkness below. Marisol watched until her gray head disappeared, then took her pouch back out and tucked it underneath the bar where Meg would see it, but no one else. Then she let herself back out into the daylight.

Outside she'd taken only a handful of strides before her quartermaster fell in beside her—a head taller and a measure fairer than her own Castilian coloring. "Jones," she acknowledged. "What's the word?"

"We've got enough munitions stocked to see us through a fortnight. Food, as well, and I've taken on two new crew, so we're up to capacity."

"Sounds like you've had a productive afternoon."

"I usually do." They rounded the corner to the main thoroughfare and were caught up in a bustle of merchants hawking wares and throngs of sailors crowding through the wide lane. To the left was the sea, shimmering green blue, the sun dancing off of it, ships of all makes and sizes anchored out in the harbor. Tall palm trees stood up along the sandy beach, bending lazily, broad fronds spreading out overhead.

To the right was a tightly packed bunch of buildings with signs declaring their trade, some in script or broad text, most in pictures since a good number of their patrons were unlikely to be more than passingly acquainted with the printed word. There was a place selling and repairing nets, another with sailcloth, a third boasting barrels sealed with pitch and promised not to leak.

They passed a small bungalow tucked back a bit, with a narrow porch and rope railings. A trio of shifty-eyed children lounged against the ropes, a boy not older than nine picking his nails with a wicked-looking knife. A sign hung off the front showed a bloody palm print with a cruel-looking dagger crossed with a pistol in front of it, the word "McGee" in bold black beneath. Marisol tilted her head. "Is that Bloody Bonnie's place? I can't believe she gave up the sea."

Jones nodded. "It is. I stopped by there earlier, too. Traded in a brace of pistols we picked up from the last ship we took, and a collection of sabers. I got us a very pretty twelfth canon in trade."

"We needed that. Bonnie's doing well, then?"

"Busy," Jones agreed. "She offered to trade me one of the children, too, if we needed a powder monkey."

Marisol barked a laugh. "What, for more weapons?"

"For wine."

The model of efficiency, Jones already had the dinghy loaded with their new supplies, and a pair of hands ready to row them all back to their own ship. Marisol gave a nod to the man she knew. Jones clapped the second man on the shoulder. "Captain, this is Mr. Clovis. He'll be joining us aboard the *Revenge*."

"Captain," said the other man, sweeping his cap from his head. "I'm honored to be part of your crew." He was maybe thirty, with a bit of a paunch, not all of his hair, and an eager air. She glanced at Jones with a raised eyebrow, and he shrugged.

"Good to make your acquaintance, Mr. Clovis. I trust you can row?"

They and the dinghy were soon drawing close to their own vessel, and Marisol smiled inwardly with the same sharp joy she always felt boarding the *Adelaide's Revenge*. While the provisions were stocked and the crew made final preparations to be underway, she called Jones and her other officers into her private cabin.

"Folks, we've got a rabbit," she said without preamble. "A fat brigantine loaded with more valuable cargo than they've got on their books. They've got a day's lead on us, but they're traveling heavy and with little protection, since they think they've got everyone fooled. It should be an easy matter to catch up with them. Beccah, how long before we can be underway?"

Her master of sails leaned back in her chair, chewing the end of her long blond braid. "I can have us at speed in under an hour, so long as all the gear's stowed."

Beccah glanced toward Donald, the boatswain, grizzled scowl permanently in place. "I gave instructions. The job should already be done by now." He spoke with the assurance of a man whose crew didn't make

mistakes, and his confidence was well placed.

"Half an hour, then, for sure," Beccah said to the Captain with an easy shrug. "If I get to work now. You've got the course they're headed on?"

"They're making for open sea and then home to Montaigne. Can you plot their most likely route?"

"Due east for the first two days at least. Not a problem."

Marisol looked around the room. "Any questions?" Her master gunner, Volya—a bearded wall with a thick Ussuran accent when he spoke, which he seldom did—shook his head. The rest of her officers stayed silent, so she stood and they did, too. "All right, then. Let's go get rich."

The salt air and the morning light put Marisol in an excellent mood as she stepped onto the deck.

"Slept well? With dreams of treasure chests dancing in your head?" inquired Jones, walking to meet her.

"I slept well. I plan to breakfast well. It's a fine start to a finer day. Can you smell the opportunity?"

"I think that's carp. Some of the crew have been casting fishing nets."

"There's worse ways to pass their time..." She was interrupted by a cry from overhead.

"Ship, ho!" came the call from the crow's nest.

"Already?" Marisol grinned. "How fast are we going?"

"Or how slow are they?" Jones replied.

"Ship, ho—starboard!" came the next cry.

They exchanged looks before breaking for the starboard side. "That can't be right. The *Falcon* should be in front of us!" Marisol yelled. Jones was already well ahead of her, longer legs carrying him to the rail so he was peering through his spy glass by the time she got there.

"It's the wrong damned bird," Jones muttered, and she pulled the spyglass out of his hand, bringing it up to look.

"Just call the whole thing off," he said as she focused the lens. "I didn't really want to be rich anyhow. Let's just put into one of the smaller islands and careen the ship. We're nearly due."

She swept the glass back and forth, searching for what he'd already seen, cursing when she found it. "Damn it. The *Golden Crow*. Damn it thrice, what's he doing here?"

"Clearly, he's after the same prize we are. There's no other reason to be out this way. It's certainly not coincidence." The glass was pushed down and she frowned at Jones, his hand on its end. "Call off the chase. Let's find another prize."

She scowled. "Don't tell me you're scared of Calder's *Crow*."

"Not even slightly. I'm scared as hell of you. Every time the two of you get near each other, it's like rabid dogs after the last bone with marrow. Neither of you has the slightest idea when to quit, and all the rest of us poor souls aboard ship are hauled along to ride the gale."

"It's not that bad," she snapped.

"The two of you would cheerfully sail off the edge of the world, so long as you were racing to the bottom."

"It's *not* that bad."

"It's worse. Remember San Sancha?"

"That fire could have happened to anyone."

"And that near miss with the Castillian navy?"

"It was a miss." She turned her back and strode across the deck. "Beccah!" she shouted.

"You remember that time you married him?" Jones snorted with exasperation just over her shoulder.

"That was a dare!"

"Normal people don't *get married* on a dare!"

"Normal people aren't pirates. You want to be normal, go get a job in a paper mill. You want to quartermaster my ship, find Beccah and get us turned on an intercept course with the *Crow*." She left him standing mid-deck and stalked back to her cabin. To get her pistol.

Marisol stood, impatiently fuming as a plank was laid down between the two ships, loosely lashed together as they rose and fell on the shifting sea. As soon as the wooden plank was in place, she stepped on and strode across it, ignoring the scramble as two of her crew grappled to keep their end secure.

"Marisol. How good to see you," Calder greeted her with a broad smile. His face was open and honest the way only a lying man's could be. She took the drop down to the deck without breaking eye contact.

"You shouldn't be seeing me at all. What do you think you're doing out here?"

"Business, of course. The same as you, I expect," he replied carelessly.

Behind her, she heard the solid thud of boots that meant Jones had just crossed beside her. Next to Calder, his quartermaster—a tall, broad-shouldered man, skin the color of dark oak, named Oteka—gave a nod as the two men acknowledged their counterparts.

"We're already doing business in this part of the sea," she informed Calder coldly. "You and your crew had best find a friendlier part of Mother Ocean, and go sail there."

The smile never slipped from Calder's face, but his eyes were sharp as steel as he said, "We like the business here fine. You're welcome to cast your line for the same fish we're after, but I won't apologize if you get snagged on our hook."

"If someone ought to be looking out for something sharp, shoved up their..."

"Right. Captain, I think maybe we're finished here?" Jones interjected with false brightness.

"We're not finished by a long shot," Marisol responded, but she kept her eye on Calder while she said it, so she didn't miss the gleam in his eye or the pulse that jumped at his throat.

"A race, then." His grin broadened.

"A race," Marisol agreed fiercely, ignoring Jones' noisy sigh.

"He's got to have a Fate Witch on board." Marisol paced the foredeck, palms itching with the desire to do something more. "Or some other sorcery that fills his sails while we sit here drifting."

"We're not drifting."

"Well, we're *not moving*."

"We are. We've just hit a lull. Beccah will have us at speed soon enough."

She eyed Jones, standing easily at the rail. Most days she thought his calm was the balance to her own temper. Other days she was certain he just did it to annoy her. "You'd rather give up the chase. What, just because it's Calder we're racing against?" She watched to see if she'd get a rise out of him, but his eyes stayed on the sea and his body stayed relaxed.

"Calder's not the problem. The trouble is that you don't know how to back down from a challenge. Which he knows, by the way."

She bit her tongue. Just because he was right didn't make her want to argue with him any less.

Just then, a chorus of whoops came from the main deck, and she turned to see the mainsail billow full and beautiful. She turned back to Jones, ready to admit that he'd been right about a lull, when there was a whip-cracking snap, and the cheerful whoops turned into shouts and sharp cries. She spun back around in time to see the boom swing free. There was a great rushing sound, and half the sail dropped, collapsing down on itself like a sailor who'd been shot.

Cursing, she bolted into the chaos. The boom was still pivoting even while the crew scrambled after flailing ropes, trying to bring it to heel. Others ducked low to help those who'd been knocked to the deck. She caught hold of a line that two men were grasping and helped struggle it taut as the great wooden beam was brought to a standstill.

With things under control for the moment, she looked around to assess the damage. It looked as though most of the men and women nearby had gotten away with frayed nerves and some rope-torn palms. Jones was seeing to a crewman with a bloody gash over his eye.

"Beccah!" Marisol shouted, stalking toward the Master of Sails.

Beccah stood with a length of rope in her hands, expression sober. "It's worn through," she said, peering closely at the end of a rope that a few minutes earlier had secured their mainmast. "And it can't be the only one." She pointed up to where the rigging that should have secured the sail to the topmast hung loosely. "For this to happen there must have been fatigue at multiple points through our ropes. When we caught that wind, it stressed the mainline to break. The rest went like links in a chain."

"Three days in port, three days to check over all our gear, and we set sail with rotten ropes?" Marisol fought to keep her temper in check.

Beccah shook her head, pale but determined. "There's no sign of rot." She looked again at the end of rope in her hand. "This is frayed. One rope, in one place—I might say it was bad luck, or that the line caught on something and wore thin. But this..." She gestured again to where the sail dangled from half its rigging. "It's *possible* that the rope was made badly."

"Possible, but not likely?" Jones asked, exchanging looks with the two women.

"Not likely at all," Beccah said grimly.

"Which means someone on my ship might have helped it fray." Marisol's mouth set in a tight line.

Beccah looked up at the rest of the rigging over their heads. "I need to send my crew through every inch of this."

"Do it," Marisol told her. "And do it fast."

Marisol sat in her cabin, a single lantern lighting the space. The fourth bell of the middle watch had rung. Good sense said she should be asleep, but that wasn't likely after the day's events.

Examining the rigging slowed them by several hours. Beccah's people had found a dozen more places where the ropes were weakened. Any of which, by itself, might have been the result of wear and bad luck. But there was no way that all of them were. That left the options of sorcery or sabotage.

Marisol regarded the cup in her hand and sipped, savoring the rum's slow burn.

There was no sure way to know how much their delays had cost them. The *Falcon* was sailing fat and slow, but the *Golden Crow* wasn't. It could be that they'd already caught the *Falcon* up, and Marisol was pushing her ship and crew hard through the night for a battle they'd already lost. But the sea was a place full of unknowns, and she wasn't about to give up the chase because they *might* be too late. On the other hand, she should probably give up thinking about it for a few hours and try to get a bit of sleep.

She stood up, only to have her feet taken from under her by a great shudder. A hollow boom echoed from somewhere below. She grabbed her boots and bolted into the hallway, half expecting to see the Devil Jonah's own ship firing on them. The smell of powder and smoke wasn't much of a surprise. But the fact that it was coming from *below decks* was another matter.

She coughed as the smoke thickened, finding her way to the hold half because she could do it blind, and half by following the noise. At the aft end, men and women draped powder kegs in wet blankets. The walls and floor along a length of the starboard side were blackened and still smoldered under a sludge of water and sand, applied by the crew. Marisol sent a silent thanks for the tedious drills her Boatswain Donald made all the crew practice regularly, so every soul aboard knew what to do in the event of a fire. Water was the obvious choice to put out a blaze at sea, but sand often did the job better, and they kept barrels of it on hand just in case. Especially here.

"What in the seven seas happened?" she demanded, striding across the floor. "If some fool lit a pipe in the powder room, I'm going to drag him behind the ship for the rest of the voyage."

"Not a pipe. And not an accident," growled Volya, following her in from the corridor. He snapped his fingers, and two of his gunners came through the doorway, dragging a struggling figure between them. Marisol immediately recognized Mr. Clovis, the new recruit who'd joined them in Sylviette.

"We caught this fool in the crew quarters, trying to act like he didn't know what was going on, even though he *reeks* of fresh powder and soot." Volya shook his head in disgust. "My men were for taking off at least one limb on principle, but I made 'em wait in case you wanted him whole."

"Thank you, Master Gunner. I appreciate your forethought." She looked Clovis over with a measuring eye. "When it's time to start taking pieces off, I'll make sure to get your men in for the job." She watched Clovis flinch at the words.

There was a brief moment when it looked like her officers might mutiny as she shut the door of her cabin in their furious faces. She didn't blame them really. But just now there was only one voice she needed to hear, that of their would-be saboteur, and she didn't want him drowned out by a chorus of furious pirates.

So now it was just her, Jones, and the beleaguered-looking Mr. Clovis—a little worse for wear after his encounter with Volya's men. Clovis sat in his shirt sleeves, having been thoroughly searched and relieved of jacket and shoes before he'd been let go of. A cut over one eye had stopped bleeding, but a respectable bruise was darkening around the eye itself. His hands, pressed against the table, were blackened with powder burns, and his shirt was smeared with soot.

She swapped a look with Jones, who shook his head and sighed before handing a cup of water across to her.

"Apologies, Captain. This was not one of my best decisions," he said with a nod at the man seated before them.

"You've made better," she agreed, sipping the water before setting it down on the table, in sight but out of reach of their prisoner. She put it down hard enough that a bit splashed over the rim, and watched Clovis' eye follow the liquid. Her own throat burned from that brief span in the hold, so she was willing to bet his was worse.

She gave a sharp whistle to get their prisoner's attention, catching his gaze and keeping it. "What was the plan, then?"

"P-p-plan?" he stuttered. "I don't know..."

"She'll feed you to the mermaids, you know," Jones interjected conversationally. "She's done it before. And that was *just* mermaids. We're in the Sea of Monsters now. There's no knowing what hungry thing is out there waiting." Clovis blanched, his gaze whipping between them.

"That's assuming we got him over the side of the ship before Volya's gunners got hold of him again. I held them off for a bit, but they're like dogs after a wounded rabbit. Once they get a scent..." She turned to Jones. "Did you know Volya brought the whole gunner crew along with him as a pack when he joined? Straight off the Ussuran navy."

Jones gave a low whistle. "Not a nice bunch, that lot. I've heard that when they take prisoners, they keep them in a cage off the mess. Then, if they get low on food before they get a good price offered for the prisoners..."

"That's not true." Marisol picked up her cup and took a long sip before replacing it on the table. "They're not *cannibals*. Although, I suppose the ones that take animal forms, maybe...?" She tapped a finger against the pommel of her sword, plainly visible on her belt. "Hm. That cabin boy we lost last month... He went overboard, right? Someone saw that?"

Jones looked thoughtful. "I'll check," he promised.

Marisol looked directly at Clovis again. "You want to know what my Master of Sails would like to do with you?"

His eyes were wide, his face pale, and he shook his head, just the tiniest amount, *No.*

She went on as if she hadn't noticed. "That bit with

the ropes cost her and her people quite a lot of time and work. And Beccah's an excellent sailor, but not a patient woman. She thinks we ought to put you out on a raft behind the ship, a little before first light. Sit you right on the center, in a circle of pitch, and light it. Then the crew can take bets on whether you burn, or whether the raft burns out from under you and you drown. Beccah loves a good gamble."

Interest piqued, Jones asked, "Are there long odds for if something out of the ocean eats him, either out of the water or off the raft?"

She gave an exasperated sigh. "You and this whole thing about being eaten. Did you miss dinner last night?" Jones just shrugged.

"All right! All right, it was me, I did it, the sails, the fire, it was me!" Clovis rattled through the words at a running patter, cracking in the middle. "It was all me, and I'm sorry, just *don't feed me to anything*, or set me on fire, or drown me. Or cut or pull any pieces off!" His eyes showed the white all around and he looked like a horse that was ready to run through fire rather than stand, so Marisol figured he was about ready for a discussion. She slid the cup of water across the table to him and gave him a nod for permission. He grabbed it up and guzzled it fast enough that thin trails ran down his chin, leaving lines in the soot stains there.

"Why?"

He looked up at her, still clinging to the empty cup, and Jones walked over to stand beside him, taking the cup from his hands, relieving him of the decision of whether to try to use it as a weapon. Not that he looked the type, but Marisol was done with chances tonight.

She watched panic light her prisoner's eyes for a moment before they went dull with resignation. "For pay," he said simply.

"Pay from whom?" she asked because she knew, but it was basic diligence to have it aloud.

"Captain Calder," he said, and Marisol gave a wince at the sound of her silver cup hurling into the deck floor with enough force to probably dent the board and the cup. Clovis gave a terrified yelp of surprise, and she glanced at Jones who was giving her his best *I told you so* glower.

"Keep talking," she said to Clovis, watching Jones while he forcibly reined in his temper, pulling it close like a coat until only someone who knew him very well would see the telltales of it.

"He hired me in Sylviette. Told me to get myself hired aboard this vessel. He said if I slowed her down, he'd make it worth my while, and I'd be able to retire myself on one of the little islands somewhere, and get a nice wife and just catch crabs for supper, and not have to put out to sea again." He looked wistful at the idea.

"Did he tell you *what* to do to slow my ship down?" she asked.

"Uh, no. He left that up to me. He just said to make sure you didn't get anywhere too quick."

She nodded. "And how were you planning to collect your fee and retire to your island if you blew up the ship you were standing on?"

He looked genuinely puzzled. "What?"

"You lit a powder keg on fire, in a room full of more powder kegs." She could feel her temper slipping. "What kind of a damned fool with a death wish tries to sink a ship that *he's on* in monster-infested waters?"

The room was perfectly silent for several long seconds, and Marisol was fairly certain she was actually watching Clovis process that idea, like watching a man with three teeth chew food.

Jones broke the silence. "To be fair, Captain, if you're sending a saboteur to compromise a vessel with himself aboard, you either need someone very stupid or exceedingly clever. Want to guess which one is cheaper?"

The rose light of dawn was a kiss on the horizon, a promise of the day to come, but the *Revenge* was still shrouded in darkness and a chill mist. Sailors moved like ghosts around the deck, efficient and quiet. A good crew knew not to make unnecessary noise when you couldn't see far enough off the prow to know what might be listening.

They'd found a strong wind in the last hours of night and were moving at a speed that was respectable, but not reckless—three different watchers were posted up in the rigging, alert for any hazard. Marisol paced the deck, too restless to sleep. They'd caught their saboteur, but she didn't know if they were still in the hunt or if their prey was in another wolf's jaws. Donald came to stand beside her, tread almost silent for such a large barrel of a man. Wordlessly he handed over a heavy cup of thick, dark brew. She swallowed down the coffee, ignoring the bitterness and how it burned her tongue.

"We're armed and ready for whatever the day brings?" she asked.

"Do you need to ask?" His voice was scratchy from a great many years of tobacco, rum, and salt air.

"No," she answered. "But I'm tired of listening to my voice in my head, so I thought I'd let it out for a bit."

Donald departed with a chuckle, leaving Marisol to watch the sea. The waters were choppy, and the deck rocked under her feet as they cut across the waves.

A cry that could have been mistaken for a gull's cut across the quiet. Two sharp screeches, followed by a

pause and then a third. Immediately feet started to move on the deck. One of the lookouts had spotted a ship, in front of them. Marisol gripped the railing at the fore of the ship, peering through the mist that was slowly clearing as dawn pushed it aside. She could just make out the shape of something well ahead of them. Behind her, the crew assumed their stations, ready for whatever action they might find. Jones took his place at the rail to her right.

"Cora caught the first sight," he told her. "It's too small for the *Falcon*. Might be the *Crow*."

Marisol blinked at the shape in the distance, still wavering in the light. She couldn't see clearly, but Cora could see the eye of a needle at a distance where others would be pressed to even see the needle.

They drew closer, silent and tense, like a held breath. Likely if they could see the other ship, it could see them as well, but there was no point giving away anything they didn't have to. Several painfully slow minutes brought them close enough to make out the *Golden Crow*'s flag flapping hard in the wind, and Marisol was gratified to not see them riding low enough to be burdened with a heavy cargo, but...

"There's something wrong," she said, frowning at the other ship. The *Crow*'s sails were as full as their own, but the *Revenge* was still gaining rapidly. And there was something wrong with the angle of the *Crow*'s deck.

"Slow up," she said sharply to Jones, who was looking as closely as she was.

"Avast," he called out, clearly having decided that clarity was more important than silence. In any case, they were well within sight of the other vessel now. Near enough to see that something was wrong. Beccah shouted back a reply, and the ship began to slow. They were close enough to see activity on the deck of the *Crow*. Most of whatever was happening seemed to be on the far side of the ship. Crew were gathered there, but as she watched, a half dozen sailors began to haul something that looked like a wooden frame closer to the port side, nearest her own ship.

She frowned. "Is that a..."

"Portable trebuchet," Jones filled in. "Bonnie tried to sell me one. I didn't think we needed it."

"You're fired," Marisol said. "Right after we get out of this. Get us turned right at them. Smallest target possible."

The quartermaster turned to relay her order to the sails crew, but they'd barely begun to turn before the arm of the trebuchet swung forward, launching.

Something wet and loose smacked into the starboard side of the *Revenge*, more of it landing on the deck with a splatter that painted the deck red.

"What in all the hells is that?" muttered one of the crewmen standing nearby. He raised his hand to his face as the foul smell of the stuff began to carry.

"It's chum," Marisol said grimly, taking in the mix of fish parts and offal. "Get it off our ship!" she shouted, and the crew immediately jumped to work, trying to clear the deck of the reeking stuff, but she knew it was too late.

There were shouts and a few panicked curses. Back at the *Crow*, the water churned like it was boiling. There was a rush of motion, and the waves frothed. Tentacles, each easily as wide as a pair of oxen tethered side by side, flailed upward, and as they did so the *Crow* rocked violently before beginning to right itself.

There it was, the reason a ship at sea would stand still with its sails full of wind. A giant squid. The body moved through the water, inky dark like the ocean itself had opened up to swallow them down. And it might well do just that. The squid was big enough to scuttle the *Revenge* if those tentacles got a good hold, maybe to pull her down outright.

"Brace!" Jones yelled, the order echoing down the length of the ship.

The first impact nearly threw Marisol over the railing. The hull groaned, but thankfully it didn't splinter. For a long moment, shocked silence held them all. Then an enormous tentacle rose high over the deck before smashing down, one end sliding back and forth, questing for something that might interest or feed it. Men and women scattered, scrambling to stay clear, even as a second tentacle snaked up from the other side of the deck, thumping blindly into the mainmast and making the rigging there sway sharply. The sailors still high up in it hung on for their lives.

"It's right under us," Jones said, using the ship's railing to pull his way closer to where Marisol gripped on. The deck listed sharply to port as a third tentacle wrapped them from that side. "If it decides to give us a proper hug, it'll break the *Revenge's* back."

Marisol nodded, thinking fast. There were ships that hunted the enormous squids for profit, but it was another matter entirely when it was you that the squid was hunting. "Buy me time. I have an idea," she said, then she let go of the rail and half ran, half skidded along the tilting deck. Behind her Jones called orders to repel the tentacles with pole arms, swords, whatever was at hand. She waved to Donald, the boatswain, and gestured for him to follow her as she scrambled down the aft hatch. As soon as he dropped through, she headed lower into the bowels of the ship. "You know how to stop a fire. I need you to make one," she told him as they went.

It didn't take long to do the work, but it felt like an eternity, every creak of the ship's hull sounding like it might be the last. When Marisol emerged on deck again, there were five tentacles in total, slithering

around the deck, coiling around the mainmast, groping at her ship like a drunkard. Behind her, the crew reporting to Donald clambered up from the hatch, hoisting barrels with them.

Beccah ran up to meet her. "Whatever you're planning, it has to be quick," she said, face pale.

"Tell me something I don't know," Marisol muttered.

"I am," Beccah said sharply. "Jones is at the wheel. He's done whatever Glamour Avalons do, and he's frankly the *only* thing holding the ship together. So whatever you're going to do, do it fast before he and the *Revenge* go down as one."

Swearing, Marisol turned back to Donald, who nodded. The sailors gripped arms to anchor each other while getting close enough to the tentacles to begin to plaster them with the stinking black goo from their barrels. When all but the one wrapped around the mast were heavily coated, Marisol barked the order to light. Half a dozen flints were struck, and the mix of pitch and gunpowder was ignited. The air filled with smoke and the stench of burning grease, the skin of the monster sizzling and popping.

Screaming like nothing Marisol had heard before filled the air, and the *Revenge* gave a groan that turned her stomach to stone. All at once, the flaming tentacles flailed into the air, waving wildly before smashing back into the water. Running to the rail and looking down, she could see the beast retreating, disappearing back into the depths, flame still flickering eerily from below the waves.

As soon as it was clear the monster was on its way, she ran for the ship's wheel where a crowd had gathered around Jones. He lay on the deck, skin pale, chest heaving, one arm bent at a badly crooked angle. She sat down on the deck beside him and laid one hand against his throat to find his pulse, rapid but steady. "You're an idiot," she said.

"You said to buy you time," he wheezed. "Am I still fired?"

"Idiot," she repeated fondly, before nodding to Donald. "Get him to the surgeon."

It was late afternoon before they spotted the *Falcon*. The *Golden Crow* was tethered to her side, the crew aboard, though it didn't look like they'd been there for long. They were still bringing cargo up from the hold. Technically, the agreement had been to race to reach the merchant vessel, but Marisol was feeling more bound by the spirit than the letter of the agreement. She gave the order to bring the ship along the other side of the *Falcon*. She'd sunk a squid. If Calder wanted to fire on her vessel at this point, she'd cheerfully send him down after it.

"This really had better be a damned fine cargo," Jones commented.

"Don't people normally rest for a bit after they've had broken bones set?" she asked.

"Someone told me normal people aren't pirates," he replied, making her snort with laughter as they made their way across to the *Falcon*.

The merchant crew stood gathered at the aft of the ship, under guard by Calder's crew. Calder himself greeted her cheerfully.

"I was afraid you wouldn't make it to our little party. Still, better late than not at all."

"I didn't want to show up empty-handed, so I stopped to pick up some lunch." She took the sack tied to her belt and tossed it at his feet so the charred hunk of tentacle slid out the open end, squelching to a halt on the toe of his boot. It was one of several remnants they'd scraped from the side of the ship.

"Ah. Well, that is...appetizing."

"I brought you something else as well. Something you left on my ship." She waved, and Volya half-dragged, half-carried Mr. Clovis to where the group stood. She held up a hand before Calder started speaking.

"Do you realize this barnacle with legs tried to blow up my ship?"

"Did he really? That's..."

"Obscene?" Marisol suggested at the same time Calder finished with "...ambitious."

He held up his hands in an imitation of surrender. "I swear, I only told him to make sure the *Crow* could get here first. I left the details up to him. You know me. I don't nitpick. I prefer to *delegate*." He flashed her a charming smile. "For example, I delegated that matter with the squid to you, and you handled it *beautifully*."

Marisol narrowed her eyes and wondered idly if she could skewer him before anyone stopped her. "Do you think you're going to talk me out of being furious at you with honeyed words?"

"He talked you into marrying him," Jones pointed out.

"Will you let go of that?" she snapped. "That wasn't even a real priest." She froze at the look on Calder's face. "You said he wasn't a real priest."

"Actually I think I said I didn't know if he was a real priest. It's a notoriously easy outfit to pick up."

Marisol bit down hard on the urge to test that question of skewering. Through gritted teeth she said, "We'll take two-thirds of the cargo. And you'll pay out of your share for my quartermaster's injury pay." Jones waved with his good arm. "And you'll take this traitorous idiot with you." She jerked her head toward Clovis. "And if I see you or your ship within the next fortnight, I'll send you both to the bottom of the sea, soon as look at you." Volya shifted beside her, clearly

more than ready to take on the job immediately.

"Be reasonable," Calder said. "You really want me to tell my crew that we went to all this trouble, got here first, and we should leave with only a third of the haul?"

"No, I want you to tell your crew that you're a treacherous pig, but I expect they already know that."

He kept on as if she hadn't spoken. "Besides, fair's fair. We had the same lead from Mother Meg that you did. We just got here faster."

"You didn't hear about this from Meg. I was the only one she told," Marisol said, outraged. "She didn't even charge for the information."

"Did you give money for it anyhow?" Calder asked, amused. Marisol thought about the bag of money she'd left under the bar and her face flamed. She couldn't believe she'd been green enough to fall for that.

"She said I reminded her of her daughter," she muttered bitterly.

"If it makes you feel better, she said I reminded her of her son," Calder chuckled.

"Oh, Mother Meg ain't got any children of her own," interjected Mr. Clovis. "The name's, watchercallit... *ironic*."

Before she could reply, twin calls of *Ships, ho!* rang from her vessel and Calder's. "Montaigne navy, Captain," came the cry from the crow's nest. "Three ships, due east, approaching fast!"

She looked at Calder who was grinning, the gleam back in his eye.

"Fifty-fifty split. I'll pay double for your Quarter Master's broken arm. We take the navy together."

"Sixty-forty. You still pay double, and extra for damages to my ship caused by your man and your squid." Beside her, Jones groaned.

"It's a deal."

The sun bore down hot and bright, striking sparks off the green-blue water. Marisol raised a hand to shade her eyes. A broad expanse of white-gold sand stretched before her. The *Revenge* lay at a sharp angle at the water line, her starboard side exposed while a score of men scraped her hull. They were three weeks out from their run-in with the giant squid, and she was glad to see the last of it scraped off her ship.

The air was thick with the smell of the heated tar they'd use to waterproof the hull when they were done disposing of muck and barnacles. Further up the beach, some of the crew were digging pits to roast the pair of wild pigs that would be their supper.

Jones ambled up beside her, a mug in his right hand, his left arm still bound in a sling. "You finally got that careening you wanted," she said, nodding at the ship.

"A good thing. We were past due," he said, surveying the work.

"Well...we were busy being pirates, making a profit," she countered.

"Speaking of that, what do you plan to do with those?" He waved his mug in the direction of the two Montaigne naval ships anchored farther out from the shore. "So long as we're here, we could slap a coat of paint on them, change the flags. I could start recruiting more crew when we reach Sylviette. You could have your own fleet—be a proper pirate queen."

Marisol grimaced. "That sounds miserable. I'm a pirate. If I wanted to be a bureaucrat, I'd have gone into business or government where the real thieving is."

Jones chuckled. "We'll ransom them back then. Or sell them to another navy. We ought to lie low awhile though. Let the commotion from our last escapade die down. After losing three vessels, plus the gold and cargo off their brig, Montaigne will have an eye out for us."

"Maybe. Maybe not." Marisol smiled into the sun until Jones made an impatient noise.

"What did you do?"

"I ordered our colors dropped before the battle. Afterwards, when the Montaigne crews were all being bound up to be left on the *Falcon*, I might have circulated around and dropped Calder's name a fair bit. It's possible that they could have mistaken the lot of us for all being one crew."

"Which would leave the whole of the Montaigne navy out looking for Calder's *Crow*?"

"And you know he hasn't got the sense to lie low. I think we give it another week or so, then we should have clear sailing."

"You know, I almost feel sorry for him," Jones remarked with no remorse in his voice at all.

"Yes, well, all's fair in love and piracy."

Introduction

Welcome Aboard!

Ahoy! Welcome to **Pirate Nations**. In these pages you'll find all the information you need to explore the Atabean Sea, join the Numanari Resistance, gain magical tattoos, fight for the freedom of Jaragua against the dastardly Atabean Trade Company and, of course, sail the Seven Seas as a pirate.

Freedom and the Pirate Nations

To the Numanari, Rahuri, Jaraguans, Aragostans, Buccaneers and pirates the world over, freedom is their watchword. Most of these nations have fought long and hard to get out from under the thumb of callous and imperial rulers. The Crescent, Castillian and Montaigne Empires, as well as the Atabean Trade Company all have had an imperious hand in forging the pirates' collective will to find freedom. To the singular pirate ship and crew, their ship is more than just a symbol of freedom, it's a Nation unto itself.

To be a pirate upon the Seven Seas is to be free from all shackles imposed by others. Although some try, no Nation can control the sea. Upon that sea, pirates freely enter into agreements known as "charters" for mutual support and the enrichment of all. In recent history, the Brotherhood of the Coast has taken that idea one step further and created something new, binding their disparate ships together. Now each ship is a state within a great Pirate Nation and each captain a vote on the Council of Captains.

Ties That Bind

The Brotherhood of the Coast, the Buccaneers, and the independent pirate all see their Nation not as a parcel of land, but as a collection of men and women banding together to ensure their liberty. They have created binding charters to govern themselves so that they can ensure freedom for themselves against the rest of the world and governments to replace the oppressors they've thrown off in rebellions and uprisings.

But such freedom is an affront to the powers that wish to see free men and women crushed under the yoke of tyranny. From the royalty of Théah to the hounds of the Atabean Trading Company, there are those who want nothing more than to see these new Nations stumble and fall. Heroes are needed to protect them more than ever before.

The Pirate Nations

In Pirate Nations, we introduce you to six new factions (Nations and otherwise) not detailed in the **Core Rulebook**. They are as follows:

- **Numa**: One of the first sparks of Théan civilization, this island Nation is the birthplace of democracy and heroic legend. Now the noble Numanari fight for their independence from the encroaching Crescent Empire and the machinations of the Vodacce Merchant Princes.
- **La Bucca**: Once the ultimate Théan island prison far off the coast of Castille, the self-styled Buccaneers overthrew their captors and with some strange luck—or perhaps a twist of fate—realized their freedom as a new and neutral Nation.
- **The Atabean Sea**: The Atabean Sea, or the Sea of Monsters, is the home of the Rahuri people and the massive sea monsters lurking in its depths. The Rahuri once lived on the mainland of Aztlan, but now they are expert sailors who whisk from island to island on their swift and nimble ships.
- **The Republic of Pirates**: Aragosta! The capital of the secret society of the Brotherhood of the Coast is also a haven for thousands of independent pirate crews and their ships. Here, pirate crews are free to settle feuds, gamble, get drunk or maybe go under the magic needles of Madam Wenshen and gain inhuman abilities from a magical tattoo.
- **Jaragua**: Once a failing Montaigne colony, Jaragua was turned around by the Atabean Trading Company's introduction of slave labor. But the slaves and Mawons of Jaragua threw off their chains and now control half of their island, which they must now govern.
- **The Atabean Trading Company**: Originally a joint Avalon and Vendel shipping enterprise, the Atabean Trading Company's lust for profit above all else drove them to seek out a new home, building a massive and secretive illegal slave trade between Ifri and the Atabean Sea to fund their financial empire,

The Magic of the Atabean Sea

Outside the borders of Théah, secret magics move between the waves and the wind. In this book, we detail six powerful new forms of magic for Heroes to discover and learn:

- **Charter Magic**: Pirates have their own unique sorcery binding them together. A bit of blood, a few words spoken over a fire and a signature are all that's required.
- **The Gifts of the Devil Jonah**: The ancient and undead pirate known as the Devil Jonah sails the waves of the world seeking out the limbs of sailors to remove his grisly curse. If you can endure cutting off your own arm, hand or foot, or plucking out your own eye and tossing your grim offering into the sea, the Devil Jonah will give you a gift for your troubles. A very dark gift.
- **Kap Sèvi**: The powerful religion of the Jaraguans frightens and confuses most Théans. The Jaraguans spend long hours praying to ancient spirits, performing elaborate rituals, in hopes one will grant you favor. And if not… you pay the price.
- **Mohwoo**: If you can find Aragosta, have the coin and can endure the long hours under the magic needles of the Huajia you can acquire a tattoo granting inhuman abilities.
- **Mystírios**: The magic of Numa. Join the mystery cults of the ancient Numanari gods, learn their secrets and gain powers from legends of old.
- **Soryana**: The ancestors of the Rahuri do not go far when they die. They go to "the other side of the island," or Soryana. If you need help with a difficult task or need some wisdom and guidance from your ancestors, you can travel to the Land of the Dead on the other side of the island, and talk to or maybe borrow your Great Great Uncle Majagua to help you hunt down a particularly difficult sea beast.

HEROIC PIRATES VS. HISTORICAL PIRATES

7th Sea is a roleplaying game about swashbuckling adventures where you play heroic characters. Yet, most of history's pirates fall firmly into what we'd today consider unlawful, illegal and, at best, morally questionable.

In this game, and in this book, we strive to portray how one can be both a pirate and a swashbuckling hero. The key to understanding how one can do so is to consider the genre of swashbuckling adventure. Peter Blood, the pirate hero of *Captain Blood*, only hunts his direct enemies: those who had enslaved him and his crew, and those who seek to enslave or destroy him once again.

While pirates of all stripes scoff at the laws of Nations, heroic pirates still believe in justice and freedom for all people. Villainous pirates also exist, and are depicted throughout this book as well. They don't care about freedom or justice for others, only for themselves.

Will your pirate character use his freedom to help others find theirs, or will he use it to subjugate the weak to fill his own pockets?

Hoist the Sails!

And now, it's time to set the mainsail, run out the guns and get ready for adventure on the high seas! If you want to get started making your pirate Hero, turn to **Chapter 2: A Pirate's Life** and start reading!

If you wnat to learn more about the various Nations of pirates before you start making a Hero, turn to **Chapter 1: Ports of Call** to learn more about these fledgling Nations and their politics, personalities and conflicts. There's more than enough here to keep an adventurous crew busy for a lifetime.

Chapter 1

Ports of Call

Ports of Call

The lure of exotic locales, foreign foods and peoples has been part of nautical fiction since the ancient Greeks. For the Heroes of Théah, such adventures are no different. Why sail just the Seven Seas when there is a whole world to explore? Why try to make your fortune framing dirt in Ussura when a hold of cargo from distant lands can make you rich beyond your wildest dreams?

This chapter has four new ports for your Heroes to explore, ports that fall far outside the influence of mainland Théah. Some are to be found south of Théah, itself bordering the Crescent Empire; others are further west in waters that welcome ships and sailors alike to the New World. And all of them have secrets to discover. Secrets, treasures, monsters, Villains, adventure…and pirates.

Numa

Numa is the beginning of Théan civilization: the home of the Old Republic and the Old Empire. The place where legends never die. Théans may think they know Numa, but the ancient lands still hold many secrets. For centuries, Numa has been a battleground with foreign powers attempting to control its valuable ports, but recently, the Numanari have won their own country back from those who would seek to control its destiny. No longer under foreign thrall, Numa fights to maintain its hard-won independence. A true pirate nation.

La Bucca

From one of the oldest civilizations to one of the newest. Across the waves, far from Théah, the former prison island of La Bucca wonders if it even is a nation. An island of thieves, pirates and cutthroats, La Bucca promises liberty for all. Led by the walking enigma calling himself (herself?) "Allende," La Bucca has a chance at becoming a shining beacon of liberty across the moonlit seas. But it could also fall into the hands of Villains, turning it into a true beacon of darkness.

The Atabean Sea

And even farther west lies the Atabean Sea and the people called the Rahuri. A people who face two powerful forces: the monsters lurking beneath the waves and the spirits of the dead "on the other side of the island." The Rahuri hunt the monsters and make deals with the King of the Dead, allowing them to bring their ancestors back for a few hours or even days. Hunting monsters with the spirits of your ancestors beside you, hand in hand. That is the way of the Rahuri.

Aragosta

Aragosta is an island founded by a fool who thought himself a pirate, hoping to create a nation of free men and women, bound by agreement rather than gods or kings. Sometimes, a fool has the courage to do what the wise do not. Aragosta is no paradise, but it is a free land. No church, no crown. Only the agreements sailors make with each other. Of course, the cost to make such a place was high. And demanded blood.

Jaragua

The young nation of Jaragua was once terrorized by the powers of Théan Villains, but their uprising returned liberty to their islands. Like the Rahuri, the Jaraguans speak with spirits, but in an entirely different way. And like the Buccaneers, they are also poised to become a great island nation. But many forces pull at Jaragua's destiny, seeking to control it. The choices of a few will determine the fates of many.

The Atabean Trading Company

And finally, a true Villain. The Atabean Trading Company—also known as "the ATC" or just "the Company"—has tried to control the oceans of both Théah and beyond for many years now. And they control it with terror, violence and slavery, answering to no Crown or master but their own awful cause.

These are the Pirate Nations. Lands on the perilous edge of uncertainty. Heroes and Villains seek to control them. How will their destinies manifest in your hands?

Numa

Numa

"Truth, courage and virtue were born here. They never left."
— Bengüsu Zabat, Numanari Historian

The cradle of civilization—at least, as the Théans see it—is a series of archipelagos and islands south and east of the Commonwealth, north and west of the Crescent Empire, within reach of the southern continent some call Alkebulan and others call Ifri, lying in the sea that bears its name. A name that resonates all through Théah.

Numa.

Home of the ancient Numanari Republic, home of heroes and myths alike, the birthplace of logic, reason and science. Just whisper its name and you can feel the entire scope of human history.

But that was a long time ago.

The Numa that is lauded in Théan universities and schools was the product of an age of legends and monsters, an era of great philosophy that led to the beginnings of the modern eras of scientific study across the known world. Some say the world would have remained in darkness if not for the Numanari.

Today, Numa is quite different. The islands have been the staging point for countless conflicts over the centuries, multiple Nations fighting to control its archipelagos and straits. As a strategic waypoint, Numa sits between three great powers: Théah, the Crescent Empire and Ifri. Each wishes to control Numa for itself, as much for what Numa means as for the military and economic value the islands provide.

There is a fourth power, Numa itself, that has been fighting for its own solidarity, shedding the blood of all who think they can command its destiny. For centuries, the Numanari Isles have fought invaders… sometimes claiming victory, sometimes accepting defeat. But no occupying force stays on the isles for long. Sooner or later, they are all driven off, either by a different conquering Nation or by the Numanari themselves.

But make no mistake. Numa stands alone. It is an idea as much as a place, a dream as much as a Nation.

Numa Today

During each occupation, the conquering Nation imposed its own culture on Numa. On one side of a city's streets, you can see Vodacce architecture, while on the exact opposite side, Crescent minarets reach up toward the sky. Clothing varies from neighborhood to neighborhood, and you can see merchants wearing clothes from many different Nations.

Then, there are those who invaded Numa and, inspired by its people, chose to stay and fight for the Nation. Over the centuries, this has changed the face of Numa…and its faces. The native people of Numa are olive-skinned with dark hair, but with so many other cultures present, you can find white-skinned Numanari with blonde hair, black-skinned with black hair and combinations of all the above. They are different colors, different creeds, different faiths… but they are all Numanari. While other Nations may claim diversity within their borders, the Numanari are the only Nation bound solely by a common spirit.

The Light of Numa

After the most recent revolutions, a few strong leaders rose to power, hoping to claim the right to unite Numa, but have found themselves in a stalemate. These "kings and queens" know they cannot fight against each other, or their neighbors will use the infighting to regain control of the islands. On the other hand, they *must* fight: conquest and struggle are the only true measures of a Numanari monarch.

"We are Numa." A phrase heard throughout the islands, elsewhere in Théah, and across the world. To be Numanari means to have a particular light in your soul. A special kind of courage. A special kind of virtue. The Numanari believe in freedom and the right to fight for it. They believe in something they call *kleos*, or "incorruptible glory." Feats of bravery are not enough; a courageous act means nothing unless others are there to see it.

The Numanari do not see "National identity" the same as other Théans. They recognize this fire—the Light of Numa—in *all* men and women, regardless of where they were born. Eisen can have *kleos*. Avalons can have *kleos*. Ussurans can have *kleos*. Some recognize it within themselves and some do not. But once you have seen it, you see it *everywhere*.

The Revolution

Just five years ago, the Crescent Empire and Vodacce held contested control of the Numanari Isles while the Sarmatian Commonwealth began exploring how to take control for itself. These three Nations exploited the land, but the Numanari united quietly in a common cause: free Numa. With two countries locked in mortal combat and a third looming, the Numanari saw their opportunity.

Led by Küçük Metaxas, a naval captain who lost his arm at sea and became a silk farmer, the revolution spread quickly across the islands. His words of pride, honor and courage invoked a common dream: a united Numa.

The Vodacce saw the revolt as a problem for the Crescent Empire to handle. When the Crescent commanders fled, the Vodacce found themselves unprepared to handle the united Numanari. Within six months, the occupying forces left, and—for the first time in centuries—the islands were united.

Seeing how quickly the Numanari dispatched the Crescent Empire and Vodacce, the Commonwealth immediately sought peace, hoping to establish prosperous trade routes. The Sarmatians became the first ambassadors to the new Nation, and the Commonwealth became its first supporter. To many Sarmatians, Numa is the eleventh Nation to arise in the modern Théan era—and an inspiration to those Théans hoping to embrace some form of democracy at home.

Since the revolution, both the Crescent Empire and Vodacce have tried to invade the islands and reestablish control. All such invasions have failed. Not just failed, but failed in *spectacular* ways. The Numanari have proven their solidarity with blood, steel and courage.

Yet Numa remains in a dreadful state, a strange kind of war as opposing forces try to gain control while keeping foreign forces from taking it themselves. It isn't open warfare but clandestine conflict, with each ruler trying to undermine the power of his enemies. No direct attacks, but subtle maneuvers against power bases. Stolen shipments, burned crops, bribed officials, ambushed allies…all of these methods are on the table, although not all of those in power utilize them. Some still hold to the idea that virtue will win the day. Tough to win a war when both sides aren't using the same rules.

The People

A quick look at the Numanari. There are no "common features." The streets are filled with different faces, different features, different faiths. Men and women from all over the world live on the islands, all united by a common identity. A common idea.

"We are Numa."

The divergent cultures have become a single culture, recognizing the differences and embracing them. You can find temples and churches to many gods. Some Numanari even accept *multiple* gods. You can find them worshipping in Vaticine Churches on one day and dancing around fires in pagan rituals the next. Polytheism is a common practice on the islands. Numanari solidarity means accepting the faith of your brothers and sisters, and that means attending their religious rituals with enthusiasm and zeal.

Foreigners inspired by Numa's recent independence are welcomed with a bit of skepticism at first, but if they prove themselves—by throwing their labor and love into rebuilding the Nation—that skepticism evaporates. Those who give selflessly to Numa are rewarded with generosity and fellowship. For those who give to Numa find that Numa gives back.

Social Strata

The Numanari have two distinct castes: warriors and non-warriors. All Numanari choose their caste. Some are born to be warriors, and some are born to be farmers. Both strive for incorruptible glory in different ways.

When a child reaches the age of nine (sometimes as early as seven), her parents bring her before one of the Numanari Oracles. The Oracle speaks to the child in a private ceremony. After listening to the Oracle, the child decides her fate, weighing what she knows about herself against what the Oracles has to say and choosing to become a *haimon* or an *ergein*.

The warrior caste—haimon—train to be the greatest warriors they can be. From the time they choose to enter the warrior caste, all they learn is fighting: fighting with spears, fighting with shields, fighting with swords, fighting hand-to-hand.

The *ergein*, on the other hand, are the workers. They maintain land, make wine, keep accounting books and otherwise make everything *work*. But they are not simple peasants to be pitied. They are still Numanari. A Numanari farmer takes pride in his work, striving to become the greatest farmer on the islands. A Numanari blacksmith strives to make the greatest tools and weapons ever seen by human eyes. There is honor in sweat and toil. Those who would say otherwise don't understand incorruptible glory.

Without the *haimon*, the land is defenseless. Without the *ergein*, the land is worthless. Both of them serve their respective duties for Numa. With honor.

Clothing

Numanari clothing is a mish-mash of many cultures. You see Crescent Empire robes, Vodacce swords, Ifri spears, Eisen breastplates, Avalon trousers…all of it from every corner of Théah.

Senators wear traditional Numanari garb—white *himations* (togas) to show their "purity of spirit"—when performing official duties. Others wear the white toga at official functions, invoking the symbol of honor and purity.

While under the sway of the Crescent Empire, Numanari were also under sumptuary laws controlling what they could wear and when they could wear it. With the freedom they now hold, with all those regulations lifted, Numanari still prefer to wear simple, effective clothing rather than leaning toward extravagance.

Diet

Numanari cuisine is famous in southern Théah for its olives, zucchini, beans and vinegars. Théah's demand for spices is met with exports from the islands, including pepper, thyme, oregano, cilantro and parsley.

Souvla and *souvlaki* are two of the most popular meat dishes on the isles, both mixes of different meats roasted over fires on spits. Théan sailors who have visited Numa often wake from dreams of such delicacies and offer the Numanari fortunes for secret recipes. So far, none have escaped the isles.

But the *real* Numa taste men and women crave is mint. Found only on Nuama—so far—this little plant is the secret ingredient in Numanari cooking. Mainland Théans haven't figured out a way to make mint grow north of the Numanari islands…but they're trying. One day they may yet succeed.

Kleos

If one word best sums up the character of Numa, it is *kleos*. Derived from the Numa word "to hear," it represents more than just a Numanari's reputation, but all his accomplishments. It is what others know about him. To the Numanari, kleos means everything. A single stain on his reputation means he must erase it. And soon.

Kleos is like a himation: if it is pure, all can see it, and if it is stained, the same remains true. In order to get rid of the stain, the himation must be thoroughly washed. The same is true of *kleos*. A stained reputation must be washed. Honor must be renewed by an act of courage.

Public and Private Face

To many foreigners, Numanari seem boastful, arrogant and proud. This is the public face, the one worn outside the home. Inside the home, that demeanor changes. Among friends and family, a private face emerges. A more nuanced and introspective demeanor.

A Numanari's public face must be boastful and arrogant. He must make public his accomplishments and lay claim to great deeds. He must speak to his ancestors' greatness and to the indomitable enemies he has defeated. He must identify the problems that Numa faces and state how he will solve them with will and deed. All of this serves *kleos*.

But when among family and friends, a Numanari also serves kleos by being more introspective and thoughtful. In fact, many Numanari have a private name known only to a small circle of friends. An intimate name. Sometimes, for brief moments, a Numanari may demonstrate her private face to the public to show her sincerity, but such emotional demonstrations are rare.

Those who show their private face too often are seen as boorish and patronizing. For example, the Numanari do not cry in public. Such emotion is reserved for the private face. But if a Senator were to shed a tear at a funeral for a friend or even hide her face because of an outbreak of emotion, Numanari would interpret this act as a sincere break. A moment when the emotion was too great to maintain the public face. But a Senator who always broke down in tears every time he spoke in public would be seen as someone trying to be manipulative, and his sincerity would not be taken for granted.

Agoge

Agoge was a method of training warriors found in the *polis* of Lakedaimon (la-kay-DIE-mon), but with the recapturing of the islands, it has become quite popular across the new Nation, spreading throughout the islands…to various degrees. The best agoge academies are on the island of Lakedaimon, although there are many in other cities and isles. Kings and queens both have been known to recruit agoge instructors for the express purpose of building a new academy to train warriors.

HUNT, STEAL OR DIE

During training, students are underfed and kept hungry. They are also shown the building where food supplies are kept: guarded all day and all night. The students are told, "Anything you steal, you can keep. But if you are caught, you will be punished." This way, the children learn stealth in real-world conditions.

The children are also taught basic hunting skills and told, "Anything you kill, you can keep." Again, by keeping the students underfed, they learn—out of necessity—how to hunt for their own food. Students also learn that bringing back only enough food for yourself quickly earns you enmity from your fellow students. Those who bring back enough for their group earn camaraderie.

Agoge Academies

Agoge is a rigorous, brutal, violent, and demanding discipline. Parents send their children—both boys and girls—from the age of five to eight to learn warfare, stealth, weapons and pain tolerance. Those who cannot withstand the training are dismissed, although there is no disgrace or dishonor: to even last one day—that terrible, grueling first day—demonstrates a student's conviction and courage.

Agoge students learn not only warfare, but also singing, dancing, public speaking, courtship and history. Agoge does not train mere warriors, but fully complete human beings. Those who withstand the training—usually five years—come out the other side some of the most disciplined warriors in all of Théah, bred for only one purpose: defending Numa from its enemies.

During Numa's occupation, these academies were outlawed by the Crescent Empire, but the training still went on. Entire generations of boys and girls trained to liberate Numa from its captors. When the time was right, this generation rose up and destroyed those who believed Numa belonged to anyone other than the Numanari.

While agoge is popular among the Numanari, each island practices its own level of discipline. Lakedaimon is the most rigorous, with the others all falling far behind in a distant tie for second.

Art and Music

Numanari music is an eclectic mix of all the cultures present on the islands. The most popular instrument is the *baglamas*, otherwise known as the Numanari lute. Portable and versatile, the instrument has become a symbol of the *aoidos* (plural: *aoidoi*), Numa's famous professional bards. The aoidoi are masters of memory, capable of reciting epic poems and reciting long histories at the drop of a hat.

But Numanari music is more than just the native aoidoi telling generational tales of comedy and tragedy. The aoidoi adapt *all* cultural stories and myths to their repertoires, making them some of the most eclectic storytellers in the world. It's said that a story told by an aodios is told truly, as if other versions of the same tale are pale reflections of greatness.

Names

Native Numanari have names as old as the world, dating back to the great heroes of legend. Typically, a Numanari's name is made up of both her given name and the name of the island or town where she was born. Thus, you get names such as Alexis Volos, Eustorgios Thebai and Ireneus Iraklion.

Those who have adopted the Isles as their own take Numanari names to show their adopted heritage, replacing or supplementing their native names. This leads to combinations such as Lysander Baum, Lysistrata Förstner and Myrrine Donahue. Numanari generally look down upon those who take a name too early, those who simply arrive at the Isles and proclaim themeslves as Numanari before they earn the right.

Common Male Names: Acacius, Agapetus, Andreas, Basilius, Chares, Dareios, Epapharas, Heliodoros, Hyakinthos, Kleisthenes, Leontius, Markus, Melanthios, Nicanor, Nikostratos, Paramonos, Phaedrus, Paton, Polykarpos, Solon, Sophos, Theocritus, Theodosius, Timo, Zeno

Common Female Names: Agape, Agathe, Ambrosia, Berenike, Charis, Corinna, Demeter, Elpis, Euthalia, Galene, Helene, Isidora, Kallisto, Ligeia, Lysandra, Lysistrata, Metrodora, Myrrine, Pelagia, Sophia, Pherenike, Phile, Phoibe, Sappho, Sophia, Sostrate, Theodora, Theodosia, Tryphaina, Xanthe, Zenais

Religion

The Numanari native religion—the Pantheon—is incredibly popular on the Isles. When Numanari speak of the Pantheon, they do so with conviction, as if the gods and goddesses could hear them. As if the deities were always present, always watching, and even manipulating events.

Yet the Numanari see the Pantheon not as actual entities—although they are treated as such—but as symbols of truth. And there's nothing a Numanari respects more than truth. Just because the gods don't exist doesn't mean they aren't real.

Numanari see the gods of the Pantheon as elements of the human condition. The Goddess of Wisdom and the Goddess of War are real, living in the human heart and mind. What's more, the Numanari believe they symbolize deep meanings human language cannot convey. Calling upon the Pantheon is calling upon one's own mental and physical reserves. The gods are real because they are *us*.

Hiereia and Mystai

In ancient Numa, the *hiereus* (plural: *hiereia*) were citizens instructed in the proper rites and rituals of the gods. These days, the hiereia still perform rituals, but with a different focus. Instead of literally communicating with the gods, the hiereus uses the rituals to help bring out the gods within each Numanari.

Numanari temples are more like private clubs than open churches. The Numanari call them *mysterion* or "mysteries." As in, "I have experienced the mystery of Dithyrambos." To attend, a devotee must undergo an initiation ritual performed by the hiereia. The initiation ritual teaches the devotee the complicated symbol system associated with the god, symbols communicating truths too grand for words to contain.

Once the devotee becomes an initiate, she is called a *mystai*." One who has experienced the mystery. The mystai typically takes a vow of secrecy. The secrets of the gods can be communicated properly only through ritual and lose all power and potency when delivered in a more mundane method.

Usually, Numanari pick only one god as their patron, but some seek out the mysteries of the other gods. The more mysteries a Numanari can master, the greater his glory. But he must maintain balance. For every aspect of life is about balance. Even the gods.

Zendio, Father of the Gods

Temples dedicated to Zendio are rare. Numanari view the Father of the Gods as a distant figure, isolated on his great mountain. All the other gods are his children from different mothers. In the oldest stories, humans are also children of Zendio, although not directly. The Father seduced the goddess Terra, and when she discovered she was pregnant, she fled into the Earth. From the soil, humanity rose like flowers.

Numanari seldom call upon Zendio because of his temper. He hates humanity—or is, at least, ambivalent toward them—and is more likely to curse those who call upon him rather than bless them.

Stories about the Father's hate are legendary, from curses he visits upon unsuspecting towns to plagues that wipe out entire generations of those who anger him. Yet priests who still light quiet fires to the Father of the Gods, the Far-Off Father as he is known, speak about a time before when Zendio did not hate humanity so. They say that Zendio once loved his unborn children, and his most beloved goddess, Terra. The gods during that time squabbled often, and Zendio believed that Terra's children would bring peace and happiness to his myriad family.

Yet before the birth, the god had a dream which told him that his children would be ever-restless creators of noise, mess and suffering. The story says that Zendio cried out in his sleep and was woken by Terra before he could see the dream's end. The horrors he'd witnessed were enough to send Zendio into a rage. He talked about caging Terra's soon-to-be children, and even contemplated their death. It was this rage that sent Terra fleeing to the earth, and once her feet touched the soil, her children were destined to be born mortal. Terra never returned to Zendio, instead traveling the mortal world to protect her children in secret.

The story ends with the loss of Terra finally driving Zendio into the rage and despair that has kept him distant from the mortal world. Many believe that Zendio could be reconnected to humanity, if only Terra could be found and convinced to return to her moody, distant love. For now, petitioners to Zendio tread lightly, and call upon his name in only the most dire of circumstances, when the righteous fury against the tyranny and destruction of humanity is needed most.

Dithyrambos, God of Plenty

Numanari portray Dithyrambos as a beautiful young man in the prime of his life. While he is chiefly a god of the harvest, he is also a great lover of food and drink and taught humanity what to eat, how to plant and harvest and how to make wine. For these crimes, Zendio punished Dithyrambos, chaining him to a great stone he must push uphill forever. When he can no longer push the stone, it falls back, crushing and killing him, driving him into the soil. Every spring, he is reborn, only to push his stone up the hill once again.

Initiates in the secrets of Dithyrambos are taught pushing the stone relates to the act of grinding wheat—using a tool to transform it into flour—or perhaps grinding barley for a more entertaining purpose. And his yearly quest suggests he is the field itself, harvested by the farmer, then planted to rise.

And so is the human soul just like the field. It must be cut down and replenished lest it rot in the field, unharvested. In other words, we must always strive to begin our lives anew. If we do not, we simply grow old, tired and die before our death arrives. Celebrate, and celebrate now. Rejoice and reflect, cast away the old for the new. Everything in nature does this: the seasons, the beasts…even us.

Supati, Deity of Language and Magic

Supati is the definition of *mercurial*. A deity who appears as both male and female—and sometimes both or neither—Supati is a trickster who snuck secrets to humanity, one at a time. Hundreds of stories tell of Supati taking the form of a falcon or a serpent or even a leprous beggar to grant Heroes gifts of wisdom. Of course, Zendio never approved, but he could never *catch* the trickster god.

Those who are initiated into Supati's secrets undergo a ritual retelling the story of his/her punishment for giving humanity various gifts. The first gift is song, the second is the lever (which can move the world) and the third is language. Each gift requires a penance, each more severe than the last. But Supati always figures out a way to avoid the punishment with a clever trick or rephrasing it in such a way that it is no punishment at all.

Potnia Agrotera, Goddess of the Hunt and War

Potnia Agrotera is one of two twin sisters, both most often associated with war. But while her sister—Theonoa Dianoia—represents cold-hearted strategy, Potnia Agrotera lives for bloodshed and violence. Theonoa Dianoia is the general, commanding the battle from afar, while Potnia Agrotera is the warrior, in the middle of it, right up to her hips and shoulders.

Potnia Agrotera's hair is said to be the color of a purple twilight, her body covered in tattoos. She fights with a sword and no shield, takes only female lovers and her sacred bird is the raven, a gift from her sister. The relationship between the two women is complicated and strained, sometimes loving, sometimes disagreeable, sometimes antagonistic.

The great war between Tyrian and Lakedaimon, a war that nearly destroyed both city-states, was caused by a rivalry between the two sisters over a great hero: Hypatia, a mighty warrior born in the wilderness, and raised by a wolf. Theonoa hoped to make the hero a powerful general. Potnia wanted her as well, but for less cerebral reasons.

The sisters approached Hypatia, but Hypatia recognized she was doomed no matter what choice she made and chose Theonoa. Potnia was furious, sending her armies to Tyrian. The siege lasted ten years, and in the end, Potnia's forces failed. Out of rage, Potnia slew Hypatia by her own hand, dragging the hero's body back to Lakedaimon as Theonoa followed, weeping.

Those who are initiated into Potnia's secrets are often given the role of Hypatia and forced to choose between the two goddesses. Once she makes her choice, the passion play begins and the initiate follows in Hypatia's footsteps until she is "slain" by Potnia, thrown into a coffin and dragged through the temple as Theonoa follows, weeping.

Inside the coffin, the initiate hears Potnia make a deal with the God of Death, a secret bargain not told in other versions of this story. Potnia sacrifices her own immortality so Hypatia may live again. Initiates are taught the goddess was willing to give up the one thing that was most sacred to her so she could bring back Hypatia, thus transferring her immortal power to a mortal. A mortal who founded the current line of Heroes in Lakedaimon. Her blood runs through their veins. The blood of a Hero and the soul of a goddess.

Salacio, God of the Underworld and the Sea

Across Numa, temples dot the landscape on cliffs high above the ocean. Above their open archways are carved the words: "To télos perimênei parakáto." *The end waits below.* This motto is the greeting and hymnal call of the priests of Salacio, god of the sea and the Underworld. It is whispered by sailors and mothers alike, as much a warning as an invocation of the god's power over the depths of the sea.

Salacio was not always the god of both the Underworld and the sea. Ancient stories tell of another goddess of the Underworld, a woman with shadows for hair and eyes like pitted red lakes of fire. The ancient stories say she used to walk freely across Numa, a burning pestilence who rose from the ground and burnt everything she touched, dragging souls down into the Underworld without regard or hesitation.

Then one day the goddess, called Hecteba, burnt a village home to a woman Zendio had courted. Zendio flew into a rage and commissioned the gods to destroy Hecteba, promising the Underworld to whomever could vanquish her. Each of the gods tried in his or her own way, but ultimately fled before Hecteba's power, until Salacio brought the waters of the sea up to drown Hecteba. The battle between them flooded huge portions of Numa and killed thousands of followers, but Hecteba was defeated.

The priests of Salacio say that she was vanquished, but rumors abound that Hecteba still exists, locked in the darkness of the undersea in a prison meant to contain her boiling rage. No one knows if Salacio holds the key to her release, but Zendio is not known to give gifts for partial efforts; if Salacio defeated Hecteba, as the legends say, then he would have been responsible for finding a cage in which to keep her.

Salacio inherited the Underworld then, and merged his realms. The rivers that cross much of Numa became passageways from the sea into the Underworld. Numanari funerals involve placing the bodies of loved ones onto great barges piloted by priests of Salacio, called ferriers. These ferriers carry the boats, festooned with gifts and offerings, up river to the fork of the river. Once the ferriers arrive, shrines to Salacio serve as great burial vaults where those able to pay for a place are interred, their souls resting in what the priests call one of Salacio's palaces.

SALACIO'S GIFTS

Sailors who leave from a Numanari port make two offerings to Salacio before reaching the open sea, each a tribute to his conflicted nature.

The first is typically fish or reeds from a river, a reminder that the journey leaving Numa is for the good of all, even those who remain at home.

The second gift is an artifact from the dead: ashes, bones or even sacrificed animals dedicated to the god of the ocean and the Underworld.

These gifts are best not forgotten, even by the most daring of sailors. In Numa's markets, such trinkets are often advertised as Salacio's Gifts, a reminder to sailors that they ought to prepare their offerings to Salacio before leaving Numa's isles and straits.

Those unworthy of such an honor, or not wealthy enough to pay the ferrier's toll, are burnt on great pyres at the water's edge, their ashes scattered into the waters, to be carried out into the sea. It is said that the pure of heart may still reach the Underworld without gifts, but only Salacio can grant such a boon.

Salacio himself is a mysterious god, deep as the waters and changing as the tide, burdened and festooned in equal measure by the riches that accompany the dead to his realm. His moods turn in great crashing changes, one moment calm and the next tumultuous. Once he has committed himself to a course, however, none can stand in his way. He is attended by the river guardians, spirits of each river of Numa who serve as his emissaries.

Salacio's icons are the trident, the dolphin, and the ferryman's long staff, carved with the words of his motto. The merger of his realms, as well as the gifts he receives for passage to the underworld, have made Salacio a rich god. He always demands tribute, a cautionary tale for the Numanari about the effect that wealth has on those who seek it.

Theonoa Dianoia, Goddess of Craft and Wisdom

Twin girls were born to the god Zendio, intended to be the bright light that would bring him back to happiness. Zendio's beloved, Terra, mother of humanity, had learned of their impending birth and snuck back to the home of the gods to see whether they would restore Zendio to his ancient, good heart.

The first child, Potnia Agrotera, was born fully formed of Zendio's rage, the goddess of war and the hunt, soaked in blood from birth. When Terra saw Potnia, she scooped up the second daughter as she was born, carrying the child away from her father on feet still caked with mortal soil. This touch of mortality infected the child; Theonoa Dianoia was born an infant, forced to grow slowly into her physical form while still blessed with the knowledge of a goddess from the instant of creation.

For this reason, Theonoa Dianoia is a goddess of cycles, as well as crafts and wisdom. She was born an infant, aged over the span of centuries, then died an old woman, only to be reborn once more. Each cycle has only replenished Theonoa's gift of wisdom and made her a cool, calculating goddess, a tactician with an eye for long-term strategy and understanding.

Unlike her wilder sister, Theonoa's gifts lie in planning and organization, though her martial skills are no less keen. Statues to Theonoa depict three stages of her life: the beautiful cherubic infant, the long-limbed battle warrior with dark skin, and the crone cloaked in honored raiments of a wise general, always carrying her trusty spear and round shield and wearing her war helm crested with a mighty eagle-feather plume.

The death of Hypatia at the hands of her sister Potnia tranfromed their difficult sibling conflict to deadly aggression. Though Theonoa once loved her blood-soaked sister, the senseless loss of Hypatia and the needless suffering of the people of Tyrian led Theonoa to withdraw from Numa, her sadness calcified into a calculting fury. Militant followers of Theonoa are known to tear down dedications to Potnia Agrotera, while more moderates belittle the unchecked war mentality of her dedicants. Followers of Theonoa carry spears and shields like their namesake and dedicate themselves to the arts of crafting and war. Her symbols, the eagle, the owl, and the leopard, are painted on many warriors' shields on the eve of battle.

Terra, Lost Goddess of Humanity

Numa has a mother, and she is the mother of all humankind, mother of the mortal world itself. She is Terra, and the legends say that when she fled her beloved Zendio to come to the earth, she brought humanity into being. Terra was once the goddess of light, the shining power beside Zendio in the pantheon of the gods. But when his prophetic dreams brought Zendio to consider killing their unborn children, Terra fled to the earth and gave birth to humanity in the great caves below Numa. Once her feet touched the soil, her children lost their connection to their divine ancestry and became mortal.

The ancient stories say that Terra lay in the cave with her children and wept in fear for their future. She was then visited by her sister Hede, the divine Supati and the god Dithyrambos. Each comforted Terra and promised secret aid in teaching her children what they needed to survive. Hede, primordial goddess of fire and the hearth, promised she would never let the mortal world lose the gift of flame and its protection from the dark. Dithyrambos promised he'd teach mortals how to produce what they needed to survive, and Supati promised he'd teach them how to pass that knowledge on to their successors. It was only then, comforted as she was by these oaths, that Terra emerged from the cave with her children to settle and populate Numa.

Terra never returned to Zendio and the other gods but continued to roam the world, and still does, if the stories are to be believed, to this day. For that reason, Terra does not have shrines and temples like the other gods. Instead, her dedicants wander from city to city, telling stories and sharing what they can. They are known as the Perpetual Parents, the Wanderers, or the Caretakers, and are considered inviolate guests wherever they go. Anyone who harms a Caretaker is subject to the harshest of punishments, as these holy and pure people have dedicated themselves to a life of simple service to Numa. Their symbols are bags of earth carried at their waists, and the simple, homespun clothing they wear. The Caretakers bear no weapons, but only staves to defend themselves when needed.

Caledon, God of Medicine, the Home and Family

When the father of the gods lost his beloved Terra, he took her sister Hede, mute goddess of the hearth, as a lover. From their union came the quiet god Caledon, the youngest of the gods and patron shepherd of humanity. Caledon was the joy of the gods, beloved by all for his youth, curiosity and empathy. Of all the gods, it is only Caledon who is known to be able to reach Zendio in his distemper and bring him some peace.

Maybe it's because of their close relationship that Caledon managed to keep his father's love even when he dedicated himself to the stewardship of humanity. After mortals had spread for several generations, Zendio fell into a great rage over their destructive nature. He swore he would wipe Terra's children from the earth. It was Caledon who offered to teach humanity and show them love when Zendio would have destroyed it all. Zendio finally agreed, and gifted his son with the *caduceus*, a staff with two living serpents intertwined around it. These serpents would serve as Caledon's protectors and advisors, as well as his messengers wherever he went.

Caledon donned mortal form and walked across all Numa, sharing knowledge of medicine and domestic life. He taught that family was not simply about your mate and offspring, but instead about community and bonds of friendship. He taught the importance of his mother Hede's rules of hospitality around the hearth and that the bonds family and fellowship cross all borders and boundaries. It's not hard to tell why Caledon is one of the most popular gods in all Numa.

Caledon is worshipped as the patron of medicine, the home, hospitality and, above all, the family. Temples to Caledon exist in every city and offer lodgings and aid to any who need it. Priests of Caledon come from all walks of life, genders and backgrounds, and serve their communities as physicians, spiritual counselors, teachers and mediators. They are tasked with everything from treating the wounded on battlefields to teaching new couples how to tend their new home, and officiate all wedding celebrations. Caledon is depicted as a handsome youthful man with tanned skin and shocking pale hair. His symbols are the ivy branch, the marriage bands and the famous caduceus.

Hecteba, Goddess of Mysteries, Murder and Dark Magic

The truth of the former goddess of the Underworld is a secret passed along back alleys and in hushed whispers across Numa, despite the rumors that Salacio killed her outright. Hecteba once killed indiscriminately in clouds of inky shadow and boiling-hot liquid rock. Her battle with Salacio, the sea god, nearly drowned all of Numa in the time before time, but, in the end, her defeat cast her down into an ancient undersea prison where she sleeps, rumbling with dark dreams even today.

Yet those dreams are not silent, for Hecteba was not just the goddess of the Underworld, but of magic and ancient mysteries. And though Hecteba sleeps, in her dreams she sows the seeds for her release. Her slumber is a mask, a concealment for her continued reach into the world of mortals. From her dreams, she recruits her initiates, each burdened with nightmares that shake their soul and affirm their faith.

Hecteba's followers are everywhere, though her worship is outlawed in many parts of Numa. These dedicants find one another by the sign they all bear: the image of a woman with red pits for eyes and hair of long black strands, her mouth open in perpetual screams. They whisper of the dreams that reached them in the night, of mysteries whispered in a voice that is not a voice, teaching them about places far away and wisdom they shouldn't know.

These followers exist mostly on the fringes of Numanari society, a collection of the cast off and the unlucky, plying their murderous trade wherever they can. Still, sometimes Numanari will awaken in the middle of the night to see a loved one sitting and staring out the window towards the sea, whispering to someone who isn't there. This is where the madness begins. Mayhem comes soon after.

Followers of Hecteba learn firsthand the wonders of taking life. Many are professional soldiers, mercenaries and hired killers. She often inspires her followers to place her image on the corpses of those they have killed in her honor, a grim reminder that her influence is not squelched by the prison Salacio has built for her. Many dismiss these markings, but there are those who know t he truth: Hecteba lurks in darkness just out of reach, waiting for her moment.

Government

Numanari government is a mess, a hodgepodge of different systems held together by tradition rather than practicality. One could say there are four different governments in Numanari, all running at the same time: there ar the original democratic republics, the Crescent Empire bureaucracy remaining from occupations new and old, the warlord dynasties, and the new-found monarchies. None of these systems were designed to work together, and yet, somehow Numa still stands.

Only time will tell if Numanari Heroes can transform the existing system into something that will serve the people of Numa...or if something new must be hewn from the government that rules the Isles.

The Monarchies

The Numanari Isles are ruled by a number of monarchs, making each island its own city-state, or *polis* (plural: *poleis*). Because of the mountainous terrain dividing each polis from the others, the Numanari city-states grew independently from each other, each developing its own character. However, the poleis all share some elements in common.

Each polis has a ruler and a senate, but the powers and privileges of the ruler and the senate are different. While there are dozens of poleis, each with its own divine patron, five have remained the largest, most powerful and most influential. Those five lie at the heart of many conflicts between the city-states, though the honor of the city's patron is usually just an excuse to declare open hostilities long bubbling below the surface.

Lakedaimon

Known throughout the world as "the Sword of Numa," Lakedaimon is a city-state of warriors. Ruled by Queen Soteira, Lakedaimon has often been seen as a culture of warmongers. However, the people are more than simple brutes. They see the world as a place of strife and conflict, and before one can accomplish anything, she must first learn to overcome. Every man, woman and child on Lakedaimon can wield a weapon. Every one of them. Their patron deity is Potnia Agrotera, the Goddess of the Hunt and War.

Ephyra

One of the smallest and most distant poleis, Ephyra sits closest to the Crescent Empire. Its queen is a woman named Anfisa, a decadent but influential ruler. Ephyra's patron is Dithyrambos, which means "pre-born." Dithyrambos is known as the God of Plenty or the God of the Cornucopia. Ephyrians are commonly caricaturized as drinkers and revelers. The Queen is known to throw week-long revels when given any excuse with diplomats waiting months to discuss business while the parties rage on.

Hylicia

Some Numanari say Hylicia is more Crescent than Numanari, a claim unpopular with Hylicians. The people speak a hybrid of both Numanari and the Crescent Tongue unique to Hylicia, and there are more mosques on the island than on any other. King Lysandros wears a mask for an unknown reason. Some say it is because of a terrible birth defect, but others suspect supernatural causes. The patron deity of Hylicia is Supati, a relative newcomer to the Numanari Pantheon, adopted centuries ago after Hylicia was captured from an old enemy.

Kousai

Because of its thriving ports, Kousai is one of the wealthiest Numanari islands. Its current monarch, Queen Syntyche, is proud of the accomplishments of her people and makes certain the other monarchs know. The city's patron is Salacio, the god of the Underworld and the sea. More importantly, he is also the god of riches, a fact the Queen never lets anyone forget. Some in Kousai say that the city was once the seat of the Old Republic, the polis that governed the world. Queen Syntyche has done much to fan the flames of such myths and is building a library to house ancient documents verifying such claims.

Tyrian

King Polyaretos rules the isle of Tyrian, one of the most populated islands in the Numanari Sea. It was on Tyrian that production of the color purple began (a difficult process involving snails). Polyaretos is named after one of the great Numanari heroes, more of a cunning trickster than a man of strength and prowess. The patron deity of the island is Theonoa Dianoia, a goddess associated with craft and knowledge. Some of the greatest philosophical works of the Numanari came from Tyrian, making it the birthplace of reason.

The Warlord Dynasties

Though many of the large cities have established monarchies with stable royal families, the smaller poleis have had no such luck creating solid governments. Instead, many of the smaller city-states are ruled by warlords, or regional leaders intent on keeping their home territories from falling into anarchy. These leaders are a hodgepodge of different types, from benevolent dictators to cruel monsters, each with his own views on how to lead his people. Because of those differences, these city-states often come into conflict with their neighbors.

The Magna Numara

This league of three city-states is the first of its kind, a union between three poleis hoping to maintain their independence in the face of aggression from their neighbors. Just after Numa regained its freedom, the polis of Adamaradon declared its intention to annex all of its neighbors to form a powerful Nation under its king, Milyptos. In response, three of the closest cities to the north, Akragosus, Libanuma and Bothrauton, united against Adamaradon to protect their citizens and future. The brief invasion saw the united three cities drive back King Milyptos' forces after a surprising rout. In celebration, the cities formalized their allegiance and became the Magna Numara, a league dedicated to mutual defense, growth and unity.

The Magna Numara cities each have their own government structures in place within their own walls. Akragosus is a democratic city-state with a representative senate that serves under a proconsul whose power comes from the people's support. Libanuma is a city of crafters and teachers of primarily Ifri descent, ruled by a king chosen from among the various noble family heads and chieftains in the city.

The river city of Bothrauton is far less representative in its rule, as its leadership is dynastic. The current queen, Calysto, is the half-Vesten daughter of the first warlord who took the city from the Vodacce. She remains in power for as long as she can keep the throne, and has so far fought off six bloody assassination attempts in only a few years. Though the three city leaders may squabble amongst themselves, they are united by the notion that their unity represents the paragon of the phrase "We are Numa." A challenge to one city is a challenge to all.

From: C
To: I
Re: The Numa Warlords

These "warlords" cannot agree on anything, even the kind of wine to have at meetings. This is a good thing. If the Numa warlords were united, it would be a catastrophe. As it is, the chaos they spawn allows us to move at will and manipulate as we wish. Bribery is the chief motivation, although blackmail has been most efficient. Their sense of honor and public reputation is easily exploited. T, V, X, Y. 1, 3, T, 7. I will move forward with the next steps.

The Eye Sees All

Nikiamara

One of the most ancient cities on the southern tip of Numa, Nikiamara was once a thriving city of Numanari scholars and warriors. Considered the crossroads of thinking in the time before Numa's many invasions, Nikiamara hosted a tremendous gathering of schools on topics ranging from philosophy to war, medicine and the study of the natural world. The city also hosted three large temples to the gods and goddesses that held sway over their fields of study: Theonoa Dianoia, Supati and Caledon. Nikiamara was considered the most peaceful city. That dedication to knowledge over warfare made it a prime target for raids by the Crescent Empire.

The invasion of the Crescent Empire destroyed the center for learning. They say a rogue Crescent general named Islandur burnt it in defiance of his orders to prove to the Numanari that they would be destroyed. The city was nearly burnt to the ground, its years of history lost. Those from the Crescent Empire who settled Nikiamara simply rebuilt over what was destroyed and turned the city into a monument to their victory. As time passed, and the Crescent Empire was driven from Numa, the city became a testament to the fleeting nature of such victories, and the loss of knowledge in the face of bloody conquest. Today Nikiamara is a city of ancient ruins below a modern port city. Historians and adventurers from all around come to petition the warlord and ruthless pirate Galatus for access to the vast labyrinth of ruins underneath Nikiamara's streets in the hopes of finding a trove of ancient wisdom, lost to the centuries.

The Kodjabashes Bureaucracy

For 300 years, the Numanari Isles were ruled by a kind of inherited bureaucratic class called the *kodjabashes* oligarchy (singular: *kodjabashis*), a system inherited by Crescent rule. During that time, the Empire placed governors on each island to maintain order, collect taxes and suppress revolt. The Crescent Empire selected kodjabashes from the local nobility, a step designed to prevent violent overthrow. If the Numanari saw their own as leaders, they would be less likely to turn against them.

The post was passed from parent to child, although the Crescent Empire had been known to remove oligarchs from their position, assigning the duty to another, if the region became too violent or income was not consistent. In the regions where Vodacce held control, many Merchant Princes left the kodjabashes in control, seeing the virtue of the Crescent Empire's strategy of an illusionary "home rule."

During the revolution, some kodjabashes saw the writing on the wall and helped organize the overthrow of Crescent Empire and Vodacce rule. Others did not and paid the price. While the Numanari monarchy sees themselves as the true rulers of the Isles, the kodjabashes are the ones maintaining the bureaucracy. Kings and queens make decisions, but the kodjabashes carry them out. They collect taxes, organize and count votes for local positions and maintain the postal service (one of the best in Théah).

Numanari Democracy

A kodjabashis is still an inherited position—just like king or queen—but many of the local governmental offices, such as city mayors, are elected by the people. Each city andvillage holds votes for public positions, each of which varies depending on the city or village. For some villages, the only elected official is the mayor (or *dímarchos*), while others elect more. Typical terms last for one year before re-election. Some locales have term limits, others do not. Elected officials work with the kodjabashes for tax collection and other official duties. Oftentimes, officials from the bureaucracy clash with elected officials over jurisdiction. There are no clear solutions to these problems, and the decision usually goes to the official with the greatest influence with the monarch.

Economy

Numa's economy relies largerly on trade, but there are plenty of Numanari who make their living farming, fishing or even as smiths or crafters for local markets. While most Théans have an idealized view of what it means to live in Numa, the reality is much the same as it is anywhere else in the world; trade makes some Numanari wealthier than others.

Given Numa's central location, pirates often find it a useful harbor to move trade goods, repair ships and find new crew. Individual city-states treat pirate vessels according to their own customs, but anyone who understands the Numanari economy knows that pirates serve a more crucial role than any king or queen would like to admit.

While in a key trade position with Ifri, Théah and the Crescent Empire—and, to a smaller extent, the East—Numa's independent city-state structure prevents the Nation from growing any faster. Many Numanari philosophers note a unified government would benefit the Nation, but tradition keeps that from happening. The Numanari do not want a high king, nor do they feel they *need* a high king.

Currency

The most common Numanari coin is the *drachma*, minted by each island with the face of the current monarch. The drachma is minted in both gold and silver—roughly 20 silver coins equal one gold coin. Numa is one of the only Nations still minting coins in gold and silver. The presence of the Guilder has not affected the drachma because of its inherent value, but the Guilder is becoming more present on the islands. It's easier to use, accepted by all foreign ports and gaining popularity fast. Some Numanari resent this fact, refusing to use it. Others recognize the practicality but refuse to use it out of principle. But the majority of Numanari are coming to grips with the fact their native currency is losing favor and are slowly adopting the Vesten currency.

Some of the old Crescent Empire currency still moves around certain Numanari circles, but many refuse to accept it. They call it *vrómiko nomísmatos*, or "dirty coin," a reminder of a time when Numa was not free.

Towns and Villages

Paestum

When Vodacce invaded Numa and established its first settlements on the islands off the coast, the military leadership believed they might capture the hearts of the Numanari people by adopting some of their ways. General Carmelo Baldassari learned about *agoge* from captured Numanari and believed his own soldiers could learn a thing or two. He built the town of Paestum around a hybrid *agoge*, meant to train young Vodacce citizens to become well-rounded *haimon*.

In fact, he did the job so well that Baldassari sowed the seeds of his own defeat right under his own nose. The Vodacce children brought to the *agoge* were trained by the best captured teachers and warriors Baldassari could supply. Yet through their training, the students began to believe less in their home and more in Numa and its unity. Just before the first crop of students was to graduate, the graduates staged a revolt. They drove back Baldassari and the soldiers holding Paestum and returned the city to Numanari control. When the Vodacce military left Numa, the *agoge* graduates stayed and settled Paestum, led by Baldassari's own daughter, Carolina. Now Paestum maintains the *agoge* and uses it to educate young Numanari in the best ways to prepare for any invasions from Théah.

Naucriparos

Every country has its seedy underbellies, and Naucriparos is as seedy as they come. The saying goes that every son and daughter who has ever cheated, stolen or slit a throat in Numa has set foot at least once in Naucriparos, the sellsword city.

First built as a stop-off port for Numanari soldiers shipping from one part of the kingdom to another during the war, Naucriparos was a hastily constructed military port city that barely survived the constant battles for freedom. When peace was established, the men and women who served to drive back Numa's conquerors departed Naucriparos to return home, leaving behind a perfectly good port city to a skeleton group of locals. A provisional council took up leadership and for a time, everything was quiet. Then, the Red Hand League arrived.

Professional soldiers and mercenaries, the Red Hand League came into being to give Numanari veterans a way to sell their well-earned fighting skills to the highest bidder. Led by five former decorated Numanari war heroes, the Red Hands made it a port of call for anyone looking for mercenaries, or for any mercenaries needing a place to lay their hat. The result is a town where anyone can find the hired killers and thieves they seek for the right price. The streets may be dangerous, but the code of the Red Hands is upheld in every establishment: *always keep a contract, never turn your back on a fellow Hand in need, and seek no quarrel but always finish one.*

The Military

Numa has no single army: each polis stands alone. However, nearly every citizen has military training. The hatred of foreign invaders once united disparate forces, but now they squabble; a few seek a common goal that might unite all the poleis together once more. Their opinions about the world beyond Numa are also divided, but certain beliefs are almost universal.

Current Relations

Avalon

A land of "legends." More like a land that traded its freedom for magical slavery. Every collar is a noose.

Castille

Fanaticism moved them from reason to blind emotion. Weakness. They were once great. Now, they are mired in a poverty of imagination, courage and compassion.

Eisen

A Nation of warriors who faced the ultimate test and lost. That doesn't bring them dishonor. On the contrary, they fought until the last of them. Never retreated, never surrendered. The Eisen are a great people…they've just forgotten how great.

Montaigne

The monarchy is blind. We have seen the chaos awaiting them. It seethes at the edge, waiting to drag them all down. There will come a time when the only diplomacy will be made at the edge of a blade.

Pirate Nations

A thief is a thief is a thief. Even if it's a thief you hire.

Sarmatian Commonwealth

The Sarmatians have taken a step in the right direction. But not all are equal, despite what they claim. Some are Heroes with souls of gold. Others are Villains with souls of vile darkness. Judge a soul on its worth and do not assume all intend the best.

Ussura

A civil war over which corrupt monarch will rule. The people of Ussura are superstitious, afraid of reason, afraid of technology, afraid of *everything*. They are proud but fearful. Halfway to being Heroes.

Vestenmennavenjar

Their people live for battle, live for courage, live for *glory!* But they are distracted by shiny baubles and false accomplishments. Gold is a means to glory, nothing else. Glory and glory alone. All else is vanity.

Vodacce

They thought they could control us. They thought they could rule us. They thought they could manipulate our destiny. They only delayed it for a while. We are united. And they are expelled.

Playing the Numanari Hero

You have much in common with Heroes from Vestenmennavenjar and the Glamour Isles: you want to be remembered. But unlike the Vesten—who believe reputation allows them into the afterlife—or the Avalons—who believe reputation gives them powers—you believe reputation aids you now.

The key to understanding the Numanari is understanding that "Numanari" doesn't apply to a race of people, but a *quality* some people have. The Numanari feel they can recognize it in others and feel an invisible bond, a kinship, between themselves and those who share this quality. As a Numanari, you have been trained your entire life to be a Hero. Others may not have the training, but that doesn't mean they don't have the same fire.

Your goal is to gain glory: to make your heroic deeds known throughout Théah and the rest of the known world. Not to soothe your ego, but to provide an example for others. An old Republic philosopher once said that moral acts had to be performed in public, otherwise, they meant nothing. A heroic deed done in secret inspires no one, and thus, means nothing.

If a deed is worth doing, it is worth doing in sight of others. If you feel you must hide your action, it cannot be moral. Even if this means facing public scorn, ridicule and even punishment, a citizen's duty is to do the right thing. (This philosophy has led to the concept of civil disobedience—peacefully breaking unjust laws and then facing the punishment to show the law is unjust.)

Show them what it means to be a Hero. And when you are done demonstrating what greatness looks like in all things...show them again.

Numanari Notables

Lysinnus

Consort to the Amazon Queen Artemesia, Lysinnus is at the crossroads of history for the warrior nation and Numa. The young hero met the Amazon Queen during the early battles against Vodacce, and the two soon fell in love. This kind of bond between a woman and a man is frowned upon by the Amazons, so the two kept their affair a secret, even while the Queen bore Lysinnus seven daughters over the years. After the wars' end, Lysinnus petitioned Artemesia to allow him to remain in Amazon society to be near his daughters, a request the queen has put off for several years. Lysinnus knows he may be at the heart of reuniting the Amazons with the rest of Numa, yet has no interest in such proud people losing their individuality and power. A skilled horseman, Lysinnus follows the Cyrene horde, looking out for any threats to the Amazon Nation and his beloved Artemesia from the outside.

Queen Calysto

The half-Vesten Queen of Bothrauton is as formidable as she is bloodthirsty. Raised by her warlord father Kokistos and his foreign bride, Calysto embraced the notion of *kleos* to the utmost, perhaps to overcome what she perceived as the stain of her foreign blood. When her father was killed in the war, the blond-haired warrior took up her father's sword and shield to complete his quest to take the Vodacce city, earning herself the mantle of queen. The years of bloody war have taken their toll on Calysto, who cannot seem to live a life without bloodshed in it. Quick to anger and tumultuous at heart, Calysto keeps herself well removed from her people, especially after several assassination attempts by rivals intending to take her throne. Calysto knows she must secure herself a legacy by producing offspring, and suitors from many other city-states in the region have traveled to Bothrauton in an attempt to win her hand. Most, unless they are very well-mannered, end up going home in pieces.

King Milyptos

The disgraced king of Adamaradon is a disaster in the making in the midst of a rebuilding Numa. After his failed attempt to annex Akragosus, Libanuma and Bothrauton destroyed his army and created the Magna Numara right on his doorstep, the already unstable Milyptos slipped over the edge into madness. Now the King spends his nights wandering his castle, speaking to voices who aren't there, and writing secret letters sent out by envoy to parts unknown. The court is deeply disturbed by the King's behavior, but even they are unaware of the depths of his treachery. Milyptos has made contact with the Vodacce royal court in secret, trading them information about Numa's defenses in preparation to back another invasion. That would be heinous enough, were it not for his whispered dedications to the ancient worship of Hecteba, as well. Wide-eyed and dangerous, Milyptos kills anyone who openly questions him, leading many to wonder how much longer Adamaradon can hold itself together.

Carolina Baldassari

Leader of the *agoge* at Paestum, Carolina Baldassari is the product of her strict military upbringing and her passionate dedication to truth and honor. Raised by her father, General Baldassari, Carolina resisted being enlisted in the hybrid Vodacce-Numanari *agoge* at first. Yet over time, Carolina not only thrived in the harsh warrior's environment, but excelled, embracing the idea of *kleos* in her life to become one of the school's most decorated students. It wasn't long into her training that Carolina began to embrace the notion of a free Numa, and tried to influence her father to support Numanari independence. When he would not, Carolina led her fellow students to push out her father out of a sense of love for her adopted homeland. Once Paestum was freed, her fellow students nominated her as new leader for the town. Fair-minded and just, the battle-scarred young woman is testament to the power of one warrior helping transform a Nation.

Places

The Lost City

Nestled in the crook between two great mountains in Numa's north is one of the greatest enduring mysteries of Numa, an ancient city of wonders known as the Lost City of the Gods, or simply the Lost City. *Haimon* ache to travel there to prove their bravery and earn their *kleos*. The Lost City is the origin of a thousand myths about the ancient past of Numa, and home to harrowing dangers and staggering ruins.

No one is sure how old the Lost City truly is, nor who originally lived there. Legends state that it was originally the home the gods built for Terra and her children when they emerged from the caves to become the first mortals to walk the earth. Still others say it was a city of giants that were conquered by the ancient Numanari to claim the land.

The Lost City sports massive architecture far too large to be designed for mortals. Buildings tower overhead with ceilings four times the normal height, complex stone arches with gorgeous mosaics of battles long past. Crumbling roads lead through the deserted city, the buildings a testament to the skill and civilization of the former inhabitants.

No one is sure what happened to those former inhabitants, but early explorers who found the Lost City speak about discovering the city abandoned, as if it were left in a hurry. What they left behind were treasures of all kinds, including powerful weapons and strange artifacts that glowed with unnatural light. They soon learned that the ruins were home to many wild and dangerous creatures, including monsters that lurked in the towering ruins, waiting to rip apart unsuspecting Heroes. Still, the dangers cannot keep away the curious, fearless, or foolhardy. Those looking to make a name for themselves can always be seen taking the high road to the mountain pass. Whether they make it back or not is another question entirely.

Aigosthena

The people of Numa have been conquered and reconquered throughout their history, their stories soaked in the blood of their defiant ancestors. After the last invasion drove out their oppressors, some believed that the next generation must be prepared for whatever may come next, a constantly vigilant force standing sentinel for Numa. The cliffside fortress city of Aigosthena stands that vigil as home to an elite band of warriors called the Myrmidon.

Aigosthena is a walled citadel high on the bluffs above the northeastern coast of one of Numa's eastern isles. The walled city was originally created by King Achelanus, whose tiny but prosperous polis of Theloniki was stripped and occupied by the Vodacce military. The king and his court fled to an abandoned military encampment on the cliffs, and there the paranoid and bitter King Achelanus worked his servants near to death building a citadel that could withstand any army. He named the citadel Aigosthena, after the daughter he lost in the fall of Theloniki.

Achelanus' cruelty was legendary, and led to his eventual assassination by his own steward long before the Vodacce could get to him. When the local Numanari warriors came to the citadel, they found the court starving to death behind the walls. The *haimon* took over the citadel and used it as the launching spot for many raids against the invaders. Once the war was over, however, many questioned how they could repurpose the remote location.

It was Küçük Metaxas himself who came up with the answer. Upon the end of the war, many of the most dedicated defenders of Numa did not want to return to their old lives as workers. They believed a standing defense force could help turn the tide should anyone try to retake Numa from its people. Küçük Metaxas charged these warriors to settle at Aigosthena and become the Myrmidon, defenders of the spirit of Numa. From behind the high walls of Aigosthena, these mighty heroes travel across the land to preempt any dangers to the Nation they love.

Cyrene

While most poleis in Numa are set locations, there is a single city-state that ranges across the wilds, a floating kingdom whose territory is wherever its citizens rest their head. The traveling city of Cyrene is less of a city than a roving horde of matriarchal *haimon* called Amazons who long ago eschewed sedentary life in favor of wandering. A Nation of all women, the Amazons are a powerful force to be reckoned with, respected for their military prowess and fierce nature.

The horde of Cyrene began in ancient times, before the invasions. The stories state that once the Amazons had their own city called Agrotera, after their patron goddess Potnia Agrotera. Their queen was Cyrene, a wise and powerful leader whose counsel was sought out by kings and warlords across the land. She even brokered a symbiotic relationship with the neighboring polis of Tyrins. The Amazons would seek out mates from among the men of Tyrins for the purpose of procreation, then keep the girls while bringing the boys to the Tirinese to be raised.

The relationship worked well for generations, until a vain warrior named Hercules decided he intended to have the queen Cyrene for his wife. He tricked Cyrene into hosting a party for him and his warriors at Agrotera. After the Amazons went to sleep, Hercules and his men attacked their hosts in an attempt to enslave the women. The Amazons resisted and fought bravely, but in the process the city was burnt to the ground. Most of the Amazons perished, including Queen Cyrene. The survivors were forced to flee to the mountains, vowing never to rest again once more in a single place where they might be caught unaware.

The horde of Cyrene travels as a giant caravan made of chariots and horse-riding warriors escorting a retinue of workers and their families. When the horde chooses a place to settle for a time, the locals are rarely consulted. Instead, the Amazons will set up the wandering city wherever they wish, trading and providing recompense by offering labor and defense of the area. Once settled, the Cyrene camp covers miles of ground, full of beautiful tents bearing the standards of various Amazon families.

The center of the camp is a collection of giant tents belonging to Queen Artemesia, descendant of Queen Cyrene, and her seven daughters. Queen Artemesia is a controversial figure among the Amazons as she has produced all of her daughters with a single man, a Numanari poet, horsemaster and hero named Lysinnus. Many worry that Artemesia is becoming too soft in peaceful times and wish for the days of wandering battles against invaders. In the meantime, the Amazons travel where they like, the banners of their ancient bloodlines held high.

La Bucca

La Bucca

"Gold is not the goal, it is the means to the goal. And that, my friends, is freedom."

— Allende

La Bucca, the Island of Temptation, was once the most notorious prison island in Théah, holding violent criminals and dangerous political prisoners. Now, the island stands as one of Théah's free Nations, run through a fragile mix of direct democracy and stern leadership. Ostensibly, all stand as equals...but the truth is a bit more complicated.

La Palabra de Dios

La Bucca's original purpose was as a prison island for the most notorious criminals in Théah, and later political prisoners. The island was originally discovered by Cardinal Alfonso Ordunez quite by accident. His ship was blown off course during a particularly bad storm. They ended up on a small island chain just west of Castille and Ifri filled with a huge natural swine population and fresh water. They named it *La Palabra de Dios*, as it had just saved their lives.

The crew spent a few days reprovisioning the ship, and the Cardinal and a few fellow church members scouted the island, charting it for future voyages. They found upon the island a Syrneth ruin, and a single artifact inside and several tablets with strange pictures, all including what appeared to be a strange monster with tentacles. Ordunez didn't realize the importance of the artifact until they attempted to leave the island a few days later.

As they set sail, they caught sight of a huge sea creature, monstrous in size and shape, circling the island. The Cardinal recognized it at once as the creature depicted on the tablets from the ruins. The ship was forced back to port by the creature, as it aggressively defended the exits to the bay they were anchored in. The crew wanted to kill the creature to ensure their escape, but the Cardinal turned to attempting to understand the tablets and artifact he had found.

The Mysterious Artifact

Within the week, the Cardinal had a basic understanding of how the artifact functioned. It could control the creature's movements of a sort, directing it to one end of the island or another. He shared these secrets with no one, not even committing them to paper for fear that someone would learn what he had learned from the tablets.

The Cardinal sent the creature to the opposite end of the island, allowing his ship to be able to sail safely away without attracting the creature. A few miles out from shore, he destroyed most of the tablets, throwing their broken pieces into the ocean to be carried away.

The Cardinal was drawn to the island, slightly obsessed with the artifact. He wanted to go back, and saw in this place a magnificent fortress. He kept the artifact itself under lock and key, believing it—not incorrectly—to be the key to unlocking the island's unique opportunities.

A Perfect Prison

Before the use of La Bucca, public executions were commonplace in Théah, despite the Vaticine Church's objections. The Cardinal saw this island as an opportunity to change that. He urged the Nations, through the Church, to save the souls of the damned and sequester them away from society instead of killing them. At first, Castille sent its most undesirable prisoners, those who committed the worst of crimes. They built barracks and guard houses on the island, for all to live in. Soon, the other Nations began to follow suit, though instead of hardened criminals, they sent their political prisoners—people more dangerous as martyrs than simply sent away into exile.

Ordunez became the warden and moral leader of the prison, the Church putting him in complete command and control of the island. He brought a group of loyal guards and fellow priests, hoping to convert the criminals to a more "philosophically minded lifestyle." The Cardinal dreamed of creating order from chaos and redeeming the prisoners of the island, looking at them as his children of sorts. He also devoted much of his time on the island to understanding and eventually mastering the monster that lived in the surrounding water.

The Quiet Revolution

The island served as a prison for people from all Nations of Théah for many years until one fateful morning in late winter, when the prisoners claimed the island for themselves. Under the direction of a woman in a velvet mask who called herself Allende, the prisoners staged a coup by pretending illness.

Allende and several other prisoners brought what appeared to be a corpse covered in blotches leaking white, milky pus to Cardinal Ordunez's office. The man was clearly suffering from the White Plague—an ancient illness responsible for killing nearly a third of Théah's population in the 12th and 13th centuries. Allende informed the Cardinal that the man had been the water carrier for the guard house, and they were unsure how long he had been sick before they found him. He likely contaminated the entire water supply.

Within the hour, the Cardinal had packed his guards and crew onto all the ships in the harbor and set sail, seeking refuge from the plague, leaving behind only prisoners on the island. Ordunez hoped the plague would burn itself out in a few years, and he could return to the island to reclaim the prison. Until then, the prisoners could fend for themselves. Little did he know that the prisoners had staged the whole thing.

Allende immediately set up a representative government, the prisoners electing their leaders, with Allende serving as their de facto president until they could sort themselves out. The biggest hurdle the prisoners needed to face was dealing with what they called "the Creature." No one really knows what the thing is, other that it is capable of sinking ships, and sometimes the guards fed problem prisoners to it when they thought the Cardinal wouldn't notice. The Cardinal clearly had a way to tame the creature, because supply and prisoner ships came and went from the island, but if a prisoner were somehow capable of stealing a ship, it wouldn't make it to the deeps without sinking. The best Allende and her cohort could manage was to put the beast to sleep, using a single text found in the chaos after Ordunez left.

Word soon spread across the different Nations of the White Plague spreading upon La Palabra de Dios. The Cardinal shared how the Creator judged the prisoners unfit to live. He claimed he had to abandon the island in order to save it. By the end of the year, none dared visit the Island of White Death.

Treaty of Three Fleets

Two years later, Cardinal Ordunez gathered support to return to the island, in hopes to salvage what he left behind. The rumors of pirates and sea monsters made it difficult to find captains willing to undergo the voyage, and, in the end, he could get only one ship to take the voyage for him. He paid in gold, the remaining funds he was able to gather, hoping that he could find some way to reclaim his former position.

The Vendel League heard he was returning and also sent a ship, hoping to outpace him and take the island for themselves. A third ship set sail at the same time from Vodacce, sent from the Merchant Prince Vincenzo Caligari, who was interested in the rumors of Syrneth ruins on the island.

The three ships sailed to the island, but when they arrived, they held back. Ordunez was concerned the islanders had gained control of his Creature, and did not want to risk his ship. The others, sighting each others' sails, refused to be the first to approach the island and place their backs to what could be their enemies. What little communication passed between the ships quickly led all the captains to share Ordunez's whispered fears. Before long, each ship was an island to itself, unwilling to send even messengers between ships for fear of attracting the Creature.

On La Bucca, the Buccaneers slowly rallied behind Allende. Many feared a battle from the sea would be their undoing. Allende had never found a way to control the island's Creature, and she knew it would only be a matter of time before the ships entered port, calling her bluff. Desperate for a change in fortunes, she pulled the prisoners together and called for volunteers to swim out a distance with makeshift fins and vines twisted to look like large tentacles to fool the Cardinal for as long as possible. Daily, as the sun rose and set, Allende sent her decoys out into the water, seeming to circle between the ships and the island, occasionally striking out at the ships' supplies of food and water as darkness fell over the island. Despite the attacks and strange sighting, the ships refused to draw closer...yet they also refused to leave.

After a month of guerilla warfare, Allende knew the ships were out of supplies and incapable of making the return trip to their home Nations. She bade the islanders to prepare smoked pork and fresh water and sent an emissary to each ship, laden with barrels of food and water and a promise of safe transport past the Creature. By that evening, each of the ships had docked, surrendering to the island Nation.

Allende gave each member of the crews an option: restock and leave the island, or remain as citizens of the republic. She even wrote up a contract and had each sign it, which she called the Treaty of Three Fleets. Cardinal Ordunez was among those who stayed on the island.

La Bucca Today

The island, despite its reputation, has become a popular destination. The island Nation welcomes guests and visitors, especially the money in their wallets. While many unsavory characters populate the island, it remains one of the few locations where a person can find practically anything, for a price. Allende's democracy lends the island an air of political freedom, and draws Théan ambassadors and agents from all the Nations.

Each ship that enters port receives a gift of smoked pork and a barrel of water as a welcoming gift from the islanders. This is likely the only thing they can expect to receive for free, yet Allende refuses to give up the custom. She claims it is one of the few things that distinguishes the island as a civilized Nation, as opposed to a repository for human filth, which may be more accurate a description.

The Buccaneers are a hardy lot of diverse nationalities and appearances, and yet all share certain similar traits: a willingness to work hard and an unwavering loyalty to Allende. Despite this loyalty, fights and disagreements still break out among them. To maintain order, the Buccaneers established Chapters. Each Chapter takes charge over specific areas of life on the island. For most residents, a life separate from the qualms of the other Nations is enough. But, for those in a Chapter, it is a chance to be part of something larger, protecting their little slice of freedom.

Democracy in La Bucca

When Allende first took over the island, she had a grand scheme for how to run a Nation. She believed in a representative government for the people, run by the people. Within the first days after the Cardinal's ship left the island to the prisoners, she held general elections for positions such as guard master, commissary master, and overseer. Prisoners stepped forward to fill those positions, some more honest than others.

At the time, Allende wore a velvet mask, a part of her shackles as a prisoner on the island. She promised not to take off the mask until they could hold a general election for president, to remind everyone that she was a prisoner, as well. Vicious rumors swirled about her identity, but those who worked with her to take the island spoke favorably of her leadership.

THE ISLAND OF TEMPTATION

People of other nations call the island "the Island of Temptation" due to the addictive, savory smoked pork that the prisoners made and exported back to the mainland. Cocteau Genet, a famous Montaigne poet, dubbed the island "La Bucca," and the name stuck. Inhabitants of the island began to call themselves Buccaneers in an attempt to regain their pride. They did not realize, outside the island, Théans began to use the term to refer universally to any criminal.

The presidential election occurred a month later—she was the only one who ran—and Allende was unanimously voted into office. True to her word, Allende removed her mask, telling the prisoners that she wanted them to know her and feel they could speak to her about anything. She would wear the mask in front of visitors, to remind them of the roots of the island Nation.

Elections on La Bucca

Each year, Allende holds general elections for heads of Chapters, the watch vaptain, and president of the island. The elections are open; anyone can run, and everyone's vote counts equally in determining the outcomes. Each year, the same people run for and are voted into office. Despite the talk of a true democracy, it is clear that not everyone agrees with Allende's utopian idea of a government system. No one dares to run for president against Allende—she optimistically believes that her leadership is too inspiring to be opposed—and threats and bribes run rampant around election time each year to secure the additional governmental seats.

Allende isn't completely unaware of the corruption rampant in her system, but she is at a loss for how to stop it. The order she imposed on the ruffians and political prisoners seems to stick, and she keeps it limping along for as long as she can. She is aware of political plots against her, but is stuck in a position in which she is afraid that if she is no longer in charge, the island will devolve into complete anarchy and criminal activity, so she lets the corruption continue in order to secure loyalty from those who benefit from it.

Allende's Rule

Allende's governance is not without dissidents; her largest detractors are a brother and sister from Eisen, Uwe and Greta Lehmann. These two came to the island seeking wealth and power only to find their efforts blocked by members of the Chapters. In the true Buccaneer spirit, they decided that if they couldn't get what they wanted on their own, then they would just take what they wanted from those who had already achieved it. Allende is vaguely aware that the two covet her power, and she openly reminds everyone that anyone can run for president of the island each year. Yet the Lehmanns see this as an open threat, forcing them to work in secret.

Others, especially the heads of the Chapters, are happy with things exactly the way they are. As Allende attempts to make elections more democratic and fights against corruption, these people simultaneously undermine her attempts and actively work to keep her in power, believing she is the perfect puppet for enacting their desires. No one seems to understand how tentative the government system is, and the fact that if any of the players lose office, the whole thing would come crumbling down around their heads, ending the fledgling Nation.

Allende's legend outside the island is full of rumor and myth. Few people know about the island's democratic state until they arrive on the island, and most only hear of Allende as the island's leader. Few know anything at all about her before arriving, and she has been described in as many different ways as there are people to spread rumors: she is a man, she is a dreaded pirate retired to the island, she is an illegitimate child of l'Empereur and so on. Some even report that Allende died years ago and one of her many followers took up her position in her name to fool the populace.

The truth, of course, is far less exciting and considerably more fragile. Allende is only partially in control of the system she has built, but she's the only leader on La Bucca who is so far willing to take responsibility for ensuring that the island doesn't fall back into the hands of the people who made it a prison in the first place.

The Chapters

La Bucca's government includes five Chapters, each charged with the maintenance and operations of the island: the Eye, the Tentacle, the Fin, the Scale and the Pint. Each name—except the Pint—comes from a different part of the Creature that sleeps beneath La Bucca. Originally, the people who helped Allende perform the rites necessary to tame the Creature gained these names. The names spread from the individual into the elected office, and eventually the Chapters formed from these offices.

- **The Eye** handles all communications and security within the island itself. Members carry a scarf with a stylized eye designed to denote their membership. The City Watch is this Chapter's most prominent presence, composed of the older residents of La Bucca. The Eye's current Chapter head is a silent man named Alesio. They say he only speaks when trouble is afoot.
- **The Tentacle** handles travel affairs, including travel across the rope bridges when the tides are high and the beach arches leading to the fortress are underwater. In many ways, they serve as the Nation's guides, helping guests find what they want. Allende serves as the Tentacle's head, but leaves its running to her subordinates and underlings.
- **The Fin** handles communications between the island and other Nations. Members of the Fin Chapter are masters of at least three languages and keep records of all trade agreements with other Nations. They serve as harbormasters, keeping track of who comes in and out of La Bucca and granting authority for ships to dock and leave. For the Fin, secrets and information are the most important commodity, the only one truly worth trading. The Fin's current infamous Chapter head is Baron Victor Maison.

THE TRUTH ABOUT SIRENS

The Sirens are indeed real, but not as the rumors indicate. When someone breaches privacy protocols or poses a danger to the island, the Chapter heads can call upon trusted Buccaneers to dispense justice, quickly and quietly. Each of the five selects one individual and these five work in concert to fulfill their given mission.

Sirens offer role-playing opportunities for groups who desire to play more stealth-focused and mission-oriented stories and direct interaction with the main movers and shakers of La Bucca.

- **The Scale** is in charge of all residential concerns and the allocation of land and space for any commercial enterprise. Residents are required to raise at least two pigs each year and contribute to the nation's smoked pork supply. The Scale keeps track of all the businesses and monetary enterprises in La Bucca, deciding on and imposing taxes on the sale of foreign and domestic goods. They are also in charge of the island's vast treasury, used to fund public works. The Scale's current Chapter head is the Mother of La Bucca.
- **The Pint** represents the entertainment elements on the island—taverns, pubs, jennys, musicians and the like. The Vendel League tried to get a hold in La Bucca, but the Pint kept them out. At least, for now. The Pint's current Chapter head is a former prisoner named Gwyn Sharps.

Buccaneers whisper of a mythical sixth Chapter—**the Sirens**. A proverbial bogeyman who keeps dealings on La Bucca secret and respected: "Oh, the sirens of the sea will come get you," the natives half-tease. Although, some claim to have encountered the sixth Chapter, speaking of beautiful and deadly agents who use seduction to silence transgressors, killing them in their sleep. The Watch officially denies the Sirens exist, but the rumors persist.

The City Watch

The City Watch in La Bucca maintains a sort of order, despite the anything-goes atmosphere. Certain crimes are reprehensible, even to seasoned criminals—mostly those that happen in public. The City Watch has the run of the city, allowed to go into every establishment at any time, ostensibly to keep the peace. They break up bar fights and subdue unrest, punishing those troublemakers who dare to act openly. The Fin prohibits the Watch from boarding ships without their Captain's explicit permission. The Pint attempts to limit the Watch's presence in gambling and ale houses, often paying good money for members to skip their establishments on their rounds.

While criminal activity is thriving on La Bucca, few would question the authority of the City Watch. Most residents know to conduct unsavory business behind closed doors and out of the public eye, or risk harsh punishment via the Watch. Each of the Chapters lends its support to the Watch, though the Eye—and thereby Alesio—is its true patron. It is by their support that the City Watch may enact violence on anyone disturbing the peace in La Bucca.

Unlike other offshoots of the different Chapters, the captain of the Watch is an elected position. The captain is currently Lucia, a Vodacce Fate Witch who arrived on the island five years prior. She has a tight grip on the Watch; she forbids her officers to drink while on duty and must first approve any bribes or money that changes hands. She is the only thing keeping the Watch from being anything more than an organized group of thugs, and the Chapter heads give her free reign to organize them as she pleases.

Living in La Bucca

Originally populated with undesirables from all over the world, there is no Nation more filled to the brim with competing cultures than La Bucca. Certain regions of the island are distinctly multicultural, while in other regions, certain languages or musical types are more favored than others. It's common for a district to become distinctly Vesten, only for Castillians to run the Vesten off and claim the district for themselves a month later. Though far from cosmopolitan, the island has become a hub of diversity and a celebration of vice and freedom.

RESIDENTIAL FLAGS

Residents have developed a system of symbols to communicate to the City Watch when strangers are present. For example, a Buccaneer in duress can offer to buy a member of the City Watch "a drink of your choice." While the offer sounds innocent enough, all residents know the City Watch avoids drinking while doing their rounds. This informs the Watch the citizen is afraid and unable to openly ask for aid. Subsequent offers narrow down the Buccaneer's concerns; rum suggests a problem at the port, gin implies kidnapping, and wine means the Chapter heads are in danger.

Other means of communication include hanging undergarments visible at one's window. Clean white is a nonverbal call for assistance while a black pair means help with moving contraband or a body, always with a promise of payment inherent in the call.

Buccaneers have an uneasy alliance with one another, an unspoken promise to keep life civilized and not steal from or murder each other in the night. This alliance extends only so far, and deadly rivalries and grudges spring up constantly. Visitors have no such luxuries, and are open game to criminals and brigands.

Anyone visiting La Bucca would swear that the largest percentage of residents is its children. While many of the children were naturally born on the island, even more are orphans. No one really knows where all these orphans come from, as new ones seem to show up on a daily basis. Of course, it's hard to tell as their grubby faces and dirty clothes blend together after a while. The Mother of La Bucca, head of the Scale, keeps a residential building designated for the orphans, and seems to pay special care to them.

Gaining residence on the island is a tricky affair. The Scale accepts residency applications along with a small fee. The Mother goes over each application herself, deciding who can stay or who must leave. She considers what each individual can contribute to the betterment of the island, and her decision is final. No one is really sure what makes for a good application, though it seems unique skills are valued above all else.

The Free Market

La Bucca is a bustling hub of trade and intrigue, with ships from every Nation in its ports. Spies gather to trade secrets, diplomats meet on the only neutral ground in the Atabean Sea and merchants come in hopes of finding rare and illicit goods to bring back home. There's plenty to do in La Bucca, and plenty of trouble to find while you're there.

La Bucca sports a truly free market, allowing anything and everything to be bought and sold on its shores, from artifacts and expensive art to illegal goods and even slaves. Visitors can resupply their ships with food and water and hire weapons and crew members, all at reasonable costs. The more money spent in La Bucca, the better overall for the island. Both the Tentacle and the Fin work to keep the harbors open at all times to any ship, allowing a steady influx of people.

Various merchant ships from other Nations have taken to setting up temporary stalls on the island—with a generous donation to the Scale—making available a huge variety of goods and services. All anyone has to do to find what they are looking for is to ask on the docks. Everyone knows everyone, and no good is too illicit to talk about openly at the dock market, except maybe assassins and spies. Many shop owners offer their services from stalls and side stations near the ports, but some hold their business in their own homes—giving guests a more personal welcome.

As for items up for sale, some of the most valuable are nautical charts. Nations try to keep their charts secret, but in La Bucca, such items are easy to find, if not easy to acquire. No one knows where the La Bucca merchants really get their goods, but some of the most common customers are Théan diplomats.

The second most sought after item for sale is entertainment. The Pint doesn't bother to monitor their thriving entertainment industry, preferring to allow each tavern and bar to manage its own affairs. The Pint only gets involved when money or crime becomes a problem. La Bucca offers the widest variety of entertainment, sating some of the most debauched desires in Théah. Folks on La Bucca know to ask as few questions as is necessary to conduct a transaction.

Illegal Goods and the Grip Market

Goods and services normally considered illegal, even by La Bucca standards, are also relatively easy to find, if you know where to look. Sometimes, the best markets are not immediately evident. These black markets—called *marché noir*—are where the real trades take place. As the Tentacle permits other vessels to conduct commercial enterprise while in its ports, the island has many hidden coves for interested visitors. The Pint's many taverns, inns and brothels offer private rooms and secure locations for any additional business requiring greater privacy. So long as you're willing to pay, the Pint can provide. If you can't provide—well then, you can offer something more valuable: a favor.

On La Bucca, a favor is worth more than gold. The locals call this quiet economy of favors "the grip market." In other words, shaking hands over a deal. Favors are held in the highest regard in La Bucca, and a Buccaneer's promise is sometimes worth more than the Guilders that bought it. While many other promises may not hold to the test of time or distance, a Buccaneer who has given his word expects to keep it until dispensed or death. Those who trade in favors, then refuse repayment, find themselves at the bottom of the ocean. To a Buccaneer, your word is sacred, and the grip market does not offer second chances. Remember this the next time you're on a pirate ship and recognize the captain as a Buccaneer.

The Birth of the La Buccan Privateer

The vast variety of offered services and distractions provided by La Bucca is an offshoot of the fact that most Buccaneers need something to do while waiting for a new contract. These sideline jobs provide both an acceptable front when handling affairs of the less favorable sort and a celebration of their freedom from the daily grind. Very few in La Bucca have only one means of making a living.

A secondary market thriving in La Bucca is the Letter of Marque. Diplomats and agents of the various Théan crowns come to La Bucca for the express purpose of hiring privateers. They offer royal authority to ply their trade in the open oceans, and collect a percentage of the haul in the name of whatever king or queen they serve. La Bucca embraced this practice and formalized it into a business.

While such activity would normally lead to tension between the Nations, the island offers a level of separation between the crowns and their agents. Hired hands receive documents stating they are acting in an official capacity, while the Nation gains plausible deniability. In essence, everyone gets what they want, except, of course, for the ships that end up on the wrong side of a privateer's guns.

17°6'0"W
17°5'30"W
17°5'0"W
17°4'30"W
28°10'30"N
28°10'0"N
28°9'30"N
28°9'0"N
THE NORTHERN ARC
The Crown
Port Sacred
Le Gros Vert
Gibbit Lake
SUNRISE HAVEN
The Planks
BLACK SPOT BAY
Free Balconies
Brown Hall
THE HOOK
The Bilge
Deadlights Island
Grapeshot Falls
SUTLER BAY
Jacobs Ladder
SUNSET HAVEN
Betting Barnacle
Yellow Fin
Jack Ketch Cliffs
The Maze
St. Reneé's
Jenny's Jungle
Ruins
THE SOUTHERN ARC
0
0.25
0.5
Miles

Locations

La Bucca is not a single island, but three land masses. From above, it appears as a gigantic letter S, with two arched beaches meeting a central tidal island. The center is accessible via both beach arches at low tide, but stands separate like a natural fortress at other times. When it stood as a prison, the central island served as Cardinal Ordunez's headquarters, while the northern and southern islands served as the prisoner islands. Today, La Bucca is separated into four distinct regions: the Northern Arc and Sunrise Haven on the north island and the Southern Arc and Sunset Haven on the south island, with the central island encompassed by the two harbors.

The Northern Arc

The north island presents a sheer rocky face to the ocean, with the only safe harbor in the crescent facing the central island. Dense trees cover the island in most places, easing off only as you approach the sandy crescent shores. Few people live on the far north side of the island, leaving it to the pigs and the trees. The south side of the island hosts a large harbor and the merchant district of La Bucca.

The Crown

At the tip of the Northern Arc is the Crown. One side of the Crown is a ragged natural wall of rock formations. A high coral reef wrecks unsuspecting ships, and few maps exist detailing a safe passage through the reef. Smaller boats can navigate the reef to the cliff side, which hide caverns inside dense rock formations. For those who can find them, these caves offer privacy for clandestine meetings and secret affairs. The Crown is also the home of a few daring anglers, all of whom claim to be "keeping the Creature at bay."

On the beach side of the Crown, wooden embankments allow Buccaneers to clamber up and operate the ten, 20-pound cannons nestled in key positions which make unwelcomed naval approaches from the northern side unwise. It's not a perfect defense—and Allende would love to have more experienced gunners staffing the cannons—but often the appearance of a defense against invasion is more important than the actual capacity of the guns.

Port Sacred

Just east of the Crown is a deep cavern system. The entrance to the system is only revealed at low tide, though the caverns stretch all the way to the center of the Northern Arc. Inside Port Sacred is a natural harbor, large enough to hold three ships. Few know of its location, though rumors indicate that smugglers and pirates use the port as a safe haven, far enough even from La Bucca's authorities to be safe.

Rumors surround the mysterious cove with outlandish tales of pirate's treasure, mysterious ruins, sea monsters, and dark rituals. Most people on the island steer clear of the area, suspecting the rumors indicate some kind of danger. In truth, Port Sacred serves as a safe port for political exiles and those seeking sanctuary on the island. Allende meets ships coming into the harbor under the cover of the earliest hours of the morning. She smuggles people in past the other harbors, and has residential papers issued that indicate the people have been living on the island for years. The Mother of La Bucca works with Allende to set up refugees in such a manner without the other Chapters catching wind.

Port Sacred also houses another secret, one that few on the island are aware of, and if they knew, would make them even less likely to venture into the cavern system. Here is where Allende and a few other original prisoners imprisoned the dangerous sea Creature that lives underneath La Bucca, using the limited information left behind by the Cardinal to quiet the Creature's monstrous hunger and soothe it to sleep.

Gibbet Lake

A grim reminder of the hellish history of La Bucca, Gibbet Lake is named for the gibbet cages hung on the shores of the lake to punish prisoners for violent disobedience. While the Cardinal often preached forgiveness, many of the guards dealt with some of the more violent prisoners in ways that stood as a reminder to the others interned on the island.

Today, those cages sit empty—aside from the bleached bones of prisoners long dead—a bleak reminder of the island's legacy. Allende has forbidden anyone from tearing them down, claiming that "La Bucca cannot afford to forget its history so quickly."

Sunrise Haven and The Hook

The sheltered inner crescent of the northern island is a large natural harbor, with room enough for 20 ships. The locals have named it Sunrise Haven, as the harbor itself faces south, and is sheltered from the brunt of the sun's harsh rays in the morning. A few piers extend beyond the harbor's edge, allowing up to 20 vessels too big to approach the harbor.

The Tentacle tracks all ship arrivals, renting harbor spots for ships that wish to stay in port for any length of time, and dispensing travel permits to those who wish to come and go on a regular basis. Then the Fin comes by and forces captains to fill out forms indicating how long they plan to stay and their estimated leave date, as well as crew occupancy. All in all, setting anchor in Sunrise Harbor is a quick affair, with Chapter representatives around to meet ships as they arrive and conducting business in an orderly manner.

The harbor's waters are murky with oil and waste mixing with the waves. Smaller rowboats move between ships, as children taxi visitors ashore for a small fee. Shops and temporary merchant stalls clog the main walks of the docks, crowding the warehouses and shipyards to one end of the harbor. Just off the main drag, you can find gambling houses and taverns nestled between shops that are more permanent.

Le Gros Vert

The most prominent gambling den on the island is situated on in the middle of the harbor's arc, a short five-minute walk from the docks. A stuffed 40-foot-long crocodile—the namesake of the place—hangs prominently above the entrance, looming with a menacing, toothy grin. The building is a large, two-story affair, and sports a bright, festive color of green.

Patrons play games of cards or dice, testing their luck against fate on the bottom floor, and on the top floor they can view and bet on boat races in the harbor. Behind the building is a boxing ring, in which contestants can pay a small fee to join a fight for a chance for a big payout. Betting on fights is a famous pastime in La Bucca, with many of the residents favoring specific regular contestants—giving them free drinks and food when they come calling, or arguing over who is the best between bouts.

The owner of Le Gros Vert, a Montaigne woman who calls herself Madame Murmur, prohibits any weapons inside her establishment. She enforces this rule with a degree of harshness that puts even the City Watch to shame. She has a reputation as a gambler who never loses. The story goes that she won the gambling hall in a game of cards, bluffing her way through the night until she cleaned the owner out of house and home. She still owns it today, despite regular challenges to dice or cards with the gambling house on the line.

The Brown Hall

Located across the harbor on the north side of the middle island—an area Buccaneers refer to as The Hook—is the Brown Hall. It earned its name from the dark brown stones and darkened wood used to create the structure. It once served as the prisoners' chapel and worship center. It is one of the few prison structures still intact. The building is octagonal with entrances on three sides. The spacious inner chamber is large enough to hold a gathering of all the residents of the Northern Arc. The building used to hold rows of benches spreading out from a central staging area, which the Cardinal used to give lectures and pontificate.

High windows along each wall have thick wooden shutters that muffle noise and add privacy. Allende uses the hall for meetings with the Chapter heads, and running elections. During election time each year, Allende opens the hall to anyone running for office to campaign and make speeches.

For the rest of the year, the Chapter members can use the hall to stage public meetings and hear concerns raised by the island's citizens, or stage votes. The five Chapter symbols are painted on the floor, and traditionally whoever is bringing a concern forward stands on the symbol related to her claim. This kind of meeting happens at most once a year, the various Chapter heads treating it like a farce when it does happen. The rest of the time, the hall stands unused.

Allende tries to encourage more meetings for voting on important matters to the island, but getting people to agree to meeting times is increasingly difficult. The best she can do is organize public meetings with the various Théan diplomats who reside on the island.

The Free Balconies

Near the Brown Hall on the inner island, but facing Sunrise Harbor, is the largest inn on the island. The Free Balconies was once a barrack and visitor house in the island's prison days, and is constructed of beautiful polished wood. Four balconies extend in the cardinal directions, catching the wind, ensuring the rooms are always cool. Rope bridges from the Northern and Southern Arcs extend directly to the inn, giving a breathtaking view of the island as you approach or leave.

The Free Balconies is not only the most expensive inn on the island, it is also well-guarded. The City Watch makes its rounds through the inn to get from the Northern Arc to the Southern Arc up to four times a day. They often stop in for a word or a chat on their way through, and many come by for a drink after hours. The owner—a fat, balding man from Avalon named Roger Gould—pays the City Watch to come by as often as they can, and gives them free drinks at the bar whenever they want.

Unbeknownst to the City Guard, Gould conducts as much illegal business out of the Free Balconies as he can muster. His friendly policies toward the Watch are a ruse, an attempt to get the Watch to look other pleces for "the real criminals" while enjoying a meal on the house for their service. Some in the Watch suspect that Gould is up to no good, but none can yet prove his kindness to be anything but honest.

Jacob's Ladder

While the island is obstensibly one undifferentiated land mass, parts of La Bucca sink under the water at high tides, effectively separating the islands from each other. In order to traverse the Hook back to the south island—where most Buccaneers actually live—the Tentacle maintains rope bridges across the island.

The largest such bridge, called Jacob's Ladder, traverses an area of lowlands on the eastern side of the Hook and is used both to get residents back to the south island and to board ships that dock at high tide. Such boardings, in blatant violation of the procedures set up by the Chapters, mean that traffic to and from La Bucca is almost impossible to police, no matter whom Allende puts in charge of the Tentacle.

Deadlight's Island

On the west side of the Hook lies Deadlight's Island, one of the primary areas from which the City Watch works to secure the island from threats both internal and external. They store weapons and other devices there, holding meetings on the island for fear of exposing their secrets to those who would listen in on their plans for La Bucca's security.

Allende has granted the Chapter free and total control over comings and goings on Deadlight's Island, but lately residents have reported strange lights and noises coming from the island in the middle of the night. The Watch denies such reports.

The Southern Arc

The southern island is a stark contrast to its northern sister, hosting an expanse of green fields, lush jungles and sandy beaches. The crescent in the north forms a shallow bay. Most of the islands residents live in the south, favoring cool breezes and level land.

Jenny's Jungle

The largest feature on the south island is Jenny's Jungle—an unofficial name for the dense jungle that has since made its way onto local maps. The jungle is rumored to contain treasures, secrets and artifacts, but the jungle has a habit of complicating any adventure taken to uncover its secrets. Some have called it a "jungle of ill repute," laughing kindly at those brigands who think themselves clever enough to enter the thick tropical forest and emerge with more than they entered.

The Ruins

Deep in the jungle stands a collection of ancient ruins, not of human construction. These ruins pose questions, much like all other Syrneth buildings found across Théah. The stones used in its construction have no business being on this island, and Vaticine scholars cannot identify the techniques used to build it. The ruins have a single formal entrance and a collapsed wall. Three rooms lead to a central chamber with a dry well.

Few people on the island even know about the ruins' existence, much less how to get there. When Cardinal Ordunez first found the island, these ruins are where he discovered the key to manipulating and controlling the Creature living underneath the island. He removed all the artifacts and tablets he found in the chambers, leaving only the mysterious construction behind.

Every now and then, someone stumbles across the ruins and mounts an expedition to enter the well, hoping to find something hidden beneath the chambers. So far, no one has successfully reached the bottom. Each expedition comes back with rumors of a ghost haunting the ruins. It's not hard to find maps of the ruins' location, once you know whom to ask, but few expect much to come out of expeditions to the site.

MY NATION'S SOIL

Nations don't really have embassies, though some diplomats and ambassadors open their homes to their compatriots. Some native Théans seek asylum with their Nation's ambassadors, hoping to avoid the City Watch or other trouble in La Bucca. This kind of safety goes only as far as the ambassador is willing to grant it, sacrificing national identity for continued good will on the island. Most ambassadors surrender any fugitives to the City Watch to maintain good relations with local powers.

St. Reneé's Chapel

St. Reneé is one of many of the Vaticine Church's patron saints of orphans. This church, dedicated to her, is the only church still standing on La Bucca—the prisoners dismantled the rest to build other structures. The chapel is small and situated a good distance away from the southern harbor, outside the main residential area. The trek to the chapel is a long one, through high grass and soft sand, but well worth the trip; the view from the chapel is breathtaking.

The chapel's single priest is Sister Scarlett O'Donoghue—the pirates call her Sister Scotty. She is the only Vaticine priest still living on La Bucca, the others who came with Cardinal Ordunez on his return trip driven off. Laconic and dedicated to the island, Sister Scarlett does her best to save the souls of the pirates and criminals who darken the door of her chapel, hoping to do some good where she can.

Yet she's no fool. The last person who tried stealing from Sister Scotty found himself on a ship leaving for Castille with a broken arm, two black eyes, broken nose and busted lip for his troubles. Sister Scotty steers clear of the Mother of La Bucca, though she opens her doors to any children who wish to stay for a lesson and a meal.

The chapel provides a degree of familiarity for many of the ambassadors on the island, especially those who seek the comfort of Vaticine rituals. Montaigne Ambassador Anaelle Cabot, for example, lives near the chapel, and—while she's not particularly devout—finds Sister Scotty's work to be inspirational and worthwhile enough to assist her regularly.

Sunset Haven

This sheltered bay faces the opposite direction of Sunrise Haven. The harbor has room for almost 40 ships. The waters here are shallow compared to Sunrise Haven, and larger vessels must dock on the other side of the island. The most common traffic to Sunset Haven is passenger vessels and small cargo ships. Many of the residents keep fishing boats and their personal pirate ships docked at Sunset Haven.

While the docks at the opposite harbor host warehouses and merchants, the docks at Sunset Haven are more industrial. Few merchants, other than those who cater specifically to the locals, set up wares on the south island. La Bucca's main shipwrights and building contractors set up shop in Sunset Haven. The atmosphere is distinctly different. Where Sunrise offers an almost festive air with hawkers calling and sailors jostling about, Sunset has a dangerous air, as people move about and work in relative silence.

The Maze: Shanty Town

Stretching from the south harbor all the way to the jungles found in the center of the Southern Arc lies the true city of La Bucca. A majority of the residents live in this massive community of interconnected homes and hiding holes. Permanent and temporary structures mesh together creating a dense maze of buildings with small businesses and civil services interspersed throughout.

Buildings tend to move overnight as temporary homes are relocated or converted into structures that are more permanent. The labyrinthine streets can be confusing to navigate for the newcomer, and the locals rely on you getting lost, so they can charge you for directions out. In other words, it's not a place for tourists, even if you've got a quick sword or sturdy pistol.

Some of the best and most affordable goods can be found here, if you know where you're going and what you're looking for. Beware though—strangers are not always welcome deep in the heart of La Bucca. It's best to bring a guide if you want to navigate the Maze.

Of course, some guides aren't really guides at all, but instead con artists who take contracts with wealthy Théans only to lead them straight into danger once they enter the Maze. Good luck.

The Betting Barnacle

Located just beyond the docks, at a reasonable distance from the water's edge, is the Betting Barnacle. This is the gambling house of the locals, and while it is often lively, it does not offer the same kind of high-stakes games as Le Gros Vert. Instead, it offers a different kind of dangerous game—intrigue.

Here is where spies go to gather gossip from the locals, exchange information, and accept payment for jobs. Those looking for work are often directed to the Barnacle, especially if they aren't too worried about the work being legal, ethical or wise.

The most famous attraction for this small establishment is the Ambassador Wall. As soon as any new diplomat or ambassador arrives in La Bucca, her name goes up on the wall. The locals place bets on the ambassadors in the same way people bet on the brawls on the north island. The most common bet is how long she'll last on the island, but some ambassadors have death pools, sex pools and any other topic of intrigue catches the better's fancy.

The Yellow Fin

This tavern serves the working people of La Bucca. After a long day of laboring, men and women come into the Yellow Fin to exchange gossip and grab a bite to eat before heading home. This is also where Allende keeps her court. Surrounded by some of the toughest residents of La Bucca, Allende conducts all official business from the back room of the small tavern.

Anyone wishing to have a personal audience with the island's president can seek her out here. Beware of how you treat her, though; the locals are extremely loyal, and don't mind shedding blood in her name. Allende herself does her best to avoid violence, but the men and women that surround her come from rougher stock and have hotter tempers.

Once, a foolish man tried to threaten her with a pistol. All 47 other customers drew their own steel and trained it at the fool. No one is quite sure which shot killed him. Some whisper that man, Billy Bilgewater, now haunts the island— cursed to forever remain on its shores. Allende scoffs at such rumors... and yet she too puts out a cup of milk on her doorstep to commemerate his death.

Notable Characters

The following characters can be found on La Bucca, some eager to help, others eager to sink a dagger in your back. Either way, learn their names well.

Allende

Allende was born as Comtesse Marguerite Duchâteau in Montaigne to a high noble family, the fifth child, with no land or prospects in front of her. She joined the Montaigne military during the War of the Cross, but grew tired of people fighting and dying while landed nobles sat around talking about fashion. She was open about it, going so far as to rile up small revolutions among peasants as her unit moved through towns.

Eventually, l'Empereur caught wind of her activities and decided it was best to silence her completely, as opposed to a public execution that might lead to a martyrdom. Her unit sergeant brought her late at night to a group of guards, drugged her with wine, knocked her out and put a sack over her head.

She brought Marguerite to the local authorities and told them she was a political prisoner and they weren't to look under the hood. The sergeant called her Allende, and that was all they knew of her. When they brought her to prison, they handed her a black velvet hood and told her to never take it off. At first, she would scream and shout until the guards would come in and beat her into unconsciousness. She soon stopped speaking at all.

They held Marguerite as an anonymous prisoner for a year before Cardinal Ordunez opened his prison island. Marguerite was on the first ship to La Bucca that sailed from Montaigne. No one knew who she was, and she refused to speak at all to prisoners or to guards. That is, until she reached La Bucca.

When she arrived on the island, the mask remained, though her name and crimes meant nothing to the other prisoners, all doomed to live forever in exile. She adopted the name the guards gave her, Allende, and restarted her attempts for revolution in a more controlled environment.

Most of the prisoners on the island, being political prisoners themselves, were happy to lend their support to Allende, giving her numbers to help sway the more violent prisoners on the island. What could be more appealing than freedom, and beyond that, their very own island Nation?

Allende filled the prisoners' heads with the idea of true freedom, of democracy and equal representation. Most cared more about just being free, and went along with her as a rallying point. Slowly, the idea of democracy began to appeal to the residents, even if the execution was less than stellar.

Allende has spent a great deal of time hiding her true name, if only to spare her family from l'Empereur's ire. Even to this day, she won't conduct any official business without the mask. The power of anonymity is too enticing to give up after all this time. She only reveals her face to those she deems trustworthy, though her name is still her biggest secret.

Her force of personality has carried her well for the past 30 years or so, but she has a number of detractors who would happily tear down the empire she has built around herself. Few people know Allende's true name or associate her with Montaigne—she has even learned to speak without her native accent. The only person on the island that she is certain beyond a doubt knows her true identity is Baron Maison, and he uses the knowledge against her as often as he can.

Despite all opportunity for political corruption and personal gain, Allende is a Hero, looking out for the well-being of her small island Nation as best she can.

Playing Allende

Allende is personable and enchanting, without being too nice. She's loud and brash, preferring to get into people's faces and push their personal boundaries, rather than hold back. She believes you can learn a lot about a person when he is under pressure, so she turns up the heat when she's trying to feel someone out. She carries the burden of leadership like a shield, letting it keep people from truly getting to know her well. She is concerned about the state of the island, semi-aware that she may be the only thing keeping the place running in a civilized manner. She doesn't have time for small talk, but will give her undivided attention to her residents if they come to her with concerns.

Allende never meets people in public without her mask, and sometimes has her personal assistant, a woman named Leanne, wear the mask in her stead to meet with first-time visitors to feel them out. Either way, you are always meeting Allende, and Leanne is well-versed in the troubles and needs of La Bucca to represent Allende well in such meetings.

The Mother of La Bucca

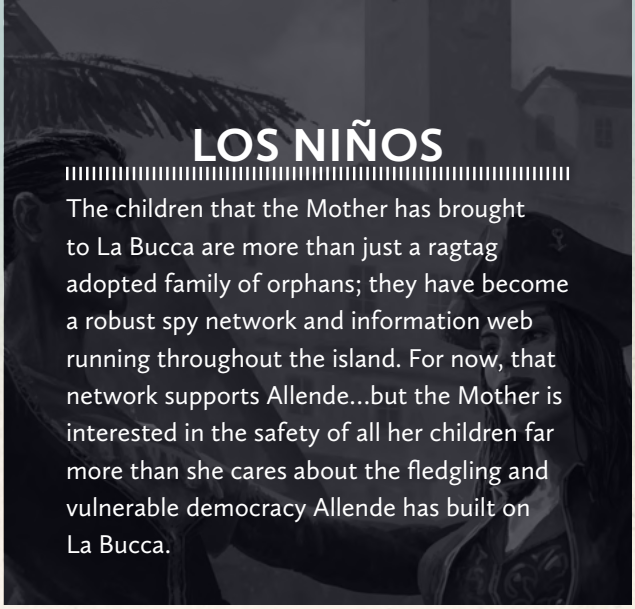
Everyone knows the Mother of La Bucca, referred to simply as Mother. She's the nice woman always surrounded by children, taking care of the orphans and helping the residents of La Bucca. Most can guess at her motives, attempting to right the wrongs of her past, giving opportunity to those who have none.

Yet no one really knows her—not her name nor where she came from. She's been on the island for as long as anyone can remember, but no one seems to know if she was a prisoner or what Nation may have sent her to live among the Buccaneers. But Mother never seems to age, and she's run the Scale Chapter with an iron fist since its inception that day, long ago, when Allende first started her government.

The Mother of La Bucca was once Sophie-Angélique de l'Écuyer, a courtier in the Montaigne courts and a powerful Porté *sorcier*. An unfortunate accident with a mirror sent her into the place-between-places for almost a century. How she survived, even she does not entirely remember. One day, she awoke on the island, in the Syrneth ruins in the jungle, a voice speaking to her. She remembers making a deal, an exchange for her freedom from the purgatory she was in. She would bring children to the island. That was the price for her liberty.

Since then, she has used Porté to travel all across Théah, but her sorcery is not the same as others' magical gifts. She can move nearly anywhere, but only to those who need her. She cannot control where she goes: she hears the cries of a child in her blood and wills herself to the location. She has taught her children a secret Porté trick no modern sorcier knows: whispering through the blood (see ***A Pirate's Life***, page 153, for more on this change to Porté).

Mother does not know how she ended up on the island, or whom it was she talked to when she first arrived. She has not aged since she arrived half a century earlier. She suspects it may be the Porté, or associated with her time in the space between. Whatever it is, she does not wish to take any chances. She protects the island, and all its inhabitants, but especially the children she brings there. No one hurts the children in La Bucca—not without losing life or limb, that is. And why the island wants children? She prefers to think of the reasons less and less as she brings more and more orphans to La Bucca.



LOS NIÑOS

The children that the Mother has brought to La Bucca are more than just a ragtag adopted family of orphans; they have become a robust spy network and information web running throughout the island. For now, that network supports Allende...but the Mother is interested in the safety of all her children far more than she cares about the fledgling and vulnerable democracy Allende has built on La Bucca.

Playing the Mother of La Bucca

The Mother is strong and silent, choosing her words carefully and speaking only when necessary. She is Allende's biggest supporter, considering the woman one of her many charges, regardless of their apparent age difference. Allende once commented that she "didn't need a second mother," but it seemed to do little to dissaude Mother from engaging with Allende.

Many people fear Mother, but she is kindly to everyone she speaks to, even when making rounds to collect taxes and back payments. Mother considers herself everyone's mother, and acts as such. She is kind when necessary, but has no compunction about putting recalcitrant children in their place. Everyone needs discipline, especially those who think themselves beyond their childish years.

Occasionally, Mother has flashes of memories of her former life, her eyes going distant, remembering the fine wines, foods, rumors, games, and…lost in thought she may not come back to herself for many moments. She may even speak in Montaigne, confuse a guest for someone lost years and years ago or suddenly remember a crucial part of her own past before she realizes what's happening.

Playing Los Niños

The childern under Mother's care are incredibly loyal; Mother rescued them in their hour of need; they are not about to forget what she did. Most of Los Niños are unwilling to even describe what brought them to La Bucca, what situation prompted Mother to intervene.

Now that they are here, however, their purpose is clear: help Mother. She has tasks for them, little jobs that must be done, like following a woman from a tavern or listening to a conversation. Important tasks.

Baron Victor Maison

Leader of the Fin and self-proclaimed "most recognized face in La Bucca," the Baron claims to have connections in every single Nation on Théah. He can acquire an invitation to any party, any celebration, and he can bring as large an entourage as he wants. The Baron trades in information and has a weakness for food and wine. In his mind, he is the most charming and suave pirate in Théah, respected and admired for his culture and popularity. To those around him, he is crude, uncultured and a sleazy bastard reaching beyond his means. It's wise to not speak of this openly, however, as hearing such things can cause the Baron to fly into a rage. The Baron is a vengeful sort and plans nasty repercussions for any who dares insult him.

While some may wonder why the people tolerate this oafish buffoon, others realize his claims to knowing information are more bite than bark. He is effective and masterful in gaining information, especially the kind he can use to earn coin, or better yet, blackmail. For all his boasting and bragging, he's right. He *can* get into any party. He *does* have contacts all over Théah. And so far, everything he's done has helped La Bucca prosper since the prisoners have taken over.

Commerce to and from the island relies on the Baron's will. With a single word from the Baron, he could stop all trade and ships coming to the island. The ports would close and La Bucca would dry up. What's worse, the Baron knows it, because the Baron knows *everything*. He knows who Allende really is. He knows who Mother really is. He knows all the island's dirty little secrets and dealings. His spies are everywhere, and if they can't find a secret, he's sure to be able to buy it off the source for the right price. The Baron is responsible for starting the grip market, his own favors worth more than anything else on the island.

He is one of the few people who really scare Allende, and she keeps him close in an attempt to keep him in check. He considers himself the true power in La Bucca, and he isn't that far off. Allende is terrified to deny him his wishes, for fear that he will remove his economic support and allow the island to fail simply out of spite.

Playing Baron Victor Maison

The Baron is a proud man who tries to sound cultured, despite constantly mispronouncing words or choosing the wrong translated equivalents. He was a political prisoner from Castille, charged with trespassing on a noble's estates as a spy. Truly, he just wanted to mingle with the upper crust, but the crime landed him in exile on the island. Despite any personal quirks, the Baron is gregarious and gets along with lots of people, and spent many years plying juicy gossip and rumors out of people with drink and a quick smile.

Those tricks served him well in La Bucca, and within a few years, he was able to re-establish connections to the people those juicy rumors would ruin. He's quick to find information to use as blackmail, all the while smiling and laughing as though he is a great friend. He has a sick knack for vengeance served cold. He plans vengeance for years, and never forgets a slight.

Uwe and Greta Lehmann

The Lehmann siblings, Uwe and Greta, arrived in La Bucca ten years ago, refugees from the War of the Cross in Eisen. When they first arrived on the island, they heard rumors of the sea Creature, just like everyone else. They dismissed the idea as crazy, until Uwe stumbled upon Port Sacred and saw the shadow of the massive thing under the water. He became obsessed with the Creature and learned everything he could about its lore.

Somehow, inexplicably, he learned that Allende had some way to control the Creature, but was keeping it asleep under the island. Greta, feeling her brother's obsession was unhealthy, suggested that Allende would maybe let him see the Creature if he asked. But no, Uwe didn't want to see the Creature, he wanted to control the Creature. Couldn't she see that with this thing La Bucca would be an unstoppable force in the seas, able to defeat any navy, any Nation? Terrified of her brother, but unsure of what to do otherwise, she agreed to help him.

For the last three years, they have been searching for a way to take control of the Creature. Greta has focused her brother's desires into an attempt to wrest control of the island from Allende, hoping to satisfy him while secretly planning to take the island for herself once they remove Allende.

Uwe has been seeking information, doing whatever he can to hear tidbits and rumors to help move their plan forward. He attempts to seduce foreign diplomats, seeking power and information. He is unaware that Baron Victor Maison is fully aware of his activities and limits Uwe's information based on his own desires. He is not as subtle as his sister, and ends up having to tie up loose ends by killing those who might betray the two to Allende, and his list of bodies is growing longer by the day.

Greta, the more practical of the two, has been secreting weapons and arms, preparing a cache for the eventual uprising. Her only real roadblock is her need for a way to meet with all her conspirators at once, but few places on the island offer the kind of privacy she needs. She's considered trying to set up something in Jenny's Jungle, but her last attempt to find something like permanent shelter in the tropical forest led to her nearly catching pneumonia after a sudden storm.

If she doesn't act or back out soon, however, the City Watch is likely to find her weapons cache and blow the whole thing wide open. Either that, or her brother is likely to blow it on his own with his crazed seeking. She's living on borrowed time, and she knows she needs to enact her plan before the whole situation flies out of control.

Both Uwe and Greta hang out often at Le Gros Vert, seeking out travelers or those new to the island as people likely to support their cause.

Playing Uwe

Between the two siblings, Uwe considers himself to be the brains of the operation. But his obsession with the Creature has driven him to commit terrible acts, and he is so lost he cannot even see the consequences of his actions. He obsessively reads arcane tomes, follows underground experiments and tries his own made-up blood rituals in an attempt to gain control of the Creature. He will go to any lengths to gain his desires, and cares for nothing in this world other than his sister Greta.

He suffers from nightmares, always of the Creature, in which he is stuck in a watery prison. He rarely speaks of his dreams, except to those who he believes can help him solve the riddle of the island.

Playing Greta

Greta cares deeply for her brother, and circles his obsession like a mote of light caught at the event horizon of a black hole. She cannot escape, and she cannot join in, for fear of losing herself. She might have once been a good person, but now she can only do whatever it takes to survive and keep her brother alive, as well.

She doesn't have anything personally against Allende, but sees her position as one that could give her enough power to escape her brother's grasp. If she could learn Allende's secret, the way she controls the Creature, then she could present this to her brother and finally end his obsession. Little does she know that he is too far gone for that, and his plans for the Creature extend far beyond the little island of La Bucca.

Lucia, Captain of the City Watch

Lucia is a Fate Witch who spent a great deal of her life running from one terrible situation to another. She first left Vodacce to work for a high-ranking noble in Castille. She spent a few years in his employ, then he begged her to marry him. She was more interested in his sister than him, and when she told him so, he kicked her out, hurt that his feelings were not reciprocated. She went from there to Eisen, but anyone who could pay her for her services was fighting for control of the Nation. She left quietly one night without looking back.

Eventually, she came to Montaigne, working as a governess—of all things—for a noble family. Her charge, the oldest child and heir, was wild, but lovable. His father made a social gaffe that left the family in a sorry state. Instead of suffering the consequences on his own, the father agreed to send his son into political exile. In the night, the father bundled the boy off to La Bucca to start a new life. When Lucia found out, she followed him there, afraid for his safety on the pirate isle.

When she arrived at La Bucca, there was no sign of him on the island. Nor was there any trace of him in the weave of Fate. Unsure of what to do, she conscripted the City Watch into helping her search for the child. The next year, she ran for and obtained the position of captain of the City Watch. This incident was the first time anyone had ever run against one of the incumbent heads, and Allende fully supported Lucia's campaign. Many people attribute Allende's support for Lucia's win, but others whisper about her sorcery. Lucia hides her status as a Fate Witch, worried that those around her would try to use her.

She holds out little hope she will ever find the boy she came to La Bucca to find, but she still checks the strands of Fate for him every once in a while.

Playing Lucia

Lucia has all but given up on her past life before La Bucca. She has gone from a wandering youth to one of the most powerful women on the island. She commands a deep loyalty from her officers in the City Watch and they would do anything for her. She runs a tight ship and doesn't put up with troublemakers. While she cares about the residents, she learned she has to use her authority with a heavy hand to get people to comply.

The Ghost

Everyone talks about Billy Bilgewater, the ghost who haunts the island. Current reports have him haunting the ruins in the jungle of the Southern Arc, but reports put him all over the island at various points. Most people think the ghost is just a story, something people make up to scare others away from secret meetings or to frighten visitors. Those who have seen the ghost know that he is indeed real, though not as frightening as rumors portray.

The ghost is described as a humanoid, translucent apparition, concealed beneath the folds of a hooded cloak. Most believe it is the ghost of the man who once pulled a gun on Allende in the Yellow Fin, that she cursed him to haunt the island forever as a consequence. This tale is one of many similar; another story has it that the ghost is a man who tried to hurt one of Mother's children.

In truth, the ghost is that of Cardinal Ordunez. After he returned to the island, the prisoners did not take kindly to him. Allende forbade them from killing him, but forced him to live in isolation. Only she visited him, attempting to wrest control of the Creature which she had locked in eternal slumber below the island.

The Cardinal refused to help her, assuring her it was safer asleep and out of the control of people. Eventually, the Cardinal died of a wasting illness, never divulging his secrets to Allende, only impressing upon her the need to keep it safely sleeping for all of time. To date, Allende has been unable to locate the artifacts he discovered, even though she grew certain he had retained them.

His ghost appeared shortly after Uwe began researching the Creature and attempting rituals to gain control of it. He is doing his best to thwart Uwe, but has limited control as a ghost.

Playing the Ghost

Cardinal Ordunez's ghost is a shadow of who the man was in life. He is still very devout, and believes he has been given a second chance to right the wrongs of his life. He hopes to regain control over the Creature and destroy it, but doesn't know how to do so as a ghost. Until he finds someone willing to destroy the Creature for him, he works to block any efforts to find the artifacts and rituals he once found in the island's Syrneth ruins. He sometimes tests the mettle of those seeking him out by giving them dangerous tasks to complete before he will talk with them, promising to give them secret lore and power in return for their efforts.

Wynne Lynch

The son of a Inish noble, Wynne Lynch was sent to Carleon at a young age to study at a Vaticine university. He was ordained in the faith early and found his way into the Invisible College soon after, studying links between Sidhe Glamour and modern science.

Wynne is convinced that the Sidhe are responsible for all magic and that they are attempting to guide humanity to a better world. His ideas caught fire in certain philsophical circles in Théah, which led to the Inquisition arranging for him to be sent to La Bucca on trumped-up charges designed to neutralize his influence in Théah. He was captured while lecturing in Castille, whisked off to a prison island before he could even mount a defense against his accusers.

Crucial to Allende's early efforts to control the Creature, Wynne has become the central point of contact for the Invisible College on La Bucca, working to pass information back to Théah about both the Syrneth ruins and the mysterous creature. More importantly, Wynne has also established a network through the ships that dock regularly at La Bucca's ports, coordinating the spread of scientific research across Théah from the relative safety of Temptation Island.

Playing Wynne Lynch

Wynne Lynch is an Inish Glamour Knight whose dedication to scientific inquiry is only tempered by his interest in building the Invisible College. He can often be found in his makeshift laboratory in the Maze, conducting experiments on materials he has pulled from the ruins or reviewing some new piece of information delivered by ship from mainland Théah.

Wynne takes an interest in training new scientists, such as Josette, a young Montaigne woman he took under his wing when she showed an interest in his work linking the Sidhe and the Syrneth. Unfortunately, not all of his charges are as forthright as he is; Josette is actually an Inquisition spy sent to La Bucca to report back on Wynne's activities to the inquisitors who wish to silence him once and for all.

On La Bucca, Wynne's position is more precarious than he would like to admit. While he enjoys Allende's protection from the nastier elements of Buccaneer society, he's sometimes a fish out of water among the criminals and thieves. He's prone to rushing into a dangerous situation with the best intentions, only to realize too late that he might be getting in over his head in the pursuit of justice.

Ambassador Máximo Zorita

Máximo is a cheerful Castillian whose broad smile masks a fount of suspicion and mistrust. He is thin and tall with unkept black hair, a beard always creeping onto his face between shaves.

Since arriving to La Bucca, Máximo has done his best to ingratiate himself with the major power players, providing information and employment as freely as possible to those he thinks are worth the investment. No one is completely certain who he works for back in Castille, but he has enough sway to secure Letters of Marque from the Castillian Crown for privateers who wish to make their piracy a bit more legitimate.

In truth, even Máximo isn't sure who pays his bills; he has a contact in the Castillian court who calls herself *La Mirla*—The Blackbird—and communicates with him only through couriers and sealed letters. She provides the Letters of Marque and the gold for his many bribes, but she's is remarkably opaque about her true motives and connections. His largesse is merely an act, a method of distributing his master's goodwill to those who serve her purposes.

Máximo has come to suspect that even La Mirla is a pawn in the larger game, a rook to his knight whose mission is to help to secure Allende's rule over the island. The instructions he receives are always carefully planned, but a pattern has emerged over time: he is to work against Allende's enemies and with her friends whenever possible. Máximo longs to discover the truth of his patronage; he would gladly expend his influence to cut through La Mirla's web of lies.

Playing Máximo Zorita

Máximo is a busybody, flitting from one activity to the next on La Bucca, always in the know but never in trouble. His fashion is impecable and practical; he looks the part of a royal spy even when he tries to blend in with the Buccaneers. Yet his good nature leads many to look past his obvious affiliations. After all, he's as free as they are to pursue his dreams.

Máximo trusts his handlers to some degree—at least enough to stay on La Bucca and follow his instructions—but he fears he is being played for a fool. He longs for certainty in a world of shadow and intrigue, and he will go to great lengths to find it.

Ambassador Anabelle de Vitry

Anabelle was sent to La Bucca to represent Montaigne ostensibly as a punishment for a social insult in the high court. In addition, she came with a secret mission from the Comte de la Fontaine. His daughter, Josette, was sent into exile in La Bucca years before as a political prisoner, and he wanted to discover if she was still alive and well. Anabelle took the post with a sense of duty to her Nation, and tries—despite the island's indifference—to represent it well.

Anabelle is currently the longest-serving ambassador on the island. She resides close to St. Reneé's Chapel and has been assisting Sister Scotty for the last three years. She considers herself a close ally of the Baron, using him to gather information about the other Nations' ambassadors. She suspects that the Mother of La Bucca practices Porté, but is too intimidated to ask her about it directly.

De Vitry is known as one of the most gracious of all the ambassadors, owing her length of stay to her forthright attitude and cheery nature. As for her secret mission, she not only found Josette, but discovered the girl is working with a branch of the Invisible College that serves as an information exchange for members across all Nations. Anabelle has joined the secret society herself, loaning her own political power and wealth to the group's efforts, and using the Baron's spies to help move information. She remains unaware of Josette's real purpose on the island and the danger the young woman poses to Wynne Lynch.

Playing Anabelle de Vitry

Anabelle never speaks negatively of anyone or anything. She is always smiling and laughing, maintaining a cheery demeanor regardless of whatever stress or pressure she's under. She is not necessarily the face of the Invisible College, but she is very active in the group and seeks to spread its influence.

Anabelle also continues to impress Montaigne culture onto anyone who will sit long enough to listen, and each meeting is a chance to introduce art or dance to guests. She has an honest concern for the well-being of La Bucca and its inhabitants, but she knows how fragile her place on the island truly is since she is still regarded as an outsider.

the Atabean Sea

The Atabean Sea

"The voices at night will find you, the lights will lead you astray,
The Devil's teeth will cut you up, and the Monsters will carry you away.
Oh come the Atabea, and bear me to my grave,
Or else shower me with fortune, and the glory we all crave."
—Whaling Song of the Atabean Sea

Ships crossing dangerous waters to set eyes on the New World of Aztlan find only more peril awaiting them upon entering the island chain surrounding the Atabean Sea (a-tah-BAY-en). A series of islands encircling a tumultuous stretch of water, the Sea is home to the Rahuri people, custodians of the waters and ancestral tenders of everything living above and below the waves.

Legend states the Rahuri once fled the Aztlan mainland in fear of a great god's wrath, guided out into the open ocean. There, they founded a Nation along several islands and made peace with the angry god. In return for safety, they promised to tend to the great Sea and its inhabitants, human and otherwise.

This task proved hazardous in the extreme—because the Atabean Sea has another name, translated for any Théan who dares enter its waters.

The Sea of Monsters.

History of the Atabean Sea

There is no history, for we live as we always have. Our yesterdays are as alive as today and as filled with promise as tomorrow.
—Rahuri Proverb

The history of the Rahuri people—and the Atabean Sea itself—stretches back far into the prehistory of the world, informed as much by legends as it is by the direct memories of the ancestor spirits whom the Rahuri contact for guidance. Yet even spirits have fragile memories, and the stories they tell transform more and more into legend with each telling. On the Sea of Monsters, there is no single truth ripe for the telling but stories that amount to more than their sum.

Long before the rise of the Vaticine Church, the people inhabiting the islands once lived on the mainland, deep in what is now Aztlan. Legends passed down among the Rahuri say they tried to live in peace with the locals, but actions taken by one of their ancient leaders angered the greatest protector of Aztlan, the feathered serpent himself, Apocoatl. The Rahuri's ancient leader tried to use magic to lead his people to more fertile ground in violation of the great god's wishes to keep his people isolated and protected. Whatever the case, the Rahuri people so angered the feathered serpent god, they were meant to be eradicated.

It was then, the story goes, a powerful water spirit came to the Rahuri leaders and offered them a way out. It led the Rahuri down a great river and out into the open water, protecting them against the dangers of the deep. The Rahuri traveled for days before they found themselves within the shelter of a long chain of islands surrounding a dark, deep sea. There, the Rahuri reached an accord with the ancient god, Apocoatl. In exchange for their safety, they became the custodians and protectors of the islands and surrounding seas. The Rahuri people settled the ocean and named it after the water spirit who guided them to safety: Atabea.

For several generations, the Rahuri spread far over the available islands. They broke into smaller colonies, settling the islands and establishing trade routes between the different groups. As they journeyed, the spirit stayed with the Rahuri, taking on a new name and role: Mama Yaya, the mother of the sea.

When other Nations reached the Atabean Sea, they discovered a large network of villages, led by flourishing Rahuri tribes, sailing the ocean and harvesting the creatures living there. Expert fisherfolk, the locals became not only adept at capturing fish and seaweed for food and trade, but slso experts in tracking and killing the larger undersea inhabitants of the Atabean. This practice became the center of their commerce and diet, as one large sea creature could feed an entire village for a season. The Rahuri harvested and sent the creatures' parts to other islands, creating a vigorous trade system between islands, uniting the far-flung villages into one united Rahuri Nation.

Because of that unity, the sea remained under the Rahuri people's control for hundreds of years. Smaller Nations arrived and challenged the Rahuri for control over territory, and the small wars kept the settlements around the Atabean shifting and reshaping themselves. The center of the Atabean trade remained, however, settled on the central Rahuri settlement of Naca'an on the northernmost island of the chain. From there, the Rahuri leaders, called *caciques* (kah-seeks), gathered from the various settlements and selected one cacique to maintain the welfare of the Atabean Sea, as was promised to the great god long ago. While no one has the date of the very first Great Cacique, records indicate that 20 such powerful leaders had come and gone before the very first Théan ships arrived in the Sea of Monsters.

From the East They Came

The first Théans entering the Sea of Monsters were hardly prepared for what they encountered. Ferocious storms rose out of nowhere and broke vessels on undersea rock formations invisible to the naked eye. Ships entered pristine lagoons only to find themselves besieged by giant sea creatures that could tear through the hull of even the largest craft. Still other ships would enter the passage dubbed "the Devil's Strait," never to be seen again. There are no records of exactly how many Théans ventured across the Serpent's Sea and reached the Atabean before the first officially recognized encounter between the Théans and the Rahuri, but stories abound of ships traveling far west, encountering an ocean of monsters and adventures. These stories eventually reached the Castillian court, who organized a fleet of ships to cross the Serpent's Sea and find out just what was on the other side. Considering the stories about the nightmares awaiting across the Serpent's Sea, the Castillian court decided not to sacrifice their own ships for the voyage and instead supplemented the three Castillian navy ships with hired privateers. Of the six ships, only one returned home.

The Sea of Monsters took its due and three ships were lost to various monsters and hazards before the Castillians set aside their pride and approached the native population for assistance. Privateer-turned-Castillian-explorer Alejandro Dantes and his ship, the *Sydonia*, landed on the island of Borequen in Primus of 1543 and made first contact with the Rahuri people.

The Castillian Arrival

Though this first encounter went without incident, early relations between the newcomers and the Rahuri were strained at best. The Rahuri distrusted the visitors, a concern inherited from their ancestors' distrust of outsiders on mainland Aztlan. Once the Castillians offered a fair exchange of trade, the Rahuri began fostering interactions with their visitors. The Castillians offered technology and production methods already prominent in Théah, a prospect that intrigued the cacique of Borequen enough to endorse further negotiations. The cacique arranged a meeting for Captain Dantes and his delegates with the Grand Cacique at Naca'an in Nonus of 1543. Even while Dantes sailed to his historic meeting, the Rahuri sent word to their neighboring islands, just in case of treachery.

Reports vary as to whether the Castillians meant to strong-arm or negotiate equitably with the Rahuri's central leadership. They never had the chance to find out. When the Castillians arrived at Naca'an, they were greeted by two Montaigne ships, the *Cyrielle* and the *Le Alexandre,* and the Vodacce galleon *Egress,* already in port.

It seemed word leaked of the Castillian voyage and their neighboring countries raced to chart their own course to the new world. The delegation from Vodacce arrived first, led by Enrico Fontana. His ships landed on the central island of Kiskeya just north of Naca'an, while the Montaigne followed the Castillians and sailed right into the heart of the Atabean. Both delegations took heavy damage in the sea voyage and needed to justify the voyage's costs.

Each country was eager to establish trade relations immediately, though records from the Vodacce party indicate they had initially intended to claim the island chain until they met with a large—and well-armed—Rahuri presence. Like all good entrepreneurs, the Voddace decided it was better to adjust to the changing circumstances instead of fighting the market.

The three Théan parties squared off in the very heart of the Rahuri people, overseen by the 21st Great Cacique, called Manicato. The powerful Rahuri leader ordered all three groups to sit and negotiate peacefully for the right to travel through their ancestral waters. Sadly, the Théans had other plans.

First Blood in the Water

No one is sure who struck the first blow. One account has the Vodacce ambassador attempting to bribe the Grand Cacique, so offending him that negotiations ended. As another story goes, the Montaigne delegation tried to poison the food of the other parties. In his journal, Captain Dantes wrote of being forced from his bed with weapons and thrown into water. The Rahuri were so offended by the Théans, they expected the visitors to swim back to their ships through monster-infested waters. Most did not make the short journey.

Whatever the case may be, the three Théan parties returned to their vessels in the Naca'an harbor and a furious ship-to-ship battle broke out. The Castillian ships were unprepared, still damaged from their long voyage, and were cut to pieces by the Montaigne cannons. The *Egress* rammed the *Cyrielle:* a decision that sank both ships. The crews tumbled into the water off Naca'an, stirring up the creatures that lived in the depths.

The Rahuri believe what happened next was simply nature taking its course; accounts from crew aboard the *Sydonia* agree that something foul and unnatural came to take their enemies to the depths. Captain Dantes had pulled his ship out of the harbor to escape cannon fire. When he turned to re-enter the fray, a massive tentacled beast erupted from the ocean and pulled apart any ship within reach.

Only the *Cyrielle* managed to escape as Rahuri fisherfolk launched their fast-moving vessels to tackle the giant squid and rescue whatever survivors they could. Captain Dantes led the *Sydonia* in to assist in killing the squid, and thereby won the respect of the Great Cacique. When the waters were calm once more, hundreds of men and women were lost to the sea. The Montaigne fled and left Dantes to negotiate on behalf of Castille.

During the night, Captain Dantes met with the surviving members of the Montaigne and Vodacce crews. They told stories of deceit and treachery. Then, the key moment: one of the Castillian crew showed Dantes a letter from the Castillian Crown. The sailor was actually a spy sent to keep an eye on Dantes, and if necessary, "deal with the Captain in any manner necessary to ensure Castille's interests."

Dantes was outraged. Instead of negotiating for Castille, he negotiated on behalf of privateers and pirates everywhere, establishing an outpost on the eastern island of Borequen meant to serve as a hub for Théan trade and travel in the Atabean. The settlement would be Castillian in name only, controlled by a governor approved of by the Rahuri, independent from official Théan influence.

The Castillian delegation was furious, but Dantes' heroic actions garnered him the respect he needed to seal the trade deals they so desperately wanted. Dantes then took the delegates out to sea and discharged the court delegates onto the first Castillian ship he saw. Captain Dantes never returned to Théah, and instead remained in the Sea of Monsters where he lived out his life as the first governor of the settlement of San Sancha, the pirate named "forever friend" to the Rahuri people.

Later accounts from the Rahuri explained that Dante's actions did much to confuse the Rahuri's initial contact with Théans. How could one people be so at war with themselves? Why was there so much mistrust among people who claimed to all come from the same place? What did these Théans intend to do when they came from so far away to the Sea of Monsters?

The Declaration of the Ris Moon

Captain Dantes' influence on history did not end there. He and his crew spent their time at Naca'an explaining to the Rahuri leadership about the realities of Théan countries. He explained the diverse cultures of Théah and how the political systems of each Nation worked. Dantes also taught many Rahuri how to read and write in Old Théan, Avalon and other common Théan languages, all in anticipation of the next wave of delegates from across the seas.

When the second wave of delegates arrived from Théah, the Rahuri were forearmed with a greater understanding of their politics, including the history of the Vaticine Church. The Great Cacique gathered these new delegates to a village high in the mountains north of the Naca'an for a grand summit on Rahuri-Théan harmony.

From sun-up to sundown, the Great Cacique heard delegates speak about everything from trade to religious beliefs and economic exchange. Trade delegations, pirate ships and government dignitaries presented themselves requesting access to the Atabean Sea. Then, after the sun went down and a bright reddish moon rose, the Great Cacique laid out the rules of trade he would accept.

TRADE GOODS FROM THE ATABEAN SEA

The Atabean Sea serves as both a hub for trade and as a source of exported goods. By volume, sugar is the largest export, but rum, molasses, indigo, coffee, tobacco, hemp and bananas are also primary exports. While gold, silver and bauxite are also valuable major exports, "whale oil" and ambergris are two of the most valuable exports per ounce. Whale oil is a catch-all term used by sea monster hunters to describe the similar oils extracted from the blubber of all large oceangoing sea monsters.

The pronouncement became known as the Declaration of the Ris Moon. The Rahuri allowed traders to establish outposts in their territory, but favored organizations and privateers over governments. The Great Cacique said there would be no other rulers in their waters but the caciques below and the gods above. Any attempt to change the arrangement would result in devastation for all Théans in the region.

Since that time, the governments of Théah have had difficulty establishing permanent settlements in the Atabean. Only three large cities have been created, and each time their construction was met with only grudging acceptance by the Rahuri. The first, Captain Dantes' San Sancha, was ruled by Dantes himself as governor until he abdicated the position, returning to piracy upon the arrival of Castillian authorities in 1574. The second settlement, Fortunato, was established by Vodacce in 1561, but after tensions flared into conflict, the Vodacce were cast out and the Rahuri now rule the formerly opulent port. The very last major settlement established is the city of Sylviette, a Montaigne outpost meant to bring the height of Théan culture into the Atabean.

Meanwhile, the influx of Théans has increased tensions with the Rahuri with every new ship and every new inch of ground taken. This only exacerbates the tensions with the Rahuri's neighbors around the Atabean, and, in recent years, the Rahuri have ceded many smaller islands to other Nations or else to Théan settlers or private interests. However, whenever the Rahuri pull back out of a territory, those who remain behind note a significant rise in attacks by dangerous sea life. Rahuri fishing fleets and fisherfolk are often hired to remain in waters long ceded to others in the hopes of keeping the monsters of the Atabean Sea at bay.

Enter the Atabean Trading Company

The respect for Rahuri mastery of the sea remained until the arrival of the Atabean Trading Company. The trade organization's encroachment marked the beginning of the decline of Rahuri control over large parts of the Atabean. The merchant fleet insinuated itself among the various trade ports as a lucrative trade partner and economic powerhouse. It wasn't long before the ruthless Company drove smaller traders out of the area, forcing most fleets to do business with them or be pushed out of business.

With their power base secured, the Company began to imprison and enslave the local populations, including and especially the Rahuri. Thousands were dragged off in chains by Company slavers, who then brought Théans to the cleared-out Rahuri territories and sold them slaves to help tend the land. Many Rahuri soon found themselves slaves on the very islands they once called their home.

The Great Cacique demanded a response from Théan diplomats, reminding them of the doom promised to all Théans should peace with the Rahuri be breached, but each Nation claims no responsibility for the actions of the Atabean Trading Company. The crowns and governments of various Nations all consider the Company to be far outside their jurisdiciton, an entity not of one Nation but funded, supplied and maintained by private citizens a half a world away.

So while the Rahuri cling to their three central islands and their fleet of sleek, deadly ships, the Atabean becomes more and more Théan thanks to the Company. This change spells doom for any independent pirates operating in the area, as well—those who face the awesome might of the Company's powerful fleet and influential friends back in Théah.

Yet the more the politics of the area become fraught with danger, so does the sea itself become more tumultuous and the monsters more unpredictable. The Rahuri serve a special role in the Atabean Sea—maintaining the fragile balance among the Monsters that swim through its waters—and the loss of so many of their people to slavery, murder and chaos threatens to destroy that balance once and for all.

The Atabean Trading Company, however, sees nothing but bright futures ahead, even as more and more of their ships fall prey to the Sea of Monsters.

The Rahuri: People of the Sea

There are many kinds of people from Montaigne, or that far-off Ussura, or Avalon. You speak with a half a hundred voices aboard one ship. Among ourselves, we may speak with single voices. But to you I say, we are the Rahuri. And we speak for the Sea.

—Great Cacique Jibaro

The primary native population around the Atabean Sea is the Rahuri. Rahuri history records that their flight from the Aztlan mainland began when an ancient leader, Locuo, angered the winged storm serpent Apocoatl. Locuo descended from a god himself and haughtily believed he could harness the power of the earth to protect his people instead of relying on Apocoatl for protection. The legend states Locuo created such great earthquakes with his magic, he ripped apart great sections of land until the serpent god became enraged.

Apocoatl was prepared to punish Locuo and all the Rahuri when a water spirit—Mama Yaya—intervened and led the Rahuri out of Aztlan and into the Atabean Sea. There she helped the Rahuri people gain reprieve from Apocoatl. In return for their lives, the Rahuri vowed to protect and tend the Atabean Sea and all the monstrous sea creatures that lived there for Apocoatl, who used it as a feeding ground. Appeased, Apocoatl left the Rahuri to spread across the Sea of Monsters, its custodians and protectors for all time.

Rahuri Territory

Rahuri society descended from a single group, but now their villages spread over thousands of miles of the Atabean. Their island territories consist of three large land masses and a string of smaller ones.

Borequen

The island of Borequen lies on the easternmost side of Rahuri territory, and serves as the first stop for any Théan ships that arrive in the Atabean Sea. The Borequen Rahuri are a hearty people who have integrated cultural aspects from many of their visitors, especially the Castillians. They split their time between traveling the Sea of Monsters to hunt the monsters below and venturing out into the Serpent's Sea to explore what lies to the east of their native home.

The island itself is densely populated, and the Borequen Rahuri have been raided often by slavers. Many Rahuri fishing ships returned to discover their villages razed to the ground, their families dragged off in chains. The Borequen Rahuri are the most vocal against the spread of the Company and their slavery practices. The term *boriqua*—the common name for a Rahuri warrior—comes directly from the Borequen, even though many boriquas aren't from this particular island.

From: C

To: V

Re: Report on the Rahuri People

Recent efforts to restore our slavery trade investments in the Atabean have failed. A number of the Brotherhood of the Coast have seen to that. We have a list of names and possible solutions. Awaiting authorizations. V, T, Z, 1, u, 1, 17, B.

Rumors of a spiritual force here have been verified. The Atabean people—known as the Rahuri—can contact the spirits of their ancestors. The ritual resembles those found in the Commonwealth and Ussura. The spirits seem benevolent and are often even helpful, but some bargain must be made. So far, all attempts to witness the ritual have failed. The Rahuri are sensitive to motives. We lost b and nearly X in such an attempt last month.

The creatures in X's report are also confirmed. While Théah's waters have their share of beasts, the Atabean Sea seems to breed them at will. I have personally witnessed a kraken devour an entire ship. The Rahuri seem to have some sort of connection to the creatures: a feature we can exploit in the future.

Inspected X's injuries after encountering the beasts. She was no longer able to operate as a functioning agent. Abeyance initiative confirmed and executed.

The Eye Sees All

Kiskeya

It's to the center of the Rahuri territory that the Borequen often turn their voices, to the island of Kiskeya and to the Great Cacique in Naca'an. Kiskeya is a wild island, full of jungles separating many of the large Rahuri villages. The central city of Naca'an lies in a large bay on the shore facing into the Sea, and stands as a monument to the beauty of Rahuri culture. It's main hall, the Great Bohio (Great Roundhouse), is a soaring structure at the center of the city made of the carved wood of the first Rahuri boats that made landfall in the Atabean. From here, Great Cacique Jibaro, descendant of Manicato, rules as keeper of the peace and maintains the bargain made with Apocoatl long ago.

Great Cacique Jibaro is the epitome of the Kiskeya Rahuri, a strong man with deep spiritual beliefs and a connection to his ancestors. The people of Kiskeya are deeply connected to the history of the Rahuri, and storytellers and elders often discuss the importance of the ancient pact as if the bargain with Apocoatl were struck yesterday. To the Kiskeya Rahuri, their connection to the Sea of Monsters, their ancient debt to the great god and their duty to the ocean isn't a matter of history, but of the here and now.

Yamaka

If Kiskeya serves as the spiritual and political heart of the Rahuri people, Yamaka is its pulsing, warrior heart. Yamaka is the oldest Rahuri settlement and lies on the western edge of the Atabean, between the Sea of Monsters and the nearby Aztlan mainland. The Rahuri first landed on Yamaka generations ago after leaving Aztlan, and the relics of their time on the mainland rest in the deepest undergrowth of the Yamaka forests. The Rahuri of Yamaka are the most isolationist of the Rahuri groups, focused instead of maintaining their traditions and culture against the encroachment of others. They are the most aggressive about their borders, and their warriors leave Yamaka to patrol the Sea, defending their people wherever they're needed. Their eyes are often cast towards Aztlan, as raiding parties from the mainland are not uncommon. They also believe that one day, the old god Apocoatl may turn his eye unfavorably towards them once more. And if that day should come, the warriors of Yamaka plan to be ready.

Paradise Lost

The Rahuri believed that as long as they remained faithful to their duty to the Sea, they would live in harmony with the Atabean as its people and protectors. That sense of purpose kept the Rahuri islands united for countless generations. However, the destruction of so many villages by slavers and encroaching Théans, as well as raids by other neighboring Nations, have destabilized Rahuri society. Dissension has sprung up between the Rahuri and their leaders, who continue to deal with the Théans and the Atabean Trading Company despite their ever-growing slave trade.

While the caciques negotiate and trade with the ATC mostly out of fear of open conflict, the Rahuri have grown tired of waiting for help as more Rahuri villages, sometimes entire islands, disappear and are rebuilt as Théan settlements. A resistance called the Riroco came together to stop slavers and those that employ slaves, wherever they are. So far, the Riroco's activities have been limited as they don't have the numbers or equipment yet for an all-out assault on the Company. And while the negotiators try to stop the slave trade through peaceful means, the Company ruthlessly hunts for the Riroco and annihilates their strongholds. Without weapons and support, the resistance may be destroyed before it can do much good. Yet the Rahuri have one unexpected weapon up their sleeves: the power to bring their ancestors back to join in the fight.

The Magic of Soryana

To protect and aid the Rahuri, Apocoatl long ago established a home for their ancestral spirits deep in the Sea of Monsters called Soryana. This island exists mostly within the Land of the Dead, though it can be found by sailors who look hard enough. The Rahuri always revered their ancestors and believed that rather than being lost after death, their departed simply went to "the other side of the island," where they resided, waiting to be called upon. Should they need aid, the Rahuri may call upon their ancestors for advice, or journey through entryways into the Underworld to reach Soryana and bring back their ancestors to assist with tasks. This task may be as simple as aiding in a great monster hunt or battling for an island's survival against a slaver force.

No matter the task, the process is the same. The supplicant must ask a pathfinder—a *bohiti*—to take him to Soryana through a doorway, often found in caves and openings into the earth that pockmark every island in the Atabean. From there, the bohiti and supplicant must find and petition the ancestor spirit for aid.

Should the spirit agree, the group must stand before Locuo, the King of Soryana, to convince him that the spirit is needed in the living world. Should Locuo agree, the spirit may leave Soryana for the length of time it takes to accomplish her task, or until the time Locuo tells her she must return. Should the spirit attempt to stay in the living world beyond her allotted time, she goes mad and turns into a ravening ghost—she has become "Lost," according to the Rahuri, one of the *Mabuya*—floating across the open ocean in search of souls to drag down along with her into the depths.

Rahuri magic can be startling to outsiders, unused to seeing the green-glowing forms of ghostly ancestor spirits aboard Rahuri vessels or walking through villages. To the Rahuri, borrowing a spirit from Soryana is as well-known and simple as one would borrow a book from a Théan library. Everyday life is full of Rahuri calling upon ancestors for advice or assistance in important tasks, or even mentoring young members of the tribe into their future professions.

Tiny frogs known as *coquí* (koh-KEE) are known as the messengers of the dead. Every night, the jungles around Rahuri villages are filled with their high, whistling chirps. Should a spirit need to send a message to someone, a coquí will find the recipient and whisper the spirit's message. They never speak otherwise. These coquí often congregate around pockets of land that have become connected to Soryana and serve as places for the Rahuri to speak to their ancestors. Generations of Rahuri have written the names of their ancestors on the walls and bring offerings to the dead.

Once the Rahuri finds the name of his ancestor on a wall, he presents an offering of fresh water and can try to make contact. If the departed wants to talk, the Rahuri soon finds himself deep in conversation with someone long passed on. Beyond these naming caves lie the entrances to Soryana itself, gateways to "the other side of the island" where the dead live in villages much like those in the land of the living. There they wait to be called by their descendants, ready to help their Nation once more.

Rahuri Society

Among the people of the Atabean, the Rahuri are considered to be a warm and welcoming people, accepting of those who respect their authority over the Sea. Once a visitor proves she can be trusted, a Rahuri community shares what they have with the newcomer and offers to include her in all aspects of village life, including voyages to hunt the Atabean's monsters. Intermarriage into the tribe is common, though those who remain in Rahuri communities are expected to raise their children with a strict respect and adherence to the people's beliefs.

Among the Rahuri, family units usually consist of several generations living under one roof. Families, like all of Rahuri society, are egalitarian, with either men or women able to lead a household and the head of house decided by who is wisest and most able to provide for the family. Marriages are negotiated between families, though they require the consent of both parties before the ceremony can be joined. Same-gender couples are not in the least unusual and are treated with full equal status among the community.

The Rahuri have a deep and abiding love for the Sea and everything it provides. Their clothing, as well as most of their possessions, are fashioned from what they've salvaged from the sea. Their homes are adorned with bone weapons and furniture, candles rendered from whale fat, and skins taken from unusual deep-sea creatures. Children transition into adulthood between the ages of twelve and fourteen, when they are sent out on their first hunt. These new hunters traditionally bring back pieces of their first kill to fashion weapons and jewelry to present as gifts to their relatives as a thank you for everything they were provided during childhood. Once they have achieved their first successful hunt, the youth are considered adults and may speak at Rahuri gatherings and make their own decisions. Weddings, however, wait until much later, once the teenagers have settled into their lives and learned a trade.

The Rahuri central language, Taiya, is spoken all across the Atabean and has become one of the trade languages for pirates and colonists settling around the Sea.

In the Arms of Mama Yaya

Living alongside the dead of their tribe has helped the Rahuri maintain a deep connection to their spiritual heritage going back to their time on the mainland. The Rahuri believe the powerful spirit Mama Yaya led them out safely away from Apocoatl's wrath to their home on the Atabean. It was Mama Yaya who forged the pact with Apocoatl and bonded the Rahuri with the Sea, and helped create Soryana to house the spirits of the dead. The Rahuri venerate Mama Yaya, as well as the other spirits of the water, air, and elements that are her children, and pay homage to her offspring, the great sentient monsters that swim the Atabea. Mama Yaya's symbol is the turtle, and her main offspring are the lobster, the dolphin, the shark, and the seagull.

Since the Rahuri live and work so closely with returned spirits all the time, their spiritual beliefs are considered less faith and more common sense. It doesn't take a leap of faith to see the hand of Yaya in everyday Rahuri life, as the dead walk around their villages and help serve the tribe. Priests and holy leaders of the Rahuri are venerated not as masters of unknown knowledge, but as leaders that guide their people in the best ways to serve the Sea. They teach that the magic of the dead is a gift that is not to be feared or especially venerated, but embraced as a tool meant to aid the people. The gift of the ancestors is meant to be used only to serve the tribe and not for selfish purposes, the priests teach, lest the spirits lose their way and become corrupted monsters bent on destruction.

This practical approach to magic and the spirit has led the Rahuri into direct conflict with Vaticine missionaries and emissaries who come west seeking new followers. The Rahuri see the Vaticine's focus on science and condemnation of magic as a denial of the power all around them, and questions whether the Church isn't based on control rather than true belief. Still, societal politeness and a wish to keep the peace have allowed Vaticine representatives to set up places of worship all around the Atabean which have attracted some curious Rahuri. Those who convert are often seen as confused souls by their people, who laugh and wonder why the converts would deny and vilify what has protected and served their people for generations.

The Right to Lead: Rahuri Politics

The spread of the Rahuri across dozens of islands in the Atabean demanded the creation of an organized political structure to maintain the people's unity. Along with a single unifying language and spiritual belief, the caciques of old created a leadership structure that is honored from one part of the Nation to the other.

Each Rahuri settlement, from the smallest village to the largest of Théan colonies, has its own leadership structure answering to the Nation's central authority. The Rahuri in a particular area gather together under a single cacique, or chief, whose job it is to protect the community. The caciques listen to petitions for aid, officiate all ceremonies, sit as mediator during disputes and act as judge when crimes are committed.

The cacique is a leader in war and peace, standing at the head of any band of warriors during conflicts, and initiates all youths into the tribe after their first hunt. It's the cacique who also approves all supplicants who want to visit Soryana to bring back an ancestor.

A cacique remains in office until she is dead or unless a challenger proves himself a better alternative before all the adults of the tribe. Upon a cacique's death, successors are chosen by the deeds they've accomplished and are selected by a vote of all the tribal adults, informed by the advice of the ancestors who choose to involve themselves in the messy business of succession. These successors are often chosen from the caciques' council of advisors, or else from the caciques' own children. A cacique's child is not guaranteed to inherit leadership, despite many calling them princes and princesses. In fact, the Rahuri are wary of dynasties and require that the children of caciques prove themselves even more worthy than another member of the tribe before they can take up the mantle of leadership.

Since Rahuri territory spans so much of the Sea, each individual settlement may have its own cacique, with multiple caciques on a single island. In turn, each cacique answers to the Great Cacique in Naca'an, sending an ambassador to the serve in the heart of Rahuri society. These ambassadors act as the Council of Renown in all Rahuri matters, negotiating with one another on behalf of their settlements and resolving any disputes that might arise. Diplomacy is very important among the settlements, as the Rahuri strive to maintain a united Nation, and war between settlements is considered a failure of everyone involved.

REBELS OF THE ATABEAN: THE RIROCO

The Atabean Trading Company's devastating slave trade has led to the creation of a resistance movement called the Riroco, or "valiant memory." Led by Rahuri princess Tanama, the Riroco have groups all along the Atabean, striking out against Atabean Trading Company targets with guerilla raids and sabotage wherever they can. While freeing captured slaves and smuggling them to freedom back within Rahuri territory is the primary goal, some focus instead on capturing ships and turning them into warships meant to raid Company ships and meeting places.

Duty to the Sea: Rahuri Law

Rahuri law is relatively simple. Each household is required to maintain order among its people, animals, and property. Should any trespass occur, the households must negotiate amongst themselves with one principle in mind: what outcome is best for the tribe? Should the two households be unable to come to terms, the cacique steps in to negotiate.

Formalized penal codes are uncommon. Should someone steal or harm another's property, she would repay the household in question or serve them in their household until the debt was repaid. A Rahuri who violently harmed another of the tribe would be punished by servicing the Great Cacique's household or the village as a whole, under the careful eye of the cacique's guards, with the length of service set by the severity of the injury.

Murderers among the Rahuri suffer a more complicated punishment. Not only would the murderer be forced to pay a monetary price to the family of his victim, he would also be forced to undertake a trip to Soryana to ask his victim for forgiveness. The murdered spirit would then accompany the murderer on a special task meant to serve the tribe as a whole. These tasks are usually harrowing, with murderers often perishing trying to accomplish the deed. Should he return successful, he could return to Rahuri society. If he failed, he was banished from the tribe forever. Mass murderers are executed by the cacique in front of the village, drowned in the ocean and fed to the monsters of the Atabean, their souls destroyed upon entering Soryana by Locuo himself.

Names

Rahuri names are handed down from fathers and mothers to their children, with a long history going back generations. They are inherited based on the legacies parents would like their children to continue, inspired by the traits the ancestor held, such as bravery and wisdom, and the like. Names often come from nature, and from the protector spirits whom the Rahuri once worshipped before leaving the mainland.

A Rahuri's full name is a combination of the person's given name, her profession, and then the name of her village, city or island. For example, a fisher-woman named Karaya from the village of Narita on the island of Kiskeya would introduce herself as "Karaya the fisher-woman of Narita-Kiskeya."

Common Male Names: Abey, Ameyro, Arieto, Aymaco, Batea, Cacimar, Colibri, Comerio, Guey, Juracan, Kaiman, Liren, Loquillo, Maboyas, Mucaro, Nasa, Ralay, Tabonuco, Yabisi Yacahu

Common Female Names: Ana, Acindina, Anacaona, Aji, Aramana, Ayiti, Cajaya, Casiguaya, Guama, Jadzia, Kakata, Karaya, Liani, Mayneri, Nimita, Tinima, Tonina, Xiomara, Yari, Zemi

Leaders and People of Note

Great Cacique Jibaro

Known as the son of proud ancestors, Great Cacique Jibaro is the direct descendant of Manicato, the mighty cacique who made the first pacts with Théans so long ago. Now his grandson, nearly seventy, has sat as Grand Cacique since he was fourteen and his reign is nearly ended. Jibaro led his people through a prosperous if tumultuous time, in which the Atabean Trading Company and various groups have overrun much traditional Rahuri territory.

Jibaro works diligently to remain in control and maintain peace. But with the caciques of various islands near to revolt, the elderly Jibaro realizes that perhaps he has been too lenient with his Théan trade partners for too long. Jibaro intended to step down and hand leadership to his eldest granddaughter Tanama, but the headstrong princess abdicated her role as heir to lead the Riroco in their war against the Company. Without a protégé to follow him to the throne, Jibaro struggles to hold on in his last few years, fighting to save his people while seeking out a successor worthy of his legacy.

Tanama

The Rahuri long ago accepted the idea that all are equal in the face of the great Sea. So when the Great Cacique Jibaro believed he would soon pass on to his ancestors, he called upon the other caciques of the Rahuri to recognize his granddaughter, Tanama, as his presumptive replacement. Raised on Borequen, Tanama is well educated by both Rahuri and Castillian teachers, and is raising two small daughters with her partner, Risa. Tanama left Borequen for Naca'an to prepare for her ascension to the throne, only to learn that days after her departure, her village was attacked and Risa and her daughters were captured.

Beside herself with fury, Tanama turned to her grandfather and the caciques for justice against the slavers and their employers, the Atabean Trading Company. When the Rahuri leadership proved ineffectual at getting justice for her family, Tanama left Naca'an, turning her back on the role she'd trained for all her life. Instead, she took her fastest ship, the *Tiburon,* and headed out to sea with anyone who would help her to rescue her enslaved family. Thus, the Riroco were born. Tanama has become the backbone of Rahuri resistance against the slavers and the ATC, leading a guerilla war on the sea in the hopes of saving her people and discovering what happened to her lost family.

Yuke Merritt

Yuke is one of the finest navigators, captains and monster killers in the Atabean Sea. The son of an Avalonian pirate and his Rahuri wife, Yuke was named after the white sandy beaches where he was raised. He grew up watching his father go off to plunder in the Sea of Monsters aboard his ship, the *White Sands,* and return with stories of the monsters his mother's people fought.

Yet one day his father's ship did not return. Yuke and his mother found the foundering pirate ship nearly dashed to pieces at the entrance to the Devil's Strait. Her Rahuri relatives salvaged the ship and turned it over to Yuke, who used it and the surviving crew to find the sea serpent that killed his father and take his revenge. In truth, Yuke had gotten lucky killing such a massive serpent, but the kill earned him a reputation. Soon, people far and wide were coming to seek out the newly minted Captain Merritt and the *White Sands* for help solving their latest sea monster problem.

Here Be Monsters

Anyone who sails the Atabean quickly discovers the creatures below the surface aren't your usual sea creatures. Monstrous eels, whales, and squid lurk in the depths, along with terrifying sharks of unusual size. But those are at least recognizable creatures. Unsuspecting ships entering the Atabean also find themselves facing horrific monsters they can't identify.

Only those most experienced at dealing with the Atabean Sea really know what creatures travel the waves, hiding in the tumultuous sea. Rahuri legend calls these monsters the food of the ancient serpent, Apocoatl, and cull the ocean, waiting for him to arrive for his next meal. Everyone else just calls them nightmares.

All sea life within the Atabean Sea is more monstrous and terrifying than normal. Fish and normally gentle sea creatures are larger and often more aggressive. The ocean predators that hunt these waters are obscenely large, with maws and spines and tentacles that can dwarf grown adults or even drag whole ships underwater. The very landscape of that underwater world is also terrifying, as the ocean is far deeper in the Atabean Sea than one expects. The water is startlingly clear near the shore, allowing sailors and fisherfolk to spot trouble as soon as it comes in sight. The farther one goes from shore, the darker the water gets, and far from land it's not uncommon for creatures to rise from the depths without warning.

Because of the size of the sea life, the bounty of the Atabean Sea is undeniable. Fisherfolk with long, sturdy nets can pull in fish, crab, and eel larger than a full-grown person, a harvest able to feed a dozen people with one catch. Still, harvesting said bounty is a dangerous lifestyle, as almost everything in the Sea of Monsters is either wily and aggressive prey, or a ferocious, oversized predator.

Among the Rahuri, fisherfolk and sailors are highly respected and honored as powerful warriors and providers. Anyone who chooses to take to the Sea to hunt monsters is considered to be doing the will of the gods. Among those outsiders who live around the Sea of Monsters, anyone who dares face down what the ocean has to offer is worthy of a raised glass and a quick prayer. Many who go out to face the Atabean never return. Funerals where the body is recovered are rare, and among sailors and fisherfolk, lost limbs are common and considered badges of honor.

If it were only large and aggressive sea life that haunted the Atabean depths, perhaps the ocean wouldn't be as special. Yet the Atabean Sea is called the Sea of Monsters for a reason.

Beside the sharks and eels and giant squid, there are other creatures far beyond what anyone would call natural. Théan sailors return home with stories of giant sharks with tentacles erupting from their stomachs, capable of pulling entire ships into their terrifying maws. Still others speak about a massive whirlpool that opens in the ocean and sucks down

I will tell you the story, the way it was told to me. Then you can decide for yourself what you believe. I was a deckhand on the Passion's Pride *for three years. We came from Castille in the hopes of earning ourselves a prize on the Atabean to bring back home. We heard just one creature netted here would buy the ship's weight in gold if we brought the carcass back intact, for who'd ever seen the fancy monsters from halfway across the world? Captain Bardocz said we'd each have our share if we carried back a handsome prize. Well, Bardocz is at the bottom of the ocean with most of the crew of the* Pride*. I've got this leg half made of wood and strange bone, rigged up by those Rahuri locals. I've got no gold, and no way back to Théah. And why's that? Because the good Captain bit off more than he could chew. He saw the white hide of some creature and thought it would make a good prize. Only this was no ordinary beast. In the Atabean, there's no such thing. This beast pulled our ship to pieces and sank those bits to the bottom of the sea, along with my shipmates and friends. I watched it all from a bit of the hull that it left behind, under the sun of a bright spring day. And I tell you, never in the dead of night, nor in any nightmare, have I ever seen anything so horrible as that mouth. Don't believe me? Take that commission and get on that boat. Go seeking those creatures yourself, and see what your weight in gold will cost you. Go ahead. I'll be waiting here if you get back.*

—Interview with Raol Navarre, former Castillian pirate, San Sancha resident

ships before disappearing and reappearing elsewhere. Then there are the singing voices, calling out to sailors on dark nights with the voices of their relatives, calling them to jump overboard and drown in the sea.

No matter the source, sailors know once they leave land, chances are they may never return. Still, for all its dangers, the Atabean Sea is a treasure trove of wealth for those brave enough to go out and take it. For the Rahuri people, the pirates who patrol the waters, and the Théans who have settled the Sea of Monsters, slaying monsters has become a lucrative profession not for the faint of heart.

Monster Hunting on the Atabean

The lifeblood of the Atabean Sea is the terrible monsters that live below the waves. Every industry rotates around the hunting, processing and selling of parts harvested from the many huge sea creatures. When Théans first came to the Sea, they were amazed at the way the Rahuri used every part of the creatures in their everyday life. They began exporting whalebone, eel skins, monstrous fish for eating and all kinds of relics brought back from monster hunts. Soon an entire trade grew around what became known as extreme whaling, or the art of hunting sea monsters.

It's easy to mark a ship in port preparing for a hunt. Each ship by tradition and simple pragmatism has at least one Rahuri whaler or hunter aboard, and those Rahuri mark the ship with long white stripes across the hull to resemble a great Atabean shark. One need only ask for the captain of such a vessel to sign aboard. Whaling vessels are always looking for new sailors because of the high mortality rate, but men and women flock to sign up every time. The return for a good hunt is far too high to turn down.

Once at sea, whaling ships follow the schools of fish across sections of the Atabean. If they see the fish veer violently away from an area, they know they are on the trail of a monster. Seasoned hunters often know of a particular creature's hunting ground and lead the ship on its path for days, even weeks, patiently stalking their dangerous prey no matter the weather. The hulls are filled with carefully packed chum, a tempting slurry meant to lure up a monster to the surface. Sometimes entire animal carcasses are dragged behind ships, aiming to draw a creature to the surface. Each whaling ship is festooned with harpoons and nets, as well as dive lines and harnesses. Once engaged in battle, sailors will leap from the ship onto the back of the monster they hunt, their only protection the weapon in their hand and a harness around their middle.

Whaling ships hunt any kind of creatures, and each one brings its own challenges. Success is by far not guaranteed, and every season captains across the Atabean raise a glass to their lost comrades, passed on to Soryana in the mouth of one monster or another. For those who do slay their foe, the payday is enormous.

We set sail on the Western Glory *yesterday and already the crew is afraid. We have many new sailors, most from across the waters and new to the Atabean. I tried to explain how to set their feet when the deck rocks in the high winds, and how to hold their harpoon for best throw. You would think I was teaching children by the way they gawk at me. I believe they were expecting some backward savage, ignorant of the Sea. I pointed to the necklace around my neck and the dozen shark teeth there. I refrained from pointing out their lack of adornment, nor how green they all seemed on deck with their shaking legs. These children prod one another and guess what kind of creature we will "discover" first. They place bets. When the bet came to me, I gave the only answer I can think of. "You will not discover anything. My people have been here and always will be here when you're gone." Then I left them with their thoughts. I have my own fears to conquer without theirs. For we have gone to sea to hunt legends once more, and I do not wish to die today.*

—The last journal entry of Ris Whena, Rahuri hunter

The monsters are dragged aboard ship with massive hooks and processed by the deck hands, cut down into more manageable pieces and carried into port. Sometimes the prey is so huge that large rafts are deployed behind the ship to bring the carcass along, though this tactic often draws other monsters who follow the scent of the dead. Once on land, the monster carcass is quickly chopped, cut, curedmand sold down to each essential part, with the captain and crew splitting the profits. The hunters claim trophies of the kill as they see fit, and each ship bears a proud piece of the kill from seasons before.

Most whaling ships are predominantly crewed by Rahuri, but Théan ships that daring to take up the trade have at least one Rahuri hunter aboard. Whaling ships are often crowded by Rahuri spirits, serving alongside their mortal descendants and living friends for the sake of taking down monsters. Seasoned Rahuri whalers who died in the teeth of a monster can come back the next season to seek revenge after a brief sojourn in Soryana, and the rosters of many ships have the names of the dead among them, marked with a star to indicate their unliving status.

Plenty of Théans find the idea of crewing a ship alongside the dead alarming, but those fears tend to quiet down once the hunt begins and the real danger that lurks below rises up to give them battle. What really scares you? The ghost who wishes to see you return to walk on land or the tentacled monster threatening to drag you to a watery grave?

Monsters of the Atabean Sea

The creatures that call the Atabean Sea home are too numerous and monstrous to account for them all. Locals joke the Sea of Monsters has a terrible imagination, a constant thirst for blood, and an awful sense of humor. Even the most seasoned hunters will admit that they are constantly surprised by the nightmares the Sea can spit forth. A host of these Monsters have been documented by Théans (see ***A Pirate's Life***, p187-193), but even that cannot be a complete list. Still, it bears mentioning a few of the more awe-inspiring and terrifying denizens of the Atabean Sea.

Mama Tortue, the Giant Sea Turtle

Far in the distance, an island rests along the horizon line. It's large, and covered in green, and it wasn't there a few moments ago. It moves across the horizon even when watched, a constant reminder of the unimaginable, strange, and wonderful things in the Atabean Sea.

For generations, sailors have been telling tales of a giant sea turtle traversing the Sea of Monsters Known as Mama Tortue, she is known by the Rahuri as the daughter of Mama Yaya and considered by many to be a sign of good fortune if spotted on a long voyage. More than just a good luck charm, Mama Tortue is a sentient giant sea turtle whose magnanimous nature has saved many a sailor or fisher from death.

The legend goes that when the Rahuri people first arrived in the Atabean Sea, Mama Tortue was there, trapped in a great sunken reef. Rahuri fisherfolk spotted her and worked diligently to release her from her bonds. The already ancient turtle thanked the astonished fisherfolk and pledged to return the favor. Since then, those lost at sea or swept overboard might find themselves raised high on the back of a sea turtle whose soft voice lulls them to sleep before delivering them to safety.

A letter from the desk of
Commodore Moussette of the *Javert*:

To my good son, Robert:

I write this letter in the hopes you are in good health. By the time you read this, I will have passed through the harrowing Devil's Strait and into the deep blue waters of the Atabean. Please allow me to offer you my assurance that I am fine, and the Javert has come through brilliantly despite the hazards we faced along the way. I can only commend my crew for their quick wits, for we encountered some narrow scrapes which tested my commitment to our cause.

I tell you in good honesty, my son, I have spent my entire life at sea and never faced a challenge like this ocean of unknowable monsters. Fiendish beings lurk in the mists and hull-cracking shoals threaten to rip us in two. Renegade Rahuri and pirate vessels prowl among the islands here, which are so numerous as to be nearly unchartable.

This is to say nothing of the ghost island we spotted off our port side three times in the last four days. The Rahuri call it the land of their ancestors, and warn us that it is not a place to put down anchor. Yet I am intent on seeing this strange sight, a land of dead men and women, for myself. One does not turn away from a chance to touch the afterlife, my son, though it may fill me with dread.

Perhaps when next you see me, I will have some skull of a great monster for you. Or a trinket from the land of the dead. I ask only that you do not tell your mother about my intentions. I would not like to survive my trip through this hellish place, only to be murdered upon my return home.

Yours fondly,
Commodore Reynard Moussette
Servant of His Majesty, long may he reign

Tiburon, the Shark Whose Maw Consumes

If Mama Tortue is the benevolent protector of sailors, the great shark Tiburon is the nightmare that haunts their dreams. This sentient mega shark rises from beneath ships to tear giant holes in the hull and has been known to swallow smaller boats whole. It can barely be seen beneath the waves, its dark coloring broken only by pale white tiger stripes against its hide. Tiburon is the ever-moving, never-sleeping reminder of the death that lies beneath the waves of the Atabea.

Despite its monstrous size and unholy appetite, Tiburon isn't simply a Monster to be feared. Legend says that Tiburon can transform himself into a man, or else cast his spirit into the eyes of a man to walk on land, to check on the well-being of his people. He serves as a guardian of the Rahuri, capable of being petitioned for aid should the people face a great danger.

Great Caciques have three times called upon Tiburon to rise up and destroy their enemies: once against raiders from Aztlan, and twice from raiding parties from nearby Nations. Each time the fleets were consumed in a nightmare of broken ships and dying sailors, a cautionary tale of the cataclysms that can surface from the waves.

Young Rahuri often seek out the great shark as a mark of adulthood and ask the great shark for one of its teeth. The youth must climb into the shark's mouth to retrieve the tooth, and—should they be worthy—the shark will allow them to leave unscathed. Should they be judged by Tiburon unworthy, however, or should they cut themselves on any of the many rows of teeth in his mouth, Tiburon will consume them whole. It is said these lost warriors are reborn as Tiburon's offspring, smaller sharks that swim alongside their father for all time.

Most Théans initially dismissed the myths and legends surrounding Tiburon, but within a few years of their initial arrival most became believers. It's hard to deny his existence when so many sailors shake in their boots at the mention of the great shark's name.

Of course, many Théans are happy to blame Tiburon for all manners of nautical accidents, lost trade ships or general mischief on the open seas. Just because someone told you they saw the great shark doesn't mean he actually made an appearance.

Places to Get Lost

The Atabean Sea stretches over hundreds of miles of treacherous coasts, perilous waters, and islands teeming with Rahuri and Théan settlers. From rainforest to rocky shores, the Sea offers untold locations for adventure and terror, trade and tragedy. For every well-known name, there are a dozen places of wonder that go uncharted. Here are only a few.

Soryana: The Island of the Ancestors

There is an island in the Atabean Sea that exists both in this world and in the world of the dead. It is called Soryana, and it is the home of the Rahuri ancestors. Sailors catch glimpses of this ghost island on the horizon, but to reach it, one must be on a mission to seek out the dead in the service of the Rahuri people, a trek that crosses the boundary of death.

The legends about Soryana's beginnings say that once the Rahuri arrived in the Atabean, they were sworn into the service of the great god Apocoatl. The Rahuri's leader Locuo angered the serpent god and the entire people were made to atone by swearing to tend to the Atabean Sea forever.

With that oath, the Rahuri not only bound themselves to the Sea in life but also in death. Legend states that at first the ancestors only lingered, restless and lost, without a purpose to serve. Many of those restless dead went mad and began attacking their own descendants, calling to them across the water and drowning the living beneath the waves. Mama Yaya, the Rahuri guardian spirit, took pity on the restless dead and created an island where they might live in peace until such time as they were needed to protect or serve their people. And so, Soryana was born.

The island of Soryana appears and disappears along the Atabean horizon. Only those on a mission to the island to collect an ancestor can truly find it. Those pathfinders seeking the island may either walk deep into the forest on land to seek sacred doorways in the earth, or else head out onto the Sea with no heading in mind. Should the seekers' intentions be pure, they will find their way through the cave systems to an opening to the island or else their ship will land on the island's shores of its own accord.

Once there, visitors are greeted by villages full of the long dead who offer food and refreshment to all petitioners. Anyone who accepts these gifts will never leave the island again. Instead, petitioners must search for the person they seek among the thousands of dead. The island is much larger than it initially seems, full of Rahuri villages both ancient and modern, idealized and idyllic. There, Rahuri live and work as they did in life, serving to tend to the Sea from the afterlife. Even monsters have spirits, and just as in the world of the living, the Sea of Monsters must be tended.

Upon finding the spirit she seeks, the petitioner must go to the great roundhouse of Locuo, ruler of the island. The king of Soryana sits on a throne of bone taken from ancient sea creatures at the foot of the island's only mountain. King Locuo is in fact the ancient ancestor of the Rahuri who led them to their new home, and now serves as guardian of the land of the dead. It is Locuo who decides if the reasons for removing a spirit from Soryana are worthy, and he who sets the length of the spirit's trip to the living world. Only once Locuo accepts a petition can a visitor leave Soryana, either by walking back over land towards the mountain, or else sailing away into the night.

This practice of borrowing the dead is considered so commonplace by the Rahuri that most have been to the island several times and understand the rules implicitly. Foreigners are welcome to make the trek but must not only employ a Rahuri pathfinder to find the way to Soraya, they must also prove their aims serve the greater good of the Rahuri and the Sea. Anger Locuo, and a visitor may find himself shredded by the Rahuri god of the dead, the pieces of his soul scattered into the waters.

The Devil's Strait

Sailors crossing the Serpent's Sea are in for a dangerous journey on their way to the Atabean. Yet nothing is quite as dangerous as the last challenge to Théan sailors: the Devil's Strait. Situated just below the southern tip of the rocky Guare Island, the Devil's Strait is the passage most ships use to enter the Atabean Sea. The Strait is nearly five miles long and lined on all sides with sheer cliffs rising high into the misty sky. On a clear day, sailors can spot the twin spire mountains on Guare high above, where Rahuri elders retire for contemplation.

The Devil's Strait is shrouded in a thick mist that makes travel slow going, leaving ships open to attack and disaster. If the razor-sharp rocks just beneath the surface don't puncture a ship's hull, the creatures calling the Strait home might do the job. The Strait is home to a host of the Atabean's most ferocious marine life, from schools of carnivorous flying fish to giant squid. While dangerous, the Strait is the primary entrance to the Atabean Sea.

At the end of the Strait sits Haakonssen's Lighthouse. Built by a Vesten architect and sailor, the lighthouse provides a ray of hope, a signal to the sailors they are near the end. Sailors often talk of "seeing Haakonssen's light" as a metaphor for the end of a long journey or a difficult struggle. The lighthouse shines two beacons—one red and one green—easily seen through the fog, lining up properly only if the ship is on the proper course.

There are other secret entrances, but they all guarded by pirates and smugglers. Charts showing these entrances have been long sought after by Avalon, Castille and the other Théan Nations, but so far, no spy has been able to capture one.

The two greatest threats by far, however, are the sirens and Wu'a, the terrible mouth of the Sea. Any sailor going through the Strait best learn to cover her ears in a hurry should she hear voices calling to her across the water. Chances are they are the restless dead of dishonored Rahuri, who were brought from Soryana and either refused to return or were misused by their descendants for less-than-honorable pursuits. These furious wraiths stalk the oceans and lure sailors to their deaths, bringing their souls to Soryana in the hopes of bribing their way back into the ancestral land of rest.

Yet even the restless dead are wary when the waters begin to boil and strange lights erupt out of the mists. These ghost lights lead many ships to an early demise, because they are the first and only warning of a doom that lies beneath the waves: the Wu'a, a charybdis that stalks the Strait and the open waters of the Atabean. Any ship that follows those lights finds itself caught in a whirlpool and sucked down into the waiting maw of the monster. Once it consumes its prey, the Wu'a moves on, leaving only broken pieces of hull in its wake. Its name comes from the Rahuri word most often screamed by sailors upon encountering the beast: "No!"

Thorindin's Spires

On the far northern edge of Atabean territory lies a chain of islands too small to be considered individual masses. Collectively referred to as Thorindin's Spires, the rocky grouping is in fact a range of undersea mountains whose barren peaks stick up above the waves. The tiny islands were considered too difficult to settle by the Rahuri and left largely untouched until the arrival of the Vendel pirate Erik Thorindin. Thorindin was one of the first Vendel pirates to come to the Atabean on the heels of the merchant arrivals. Once he saw the Théan colonies popping up along the more southern islands, he sought a territory to establish an outpost for his Nation. Instead, Thorindin bit off more than he could chew with the forbidding island chain.

Thorindin's Spires were abandoned by the Rahuri for any number of reasons. The area is prone to bad weather, supposedly caused by a cursed spirit who roams the area and blights the waters in its rage. The islands themselves have virtually no vegetation, with only a few bearing springs for drinking water and little animal life. Each island is little more than the uppermost part of an underwater spire that breaks the surface. How much of that island is visible changes with the tide, leaving the landscape of Thorindin's Spires constantly shifting. Only those most familiar with the area can keep track of which island is which.

The change in sea level also highlights another difficulty presented by the Spires. Each island is pockmarked with underwater caves which disappear and reappear with the tides. Ships that moor too close to the rocky shore can find themselves pulled into the mouth of a previously unseen cave during very low tide, while sailors seeking shelter from bad weather can find themselves trapped when their safe haven starts to flood.

These conditions all make the Spires the perfect place for illicit meetings and treasure troves, as well as excellent hiding places for raiding parties. The Riroco use the Spires as the perfect place to hide their ships, and utilize the cave systems on several of the larger islands to house liberated slaves until they can be smuggled to freedom. Despite its dangers, the waterways between Spires also remain the fastest way to travel north onto the mainland of Wabanahkik, if a ship's crew is willing to tempt fate.

Théan Colonies

San Sancha

High on the cliffs above the pristine beaches of Borequen's western shore lies the eclectic city of San Sancha. Born out of the dream of the pirate captain Alejandro Dantes, San Sancha was named after Dantes' firstborn daughter, his first child to be born aboard ship in the Atabean. Legend has it that Dantes tried to negotiate for the entire island of Borequen to be renamed after his daughter, but couldn't quite convince the Rahuri. Still, the Great Cacique was amused by the man's gall and allowed him to name the outpost instead.

San Sancha began as Dantes' reward for being a good friend to the Rahuri people, a retirement village for the pirate captain and his crew. Soon the village blossomed into a center for trade for both pirates and reputable merchants, drawing people from Théah to this mostly Castillian town. For those coming from Théah, San Sancha is a welcome piece of home, with buildings constructed in a myriad of Théan designs.

Dantes himself served as the first governor of San Sancha, but was forced to flee when Castillian authorities arrived to take him into custody. Delegates of the Crown attempted to seize control, but when warned that the Rahuri would take the city, they relented. The settlement is now under a board of governors, which is a polite way of saying the pirates and dubious persons who can afford to bribe their way into office. It swears to no flag officially, but recognizes the Rahuri as the true owners of the land. Should any danger come to the the Atabean Rahuri, San Sancha will always answer the call.

Sylviette

Nestled onto the tiny, densely wooded Ile de Sylviette, this Montaigne colony was the first settlement fully controlled by Théans within the Sea of Monsters, and now serves as the outpost for Montaigne culture and society in the region. Founded by disgraced Marquise Sylviette DuMorne, the colony is touted as the only place to find "real Théan civilization" in the West… even as nearby Jaragua throws off its chains. Sylviette is home to music halls, artist havens and lavish estates, all done in the best Montaigne designs. Locals dress in the latest fashions imported from Théah and attend opulent parties and salons, all maintained on the backs of slaves purchased from the Company. To any Théan in the Atabean, Sylviette is a glittering gem set on stormy seas.

This gilded veneer hides a dark truth. Sylviette is a disguised military outpost, operating under the guidance of Montaigne's highest intelligence authorities. Below the opulent homes and palatial estates, the Montaigne have stocked weapons en masse, and their ships are ready to turn guns on any enemy of l'Empereur. Marquise DuMorne was in fact never disgraced but dispatched by the order of the Sun King himself.

Sylviette has remained the hidden claw inside the velvet glove for nearly forty years. As Marquise DuMorne ages, one wonders who will inherit control of the island, its weapons and slaves. The court in the West, as it is called, waits uneasily to see where control will fall. Until then, the parties—and the intrigues—of Sylviette continue.

Fortunato

The story of Fortunato is a cautionary tale to any Théan colonist. Fortunato was first proposed to the Rahuri as a simple Vodacce outpost on one of the western islands near Yamaka, a home for the tradespeople who came to ply their trade in the Sea. The original settlers of Fortunato created a tiny piece of Vodacce alongside their Rahuri neighbors, including a strong Vaticine presence that soon doomed the colony to failure.

The Vaticine authorities saw Fortunato as the perfect base of operations for their missionary work, even planning expeditions as far as Aztlan. Soon the island was flooded with Vaticine emissaries. The Rahuri that lived alongside the Théans in Fortunato first met the pushy, insistent missionaries with amused patience, but it wasn't long before the fire and brimstone tactics of the Vaticine emissaries ran out the locals' patience. When the Vaticine missionaries began calling the gateways to Soryana unholy and attempted to seal the entrance to the largest sacred cave system on Fortunato, the Rahuri revolted.

It took three nights for the Rahuri to take Fortunato. The coup was fairly bloodless, as the Rahuri spared most of the civilians living in the city. The missionaries who survived were driven out into the dense jungle or set to sea in small boats, never to be seen again. Since then, the Rahuri have ruled the settlement, aided by a former Vodacce shipping clerk named Sorello, who survived the fighting and helped negotiate the new peace. The settlement was closed to Théan colonists for nearly two years, but recently reopened for commerce and settlement under its new management.

Agosta

Aragosta
the Republic of Pirates

Without a ship and sail, every island is a prison. Théah's just one big island.

— Vincenzo Gatto

A generation ago, a desperate band of pirates, merchants and buccaneers formed an alliance. Their purpose? To combat the all-out war declared on them by the Nations of Théah and the Atabean Trading Company. Survival was their cause, and they looked to the only allies they could find in a world increasingly hostile to the kind of freedom they craved: criminals and pirates.

That small band of brigands grew into the Brotherhood of the Coast and their holdings expanded into a Republic of Pirates. Each ship, its own state. Each captain, a voice in the Council of Captains. Their tiny island used more for the transfer of goods and entertainment than for governance, their Nation ruled by an elected king or queen. Most discount the Republic as little more than a haven for villains, but when roused from its slumber, few Nations can rival the naval might of the Brotherhood of the Coast.

The Legend of Knobby Knees

Ahoy! An' welcome to Grand Aragosta! You be lookin' a wee bit lost. Like'n ye' just stepped off'n a sea turtle an' found yerself here like. Let me be yer pilot here'n on Gran Aragosta and lead ye true, I wills. Ye got the look 'bout ya' wantin' to sign their Charter. I can sees it 'bout ya' I can. Well then. I'll lead the way and help ye get yer bearin's by tellin' ya' a wee bit 'bout this here knob we calls Aragosta.

Vincenzo "Knobby-Knees" Gatto was an awful pirate. Maybe the worst pirate of the century. An elderly, wealthy Vodacce merchant with a head full of romantic ideals—and absolutely no skills to back them up—he spent his vast fortune trying to live out his dreams of being a pirate.

Gatto's Early Career

He began his career hunting Crescent Empire shipping vessels in the Numanari Approach. He lost three ships and three crews. When both the Crescent Empire and Vodacce offered a price on his head, he moved to the Widow's Sea, hunting Castillian ships. He lost three more expensive boats. Finally—fearing for his life and knowing he probably couldn't recruit another crew—he took what remained of his wealth and moved to the Atabean Sea, hoping to change his fortune.

His bad luck held out. After a disastrous failed attack on a Castillian merchant vessel—guarded by a frigate who knew he was in the waters—he landed his crippled ship on a large, unpopulated island. Unpopulated by people, perhaps, but the shores were covered with lobsters and crabs. Gatto, knowing he would certainly die on the uninhabited rock, took solace in knowing he would at least avoid starvation in his final days.

But the Castillian frigate did not give up on Gatto, following him back to the island after the battle. Gatto and his crew prepared for a desperate last stand when they discovered a giant lobster inhabited the bay. As it began to rip both ships to pieces, the crews fought together against the beast. Together, they killed it.

In exchange for their camaraderie, the captain of the Castillian ship—a woman named Jacinta Irati Loida Vela—offered to spare Gatto's life...but only if he swore to never practice piracy again and abandon his dream. Gatto made the oath, his hand on the Book of the Prophets. "I have learned my lesson," he said. "I was never meant to be a pirate, nor shall I ever endeavor to do so again." Jacinta Vela's crippled ship left the bay and Gatto turned his attentions to other ambitions. Namely, to become the great Merchant Prince of the Atabean Sea.

Declaring the godforsaken rock his new home, he built Porto di Aragoste (so named because of the abundant crustacean life), a safe harbor for pirates and their kin known by most common folks as Aragosta. If Gatto could not *be* a pirate, he would spend the rest of his life surrounded by them. He would build a pirate haven the likes of which had never been seen, not in Théah, not in Numa and not even in the Atabean Sea.

THE REPUBLIC AND THE BROTHERHOOD

Just because you're from Castille doesn't mean you're clergy. Likewise, just because you were born in Aragosta doesn't mean you're a pirate or a member of the Brotherhood of the Coast. Yes, you deal with pirates on a daily basis and you probably have a lot of friends who are part of the Republic, but you can be from Aragosta and not be a member of the Brotherhood or even a pirate. The Republic "governs" Aragosta, but that can mean as little to you as you want, provided you stay out of trouble.

The Bucket o' Blood

Of course, Gatto's bad luck held. He built a large tavern on the shore and called it Vela's Mercy. It burned down less than a year later. He rebuilt it and called it Vela's Dream. It burned down five weeks after he opened the doors. Gatto rebuilt the Vela a third time, but after a violent clash between two rival crews, the tavern was a burned and bloody mess. The fourth time he began rebuilding, a pirate captain asked, "Are you rebuilding that bucket of blood?" Out of frustration, Gatto called the place Secchio di Sangue. For some reason, the tavern remained intact, and so did the name.

As the years passed, Aragosta became what Gatto always dreamed it would become: a safe haven for pirates, ruffians, scoundrels and outcasts. "If you can't find it anywhere else, you can find it in Aragosta." That's what the port masters across Théah say. If it is illegal in Théah, it's on every merchant's table in Aragosta. Gatto's island port thrived, protected by those who believed in his dream. And while he served as the de facto governor, Gatto did precious little to enforce any kind of law or order on his island. No king, no lord, no governor. Just the will of the people.

Of course, this attitude made life in Aragosta incredibly dangerous. Exactly how Gatto wanted it.

And true to his dream, Aragosta is a place like no other, hosting a bar—the Bucket o' Blood—like no other. Little did Gatto know when he founded his little tavern that it would be the site of one of the most infamous agreements ever signed. Appropriately enough, it was signed in blood.

The Birth of the Republic

Legend has it that in this very tavern, the Bucket o' Blood, on a moonless night with the wind howlin' like a banshee, the very Republic ye seek t'wer born. Aye, laddie, nine desperate captains, pirates and scoundrels all, signed, in their own blood, the infamous Charter of the Republic of the Coast. It be hanging upon the very wall right behind ye.

In the years following the establishment of Aragosta, the Castillian and Montaigne nobility had taken a rather sour attitude toward piracy in the distant waters. Normally, they would arrange for armed warships to follow their merchant galleons, but even those precautions were becoming dicey. Together, the two Nations agreed to form an alliance against "piracy and all its wicked forms." Such ships flew their respective national colors, but with one important distinction: a black dot in the middle of the flag. A symbol meaning "pirate hunters."

These "black spots" scoured the seas for Jolly Rogers, killing all pirates on board, capturing the ships or selling the vessels off to wealthy Vesten and Vodacce merchants. The practice was systematically destroying piracy in the Atabean. Something had to be done. Someone had to stop the Black Spot Fleet.

Nine captains met at the Bucket o' Blood: Roberts, Reis, Aardig, Fevrier, Carrigan, Hupia, Vinter, Quijano, Cannonnaso and Gosse. They spent a week in discussion—a desperate attempt to unite their forces—finally agreeing on a single Charter to bind any and all vessels under their command.

They promised mutual protection, elections for captains annually, a Council of Captains—who would meet in the Bucket o' Blood—sharing of spoils for repairs and maintaining a fleet to protect Aragosta from any foreign enemies. They also promised to share secret charts and any information that would help protect the new Aragostan agreement. And finally, a vow to hunt down any ship flying a black spot. And, as a punishment, any sailor who violated the agreement would be branded with a black spot: the true sign of a traitor. And when the Charter was finished, all nine pooled blood into a single bowl and signed their names.

A united Republic of Pirates, born on Gatto's island. The elderly Vodacce merchant was there. Out of respect, the nine offered Gatto the opportunity to contribute his blood to the bowl and sign the Charter, as well. Finally, Vincenzo Gatto was a pirate. He walked back to his home on the island, aided by a cane and a servant.

A few years after he signed the Charter, Gatto went out to fish in a small boat. A fog rolled in and his servants lost sight of him. When the fog passed, he was gone. Vincenzo Gatto was never seen again.

Aragosta Today

Once a minor haven for smugglers and pirates, Aragosta has been transformed since the First Captains signed the First Charter in the Bucket o' Blood. Now the island is the Brotherhood of the Coast's de facto capital, if one can say the Brotherhood has a capital. Its popularity and infamy have attracted countless independent-minded captains and crews. Many captains have signed the Charter and joined the Brotherhood, true, but just as many have used the mantle of protection the Republic's existence provides to build Aragosta into a bustling freehold of smuggling, trade, carousing, and shipbuilding.

The Brotherhood of the Coast built Aragosta as a safe haven for themselves and those they believed in, though opening it to everyone willing to sail off the main trade routes means that it's collected everyone hated somewhere else in the Atabean, or the New World, or Théah. That starts with pirates and expands into wanted criminals, religious dissidents, and political fugitives. Aragosta is home to the lowest common denominator of the known world. But at least the lobster is good.

Currency and Social Strata

When all the resources on an island have been stolen from someplace else, creating any kind of exchange standard proves a difficult proposition. Much of Aragosta runs on a kind of barter economy where every transaction has three components: Guilders, goods and services, and reputation.

Let's look at Guilders first. There are three measures you need to know about: 100, 500 and 600. One hundred Guilders is the recompense the Republic allots for an eye or finger lost in the service of the

Republic. Five hundred is the recompense for a lost limb. Six hundred is the recompense for something horrific but larger in scope than a lost limb. Those are the only reliable standards. When you think about how many Guilders something might cost on Aragosta, think: how hard is this task, how difficult is this item to acquire, compared to the kind of task which could get your eye poked out or your leg hacked off?

But it's rare that only Guilders change hands. Larger transactions involve a meandering sort of haggling in which one party will offer various other goods—a bag of fine imported coffee beans or fancy cigars, a bolt of sailcloth, a boat—and services, like a door repaired, an enemy investigated, a leg broken somewhere across town. This process makes buying or selling almost anything on Aragosta just flat-out time-consuming, especially if you aren't used to this kind of negotiation.

But the most important currency is reputation. Pirates trade on fear, infamy, the promise of adventure, whispered stories and tall tales. Any exchange stands to build or erode your reputation based on how fairly your customer or client thinks you were in haggling, how pleasant you made the process with jokes and banter or what promises of future dealings you gave along with your (probably illegal) tender.

Accordingly, the most powerful Aragostans are those with reputation to spare. Do you deal frequently and fairly with a wide range of people? Do the vouchsafes you give for your friends and allies carry weight? Then you may consider yourself an Aragostan elite. Everyone wants to talk to you because a few pleasantries exchanged might get bandied into a little positive or negative reputation of its own.

The one thing that's hardest to get from an Aragostan is a fair and honest assessment of someone else's character. Elsewhere in the world, that kind of thing is tavern gossip. You'll still hear people talk about other people while gossiping in a tavern, of course, but the descriptions will be full of bawdy jokes, tall tales, and other leavenings which make those descriptions hard to trawl for truth. In Aragosta, if you matter, then the description you give of someone with whom you deal is money spilled from your tongue. Spend it wisely.

Food, Clothing and Shelter

Aragostan structures distinguish themselves from the Atabean Sea's many other foul shantytowns by being made mostly of wrecked ships. You'll find Vendel mead halls built out of overturned longships, fences made of the flat bottoms of ships' hulls and roofs made of snapped masts and sailcloth.

If someone in the Atabean Sea says you are "dressed like an Aragostan," it means your outfit is charmingly mismatched, looking like every sleeve or button was

stolen from a different victim randomly selected from somewhere in the world…yet tastefully assembled with flair and class. Pirates view this as praise, so coming from an Aragostan, it's a high form of compliment. From anyone else, you might want to chase them down and punish them for disrespecting your fashion choices.

The same international influences that make Aragostan fashion a popular joke in Théah make Aragostan food amazing. Meats, spices, herbs and especially recipes from everywhere make their way here. While the vicissitudes of piratical provenance make it hard to find exactly the specific ingredient you need in the market, you will almost certainly find half a dozen things that are a lot like it. So, it's not just that three taverns on the same street will sell you three very different lobster bisques: in fact, the same tavern might serve you three very different lobster bisques for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

You can make a great living on Aragosta as a cook or chef. Sailors just off a long voyage are sick enough of eating the same things and brewing their own coffee that they'll pay you a great deal of money to do something they could definitely do themselves. That said, if you're poor you'll have to make do with the staples—fish and shellfish in abundance—extremely nutritious but without the vitamins from imported lemons and other fruits and vegetables that are a sailor's first luxury, crucial for staving off scurvy.

Note that on a Vodacce menu anywhere in the world, "aragosta" still means "lobster," but—on any menu in Théah—"Aragostan" means "whatever looked good and/or cheap at the market this morning."

Religion

Aragosta is covered in small churches, temples, and shrines the way a whale is encrusted with barnacles. When your every day is fraught with danger from tropical storms, razor reefs, Théan privateers, Company stooges and massive sea creatures, a pirate finds himself thinking of the state of his immortal soul more often than he might expect.

Congregations share houses of worship. For example, if you head to the small, white makeshift building on the north side of the port, you'll find Dinists from the Crescent in the morning and Jaraguan Sèvitès filling the pews in the evening. And once a week, followers of the Vaticine Church file in, pray and sing, while at night, the Objectionists arrive, singing the same songs in a very different ceremony.

One of the factors that keeps all the religions treating one another friendly-like is the threat of the Devil Jonah's cultists. Many Aragostans are so afraid of the Devil Jonah, they've decided he is the only dangerous spiritual power they should worry about. Vaticines may complain about Objectionists and Objectionists may complain about Crescents, but at least they aren't cutting each other's limbs off and throwing the limbs into the sea, expecting supernatural payment in return.

At least…that's what everyone says they do. According to rumor, Jonah's cultists perform violent and deadly rituals, sacrificing body parts to the sea in hopes the evil spirit will reward them. Jonah worship and ceremony are the only real "crimes" on the island, punishable by exile or death. The punishment for such crimes is often carried out by mobs.

Politics and Government

Aragosta has no formal government beyond a number of power players who know each other. Powerful merchants with enough coin and sway maintain their own districts of the city. But the true power of the island rests in the hands of the Republic's senior captains and their monarch, the King of the Pirates. (Or, in today's case, the Queen.)

New developments are transforming Aragosta once again. The war with the Castillian and Montaigne Black Spots is long ended, but a new war has broken out with the Atabean Trading Company. The Company's recent creation of what amounts to private letters of marque used against Company rivals is more than a shot across the Republic's bow. It's a broadside.

The real knife in the guts is that one of the Republic's own, Stephen Fevrier, one of the First Captains, is now a Company man and a pirate hunter. Company President George Rourke has promised him the deed to the entire island of Aragosta and governorship if he can bring about the destruction of the Republic and the death of the active and successful captains of the Republic. His betrayal is the stuff of legend—a loyal captain turned against his brothers and sisters by the promise of material wealth—and it could not come at a worse time for the Republic.

King of the Pirates

The King of the Pirates is a job nobody wants, but someone has to wear the crown (metaphorically). It is a thankless job with long hours. According to the First Charter, the King must remain on Aragosta to manage disputes between Captains and keep the peace on the island. The First Captains agreed on this arrangement for exactly the reasons you might suspect—whoever gets to be King doesn't get to have any fun.

But the Charter is vague on exactly what the clause means and each King has interpreted the restrictions in his own way. Roberts continued sailing around the oceans, only returning once a month to handle affairs as he saw fit. Gosse was a more permanent resident, but still left the island for an adventure or two a year.

But a few years ago, Gosse retired. During a fierce battle with Company forces, he was maimed and near death. He lost the use of one arm and needed a cane to walk about. It was time for someone else to become King, but none of the Captains wanted to wear the crown. In response, Gosse made a proclamation.

He announced that on the last day of the year, the last Captain to arrive in the Bucket o' Blood and tell the King "I don't want your job" would be the one who got it. The last day of the year arrived and every Captain sailed into port and ran into the Bucket o' Blood, announcing, "I don't want your job!" As the day grew long, the sun setting in the east, the last Captain to arrive was Morgan Jacqueline Bonaventura, the new Pirate Queen.

The King—or in this case, the Queen—lives in Gatto's old mansion at the top of a hill overlooking the port. The place has a staff and many luxuries, all provided by a 10 percent tax on any treasure obtained by members of the Republic. Needless to say, a gilded cage is still a cage, and all three pirate captains who served as the island's monarch have found it stifling. It's a thankless job, leading a Nation that is better known for its inability to follow the rules of the rest of the world, but if the Republic of Pirates is to survive such trials and tribulations, someone must lead it to victory.

Two Betrayals

Since the founding of the Republic, two events have shaken it to its core. Both of them involved a First Captain and both of them involved betrayal.

The First Betrayal: Captain Reis

One of the most feared pirates in all the Seven Seas, Captain Reis is the terror of the waves, the scarlet reaper. No one expected her to show up to the signing of the First Charter, but when the call went out for pirates willing to stand against the Black Spot Fleet, Reis arrived at Aragosta along with all the other captains.

During the week of debate, nobody seriously expected Reis to sign the First Charter. But she did. And nobody expected her to maintain the agreement. But she did. For her own damn reasons, of course. No one knew it at the time, but Reis was willing to fight the Black Spot Fleet *and* wait years to enact her real plan. She's a patient predator, a shark that makes even the great maw of the Atabean Sea seem clumsy and rushed. She'll wait for years to get what she wants in exactly the way she wants it.

You see, Reis was the one who suggested the First Captains sign the Charter in blood. She mixed their blood together in the bowl and performed the ritual, binding them all together. The other First Captains did not fully understand the blood ritual they performed, did not fully understand the implications. It was magic—that they knew—but the far-reaching effects went beyond the meager terms put to paper.

Reis, however, understood those terms perfectly. She knew the ritual bound them all together. When she went to the Devil Jonah and offered the souls of those bound to her in exchange for immortality, the Charter allowed her to negotiate with Jonah on equal footing. There was only one catch: Jonah would have to claim the souls *himself* at the exact moment of each First Captain's death. Jonah took the offer.

The Captains were unaware of Reis' betrayal until Captain Roberts himself was wounded and captured by a Montaigne pirate hunter. As he lay dying, the haunted Black Freighter appeared from a fog bank. The surviving sailors said Jonah's crew ransacked the pirate hunter and the Devil Jonah himself sucked Roberts' soul from his body.

THE MAN WITH THE SCYTHE

Most Théans have heard tales of Reis, stories of a tall man with curly black hair and a strange scythe that can cleave metal as easily as flesh—drawn to Syrneth artefacts more than any other treasure. Those who have been to the Atabean know the truth: Reis is twice as terrifying, three times as deadly and every bit as interested in Syrneth relics.

And yet, rarely a year goes by without the publication of some new story about Reis murdering an innocent crew and stealing some precious Syrneth remnant before vanishing into the darkness, leaving beyond a handful of survivors to relay the myth again to Théah.

Since the real Reis leaves no survivors, no one is sure why these tales keep coming to light. Some believe that Reis' contract with the Devil Jonah demands that she leave some survivors alive, but that her first mate claims to be Reis to throw off Heroes who might one day come for her. Others think that there is another murderous captain roaming the open seas, trading on Reis's name and reputation. For his sake, he should hope they never meet.

Then, it was Hupia. Betrayed by his first mate and beaten to death by his bosun. At the moment of his death, the Black Freighter appeared—those who survived say they saw the Devil Jonah "drinking the Captain's soul." And Vincenzo Gatto's disappearance in the fog off Aragosta? A pattern was emerging.

Soon enough, the other First Captains realized what had happened. Reis' betrayal made her a wanted woman. The curse of the Charter should have fallen on Reis, but none of the other Captains know if Reis labors under misfortune or if the Devil Jonah offered her some way to avoid her dark fate. Any ship encountering Reis' *Crimson Roger* suffered the same fate: no quarter. No survivors.

The First Captains are damned by Reis' betrayal. The Devil Jonah haunts each one, waiting to claim their souls at the moment of death. The Charter holds, but it is only a matter of time before the Devil Jonah himself comes to claim what is due from each of the First Captains.

The Second Betrayal: Stephen Fevrier

Stephen Fevrier was another of the First Captains, a signer of the original Charter hanging on the wall in the Bucket o' Blood. Quiet and unassuming, Fevrier was one of the first to call for the alliance against the pirate hunting fleet.

But shortly after the Black Spots were defeated, Fevrier's ship was caught in a storm that took him to the Seventh Sea. His crew was trapped there for almost three years, evading terrible horrors. Eventually, he made a deal with an entity on the other side. The deal allowed him to escape, but at a terrible cost. Once he returned, he found the thirty months that passed in the Seventh Sea were *thirty years* in the "real world." And the deal he made bound him to a horrible beast…that he was slowly but surely beginning to resemble.

He joined with the Atabean Trading Company, giving them all his secrets: names, places, ports, charts. Everything. He began hunting down his fellow First Captains and other members of the Republic. The Company has offered him crews and ships, but he prefers the cold comfort of the ship he brought back from the Seventh Sea, a vessel crewed by men and women just like him. Monsters in the making. Pirates turned against the Republic by Fevrier's bestial vengeance.

Why fight the Brotherhood? Perhaps Fevrier thinks hunting them down will free him from the pact he made with the monsters of the Seventh Sea. Perhaps he believes the First Captains betrayed him in some way, condemning him to a fate worse than death. Or, perhaps, sailing beyond this world has simply driven him mad. Whatever his motivations, the Company has promised the whole of Aragosta to him...assuming he can destroy the Republic and scatter the Brotherhood once and for all.

Fevrier has no doubt that he—armed with his monstrous ship and crew and a wealth of Company goods—can destroy the Republic of Pirate.

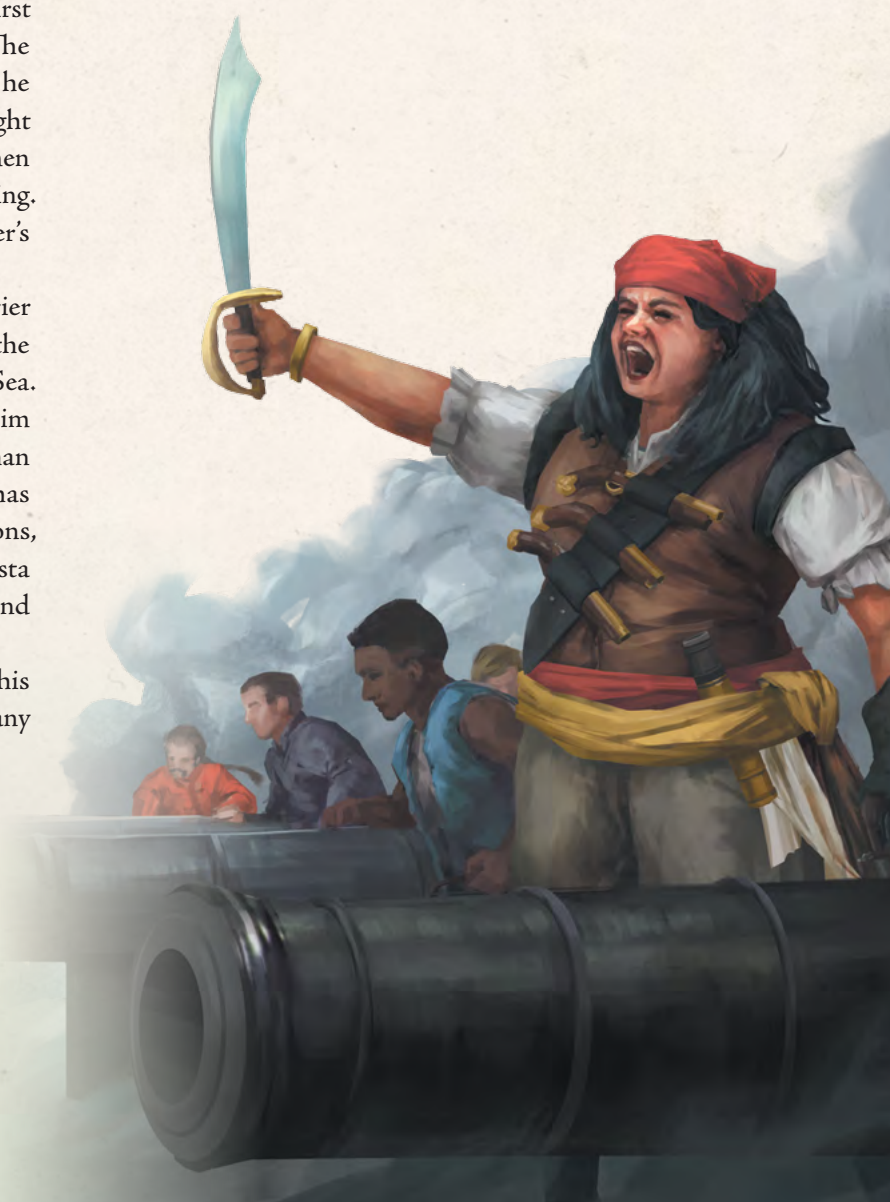
He may be right…

Joining the Republic

Since the signing of the First Charter, others have joined the Republic, as well. Some by word, some by blood. The walls of the Bucket o' Blood are covered with Charters signed by captains and crew since the First Charter went on the wall forty years ago.

A pirate can join the Republic by writing her own Charter, signing it in blood, and posting it on the wall. The specific ritual used by the First Captains has been lost—only Reis knew the proper ritual—but others have mimicked the procedure to lesser effect. What Reis and the other First Captains did has been passed down through oral tradition over the last forty years, but the purity has been corrupted. The binding sorcery is not as powerful.

Those who sign a blood Charter gain both a blessing and a curse. Those who abide by the Charter find good fortune. Those who break it find nothing but ruin.



Captains of the Council and Notable Locals

Of the original nine captains (plus Gatto), only five are still around. Three are dead and one is missing. The remaining captains have aged since the initial signing of the contract forty years ago, but they are still some of the most notorious figures on the Seven Seas.

As the First Captains have aged, retired, died or gone missing, others have risen to take their place. The Brotherhood thrives on new blood, after all, and there is no end to the opportunities that a young pirate can pursue on the open seas. Those who survive their youth…get to be older and wiser pirates.

Bonaventura: The Pirate Queen

Three captains have held the mantle of King of the Pirates. The first was Roberts, the second was Phillipe Nicolas Gosse and the third Morgan Jacqueline Bonaventura. It was a job she never sought, but it was the job she got when she arrived last to the Bucket o' Blood.

Bonaventura is a bastard, born without a family. She does not know who her father or mother are—although some dark rumors abound—only that she was raised in an orphanage and apprenticed as a sailor on a Castillian fishing boat. Five years later, she was an officer on Gosse's ship. The man she sees as her true father; the man who taught her everything she knows about being a pirate and a Queen.

Since accepting the position of Queen of the Pirates, she has proven to be progressive and dynamic. She told Gosse, "If I'm going to do this, I'm going to do it *right*." She proposed new ideas that have expanded the Republic's reach and power. She implemented improved communication among ships using the varied abilities of the magically talented and developed new lines of trade to sell their captured booty to places besides La Bucca. Her strict policy of solidarity has sent many away from the island marked with the black spot, but her improved defenses of the island have stemmed the tide of losses during the Company's attacks.

Unfortunately, it was also during her reign that Fevrier returned to the Atabean and turned against the Republic. However, both the Company and Fevrier severely underestimated Bonaventura, believing a captain so young could not command the varied interests and wandering attentions of the motley crew of the captains.

They were only half right. Bonaventura commanded the captains' loyalty and coordinated them to fight the Company and Fevrier, but she is hard pressed to continue rallying the entire Republic as a united front against so many enemies indefinitely. She needs to find an end to the war before her fragile coalition fractures and fails. She needs to defeat her enemies, maintain her hold on the limited power she has, keep Aragosta from falling to the Company and keep the Devil Jonah himself from taking too many more captains to a watery grave. No small task for a queen.

But the Republic's battles against the Company have not been profitable for Aragosta nor the captains. True, many have acquired newer, faster ships captured from the Company, but the losses outnumber the gains. Many ships have been lost to Fevrier's pirate hunters, and more each day are striking their name from the Republic's list, wandering off into obscurity.

Some are grumbling the Queen of the Republic must be removed to make peace with the Company. To keep her crown—a crown she does not entirely want—she must find a way to win this war quickly and decisively, or the Republic itself may fall.

Playing Queen Morgan
Jacqueline Bonaventure

You didn't want this job. You still don't want this job. But Gosse, one of the only men you admire and respect, has said you may the only one who can do it. You served with Gosse when you were younger and he raised you up as his own.

Your enemies abound. Fevrier, one of the original signers, one of the First Captains, and thought to have been lost at sea, has returned with a whole fleet of pirate hunters sailing new Company-outfitted ships. The Company has declared war on piracy in the Atabean, and specifically on you and the Republic of Pirates. Your frustration in dealing with them and trying to coordinate your captains is readily apparent. Fortunately, you have the help of your former first mate and best friend, Madeline Dorman, along with her two sisters Chloe and Sophie. All three are Porté *sorciers* of some skill. They are helping you with the coordinating of orders and messages to distant captains all over the Atabean Sea.

The several years of being stuck in harbor has lost you the rest of your crew, although many promise to return if you ever sail *La Dama Roja* out of Aragosta Harbor. Gosse has been a father figure, but you feel you have to stand on your own. Otherwise, the others will only see you as his mouthpiece. If you'd been at sea when Fevrier tried to strike at Aragosta, all would have been lost. You begrudgingly agree with him. You're not the smooth talker like Gosse, you're too blunt, but your intense gray-eyed stares tend to get you what you command.

Michael "Cannonnaso" Gatto

Saltier than the sea itself, Cannonnaso was never much of a pirate. Officially, he had a crew and a ship that he sailed (and didn't sink) when he went pirating one time. He's always done better on dry land. Now his crew consists of longshoremen and heavy laborers who load and unload all the booty that the Republic brings to Aragosta. He's getting up there in years; his father, ol' Knobby himself, discovered the island, and Cannonnaso has lived here his entire life.

If you want something to get done on the island, you talk to Cannonnaso. Oh, and you don't call him Cannonnaso unless you've earned it. Otherwise, some very large people will find you in the middle of the night and break your nose. And your legs. And your arms. When have you earned the right to call him Cannonnaso? Until you know, it's probably best to call him Signore Gatto.

Playing Cannonnaso

Yes, you have a big nose, and yes, everyone calls you Cannonnaso; yes, it means Cannon Nose, and yes, you are constantly blowing your nose into your handkerchief, damn dust, but those are not important. Work is important. You are Queen Bonaventura's right-hand man. She governs the Republic and heads the Brotherhood, but you *run* Aragosta.

You can speak Vodacce and all the common languages spoken in the Atabean, but you've never been to Vodacce, you've never left the Atabean, and you have no accent. You have a natural head for numbers and are great at managing your workers. You have trusted lieutenants you've cultivated and while you don't know much about sailing or naval strategy, you know about shipping routes, schedules, and who to talk to about smuggling goods anywhere in the Atabean Sea. You trust people who prove themselves capable, and people who are willing to try new things to get the job done.

You believe the island is better with organization. You've seen what happens when pirates let chaos reign and it is a mess. We're not talking total bureaucracy, but we are talking a little accountability. Yes, the Charters help keep the peace but a little more law and order wouldn't hurt. Not a lot, just a little. Of course, whenever you suggest that, you get shouted down. But you never know. Maybe one day.

Konstance Vinter

Konstance Vinter is bigger than life itself. She stands over six feet tall, with a furious head of dark blonde hair that spreads across her broad shoulders. Her ship, *Dame Død*, is a powerful frigate painted black with black sails. She's been operating as a pirate for nearly twenty-five years, yet doesn't look more than thirty years old.

When she speaks in the Council of Captains, her voice booms beyond the walls of the tavern while she walks back and forth gesticulating. She's made it clear she wants to put together a massive flotilla and burn out "that festering bubo of a pit called Fort Freedom," putting an end to the Company's war. Queen Bonaventura has reminded her that not everyone living in the Fort works for the company or is a guilty party. Kontance decided to plunder Company shipping back in Théah near Vestenmennavenjar so she "won't be tempted to do something rash." But her mind is always on Fort Freedom. One day...

Playing Konstance Vinter

You are a Hero walking on a dangerous precipice. You were once a Vesten merchant, sailing the world in the tradition of your ancestors and building a fleet that would serve the Vendel League in the Atabean Sea. Your life was filled with purpose, and you sent for your wife and children to join you in the New World within a few years of your arrival.

But when the Atabean Trading Company learned of your wealth and power, you became a target for their machinations. They murdered your family, framed you for the crime and convinced the local governor to turn you over to Fort Freedom for your prison sentence. They took everything from you and upon selling your holdings, used the funds to build an empire of grief.

You, and others, escaped the Fort in a daring prison break. Of the two dozen prisoners who tried for their freedom, only four made it. You became a pirate, undermining the wicked and corrupt tyrants who hold the world in their slimy claws. Fighting the Company at every turn. At every turn.

But you still remember the screams. The torture. The backbreaking labor and thin meals of captivity. You wake from nightmares every night. And you are convinced there is only one way to make them go away forever.

Burn Fort Freedom to the ground.

As to your seeming immortality…there are many stories explaining why you age so slowly. One says you were kissed by an Avalon Sidhe lover who granted you long life. Others claim you discovered a fountain of youth in the heart of Aztlan. Your favorite story claims that a Vodacce Fate Witch cut your black cord before you sailed for the Atabean. You'll never tell.

Grace Aardig

The Old Dame of the Council now, Grace Aardig was a beautiful woman who, weeks earlier, had just taken her first prize ship before she signed the Republic's Charter. Bent and knobbier than ol' Knobby ever was—with her second husband years in the grave—Aardig prefers the dry and warmth of Aragosta where she can command her not insubstantial fleet of ships captained by her children and grandchildren.

She represents the single largest voting bloc in the Council as every one of her captains has signed his vote over to her; she attends every single meeting and Council. It's no secret she wasn't happy when the hot-headed Bonaventura took over, but she's busy enough with her own fleet to worry about the entire Republic. She's in favor of fighting defensively and wasting the Company's time and money, and with her united voting bloc, that's what the Republic is doing.

Playing Grace Aardig

You barely remember being an adventurous young girl, but you learned from those wild days; you tempered them with wisdom and loss learned the hard way. And while you don't go dancing or singing anymore, you still like for your grandson Ronnie to play his fiddle for you in the evenings. You keep tabs on all your offspring. Your first great-grandchild, Emily, was born just last month.

You live in near constant pain from arthritis, and you regret some of the jumps from ship to ship when you were younger. But the pain keeps you sharp. And no liquor—except a wee dram of whiskey from a flask now and again for the sharp pains—because you still have work to do. Yes, Ronnie calls you cranky, and others call you a busybody. Some believe your hearing has gone. You let them believe that. Without you, near a fifth of the Republic wouldn't even exist, and someone has to keep those fools from making the same mistakes you did.

James Dharr

Captain Dharr and his ship, *Lamya*, sail the Seven Seas and every time he returns to Aragosta, he returns a conquering Hero with new exotic plunder and tall tales from faraway places. His arrival signals an island-wide party lasting days, wrecking any productivity or semblance of order. Bonaventura loses weeks of work and planning whenever he shows up. Even Cannonnaso and Aardig are taken in by his charm and perfect smile.

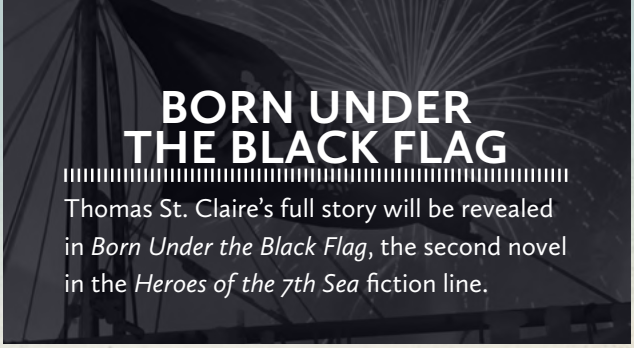
Dharr claims to be the bastard son of an Avalonian Sea Dog and Crescent princess. What's worse for Bonaventura is how alluring and eloquent his speeches are in the Council about sailing beyond the Atabean in search of treasure and bounty in the wide world. Queen Bonaventura would be pleased if he did finally set sail and never return, but his charm has brought more recruits to the island than any other member of the Republic. If he were to leave, many of the Republic's latest recruits would leave with him.

Captain Dharr's most recent return marked eight days of unending partying on Aragosta. His hull was full of gold bullion and ivory from far-off Ifri. He claimed he married the daughter of a king and received the gold and ivory as a wedding gift before leaving the king, the princess and the kingdom far behind.

Playing Captain James Dharr

Life is one unending adventure. You'd rather cut off your own hand than deal with the boring doldrums of Aragostan politics. The ATC? Yawn. Those losers couldn't catch a decent pirate with a net the size of the Aragostan Sea, let alone a cunning mastermind such as yourself. If the Queen would loosen up a bit, like how he used to be five years ago, together you could easily beat the Company. But you said one too many things and now she's as cold as an Ussuran winter. Won over by Cannonnaso's "practicalities."

You are a Hero. You're just a braggadocious Hero. You know how lucky you are, you know how clever you are and you know how handsome you are. It isn't vanity, it's *honesty*. You aren't vain or selfish; if someone needs help, you're the first one there. You make *sure* you're the first one there. And you make sure everyone else knows you're the first one there. Doing the right thing is a matter of principle. But there's nothing wrong with having fun while you're at it.



BORN UNDER THE BLACK FLAG

Thomas St. Claire's full story will be revealed in *Born Under the Black Flag*, the second novel in the *Heroes of the 7th Sea* fiction line.

Thomas St. Claire

One of the most famous captains with a Charter on the wall of the Bucket o' Blood is Thomas St. Claire. His name is important because, for almost a decade, he was one of the Republic's deadliest enemies. As first mate of *The Crimson Ghost*, he served with William Stroud, undermining the Republic's strength in the Atabean and in Théah. Like Stroud, he was a heartless monster, pillaging and burning settlements, leaving ships as burning husks. But then, something happened to St. Claire. He was captured by the Atabean Trading Company and sent to one of their "plantations." He spent two months there until—by official records—he was hung until dead.

Then, he showed up again, as a captain this time, hunting down Crimson Raiders with the same kind of ruthlessness he showed before. Two years later, his ship, *The Hanged Man*, made port outside of Aragosta. He walked from the docks to the Bucket o' Blood, a young girl at his side. St. Claire walked into the tavern and nailed his own Charter on the wall. As tradition demands, he threw down a sack of Guilders to pay for everyone's drinks. Then, he left, the girl leaving with him.

Playing Captain Thomas St. Claire

You were a monster. A horrible, terrible monster. There is so much blood on your hands, if you tried washing them in the ocean, all the waters would turn red. But then, you were hanged, and your whole life changed. With the rope around your neck, strangling, you saw a maw of black fire under your feet, and when you looked up, you saw something else. A light. And a beatific face.

Since that day, you've changed. That monster you once were still exists, but you've found a way to cage it. And you've found a new purpose in your life. You have a new reason to rise in the morning and a quiet thought that echoes through your head before you sleep.

The Crimson Raiders. All of them. One at a time.

Morgan Doyle

A bit on the short side, Morgan Doyle is classic Inish pirate, missing eye and all. He keeps his long red hair in a braid, and has a knack for surviving any and all misfortunes, especially those that befall entire crews. Rumor has it that he's lived through more monster attacks than any other pirate on Aragosta (or in the whole Atabean Sea for that matter).

And yet he doesn't remember why he came to the Atabean Sea. He knows that he carries a locket with two pictures—his own and a beautiful woman's—and that he can sometimes hear the whispers of the Sidhe in his dreams. He knows he's lost something, that much is clear, but he can't quite put his finger on what it was he misplaced. Or where he left it.

In truth, Morgan grew up in a small fishing village and fell in love with a young woman named Cordelia. When Cordelia's parents shipped her off to Vodacce to wed a foreign noble, Morgan tried to move on, only to find himself meeting her a decade later when she hired his ship to smuggle her out of Voddace under the cover of darkness.

Reunited, Cordelia and Morgan returned to Inismore to wed, but found their entire village had completely vanished. Eager to rescue their friends and family, the two lovers set out to find the truth... only to run afoul of Unseelie who stole Cordelia away, stripped Morgan of his memory and deposited the pirate a world away in the Atabean Sea.

Playing Morgan Doyle

You don't remember much about your past, but you know who you are. You know that you will fight for those who can't fight for themselves; that evil wins when good people stand aside; that it is better to have loved than nurtured a cold heart.

But in your dreams you catch whispers of something more than you *should* know and don't. A woman's voice calls to you from the darkness. A Sidhe hand strokes your face, drawing silver threads from your mind. You see your parents fading to darkness.

There is part of you that knows your time in the Atabean has come to a close. If the right Heroes present themselves, you'd like to return to Inismore to see what you can remember of your old life, and what you might do about the woman in your locket. The woman you know you love.

Aragostan Locations

The Claws and Lobster Bay

While every edge of Aragosta is encrusted with wharves, docks, quays and piers, the main port is enclosed by rocky, pincer-shaped points. Two forts, the Claws, watch over the harbor entrance. The Claws are armed with long guns designed to keep enemy ships from approaching the harbor. The Republic built, maintains and staffs one of the Claws, while the other is actually built from an abandoned Vaticine friary.

The Claws are solid stone structures with high, thick walls built dozens of years ago…and that's a problem. Modern fortifications are rarely square; the Vodacce Star pattern, which allows mounted guns to cover all angles of approach to the fort, is all the rage these days. So far, only the Company and a couple of national governments have been able to afford star forts in the Atabean. Bonaventura has been trying to raise funds to rebuild the Claws, but so far, she's found no success.

Beaches of pure white sand span the width of the bay interspersed with ships both moored and under construction. If you need a new ship built—especially something with a shallow draft for coastal raiding—this is the place to get it.

The best-known shipbuilder is "Red Alice" Stewart, an elderly Highlander nicknamed not for her hair—which is black— but for her perpetual sunburn. For ten years, Red complained about the Atabean sun and swore whatever her current project was would be her last. One of her friends put a sign up above the door: "Red's Ten-Year Retirement." Red never took it down. Instead, she just changes the "Ten" every New Year. It's up to "Twenty-Two."

The Bucket o' Blood

When most people imagine the Bucket o' Blood Tavern, they imagine the small, dark, smoky shack from so many popular depictions. The Bucket o' Blood has been destroyed and rebuilt in fire after magical accident after amphibious monster attack, the last of which was particularly expensive. Bonaventura and Cannonnaso spent a fortune transforming the ruined original structure into something fantastic. They hired Augustin Herbert, an Eisen architect famous for rebuilding castles in his homeland, to make a tavern that could withstand anything the world could imagine to throw at it.

Herbert accepted the challenge using the latest Castillian and Eisen designs to make the tavern a modern marvel. Most of the interior is modular, allowing for easy replacements if necessary. The inside walls—flush with seemingly indestructible Charters, new and old—are also covered with old flags, mounted fish, discarded anchors, and ship's wheels. All of them have stories the staff is proud to tell. The food and drink here's expensive by Aragostan standards, but it's good and it's varied.

Adetokunbo, a large Ifrian in his forties, keeps the peace in the tavern. Born in Ifri, he spent most of his life fighting for money in nearly every country in the world. He toured taverns and brothels and every other dodgy establishment, plying his wares. Legend has it he went to Inismore to fight the famous pugilists there and met the O'Bannon himself. It's said the King of Inismore took one look at Adetokunbo, smiled and walked away.

The main floor of the Bucket o' Blood is for hoi polloi. The chairs are uncomfortable but sturdy—in case you need to defend yourself with one. The tables are massive and bolted to the floor. Herbert made them too heavy for even an Ussuran to lift after one too many instances of patrons flipping tables after unsatisfactory gaming outcomes. Waiters and waitresses in the Bucket's colors, gray on red, walk from table to table bringing and taking away food and drink. Bars line the three walls not facing the harbor. Massive spiral staircases wind upwards in the two back corners. The balcony level, a wide squared-off C shape, has tables with actual tablecloths and chairs with backrests and armrests. Up here, dancers, musicians, jugglers and jesters are always at work, and a more elite grade of customers sit around the candlelit tables. You pay the same for food and drink, but the wait staff and bartenders expect hefty tips in exchange for their wit and expertise; a few of the ladies up here trained as courtesans in Vodacce and expect the kind of treatment they were accustomed to at home.

Three floors up you get to the private rooms. Many of these are meeting rooms; the Republic has purchased a few of them in perpetuity. They aren't as fancy as the ones you might find in Montaigne or Vodacce, but they are large enough for the same kind of lavish and excessive behavior.

Wenshen and the Emperor's Boyfriend

A decade after the last of the Black Spots were finally sent to the Devil Jonah, Zwarte Hoop's ship, *Angstrdroom*, picked up a castaway near the eastern coast of Aztlan. She didn't speak a word of any known language, and even the Jaraguan and Aztlan crew members were baffled by her appearance and clothing.

When offered water, she stripped naked on the deck—another startling moment for the crew—and revealed that her skin was covered in elaborate and beautiful tattoos. Every inch of her skin seemed alive, as if the light of the sun animated the illustrations. The fish sparkled as they swam through flowing water of her side, on her shoulders the monkey's fur seemed to ripple in the sun, and the stars and night sky on her back sparkled between the bamboo that swayed in an apparent night breeze.

Later, she impressed the crew by saving Hoop as he was dragged from the deck by rigging and a broken spar. She leapt from the ship to the ratlines to the falling captain. As the rigging dragged Hoop deeper into the drink, she breathed air into his mouth for long minutes while he untangled himself from the ropes. Her uncanny agility and ability to hold her breath for longer than even the most experienced pearl divers impressed and amazed everyone, especially Hoop. When asked how she could do these things she simply pointed to her tattoos and said, "Whoa sherr Whenshen." Wenshen stuck as her name.

Reduced to hand signals and drawing in sand, Hoop was convinced her tattoos were magic and asked her to give him one in exchange for whatever she wanted. She agreed. He took her to Aragosta and provided her with a share of the loot from his voyage. She mixed her own inks, borrowed a goldsmith's forge to forge her own needles, and gave Hoop his first tattoo. He thanked Ms. Wenshen and boldly shared the tale of his new tattoo to all who would listen.

Before long, Wenshen was in high demand. She learned Numanari and speaks with a heavy accent. Although many walk into her shop for a tattoo, not all receive one. Wenshen is very particular about who gets a tattoo and often requests a particular task in exchange for one of her marks. After a lengthy conversation, she gives "the mark you need, not the mark you want."

Of course, she also provides mundane tattoos for Guilders, but lists no prices. She looks at the customer and gives the price based on what she sees. Some tattoos are free. Some cost thousands of Guilders. Each price, like each tattoo, is designed just for the single customer. Everyone knows not to commit the faux pas of asking for someone else's tattoo.

Many years have passed and Wenshen has trained several apprentices, and built herself a fine establishment—the Emperor's Boyfriend—which she says is slang from her homeland for any really miserable job. She only once told Hoop and a few others of her two harrowing voyages and her trek across Aztlan. Most of her stories are fanciful tales of brave warriors who leap from tree to tree fighting in the air against evil monsters. Her favorite stories are similar to her own stories from far-off places, but from Théah, Ifri, Aztlan, or the Crescent Empire.

Her shop is just around the corner from the Bucket o' Blood; she's been known to give one of her special tattoos for a particularly good tale told over one of Cannonnaso's more expensive vintages.

The Forever Reef

The island of Aragosta sits atop an ancient reef. Everyone knows that. Swim in the water just past the beaches and the bay, where the island drops off into the blue-green sea, and you'll see the old reef, looking like any other healthy reef in the Atabean: ridges and horns and fans of coral, colorful parrotfish nipping at their surfaces, clownfish hiding in anemones, old anchors, tasty urchins waiting to be plucked, octopodes who are probably smarter than you.

For a long time, everyone on Aragosta thought that there was just more rock and more long-dead tiny animals under the reef. It wasn't until Bonaventura hired a squad of pirate-adventurers to investigate Devil Jonah cultists that Aragosta discovered the ruins lying below its reefs.

The ruins went down, down, deeper and deeper, deep inside the reef and under the sea floor. Chambers and tunnels, chutes and ladders, secret doors piled on top of one another and interlinked in a chaotic cylindrical maze. A reef that seemed to go on and on and on, as far as anyone dared to dive and delve.

After a disastrous confrontation with the cultists destroyed the entrance, Bonaventura and the captains agreed to keep the place blockaded, but once word got out, the Explorer's Society showed up. Expeditions have to be limited due to the tide flooding the corridors and the treacherous nature of the place, but archaeologists have revealed a few facts. The ruins and the strata of wrecked, compacted machinery seem to be Syrneth in origin, matching dates with other finds, but some devices look modified, corrupted by the kind of diabolical prostheses the Devil Jonah bestows.

The upper levels of the reef are now fully inhabited with human refuse: Jonah cultists, outcasts, traitors and beggars. But just a few months ago, those outcasts discovered a way to move quickly from one side of the island to the other, a reliable shelter against Aragosta's regular hurricane season.

It also became a haven for assassins and thugs. They call it the Aragostan Underground now. A dangerous place even for Théah's bravest Heroes. For as deadly as Aragosta can be to those who aren't prepared for its particular charms, the Underground is ten times worse. Here murderers and criminals openly practice their trade, offering to perform all number of dirty deeds without care for the rules of Theus or humanity.

The deepest levels heretofore explored are some four to five stories below the surface of Aragosta, depending on where you start from. These levels have windows of impossibly clear glass or crystal, revealing the infinitesimal creatures in water around or beneath them. Tunnels of seawater cut across and down through. Locks and hatches would allow a diver, if ever there were one daring enough, to slip into the water.

However, archæologists have noticed a disturbing effect: the lower you go in the tunnels, the sicker you get. At first, it feels like nausea. But the deeper you go, that nausea turns into madness. And before long, you don't want to come back up at all.

Those who go too low return saying they saw things down there—people, even—and that the sea creatures clinging to the glass spoke to them, saying things which turned out to be true. They report dark shapes darting through the water, slick and swift with trailing tails. "Just sea wolves," say the surface-goers—but sea wolves don't carry weapons of coral and brass, or stop to stare through the windows with glistening eyes and ruined mouths set in human faces.

Secret Societies

Since Aragosta is off all the major trade lanes, it's a much safer place for many secret societies than Fort Freedom or one of the colonies. If you're looking for a contact in a Secret Society, it's best to start looking in Aragosta.

- **The Brotherhood of the Coast**: This is the Brotherhood's capital, but most of those who live on the island itself are not members. Cannonnaso is a member only because he once captained a ship. However, virtually the entire economy of the island relies on the Brotherhood's pirate activities.
- **Die Kreuzritter**: The leadership of Die Kreuzritter have recently heard of the Devil Jonah when a Kreuzritter destroyed a gift of Jonah's with a dracheneisen dagger. They wonder if dracheneisen would be effective against the Devil himself.
- **The Explorer's Society**: Officially, the regional headquarters of the Explorer's Society is in Fort Freedom, but many Explorers who don't trust the Company have decided to take their chances based out of Aragosta. The new chapterhouse is in the mysterious ruins underneath the island, the perfect place for young Explorers to gather.
- **The Invisible College**: Huemac at the Bucket o' Blood belongs to the Invisible College. If you order the right drink, he'll tell you he hasn't got it, but if you come to the back, he can show you something a lot like it. Then you follow him through some twists and turns and secret doors and find yourself at a College laboratory hidden under the Bucket, in a sub-basement forgotten in every rebuilding of the tavern.
- **The Knights of the Rose & Cross**: No one needs a moral compass here. The only Knights on Aragosta are hiding from someone or something.
- **Los Vagabundos:** One time, a couple years ago, the Company hired an assassin to put a crossbow bolt in Queen Bonaventura's heart while she ate dinner at the Bucket o' Blood. El Vagabundo turned up in the nick of time, snatching the bolt from the air before chasing the shooter down and defeating her in single combat—though she committed suicide rather than submit to capture. Since then, the Queen has sought more information about Los Vagabundos. She's grateful for the save, but at the same time, she doesn't like knowing she's being watched.
- **The Močiutės Skara** operate relatively openly in Aragosta. In particular, they have a network of sympathizers who provide temporary safehouses for individual refugees whom the Shawl has extracted from conflict elsewhere in the Atabean.
- After a disastrous attempt to set up a functional cell in Fort Freedom, the **Rilasciare** have absconded to Aragosta. There are no nobles here other than Queen Bonaventura—who barely counts—but the lack of activity means it's a good place for them to fall back and regroup.

Antagonists

While Aragosta may seem to be a pirate's paradise, there are many dark and awful things that sprang forth from the island. Even the most fearsome pirates will whisper of deadly foes after a few drinks in the Bucket o' Blood.

The Crimson Raiders

Once she betrayed the Republic, Reis needed allies. She made promises and offered bargains. Some say she even made a deal with the Devil Jonah himself. The outcome was a kind of Republic of her own, the Crimson Raiders.

All those who join the Crimson Raiders make a blood compact with Reis. With that ancient sorcery, those who fly crimson Jolly Rogers swear to take no prisoners, show no mercy to enemies and take all that isn't nailed down. Those who make a pact with Reis sacrifice pity and fear, replacing it with unstoppable violence and bloodlust.

Now, whenever anyone sees a red Jolly Roger, they know the ship belongs to Reis' fleet of cutthroats. It is fight, flee or die. There is no fourth choice.

Reis has seven captains under her command, each of which is just as wicked and devious as she. She calls them her Seven Deadly Sins. Black Heart Spannagel, Jérémie Otto Oliverson, Andrej Vinícius Edwardssen, Maredudd Wallis, Ioann Celso Mah, Jami Akelsesen and her current favorite, William Stroud.

William Stroud

Stroud is known as the Red Ghost of the Atabean Sea. A merciless and cruel man who dresses in fine silks, his head covered with a black wig and wide-brimmed hat. He makes a Montaigne dandy look like a street urchin. When he speaks, it is not with an Avalon accent, but with the hint of something more continental. Perhaps Eisen, perhaps Ussuran. His ship, aptly named *The Red Ghost*, follows Reis' commandment of "no prisoners." And it's said he cannot be killed by any weapon. Pistols, swords. No weapon. That he hid his heart somewhere out at sea.

The Grisly Gifts o' the Devil Jonah

"Give the Devil Jonah his due or he'll take it from ye."
—Common sailor's saying

On moonless nights in Backbreaker's Bay on the north side of Aragosta, a forlorn sailor might be found there with a few mess mates. The poor soul will bite on a belt to stop her screams as her mates hack off her limb or pluck out her eye. Then the sailor will—with a quick prayer to the Devil Jonah, including the naming of the Black Freighter's true name, *Caroline*—throw the appendage into the Devil's Spout, a blow hole right at the edge of the rock-strewn bay, and wait alone at the shore for a gift from the Devil Jonah to wash up at her feet. One doesn't even need the Devil's Spout. Any soul who wishes can hack off a limb, say the prayer, and toss it over the side of her ship and wait in the forecastle for a gift to splash over the side into her hands.

Some do it out of a desire for the uncanny gifts the Devil Jonah grants, some do it out of fear to keep themselves safe from the Devil himself and others do it because their crew won't take them 'less they do. Of course, there are those who the Devil has taken an offering directly from after boarding their ship, and while he grants all a grisly gift, these sailors are less likely to make happy use of a Devil's gift they never wanted.

Gosse tried to stamp out the practice while he was King, but while many of the crews who follow the Devil Jonah's ways have left or been forced out of the Republic, lone sailors and captains remain with the gruesome gifts. Queen Bonaventura has issued a personal decree that she will not allow any captains to the Republic who have the Devil Jonah's gift. She doesn't trust any who carry his trophies.

The gifts themselves vary. Often, they are creepy devices to replace a lost hand, leg or eye, but not always, and they work only for the one who sacrificed to the Devil Jonah. Worse, if the bearer ever tries to throw the gift back into the sea, sell it or give it away, he will find it next to him by the next nightfall.

The Tale of the Devil Jonah

No one ever talked to the old man. He sat in the corner of the tavern, never speaking to a soul. He sat at the same table and said nothing.

Jocelyn was born in Aragosta, the island where the tavern lay, and when she was fourteen, she began working as a serving girl. She was tall and slender, her limbs long and lean. And because her mother was an Avalon privateer and her father a Rahuri fisherman, her hair and skin were as gold as a sunset.

For as long as she could remember, Jocelyn never heard the old man say a word. But she watched him. For a week, she watched him. Her curiosity growing stronger. And she also noticed nobody else spoke to the old man. Not a single one of the sailors who drank and sang and told stories ever approached him, bought him a drink or even dared look at him.

After a week of watching him, she finally gathered the courage to say something.

As she passed by the table, she said, "The pig is very good tonight."

She paused, waiting for a reply. The old man said nothing. Didn't even move.

Jocelyn turned to walk away when she heard the smallest sound. She faced the old man. He was looking at her. His eyes as dark as the sea at midnight. And he said the words again.

"Thank you."

All that night, Jocelyn couldn't stop smiling. She moved through the tables and dancing sailors as if her heels had wings. Dancing. When the tavern keeper asked her why, she said, "Oh, just a good day."

The evening passed quickly, and when it was time to close the doors, she moved to the old man's table and took the empty plate in her hands.

And before she could lift it from the table, his hand was on her wrist.

"Sit," he said.

Jocelyn looked around the room. There was no one. The last embers glowed dim in the fireplace. Smoke still lingered. But there was no one there. She felt his hand on her wrist and it was cold.

Her eyes went back to the old man. He stared at her. Jocelyn swallowed so hard, her throat *clicked*.

"Sit," he said again.

She used her free hand to shift her skirts and sat at the table with the old man.

And this is the story he told.

* * *

Captain González was a good man. An honest man. Well, as honest as a sailor can be. Or a pirate. In fact, pirates are more honest than sailors. At least the pirate flies a flag that clearly states his intentions.

PLAYING THE DEVIL JONAH AND THE BLACK FREIGHTER

Dread is the watchword for the Devil Jonah. All sailors fear him, and when they sight a strange sail they hope that it's not the Black Freighter. But when it is, the fear grips their hearts in a steel vice. Brave men become mewling babes, and wise captains do foolish things attempting to escape the Black Freighter and its captain. Your goal is to recreate that fear in the hearts of your players. No one speaks the original name of the Black Freighter, but some whisper the name "*Caroline*" when foolishly drunk. If that happens, all others should curse the one who misspoke. Describe the inexorable chase of the Black Freighter. Only those who can sail until sunrise can sometimes escape the Black Freighter, but few talk about doing so as they don't wish the Devil Jonah to come searching for them again.

The ship itself is more bones now than wood, like the crew replaced broken staves and wooden ribs with the actual ribs of sea monsters. The sky always grows dark and the wind howls when the Freighter is sighted. A storm might break out, but take your time and describe the details of the chase and the inability to escape unless the characters do something insanely foolhardy.

When grappled with the Black Freighter—for it never tries to sink a ship, but instead board it—let moments pass, describe the sound of the slapping waves, the smell of salt, the copper scent of blood, and the desiccated scent of death from the Black Freighter itself. Describe a silence of the tomb as no living thing exists aboard the Black Freighter.

Describe the Devil Jonah's crew of tattered and decaying skeletons, and build dread in the players by having the crew interact in creepy ways with the characters: sizing them up and checking their limbs for what they might want to take. Finally, after long moments, describe the tall, gaunt and tattered remains of the Devil Jonah. His skin bleached pale white, but his bones black and shiny like they've been burned. Describe his once-glorious clothes and the rusted cutlass he carries at his side. Then describe his burning eye sockets filled with hatred and envy of the living.

He talks in a deep, slow and commanding voice that relishes the torture. He and his crew will take limbs and eyes offered to them by any of the crew, and sometimes take more. Rarely, they will take an entire person, but usually only from the crew not passengers—unless those passengers are crew members of another ship. The worst legends say that sometimes if angered or crossed the Devil will take all souls aboard a ship except those who previously gave him an eye or a limb. That's why it's bad luck to board a vessel that is floating free upon the sea with nary a soul aboard, for yer walkin' where the Devil himself has stepped.

If a character has already given a limb to the Devil Jonah then the Devil will thank him personally, telling him, "One limb is all that I require of thee, but if you wish to donate more, I'd be willin' to part with a fine gift from me hold."

His quartermaster, on the other hand, was not so honest. A black-hearted traitor was he. Jonah was his name. González knew Jonah had himself a wicked heart, but the captain never knew the damned bastard was a Villain. And that's the tragedy of it.

González had him a master gunner, and she was from Vodacce. She had the gift that women from Vodacce sometimes have, meaning that when the cannons of the ship fired, they seldom missed.

But there was a problem. Years before, on a sandy beach in the Atabean, under the stars and around a fire, González wrote up a Charter. He wrote it in blood—his and his officers', too. González's mother was from Avalon and there was Avalon magic in his blood. The Vodacce woman's blood was in there, too, which gave it more magic. And Jonah's blood. The Charter made all of them loyal to the ship. It gave them a kind of magic nobody in all the world had seen before, long before the First Charter, long before the Brotherhood, long before the Republic.

Like the times of the Numanari Republic, the Charter gave every hand a vote. The Charter made

that promise. And breaking the Charter meant awful things. A horrible curse that even one of them Vodacce witches couldn't pull off your head.

Now, since that day, the ship knew nothing but clear skies and riches. The crew was happy and everyone sang the captain's praises. But one day, González saw himself a beautiful woman on another ship. González wanted her so, she became his sole obsession. Not treasure. Not glory. Just to see that woman's smile again.

He ignored Castillian galleons fat with treasure from the New World. He ignored Vesten ships loaded down with cargo. The only thing he wanted was the one thing he couldn't find. And that's the worst kind of treasure to put in front of a pirate. Something he can see, but can't have.

The crew started mumbling. And that villain Jonah, he did nothing to stop it. Poisoning the crew with whispers. Making sure the master gunner heard none of it.

But then, one day, the watch saw a ship on the horizon flying the flag of an Atabean plantation. The captain shook his head, saying he wasn't interested, but Jonah called for a vote. The crew decided to take the ship.

It wasn't even a battle. Seeing the Jolly Roger of the pirate González, the ship surrendered. But when the crew came aboard looking for treasure, they found the ship carried nothing but illegal slaves. According to the Charter, all slaves were to be released and given command of the ship with the slaver crew abandoned on the nearest island. Jonah demanded they keep the slaves and sell them. The captain refused, reminding Jonah of the Charter's punishment if they should break it. They followed their Charter: giving the slaves the plantation ship and setting the crew on the nearest island. They didn't even keep the ship to sell.

That was the last day González was the captain of his own crew.

When the moon crept up over the ship, Jonah lead his mutinous bastards through the decks, cutting the throats of all those loyal to the captain. The traitors reached the gun deck and Jonah's own blade pierced the heart of the master gunner. With her hands thick with her own blood, she touched Jonah's face, whispering the words, "Vivere per sempre."

No matter. A dead witch's curse can be lifted by a live one.

Finally, they reached the captain's quarters. The two men faced each other with swords, but when it became clear Jonah's blade was not as quick nor clever as the captain's, he ordered his mutinous bunch to hold González down. But the captain would not be killed so quickly or cleanly. He fought them off with a sword in one hand and the Charter in the other. And when he struck one of the traitors with the Charter, the man burst into red and gold flame.

They fought all through the ship, the captain finding he had no loyal crew left. When he saw the body of his master gunner, his soul sank. All the fight left him. Jonah and his mutinous crew proved too much for the captain. As they overpowered him, González put the Charter against Jonah's chest and thrust his sword through both of them. The Charter burst into flames and the sword pierced Jonah's heart. The fire burst like a cannon. The Charter was gone. Jonah was on the deck, his chest aflame. And the captain had fallen over the side of the deck into the dark, empty waters.

But though he was wounded, Jonah did not die. Even though his heart was pierced by González' sword and burned by the Charter, the witch's curse kept him from death. But it also kept him from life.

From that day forward, the Devil Jonah was a man trapped between life and death. A creature unlike any other in the world who must steal the flesh of others to maintain his rotting, traitorous body. And he haunts the seas even to this day...robbing ships not of their gold or silver...but their flesh and bone.

* * *

Jocelyn trembled as the old man finished his tale. Her eyes felt as if they had not blinked since his story began.

"Wh—what happened to González?" she asked.

The old man's face remained as cold and implacable as stone. "No one ever saw him again," he said.

Then, his fingers released her wrist and he sat back in his chair.

Jocelyn ran from the tavern, bursting through the front door, running home as fast as she could. She fell into her bed sobbing, falling asleep with her eyes wet with tears.

The next morning, she went back to the tavern, her knees weak. She entered through the door and saw the tavern keeper cleaning glasses. Jocelyn stepped up to the bar.

"You look like you haven't slept all night," he said.

She nodded. "Nightmares." Then, she asked. "I sat with the old man last night."

The tavern keeper looked confused. "What old man?"

"The one who sits at the corner table every night," she said. She gestured at the table, afraid to look at it.

The tavern keeper shook his head. "No old man sits there," he said. "That table had Vodacce sailors last night."

Jocelyn turned to look. As she did, the tavern keeper asked, "What happened to your wrist?"

Jocelyn swallowed so hard, her throat *clicked*.

She looked at her wrist...and in the middle of her gold skin was a single mark of ghastly pale.

Jaragua

Jaragua
Live Free or Die

"Make no mistake, we are now in greater danger than ever. For now, we have something to lose."
— Chaplain Nsōwaa Nkansa

For most of Jaragua's (ha-RA-gwa) history, Rahuri chiefdoms squabbled over the fertile island's best fishing, mining, and agricultural sites. One hundred years ago, Théan ambition covered the island with profitable plantations and crowned them with a handsome port town, crowding the local Rahuri into the mountains. But when the Atabean Trading Company seized control of those plantations through lies and treachery, the Company added an ingredient crucial to realizing the island's true productive potential: slavery.

The Company's greed and violence worked countless Ifrians and Rahuri to death making Jaragua the Company's single most profitable possession. Yet these captives, the most disenfranchised and vulnerable humans alive, developed an indomitable spirit which inspired many to mastermind daring escapes, then found runaway communities and support networks to extend freedom to their downtrodden comrades.

Before long, these *Mawons*—escaped slaves who declared war on the Company—organized an island-wide revolution, using superior numbers, brilliant strategy and raw determination to overwhelm Company security. An island of broken and beaten workers united to become one of the world's most unlikely Nations, an Ifrian and Rahuri cultural crossroads and an incipient agricultural powerhouse guarded by an army which accomplished the impossible.

The Company doesn't want you to know about Jaragua and its history. They'd have you believe slavery doesn't exist in the Atabean, there was no revolt, and nothing of import happens on Jaragua. But the truth is that Jaragua is the Company's greatest failure, a failure they will stop at nothing to tear down.

If any Nation understands heroism, from its humblest laborer to its greatest general, it's Jaragua. For what is more heroic than casting off your chains in the pursuit of justice?

History

When the Rahuri migrated from mainland Aztlan to the Atabean Sea, Jaragua was among the first islands they settled. The island's fertility led to the early establishment of five Rahuri chiefdoms, competing politically and militarily for the best fisheries and fields. By the time the first Théans arrived 100 years ago, the Mariana Chiefdom in the north and the Higüey Chiefdom in the south had engulfed the other three, dividing the island between them. When Castillians and Montaigne arrived in 1568, both chiefdoms eagerly sold them farmland in exchange for Théan technology and handicrafts, hoping to get an edge over their neighbors. Théans founded a port town, Cap-Carrefour, on an eastern cape, the first stop, in the Atabean Sea, for ships from Ifri or Théah.

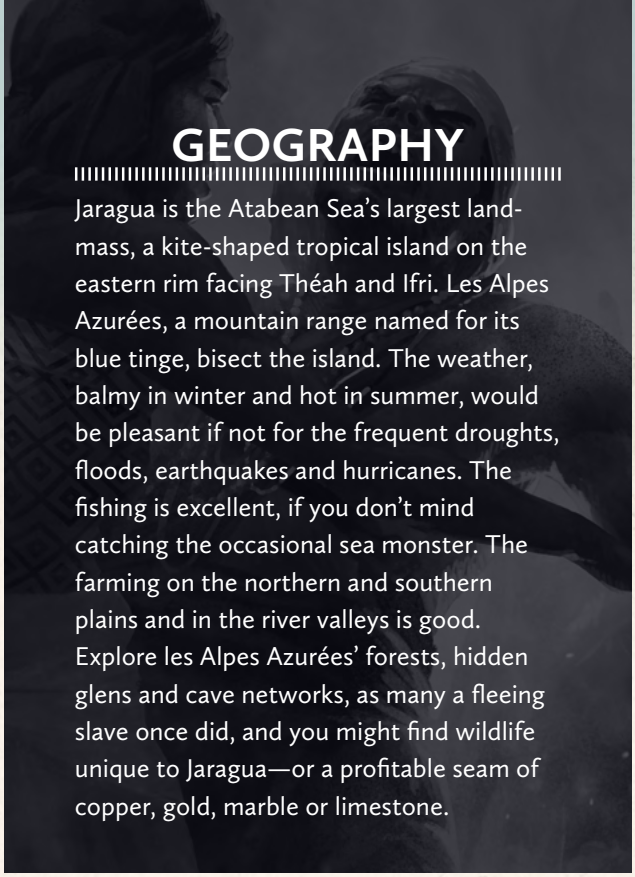
Colonial Period

Intrigue and skirmishing among the Jaraguan people allowed Théan indigo, coffee, cotton, tobacco, and especially sugar planters to infest both halves of the island. While these crops were profitable, the heat, humidity, and danger of harvesting and processing them made hiring and retaining workers challenging.

When Vespasien de Vicquemare became Jaragua's governor in 1636, he brought a solution: give Théah's poor free passage to the New World, charging them their fare in a term of work promised to their employers. This system of indentured servitude, which was illegal everywhere in Théah, worked out well for Jaraguan planters.

So, the hiring problem was partially solved, but retention was still trouble—and the numbers were never enough. Vicquemare linked up with a Montaigne-based outfit called Rourke & Rudd as a local fixer and procurer, arranging meetings between struggling Jaraguan planters and Company money-lenders for a handsome finder's fee.

Eventually, Rourke & Rudd became the Atabean Trading Company, and their tactics evolved: the ATC intentionally crashed local markets by flooding them with cheap goods and bought up struggling independent farms across Jaragua. Soon indentured Théans were working side by side with impoverished Jaraguan farmers. The future, in the form of the Company's inhumane business practices, had arrived on Jaragua's shores. It would never be the same.



GEOGRAPHY

Jaragua is the Atabean Sea's largest landmass, a kite-shaped tropical island on the eastern rim facing Théah and Ifri. Les Alpes Azurées, a mountain range named for its blue tinge, bisect the island. The weather, balmy in winter and hot in summer, would be pleasant if not for the frequent droughts, floods, earthquakes and hurricanes. The fishing is excellent, if you don't mind catching the occasional sea monster. The farming on the northern and southern plains and in the river valleys is good. Explore les Alpes Azurées' forests, hidden glens and cave networks, as many a fleeing slave once did, and you might find wildlife unique to Jaragua—or a profitable seam of copper, gold, marble or limestone.

The colonial period came to an official and brutal end when Vicquemare arranged a private meeting with the native Rahuri tribes—the Higüey and Mariana—ostensibly to discuss the division of the island. The Jaraguans weren't stupid, their bodyguards leaping into action when Company security forces launched an ambush; but after a short, bloody shootout, the Company captured both caciques. Security Chief Lærke Ulriksdottir then assaulted the disorganized and demoralized Jaraguan chiefdoms, driving them from their ancestral lands into the highlands. Soon, slave-worked Company plantations blanketed Jaragua.

Mass Slavery

The Company began importing Ifrian captives en masse starting in 1642. For the first time, every plantation on Jaragua was fully staffed and operating at peak efficiency. Plantation owners could safely work slaves to death before replacing them.

Since slaves had nothing to lose, this period also saw a boom in escapes. Many traveled to les Alpes Azurées or to the Mangrove Base, where the thick forests, and broken terrain confounded their pursuers. Soon, several hidden Mawon villages of had popped up in the mountains, each offering asylum to any escaped slave. Bolstered by ever-increasing forces, these guerilla forces frequently raided the rich plantations near the mountains for provisions, arms and personnel.

The Greatest Slave Revolt in History

The powder keg ignited in 1659. After years of operating a secret network that allowed slaves to escape to Mawon territory in the mountains, Taiyewo and Kehinde—two young heroes of the incipient rebellion, twins born into slavery on Jaragua—met with Chaplain Nkansa and the chiefs of the Mariana and Higüey Rahuri at Mangrove Base. Taiyewo and Kehinde proposed that the oppressed people of Jaragua throw off the Company's yoke once and for all, marshalling their covert resources and greater numbers to obtain their freedom.

Chaplain Nkansa and the chiefs agreed: it was time for the Company to be driven out from Jaragua. At a nighttime festival in the tradition of the religion of Kap Sèvi, they announced their defiance. They would take back their island, not just for the Rahuri who had been stripped of their ancestral homes, but also for the Ifrians and Théans who had been brought to Jaragua as property. Their revolution would unite their forces against their common enemy and live in the future they would build together.

Chaplain Nkansa organized her corps of *nganga* priests as generals to implement her strategy. Chief Pablo de la Cruz became chief drill instructor, teaching guerrilla warfare to the rebel armies, reminding them of what he had learned about the Théans from his captivity. Chief Casiguaya coordinated naval support, striking out into the Atabean to steal Company warships and confound Company supply lines by passing information to pirates such as the Brotherhood of the Coast and buying munitions from various freebooters. Kehinde used his resistance network to coordinate rebels all across the island, even sending small animals to carry messages when humans could not. Finally, General Taiyewo led from the front with machete and pistol, using her tactical genius to outpace unprepared Company security.

For the next eight years, casualties on both sides were high, to the point where Lærke Ulriksdottir had to call in mercenaries from Théah to defend Company holdings. The final battle took place at Cap-Carrefour. As night fell, the Jaraguans made their move, striking at their enemies with brutality, skill, captured weapons and equipment.

Ifrians and Rahuri inside were already aware of the timing of the assault, preparing to assist from within. They staged a mock escape attempt, designed to distract the guards from the walls. With the defenders occupied, the rebels used the opportunity to scale the walls of the forts and seize the gun turrets, allowing rebels into the city while covering the slaves already inside. A long night of vicious close-quarters combat ensued. As dawn broke, Company agents and mercenaries swam for their lives for the Company ships departing the harbor as General Taiyewo crossed her machete with Governor de Vicquemare's rapier and dagger, eventually striking him a mighty blow that sent him tumbling from the battlements. Company sailors pulled him out of the sea and onto a former slave ship, bleeding from a dozen wounds.

Independent Nation

In the Company's wake, the rebel leaders set up a provisional government. General Taiyewo took charge of the military, Chief Casiguaya became admiral, and Kehinde took charge of domestic affairs such as the operation of the reclaimed plantations. Chaplain Nkansa declined to join the provisional government, explaining that she hadn't "had a day off work in fifteen years. I'm going to sit on the beach and read a book."

Chief Pablo de la Cruz was not so happy to take a position in the new government. In a meeting on the day after the Company was driven from Jaragua, he expressed shock and upset that the Mariana and Higüey lands would not return to their original owners. "But where could the Ifrians go?" asked the others. Some wished to return to Ifri, but not everyone could—and in Ifri, they might fall victim to slavers once again. Why could they not share the land they had fought for together?

But Chief de la Cruz was adamant. He wanted Jaragua back. If he couldn't have the whole island, then he wanted the original Mariana territory back, north of les Alpes Azurées. The argument went on all day, but no amount of pleading would change his mind. In the end, the oligarchs agreed, heartbroken, to return the northern segment of the island to the Mariana. Their heartbreak only increased when the following year the Mariana began selling off plantations anew—not to the Company, at least, but to Castillian planters. Again.

Return of the Colonists

Now the provisional government has its work cut out for it. A Nation of weary soldiers must return to work—on many of the plantations they fought to escape, some converted to food production and others still generating the cash crops so many Ifrians and Rahuri died to produce. A new government must be established. Diplomats must travel to foreign lands, forging diplomatic ties and building new alliances. And the Atabean Trading Company's agents continue to lurk in Jaragua's cities and the surrounding islands, waiting to foil Jaraguan efforts.

In the north, a new city has already appeared: Porta Ozama, a Théan town built to serve Théan planters' needs, with a Castillian governor in place. The Atabean Trading Company is formally banned from the island, but who knows how many of the planters here are secretly in the Company's pocket?

Worse yet, many of the Théan plantations in Mariana territory use slave labor…again. This is a well-kept secret. None of the plantations rely entirely on slave labor; to do so would attract too much attention from the Jaraguan government. Instead, they use a combination of free labor, indentured workers, and outright slaves—Théans (especially convicts), Rahuri, and Ifrian. Paid workers are forbidden to discuss their compensation with one another, to keep slaves' identities unclear for as long as possible. Any workers who speak out against the practice lose their jobs...or worse.

In the south, Théan relations are much less dire. Eustache Dubois, the son of the former governor, Alexandre Dubois, returned at the end of the rebellion from his family's holdings in Montaigne, bringing critical supplies and support in desparate times. As a half-Jarguan/half-Montaigne leader, Dubois is already working to connect the Provisonal Oligarchy with revolutionaries in Montaigne as he travels back and forth between Théah and Jaragua. He has set up a new chapterhouse for the Explorer's Society, inducting new members into the organization in the hopes that he can lead an expedition into the Syrneth ruins beneath the mountains.

Despite hopeful signs of an integrated future, the darkness of Jaragua's past seems to have outlived the revolution. With enemies all around them and a difficult transition ahead of them, can the violent rebels of the past become the peaceful leaders of the future?

People and Culture

The demonym "Jaraguan" covers the island's myriad ethnicities present. Atabean Trading Company slavers purposefully targeted as many different Ifrian ethnic groups as possible, to confuse their communication and prevent any one people from organizing against them in rebellion. The language of the island is Patwa Haragwen, a fast-paced créole with Montaigne and West Ifri roots. Most Jaraguans can slow down and speak the Montaigne language clearly for foreigners.

Appearance

Jaraguans—hailing from the Atabean Sea, Théah, Ifri and even further afield—are a diverse bunch. A good number of Jaraguans have dark brown skin and dark curly hair…but that's where the similarities end—even those generalizations are a stretch. Jaraguans of Crescentized Ifrian or indigenous Rahuri ancestry may have lighter brown skin and straight black hair. Hairstyles range from naturals to coiled knots to *otjize*-treated dreadlocks to close-cropped hair with geometric patterns razored in. Jaraguans have every body type imaginable, though bondage and warfare have made scars, missing limbs and disabilities common.

Social Strata

The conventions of slavery have made social standing a confusing prospect in Jaragua.

In West Ifri, source of most of the Atabean Trading Company's slaves, various cultural groups follow different caste systems: some have noble lineages, some have professional warrior classes, some have meritocracies or economically defined castes. However, the circumstances of enslavement led to a predominance of young, physically fit soldiers in the kidnapped populations. A few nobles and merchants were scattered among these folk, but those distinctions largely evaporated during the hellish passage west.

As slavery exploded on the island, the Company encouraged a sort of meritocracy among the slaves. Unskilled workers had the least desirable duties, in the fields and the sugar boiling houses. Slaves with technical skills—blacksmiths, grooms, carpenters—and slaves trained as house servants had safer jobs closer to their Théan captors. While closer to the source in the case of particularly cruel masters, these slaves were more highly valued, sometimes even paid or tipped small quantities of cash. They were considered too uncommon to be worked to death like field hands.

Flemming Rudd advised slavemasters to teach "house slaves" they were cut from different cloth than the "field slaves," encouraging classism and elitism among slaves to distract them from their real enemy. It wasn't just selfishness or envy that drove the two classes apart; sometimes, when you're that tired, you can't help but nod your head at what you're told. Or sometimes, you spend so long pretending that you start to convince yourself.

In any case, the revolution complicated this arrangement, even when it was successful; but in general, slavemasters found their "devoted," "loyal," and "well-treated" house slaves shockingly quick to join the rebels. In fact, some slavemasters learned a bit too late that those who cook your food, clean your clothes and prepare your bed are all too well positioned to strike a lethal blow in the early moments of a revolution.

In victory's wake, these divisions hang overhead like the bodies of criminals: elite or peasant, house or field, Ifrian or Rahuri. Many former slaves who used to work the fields have been given opportunities they once thought impossible—it's been common practice to temporarily entrust the plantations to freed slaves—but they find themselves relying on those they used to distrust to run the stables, keep the books and sell the product at market. Those old distrusts aren't cleansed by blood, and no one knows what the future holds for Jaraguans who once hated each other as much as they hated the slavemasters.

Art and Music

Jaragua uses drums for everything from long-distance communication to religious ceremony to social dancing. Ifrian polyrhythms are common, with drummers playing different time signatures with their left and right hands. Dancers represent a wide diversity of Ifrian, Rahuri, and Théan traditions, but most steps are simple and repetitive at their base, easy for newcomers to learn while allowing acrobats and showoffs to improvise extensively based on the theme.

Ifrian traditions of visual art also survived the western passage largely intact. Jaraguan slaves constructing items of religious significance frequently passed them off as secular artworks or Vaticine symbols, though their masters sometimes stole the most impressive pieces for sale. Creatively decorated or embellished items meant for practical use—staves, bowls, gravestones, musical instruments, divination trays—abound. Stylized human sculptures of carved wood are another classic, many of them meant for sale off the island to generate revenue for the impoverished Nation. One distinctly Jaraguan trend is the creation of sculptures or other artworks from trash or refuse materials like driftwood and scrap metal.

Clothing

The Company forced Ifrian and Rahuri slaves in Jaragua to wear cast-off Théan clothing and rags, hoping to negate their ethnic identities. Nevertheless, slaves made a kind of art form of swapping and recombining the scraps they were given to create eye-catching outfits—or to break up their silhouettes and blend with the background when they bolted for the hills. As the Mawons retook the island, they gained possession of many Atabean Trading Company uniforms, which it greatly amused them to wear in piecemeal fashion, combined rakishly with other pieces.

In the wake of the Company's expulsion, mainland Ifrian styles of clothing have boomed, especially in cities and towns: loose, baggy shirts, skirts, robes, trousers, and tunics of colorfully patterned cotton, with complementary turbans or caps. Belts, shawls, and scarves augment these fashions and make it easier to carry items. Anklets, bracelets, and necklaces of colorful beads or ostentatious cowrie shells abound. Tattooing is not common among Jaraguans, but certain ethnic groups perform ritual scarification shortly after birth to mark tribal affiliation.

Currency

Jaragua currently uses leftover Company Guilders to trade with the outside world, but the Provisional Oligarchy is in the process of switching the island over to an Ifrian-style local shell currency using *quahog* or hard-clam shells marked with a national stamp. The Jaraguans try to keep a fair-trade rate—one clamshell to a Guilder—working with the local representative from the Vendel League, Herlief Asgersen.

Asgersen is an old man with a long gray beard who volunteered to journey to Jaragua two decades ago because nobody else wanted to go. He was a horrible merchant, a far better warrior, and a willing accomplice to the revolt. He never liked slavery and played a small but important part in the revolt's success, providing intelligence to the revolutionaries about ATC movements whenever possible. He's tried to pass word to the Vendel League about what really happened on Jaragua, but the ATC has done its best to intercept or discredit his messages.

Government

In the Provisional Oligarchy, General Taiyewo is in charge of the military, Kehinde is in charge of domestic affairs, and Chief Casiguaya handles maritime matters. Chief de la Cruz was the most experienced governor among the prospective oligarchs; his recent departure has left the government with an uncomfortable dearth of experience. Chaplain Nkansa has repeatedly vowed that she is "done with leadership for the time being" and "nobody's wise mentor," but the Provisional Oligarchy's crisis of the week frequently drags her back. Many Jaraguans believe it is only a matter of time until Nkansa has to step up to a more formal leadership position to keep the Oligarchy running.

The plan for the near future is to create a new government with elected representatives from each district of plantations, but a seemingly endless series of tasks precedes those elections. The government needs to organize the plantations' operations, determine which ones to repurpose for food production and which to keep as economic sources, dig mines into les Alpes Azurées…and determine what to do about the increasingly hostile Mariana Chiefdom and its many Théan guests. Many loyal revolutionaries are already muttering that the war was the easy part… governing is proving to be much, much harder.

Current Relations

Now that the revolution is over, the Provisional Oligarchy has begun to realize that it must reach out to nearby governments and organizations, eventually establishing diplomatic ties and formal alliances. Yet years of war and slavery have left Jaragua without a functional government, diplomatic staff or long-standing relationships…everything Jaraguans know they need to keep a hold on their vulnerable island.

Aztlan

Despite the efforts of Jaraguan emissaries, the mighty empires of Aztlan appear disinterested in the goings-on of the Atabean Sea. Both the Nahuacan Alliance to the west and the Tzak K'an city-states to the south have received Jaraguans as state guests, but offers for officials to travel back to Jaragua for more formal visits are politely rebuffed. Jaraguans aren't entirely sure why Aztlan keeps its distance from the people of the Atabean Sea, but it appears that

Jaragua's political plight isn't enough of a reason for them to break from tradition.

That said, one Jaraguan—Hangbe—recently traveled much farther south than any Jaraguan had journeyed before: past Tzak K'an, all the way to the Kuraq Empire. She reported back that the Kuraq Empress was stunned by Hangbe's story of slavery and sacrifice, and wished to establish formal diplomatic ties with the Jaraguan people, sending gifts of gold as a token of her esteem. Only time will tell if such ties will prove profitable for the Provisional Oligarchy.

The Brotherhood of the Coast

Some Jaraguans believe that the government should conduct friendly relations with the Brotherhood; after all, they share a common enemy in the Atabean Trading Company. Admiral Casiguaya, in particular, occasionally lets slip that she sees them more as allies than enemies. But the Brotherhood is made up of *pirates*, and many think it's only a matter of time before their poorly guarded shipments of cash crops and Guilders become too tempting for the Brotherhood to ignore. And if Jaragua is to be a Nation, with all the alliances and treaties that Nationhood entails, then many of their allies will not look favorably on them consorting with pirates and brigands.

Théah

Relations with Théan Nations are a Theus-damned fiasco.

After eight years of revolution, Jaragua is not a Nation, but a ghost story to most of the world outside of the Atabean Sea. In Théah, the Atabean Trading Company has successfully convinced governments and Heroes alike that slavery in the Atabean is a myth disseminated by President Rourke's political enemies to smear the Company's good reputation. The few escaped or former slaves who made it to Théah in the wake of the revolution disappeared shortly after their first public declarations—or else nervously recanted their tales as Atabean Trading Company agents observed them from the shadows.

The Atabean Trading Company believes that they can eventually retake the island—their crown jewel holding in the Atabean—but they fear that the Provisional Oligarchy will find new allies and resources among the Théans. After all, slavery is illegal in Théah! But if they can intimidate, silence or murder all the Jaraguans who seek aid and comfort… perhaps Jaragua will be theirs again before too much damage is done.

To fight the ATC's propaganda efforts, the Provisional Oligarchy has deputized a number of Mawon officers as a new kind of diplomat. This new diplomatic corps requires Jaraguan subtlety and charisma in equal measures; the diplomats disguise themselves as dandies, courtiers, and socialites and embed themselves among other Nations' elites quietly seeking out potential investors and other powerful people who might sympathize with Jaragua's cause. They dare not operate as open agents of the Provisional Oligarchy, for the Company is always watching.

The secrecy of the diplomatic corps is even more intense when it comes to the Théan colonies of the Atabean Sea. The Company holds a mighty sway among these distant settlements, even as many of the colonists have begun to doubt that the ATC has their best interests at heart. It remains to be seen whether Jaraguan diplomats will be able to build the kind of relationships they need to turn the colonies against the powers-that-be in the Atabean Sea.

Religion

While Jaragua hosts a handful of Vaticines and Objectionists, as well as a larger contingent of Rahuri traditionalists and Ifrian practitioners of Crescent religion, Kap Sèvi is its most widely practiced religion.

The Lwa of Ifri

The various Ifrian religions brought by force to the Atabean Sea are diverse, but many slaves found certain commonalities between them. Most conceive of a single almighty god, sometimes associated with the sun, named Bondye in Patwa Haragwen, and often casually (and somewhat alarmingly) referred to as Theus when in conversation with Théans, Crescents, and other monotheists. But this god plays little to no role in a practitioner's day-to-day life compared to the Lwa.

A Lwa—literally "king" in Patwa—is an entity more divine than a human but less divine than Bondye or Theus. Some philosophers call the Lwa the subdivisions of Bondye's soul. Others describe them as servitors, seraphs, or devils, albeit more as a compliment than a slur. Along with revered ancestor-spirits, Lwa dwell in a realm of spirit not far removed from the mortal realm, and once were the allies of female priestesses who practiced Kurwa, a religious ritual in which the priestess would petition the Lwa for favors or knowledge in exchange for offerings—usually substances hard to get in the spirit world, such as fine tobacco or haute cuisine.

As the horrors of Jaragua came to bear on the enslaved and captured Ifrians, many began to petition the Lwa for new resources, offering up their own bodies as vessels for the Lwa to inhabit. The Lwa, perhaps wishing to provide some respite from the torturous slavery the followers endured, began to respond to both men and women, inhabiting bodies as well as offering favors to impart holy wisdom or trickery before absconding from their host.

Since coming to Jaragua, the practice has become widespread enough that those who can summon Lwa into their bodies are known as Sèvitès, although even the name—*Kap Sèvi*—is an exonym of sorts, derived from the response its practitioners give when asked what religion they are. There is no formal structure; each practitioner has his own process for summoning a Lwa and his own relationship with the Lwa he knows how to summon.

Syncretic Subterfuge

When the Atabean Trading Company brought Ifrians to the island, they made sure to sequester any holy person from the rest of the population and hang him publicly. The Company reasoned that destroying slaves' morale and culture would help indoctrinate them into a servile life. This thinking, coupled with teachings from corrupt Vaticine priests on the Atabean Trading Company's payroll, made Rahuri and Ifrian captives' lives hard. They weren't about to give up their faith. But how could they continue to worship and evoke non-Théan religious figures under Vaticine oppressors' watchful eyes?

The answer came from the mass-produced lithographs of Vaticine saints distributed to slaves. Ifrian religionists adopted Vaticine religious figures' names and imagery, well-known to every slave regardless of their place of origin, as a cipher for the names of Ifrian divinities. "Tonight, we'll hold a ceremony in honor of the Second Prophet," the Jaraguan might say, pointing to a lithograph of the Second Prophet. Even as the passing missionary nodded in approval at the slaves' devotion, the slaves would know, seeing the Prophet's staff, that the Ifrian was really talking about Ahron, the staff-carrying Ifrian psychopomp. "Here is our altar to the Third Prophet," the Jaraguan might say to the missionary, showing him the wooden image of the Prophet with the flaming sword—but every Ifrian who looked on knew that this altar was really meant for Jakuta, the warrior-king of fire and storms.

Thus, Kap Sèvi merges Ifrian and Rahuri traditions and obscures them under a veil of Vaticine imagery and practice. These traditions include animal sacrifice, sacred dance and music, and a trance and divination system for communicating with ancestors and deities. While Jaraguans practice it openly in the wake of a successful revolution, Jaraguan agitators spread their tradition in secret to other Atabean islands, so that even those who still suffer in slavery can worship in relative freedom.

Ifri Divination

Ifrian religion fractured, fragmented and reformed repeatedly on its unhappy way over the sea. One of the more common traditions was divination. Various divination forms made their way across the sea, some the province of schooled diviners and others more widely distributed, but one of the simplest and most common was throwing *kola*—flipping the halved nuts of the cola tree (or a similar local equivalent, such as Guilder coins) on a divination tray or mat.

Anyone can throw kola and read the results, based on where the nuts fall, how they're oriented and which face is up. They're not considered to be hard-and-fast predictions of the future so much as suggestions of topics on which to meditate—though when one's ancestors have important things to say, they often say so through the kola. The Rahuri find this last clause confusing, since their ancestors tend just to show up to yell at them directly.

Nganga and Obayi

A nganga is a priest, herbalist and community leader trained in the Ifrian tradition. Prospective nganga train for their entire lives in *obayi*—their religious craft—learning a staggering diversity of disciplines ranging from poetry and oral history to medicine and toxicology to mediation and therapy.

Their job description grew even more demanding when Company agents stood by to murder anyone who practiced these skills in the open and unfamiliar flora and fauna replaced centuries of empirical observation and testing with educated guesswork. One of their first discoveries in the New World was a poultice which could heal the brands planters applied to slaves, a secret they kept so carefully that many planters came to believe that the Ifrians and Rahuri were able to recover from such things, because of their darker skin.

When the rebellion began, Chaplain Nkansa drew on the ngangas' previously established position of social authority. She reasoned that priests would lead more effectively, if less professionally, than military officers, since her rebels were angry civilians with machetes and farm implements rather than trained and drilled soldiers. Accordingly, rebel stratagems made extensive use of ngangas' skills. They used herbal concoctions to pollute Company water supplies and food, toxins drawn from marine life and plants to envenom arrows and botanical poultices to field-dress Mawon wounds.

Names

Since different cultures of origin had different customs regarding surnames, many of which the Atabean Trading Company forcibly erased, most Jaraguans go by a single name. The names below come from West Ifri. The Rahuri, Castillian, or Montaigne name lists are also appropriate.

Male: Adisa, Bamidele, Chukwuemeka, Dzigbode, Emeka, Fela, Gaddo, Hogan, Ikenna, Jawara, Kofi, Lanre, Mamadou, Nnamdi, Okoro, P, Qwao, R, Senghor, Tomi, Uzochi, Yohance, Zebenjo

Female: Akosua, Bosede, Chidimma, Dada, Ebele, Funanya, Gbemisola, Ige, Kunto, Lumusi, Mojisola, Nkiruka, Oni, P, Q, R, Simisola, Thema, Urbi, Zinsa

Unisex: Ayo, Baako, Chi, Dubaku, Ekundayo, Folami, Gameli, Hauhouot, Ime, Kayin, Lebenɛ, Makafui, Ngozi, Opeyemi, Pereko, Quaco, R, Senyo, Temitope, Uzoma, Xoese, Yayra

Figures of Note

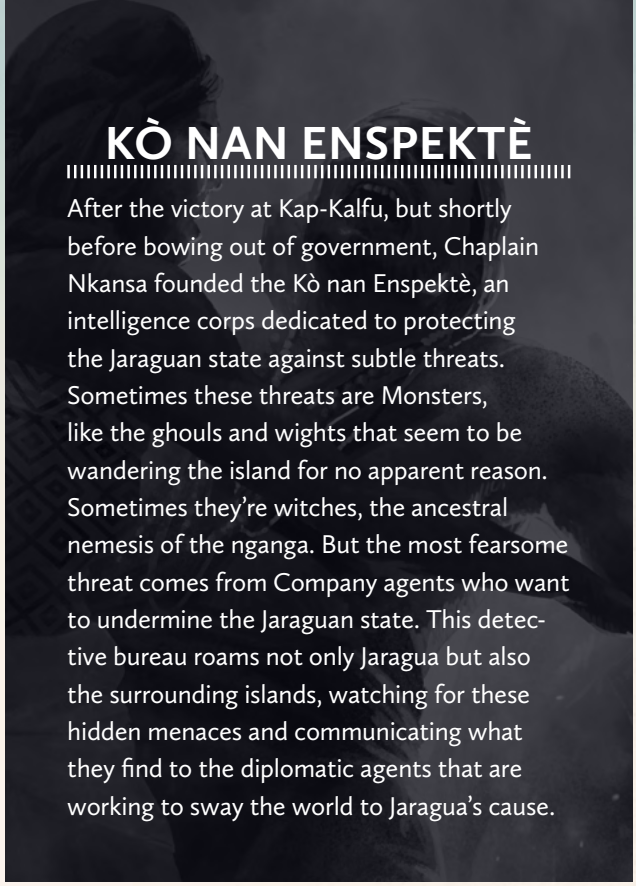
Chaplain Nsōwaa Nkansa

Nsōwaa Nkansa arrived in Jaragua when she was sixteen. Her parents had apprenticed her to a priest and herbalist, but she was abruptly yanked from that path and taught martial arts and soldiering when war engulfed her state—a war that would kill her parents and damn her to slavery. She survived the Western Passage and concealed her knowledge of religion, knowing the Company executed holy folk. She also escaped, almost immediately. She assembled a group of slaves who were smart, competent, brave and willing to listen to her; gathered some makeshift weapons; took out their overseer; hid the body; and bolted into the mountains.

Nkansa and her crew fled into the mangrove swamp on the island's west coast, reasoning that Théans wouldn't brave the wild animals of the swamp to get them back. They were right. Together, they built a floating town among the mangroves which came to be known as Mangrove Base. Over the years, Mangrove Base grew into the strategic control center for the entire Mawon network, which would one day become the Jaraguan Rebel Army.

Chaplain Nkansa led the rebels both militarily and spiritually. She never fought on the front lines; she was proud and angry, but not so proud and angry that she would risk leaving her troops without a leader. She led Kap Sèvi ceremonies to mark victories and commemorate deaths, training others as warrior-priests like herself: able to lead their sections from both heart and mind, as skilled in chemical warfare and emotional support as they were in tactics and command. While General Taiyewo was the rebel army's strong arm and Kehinde its breath, Nkansa was its heart and mind.

She's forty years old now, but she says she feels about sixty, and she's ready for retirement. She's loath to mention it to anyone, but she's quietly suffering under the weight of pain and illness, both physical (arthritis) and mental (depression). The trouble is that given Pablo de la Cruz's departure, the Mawons' losses in battle, and the low life expectancy of Company slaves on Jaragua, she's the most experienced leader present. Nkansa needs rest, but Jaragua needs Nkansa.



KÒ NAN ENSPEKTÈ

After the victory at Kap-Kalfu, but shortly before bowing out of government, Chaplain Nkansa founded the Kò nan Enspektè, an intelligence corps dedicated to protecting the Jaraguan state against subtle threats. Sometimes these threats are Monsters, like the ghouls and wights that seem to be wandering the island for no apparent reason. Sometimes they're witches, the ancestral nemesis of the nganga. But the most fearsome threat comes from Company agents who want to undermine the Jaraguan state. This detective bureau roams not only Jaragua but also the surrounding islands, watching for these hidden menaces and communicating what they find to the diplomatic agents that are working to sway the world to Jaragua's cause.

Playing Chaplain Nkansa

Hard-nosed, exhausted, direct. Chaplain Nkansa has weathered every challenge life has thrown at her and inspired an entire Nation to fight overwhelming odds for freedom—but it's never been easy. She's mentally and physically tired and she hasn't any extra patience to spend. She's not here to be anyone's mentor figure or caretaker, but she will grudgingly offer a terse professional opinion if Taiyewo, Kehinde or Casiguaya (or even Pablo de la Cruz) asks for her guidance.

It's definitely possible for extreme unction to pull Chaplain Nkansa back into leadership, but a) she doesn't want to be there, and b) it won't be good for her health. The problem that could probably most benefit from her help is the Cruz situation. Pablo de la Cruz never really trusted anyone in the Provisional Oligarchy, except for Chaplain Nkansa. It's possible she could talk him into reconciling with Jaragua, but she'll need help from someone who can prove to Cruz that his interests won't fall by the wayside.

When you portray Nkansa, you're portraying the players' Heroes in their future, at the end of their great story. She is your opportunity to show the players, "This is where you are heading." By helping Nkansa, they're laying the foundation for their own future successes. Look over the steps in your Heroes' stories and try to integrate them with Nkansa's issues.

Taiyewo and Kehinde

Sometimes, love finds a way.

On a large coffee plantation just south of les Alpes Azurées, a Rahuri field hand named Juax and an Ifrian carpenter named Olubunmi fell in love. Their friends helped to hide the carpenter's pregnancy until, in 1642, she delivered two healthy twins: a girl named Taiyewo and a boy named Kehinde.

Infant mortality was predictably high for Jaraguan slaves, but it was said that the gods themselves protected them. From early childhood, the twins demonstrated strange powers. Everyone worried at Kehinde's habit of striking up conversations with snails, monkeys, rats, dogs, or birds, but they marveled at the fact that the animals seemed to listen to him and respond. Taiyewo, for her part, demonstrated a tactical aptitude from her earliest years; she could match all her elders at chess soon after she learned the rules, and even when she played at soldiers with other children she would inspire them to obedience and advanced tactics, flanking and ambushes and the like.

Once they had children, Olubunmi and Juax resolved to escape. They bided their time for years, gathered resources, and prepared to use the cover of a Mawon raid to bolt for the mountains. Yet once they were safely in a Rahuri village in the mountains, Taiyewo and Kehinde said something that shocked everyone: "We have to go back."

But the children had a plan. They reasoned they could use their young age, small size, and special talents to move under the Company's radar and help slaves in the greatest need—the sick, the disabled, those with special knowledge of Ifrian traditions or magic, or children—to move between plantations and eventually make their way to the mountains. Their parents were terrified, but they knew there was something special about their children.

Over the next three years, what had begun as a plan to get a few more slaves out of captivity grew into a network of informants, saboteurs and safehouses which relayed slaves from the plantations at the island's edge through the central plantations and towards the mountains. The Atabean Trading Company would send its security after escaped slaves, but they underestimated the slaves' organizational abilities.

When Taiyewo and Kehinde finally fell in with Chaplain Nkansa and the Rahuri leadership, the ATC was completely blindsided. Both twins distinguished themselves prominently during the hardest fighting of the rebellion, Kehinde on intelligence and logistical support and Taiyewo on the front lines. During the final battle, Kehinde's animal allies and Taiyewo's flashing machete locked in the rebel victory.

The twins are twenty-six now. They've had more experience and adventure in a quarter century than most humans get in a lifetime; but they're still young. They never got a real childhood, and they've been watching violence and bloodshed from up close for almost their entire lives. They've only ever talked about it with one another, but…they're both feeling the pull of normal life. Friends. Love. Family. Free time. They both expected Chaplain Nkansa to head up the new government, but she's bowed out. Taiyewo and Kehinde are now wondering not only whether they're up to running the new government, but also whether they want to devote the rest of their lives to putting Jaragua's needs before their own.

Playing Taiyewo

Brash, inspiring, unsure. More than anyone else, Taiyewo has been the face of the rebellion. She was on the front lines of every battle with a machete and pistol, roaring orders and defiance. She had a unique speech for every new group of soldiers she mustered or led. She had a natural talent for tactics and martial arts, although she could never scale those skills up to strategy (Nkansa's wheelhouse) or logistics (Kehinde's). The fact that she's most effective on a small, direct scale isn't lost on Taiyewo now that she's a head of state as well as a general. She's just way out of her depth.

Taiyewo doesn't want to give up on the fledgling government. Everyone's looking to her to lead, and even if she doesn't have what it takes, she's still going to fight to the end to do it right—which may not be the most valid approach.

Taiyewo may be a hammer, but she knows that not everything is a nail. Use her to push the Heroes to action, to demand that they *do something* about an injustice that seems too big for them to confront. Show her struggling to reconcile her gifts with what Jaragua needs, and give the players the opportunity to help her resolve the conflict.

JARAGUAN TWINS

Many traditions and beliefs from Ifri were lost during the long years of enslavement and occupation of Jaragua, but a few have survived. The belief that twins hold a special power because their souls are connected in ways no one truly understands is one of those traditions. Twins have a great capacity in them for good or for evil, and parents of twins must be careful in raising them so that they become a force for good. It is even whispered that there are certain twin Lwa that will only inhabit a pair of twins at the same time, but grant them incredible abilities. But if so, the knowledge of them is certainly guarded, if not lost to those in the Atabean.

Playing Kehinde

Gentle, eccentric, optimistic. Kehinde is a different kind of Hero, one who gets along with animals better even than people. His ability to communicate with and persuade animals isn't unique, but very few other humans have it, and certainly none on Jaragua.

Slavery and rebellion have hardened the hearts, bones and manners of many Jaraguans; but privation after privation, Kehinde has remained cheerful, thoughtful and caring. He's the kind of guy who will point out how blue the sky is, or a butterfly that lands on your clothes, even if it's ten minutes before you're about to ambush a Company patrol. He unsettles some people with this nature, but others find him deeply inspiring.

Kehinde's empathy gives you the opportunity for color scenes that show off what the Heroes are feeling, like a confessional on a reality television show. In the fast-paced Atabean, where powerful people chase profits or ideals single-mindedly, when someone as high in station as Kehinde takes time out of his day to ask what your thoughts are on something that just happened for no reason other than that he genuinely cares what they are, it leaves an impression.

Admiral Casiguaya
Former Chief of the Higüey Rahuri

Casiguaya's mother gave birth to her on a catamaran in the middle of a Monster hunt, as her father hacked at kraken tentacles to keep them from pulling the family under. In retrospect, both parents realized they probably should have stayed home that day, but it's a fun story to tell at parties—and the experience seems to have defined the rest of Casiguaya's life. The princess of the Higüey Rahuri has always been more at home at sea than on land.

The worst time in her life came after Governor de Vicquemare captured her ailing father, the chief of the Higüey. In a desperate bid to get her aged father out of a prison where he would surely die, Casiguaya sent word that she, not her father, was the true chief of the Rahuri, and that she would trade herself for her father's freedom. Vicquemare agreed, and soon Casiguaya herself was locked in the cells of the House of Sorrows. In this prison-fortress overlooking the bay of Cap-Carrefour, Casiguaya could hear the crash and smell the salt of her beloved sea just outside her window, could look through the bars at the ocean stretching towards the horizon, but she could not touch it. She was devastated.

In prison, she lived alongside the chief of the Mariana Rahuri—Pablo de la Cruz—who took to captivity somewhat differently, converting to the Vaticine religion and becoming the head prisoner. When Casiguaya and some other prisoners master-minded an escape, detonating a strange device the prisoners had found deep in the dungeon that set the very stones of the prison ablaze, Cruz only reluctantly came along so he wouldn't die in a fire.

Fleeing the prison, Casiguaya stole a Company ship from the harbor and sailed for the mangrove swamps, where they met Chaplain Nkansa and the Mawons. During the revolution, Casiguaya became the Mawons' admiral. She led flotillas of small Rahuri boats to sneak up on Company ships under cover of night or storm, clambering aboard and incapacitating the crew. The stolen ships became a small navy for the Mawons, though few ships lasted very long in combat against the Company. Casiguaya even sent messengers in small craft to nearby locations, inviting pirates and privateers to harass Company craft sailing around Jaragua.

In the new government, Casiguaya is overjoyed to head up maritime affairs for the new Nation. Chieftaincy is fine, but a job that keeps her feet on the deck suits her much better. Currently, she's not sure what to do about Atabean pirates and the Brotherhood of the Coast. The Brotherhood has sent congratulations and even gifts to her upon the success of the revolutionary campaign; its leadership seems to want Cap-Carrefour (now Kap-Kalfu) as a new outpost for the Brotherhood's ships. Both Jaragua and the Brotherhood hate the Company, right? So, doesn't it make sense?

Except the Provisional Oligarchy doesn't like the idea. They know they have a long slog through respectability politics ahead of them if they want the established Nations to recognize Jaragua. Consorting with pirates won't establish the reputation Jaragua needs. For now, Casiguaya has told the Brotherhood their ships may dock in Kap-Kalfu so long as they keep the fact that they're pirates under wraps. The balance isn't likely to last, though, because when the republican government replaces the provisional one, everyone will have an opinion about pirates.

Playing Admiral Casiguaya

Enthusiastic, straightforward, adventurous. As admiral of Jaragua, Casiguaya is working with limited resources. Rahuri traditional craft, hardy and good for fishing but of lesser use for naval warfare or large-scale shipping, make up most of her small fleet. She also commands various Company craft, mostly slavers or trading vessels, cheaply built and ill-defended. She has one galleon, one ship of the line, and a handful of frigates and other smaller fighting ships: not exactly strong foundations for a working navy.

Casiguaya will need independent contractors like the Heroes to do jobs for her, protecting ships conducting trade and dealing with Company vessels that get too close to Jaragua's shores. She can pay (probably in sugar or coffee rather than hard cash), but helping her out also earns the Heroes the incipient Jaraguan republic's gratitude and backing.

Chief Pablo de la Cruz of the Mariana Rahuri

Pablo de la Cruz's first memory is of leaving his ancestral home as a child and making the long, hard trek into les Alpes Azurées, where the Mariana and Higüey chiefdoms would effectively merge. His parents, the Mariana chief and her husband, bitterly complained that they had to rub shoulders with their tribe's ancestral enemies, reciting to Pablo a litany of Higüey crimes against the Mariana the way other parents might have told fairytales or bedtime stories. Pablo knew it was his destiny to retake the ancestral Mariana lands—and put one over on the Higüey.

While trapped in prison, Pablo de la Cruz met the priest Diego Mendoza. Cut off from his ancestors and desperate for a little light and hope in an otherwise miserable existence, he became Vaticine and set aside his Rahuri name for his current one. He saw this not as an act of betrayal but one of survival. Who knows better the weaknesses of his enemy than the man who sits at his enemy's right hand? Cruz resolved to learn what he could of the Théans without completely giving in to their way of seeing the world.

But even when Cruz escaped with Casiguaya to Mangrove Base in 1650, doubt continued to nag him: was the Rahuri and Ifrian cause doomed? Was there any way of throwing off the Company's yoke forever? Even as he trained Mawon troops during the rebellion, working closely alongside Chaplain Nkansa, the doubt never left him. When they finally won the war, he saw his chance.

Pablo was clear and adamant. Jaragua was Rahuri land. Half that land was Mariana land. Even if the Higüey Rahuri were willing to throw in their lot with the Ifrians, the Mariana Rahuri weren't going to accept a half measure. They wanted their land back. All of it. They would not settle for a single seat at a table filled with Théans, Ifrians and other slaves when half the island belonged to their people.

The debate on the subject was long and heart-breaking, but the Provisional Oligarchy could not find a reason to deny Cruz's request. Over the next month, Mawons and Jaraguans vacated the northern plantations and the Mariana Rahuri re-established themselves north of les Alpes Azurées. Their land, taken by the Company years ago, was finally theirs again. Finally.

Cruz's most shocking decision, though, was to open Mariana up to Théan colonists again. He sent word to the Castillian throne that, for a significant fee, he'd give Castillian nationals first pick of the reclaimed Théan plantations on the north half of the island. They eagerly accepted. Now the Mariana half of the island has as many Théans as Rahuri, with Théans operating most of the plantations and the Castillian Captain-General Camila Abasolo in charge in the new Théan city of Porta Ozama.

Cruz suspects the Théans in Mariana territory are keeping slaves, but he's purposefully ignoring the problem. If he hasn't seen it, it's not his problem, right? He can ignore injustice he can't see, especially if it keeps him from having to make hard choices about how he runs his half of the island. And if the Provisional Oligarchy cares about slavery, well, they can investigate themselves. As long as Cruz maintains plausible deniability, it doesn't matter how the planters run their business. They paid for their land, Cruz thinks, and it's theirs to do with as they like.

Playing Pablo de la Cruz

Bitter, pragmatic, caustic. Pablo de la Cruz was raised and steeped in hate. He hates the Higüey Rahuri, hates the Atabean Trading Company, and resents Casiguaya personally and the Ifrian presence on "his" island. He's choked back his bile for most of his life, but he wasn't going to let the opportunity that victory gave him go to waste. He believes that by colluding with Théan powers more reliable than the Company, he can secure his own and his people's fortunes and future. He's probably wrong.

Cruz is the embodiment of what happens when you give up hope that it could be better. He's already admitted defeat, and he knows that the people who are supposed to be on his side are more likely to compromise with him than the people he's now colluding with. He is, however, still friends with Chaplain Nkansa, with whom he always got along better than the provisional oligarchs. If he is to see reason, her influence might be necessary.

And if he can't see reason, then it may be left to Chaplain Nkansa to deal with Cruz herself.

Ex-Governor Vespasien de Vicquemare

On a spring afternoon in 1637, a young Lieutenant Vespasien de Vicquemare of the Musketeers quelled a riot in Charouse. Even though the riot in question was a protest against l'Empereur Alexandre, he was still court-martialed for his use of excessive force, which should give you an idea of how excessive his force was. Indeed, only his noble mother's clout and bribery kept him out of a cold dark cell for the rest of his life.

Luckily for Vicquemare, Alexandre Dubois, governor of Jaragua, had just passed away. Rumors swirled that his death wasn't an accident, but the Atabean authorities made it clear to the Emperor that they were looking for a new governor, someone who would hold off claims from Dubois' young son, Eustache. Vicquemare's erstwhile superiors and now-indigent parents suggested that a life of adventure in the Atabean colonies might salvage his career, especially if he promised never to return to Montaigne. Vespasien packed his bags.

Vicquemare arrived to find fertile land, valuable crops, and understaffed plantations whose workers had died or quit. He revitalized a few of them by paying passage for poor Théans, then subjugating them to years of back-breaking labor. Production tripled. And the Atabean Trading Company was paying close attention, moving to secure the colony from Montaigne before the Sun King realized how profitable Jaragua had become.

When Jaragua's plantations flipped to Company control, Vicquemare was the first to welcome the Company. He hosted George Rourke, Flemming Rudd, and Lærke Ulriksdottir when they toured Jaragua. His amoral ambition, as well as the fact that he too had been kicked out of Montaigne by the Musketeers, impressed the Company's executives, who offered to put him on the Company payroll as Jaraguan governor.

Vicquemare became spectacularly wealthy very, very quickly. He built up Cap-Carrefour as a luxury destination for rich Théans throughout the Atabean Sea, full of handsome villas, exclusive parties, and fine cuisine, a civilized counterpoint to the mess, stench, crime and diversity of Aragosta and Fort Freedom. In Cap-Carrefour, Théans with money could pretend they were among the salons of Charouse or the palaces of Villanova (if they could ignore the humidity and heat).

Vicquemare's veneer of success and propriety cracked when he realized there was an island-wide epidemic of escaped slaves. He requisitioned the best of Company security to chase down his escaped property, but they met with little success. The Mawons would leave false trails that led security forces in pointless circles in mountainous territory, or into forested regions infested with horrible beasts. Then the rebellion began in earnest, and Vicquemare was sorely outclassed.

Vicquemare was trained as an officer of the law, commanding Musketeers who were among the strongest and most disciplined warriors in Théah. He was most effective commanding elite troops in built-up areas. During the rebellion, though, he had to operate in the countryside. He commanded Company security, many of whom were washouts and dishonorable discharges from various Théan militaries, who made up for their lack of discipline with sheer ruthlessness towards unprepared and under-equipped Rahuri civilians.

That same bloodthirst made it easy for Chaplain Nkansa, General Taiyewo, and Chief de la Cruz to draw his forces into ambushes. Every day brought him new frustrations as his troops lost again and again to rebels who barely had enough muskets for half their troops. And yet he would send them back out again to meet the Mawons at every turn, drawn into a conflict he could only lose. Never did it once occur to him that destroying a populist revolution through violence would only enable the rebellion's recruitment efforts.

The Battle of Cap-Carrefour was Vicquemare's ultimate shame. He was defending his home city with his best troops, but a sudden attack from both outside and inside the fort sent his troops into disarray long enough for Mawons to penetrate Cap-Carrefour's outer walls and seize control of the western star fort, linchpin of his defenses. His forces fought hard, but the Mawons just kept coming. By the end of the day, the Company and most of Cap-Carrefour's Théan population were swimming for their lives, and Vicquemare himself had barely escaped death at General Taiyewo's hands, fleeing on a seahorse vessel that only narrowly outpaced the Mawons' fishing boat navy.

The Atabean Trading Company's leadership were furious. Vicquemare had lost their single most valuable possession, the largest and most profitable island in the Atabean Sea. Lærke Ulriksdottir dangled a whimpering Vicquemare by his ankle from Rourke's Tower's battlements as a red-faced George Rourke told Vicquemare that if he didn't find a way to reclaim Jaragua or otherwise produce a return on the Company's investment in him, he would not only get fired, but also get set on fire. Was that clear? Vicquemare replied that yes, it was very clear.

Right now, Vespasien de Vicquemare has a basement office in Fort Freedom and operates as a sort of corporate spymaster, coordinating Company informants who travel the Atabean, trying to confound the efforts of Jaraguans seeking help and support from other lands. He's forty-nine years old, tall and burly, but his unruly beard, scarred skin and sunken blue eyes make him look older. He still dresses in the height of Montaigne fashion, however. Some things never change.

Playing Vespasien de Vicquemare

Vengeful, shamed, sinister. Vicquemare sowed violence and he reaped violence in turn. He doesn't talk so much as mutter, forcing you to lean in close to hear him, close enough that you smell the liquor on his breath and have to look closely at his eyes. He'll affect a convincing veneer of Musketeer-grade grace and politesse for social functions, especially when he's hoping to recruit new spies for the Company or to expose Jaraguan sympathizers. Having Vicquemare offer the players a job spying for the Company will give them a satisfying chance to throw a drink in his face—or else accept and work against him from within.

Vicquemare is the predator lurking in the shadows, a funnel-web spider who strikes from darkness and spreads the gossamer strands of corporate espionage. Unlike the Company officers who put themselves out there—Rourke, Rudd and to a lesser extent Ulriksdottir—Vicquemare is a Villain you can keep in your sleeve, whom you can foreshadow with the movements of secret agents or secret messages the Heroes intercept. Consider giving him an alternate identity if you want him to be in active play. Even if the Heroes figure out it's him, it gives them a fun opportunity to expose him and his evil misdeeds.

Jaraguan Locations

Les Alpes Azurées

Les Alpes Azurées split Jaragua in two, cutting across the island from east to west. The great mangrove swamp sits on the west side of them, Kap-Kalfu on the east. To the north is Mariana territory and the many plantations now controlled by Théans once again.

The forests and valleys of les Alpes are the new no-man's land. Rahuri villages and Mawon forts, many of them abandoned, hide on the slopes and in the forests. Dangerous animals are relatively rare; venomous snakes are common, but their bites are painful and inconvenient rather than fatal (unless you're allergic). But keep your eyes peeled for boa constrictors and the venomous rodent-like mammals called solenodons, some of which can grow to the size of a small dog.

Les Alpes Azurées are a new battleground as the Jaraguan government and the Mariana Chiefdom probe the mountains for mining sites. Gypsum, marble, limestone, copper, lead, zinc, iron and gold are plentiful; the flow of quality iron to Kap-Kalfu has been a windfall for some Ifrian swordsmiths who are now back in business. One Mariana surveyor has located a seam of rubies which led to a cave complex that spreads underneath les Alpes, dense with Syrneth ruins. The fight for the best mining sites frequently turns violent, with the Mariana bringing mercenaries and Jaraguans bringing Mawon troops to help them take and hold the most profitable sites.

The Buried Laboratory

Les Alpes Azurées are extensive and full of hiding places. Mawons and Rahuri weren't the only ones to make use of them. Soon after taking control of Jaragua, the Company established a research station in a hidden valley with underground tunnel access to caves on either side of les Alpes. Only a location with this combination of access and isolation would do for Doctor Oluf Karstensen's experiments with the most hideous of ends: bringing wights and ghouls under the control of humans.

Results have been middling. Certain magical practices discovered by Karstensen and his sorcerer-researchers have revealed tools and potions which give him a limited degree of ability to motivate ghouls in a general sense, but nothing that allows humans to work closely and safely alongside ghouls—which was the Company's real aim in funding these experiments.

Doctor Karstensen has gone through a lot of attendants, although many of those attendants remain with him as ghouls. When the rebellion started, Karstensen turtled up in his laboratory, sealing off some of the exits and setting his undead minions to guard those that remained. He's been there ever since…and isolated as he is, he hasn't figured out that the war is over yet.

The many wights and ghouls which have escaped Karstensen's control over the years currently wander the wilderness of Jaragua, feeding on animals or humans who travel into the unknown unprepared. Reports of these creatures' attacks frequently get confused with zombie stories. Since no one outside of the Company higher-ups knows about the Buried Laboratory, the ghouls' and wights' presence here is deeply confusing to Jaraguan ngangas. They know how to ward off such monsters, and it's not unknown for them to crop up in Ifri or the Atabean of some dread power's own accord; but the proliferation of ghouls wearing Théan clothing specifically is unsettling to say the least.

The more of these weird undead that escape Karstensen's control, the worse Jaragua's reputation gets as a source of the walking dead. Most outsiders who have heard of the Jaraguan ngangas believe the apocryphal stories that say they kill good people and then resurrect them as ghouls using Ifrian necromancy.

Kap-Kalfu

Jaragua's largest, wealthiest port—Kap-Kalfu in Patwa, Cap-Carrefour in Montaigne—climbs the slopes of a dormant underwater volcano's caldera like a great amphitheater. From the surrounding hills, the sinkhole lagoon at its center looks like an unblinking eye from the surrounding hills. None has ever measured the Eye of Ulikun's true depth. Most inhabitants say it leads into the underworld. On occasion the Eye bubbles and belches gouts of roiling flame from its depths, usually presaging an earthquake. Several diviners suggest the eruptive energy could benefit the Nation if the Eye's Lwa is contacted and placated.

In the style of southern Montaigne's coastal towns, the limestone buildings huddle close to one another, with narrow alleys and niches. A market runs the entire length of the caldera and the docks that lie before it. Among its sundry exports and imports are charms sold by ngangas and charlatans to grant the favor of the Lwa.

The port's huge *senzalas*, which once held newly arrived slaves, now store sugar, tobacco, cotton, and other export crops. An arch between the two ten-story towers spans the lagoon's mouth. These "Twin Princes" double as defensive turrets and lighthouses, beacons for slaves and refugees seeking asylum.

The Grand Caiman Tavern

The Grand Caiman Tavern sits in a repurposed two-story senzala on a long loading dock, with three sides facing the water. Only the most trusted (or richest) captains may dock alongside. A short Mawon woman known only as Anty Luv runs the tavern. She's quick to break a leg or raise lumps if someone interferes with her bottom line. That aside, anything sells here, from food and drink to bawdy entertainment to fenced goods "found" on the open seas.

The Vaticine Cathedral

The cathedral sits high on the rim of the city opposite the Royal Palace, overlooking the port. Built by Vaticine officials in the Company's pocket, the cathedral served the Prophets and their teachings in name only. Today, it boasts effigies and shrines to the Lwa as well as traditional Vaticine images. Father Diego Mendoza presides, unwilling to leave Kap-Kalfu without a priest, but uneasy where he resides. After all, for most of his time on the island, his parishioners were the Théans and Company agents whose killers now fill the city and frequent the cathedral.

I took the time to make myself known at the grand cathedral in the Port of Pearls. To my surprise, I found many pagan effigies in the house of Theus! I was greeted by Father Diego Mendoza, a fellow countryman, and chief feligrés in the city. Father Mendoza explained to me that he had to share the church with followers of the local religion and was lucky to have even that. He explained that bastardized teachings of the Prophet were folded into the strange Ifrian religion brought to the island many years ago. I sympathized with him as he lamented the struggle he faced in teaching the true words of Theus as given to man by the Prophets. I listened and comforted him as much as I could but felt better when he told me that foreign patrons would soon help him in his mission here.

—Brother Karlas Osuna, 1667

The Republican Palace

Smaller houses for visitors and a large open garden surround Vespasien de Vicquemare's palatial former estate. Pilfered art from all over the world lines gilded walls and walkways inside and out, flaunting the Company's strength and reach. Now renovated in an Ifrian style, the Provisional Oligarchy's new home is the seat of Jaraguan administration and power.

The House of Sorrows

This prison was the last stop for Montaigne agitators the Emporer wanted to disappear. Then, the Atabean Trading Company found a market in the exile of all Théan nations' undesirables. The prison sits on the Gallows Cliff facing the sea, where 6,000 prisoners have died since its construction. Three 30-foot walls completely obfuscate its two-story bulk. Three levels of dungeons underneath hold arrays of torture devices once used to extract political prisoners' valuable secrets, as well as hidden underground vaults containing many Atabean secrets. The slave uprising accidentally destroyed the maps to these vaults. Rumor has it the prison was built on a sacred Rahuri cave complex with tunnels spanning the entire island.

Since the uprising, the Red Duke, a religious figure of unclear credentials and affiliation, has repurposed Gallows Cliff for honor duels. The single remaining gallows pole now acts as a scoreboard with every victorious duelist's name. The Red Duke adjudicates each duel. Those who break his rules will find him a potent enemy.

Mangrove Base

Mangrove Base was Chaplain Nkansa's headquarters. Here, huts and shelters and longhouses of wood and hide stretch between the massive trees and sit on poles sunk into the shallow water. Locals go from place to place on rope bridges and walkways stretched between them. The whole city hovers above the briny water, ospreys flitting from tree to tree above. It was the perfect place for Mawons to hide and plot their revenge upon the Company. The fishing is some of the best on the island, with clams, shrimp, and snails particularly numerous amongst the trees' snaky roots; you can eat something different every day of the week, even if you never leave the Base.

It's almost impossible for anything but the smallest craft to approach, and even those must approach slowly. The few Company expeditions which came upon Mangrove Base never made it back to report their findings, falling to hails of Mawon bullets before they could so much as start paddling in the opposite direction.

Mangrove Base is now under Mariana control. Chief Pablo de la Cruz's seat of government is there. Jaraguans are still welcome in Mangrove Base, but many of them have left for Kap-Kalfu or the countryside, feeling that the Mariana Rahuri don't really appreciate their presence. Leaving Mangrove Base, the nerve center's rebellion, stings. Many Jaraguans, Mawons especially, think that of all the territories ceded to the Mariana, Mangrove Base at least should have stayed with the side to whom they attribute the revolution's victory. Indeed, if the Mawons decided to take Mangrove Base by force, the defenders probably couldn't hold out forever against troops who know the swamp as well as they do. Cruz would need military help from Théah…and he's not afraid to ask for it.

Porta Ozama

Like much of Mariana territory, Porta Ozama looks like Jaragua did in the early days, some forty or fifty years ago. If you had visited Cap-Carrefour ten years after it was founded, it might have looked just like Porta Ozama. It's a small but fast-growing Théan port town, all white-and-coral buildings and dusty streets, with a bustling market district. Ifrian faces are not particularly common, but rich and middle-class Théans and Rahuri are common here. Captain-General Camila Abasolo has a small but well-appointed palace here.

Abasolo and the Castillian authorities keep a close watch on ships coming in and out of the port. Neither pirates nor Company ships (except for seahorses) are permitted to dock at Porta Ozama. Castille doesn't need the competition the Company provides, though a handful of Théans throughout Porta Ozama are secretly Company informants reporting to Vespasien de Vicquemare.

Atabean Trading Co.

"The Vendel League showed the way, but did not have the courage to follow its convictions. We do."

— George Rourke

From last year's letter to the shareholders from President George Rourke.

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope this letter finds you as healthy and happy as the Atabean Trading Company's current fortunes. We ride the crest of a rising tide of progress, which lifts all our ships as in the adage. The numbers are in: over the past year we have diversified our trade network's goods by 51%. We have accomplished this feat largely through our new partnerships in the Sea Monster body parts trade. Our takeover of several indigenous tribes and the replacement of their previous executives with our own has helped, as well. Independent contractor partnerships are up a stunning 208%, although we are sorry to lose our old friends aboard the good ship Betrayal to the Wu'a. Most impressively, our slavery department has increased traffic by 60%, thanks to numerous new origin points, and to our new focus on procurement rather than longevity. Because our shareholder base has expanded so much this year, I beg the forgiveness of our long-time friends as I tell our tale to newcomers.

Nearly thirty years ago, I founded the Atabean Trading Company on a dream: a dream of true freedom and self-determination for all men and women with strength of mind and character. As a young man studying archæology, I traveled Théah and saw, everywhere, human beings bowed and broken by social orders of no real value or import, ruled by lords and monarchs who had done nothing to deserve their titles—or by fatuous clerics who took and never shared their blessings with mortals. All around me were good, hard-working men and women with brilliant minds, whose duty to invented hierarchies held them back from their true potential. Would I stand for this? No! In the Vendel League, where I traded and sailed and entrepreneur'd with some of our time's most brilliant and unconventional thinkers, I saw the potential for more. Here, hard work and good ideas defined people—rewarded them with something undeniable, something transcending arbitrary borders and petty allegiances, something which no god or king could deny: capital. And it is capital, collected by the shrewd and strong in direct proportion to their worth, that would free us.

But the Vendel League is Vendel still; and for all the good it does us, I knew I could do more if I took another step into the unknown. Now, I got my start as an adventurer. I saw first-hand how a small, dedicated team could fly in the face of borders and rules, doing well and answering to no one but themselves. But what if I were to expand the model of an adventuring company beyond the half-dozen or so individuals who usually constituted it? What if I could create an organization with the numbers of a merchant guild and the freedom of a corps of heroes? What if this company were to answer to no national authority, ruling itself for the good of all who contributed to it?

As you could expect, the kings and lords of the dying world railed against my plan. The first office I built to realize this plan, in Montaigne of all fool places, was razed to the ground. The Emperor Alexandre, embodiment of everything I stood against, sent his Musketeers with gunpowder and fire and steel to burn what I had created. Many a peaceful businessman perished or suffered injury that day, for no crime greater than the desire to keep what he had earned. A naive young President Rourke learned that day that even a peaceful man must prepare for war, pairing strength of will with strength of arm.

This incident also inspired me to look across the sea, to the faraway Atabean. I devoured reports of the marvels pioneers experienced there: fierce creatures, strange and savage natives, jewel islands. Where others saw only danger, I saw something that inflamed a kindred spirit in me: untapped potential and unbounded freedom. These islands were like my esteemed business partners, awaiting only a visionary leader to unite them in making themselves and one another great. They told me I was mad, but I poured all the company's resources into a trading fleet and sent it across the ocean. On a nameless island shore, I conquered the beast-like natives and cleared off the killing jungle, creating the world's only truly free city: Fort Freedom. From this headquarters, I sent our fleet forward to bring reason and civilization to the natives, fire and steel to the monsters, and plantations and manors to the islands. As my fleet carried resources back and forth, my security forces—headed by Lærke Ulriksdottir, my faithful head of security—beat back the spear-flinging natives and filthy pirates who threatened the good and wise and peaceful, bringing those who saw reason to heel, or crushing those who didn't under her heel. The world is a better place for it.

A number of independent trading vessels with an adventuresome spirit preceded us in the Atabean Sea, but lacked the leadership and vision to unite. Many of these craft turned to internecine squabbling of the kind destructive to all businesses. We all know the name commonly applied to these traders: "pirates." Of course, this label is frequently apt; but again, where others saw mere criminals, I saw untapped potential. Are pirates not entrepreneurs like any others? Are they not driven to their choices by the tyranny of Nations, by a desire to be free? And so, the Company began to contact pirates, to extend them opportunities and benefits they would otherwise never have. The wisest chose to partner with us. You may rest assured that we vigorously investigate any claims which reach us about violent activities or theft by our sponsored contractors.

How did I do it? I'm glad you asked. First, an eye for potential. An understanding of supply and demand. A strength of will that forged many a profitable deal. And slavery.

Now I've been asked many a time, "President Rourke, how could a man so dedicated to freedom enslave another human being?" And I'm always happy to answer this question. You see, we are rewarded in this world for our strength of arm, of character, and of mind. Those who succeed—here amidst Atabean dangers especially—succeed because they have earned their success, unlike in the old world, where men enslave others by virtue of a lordship or a purported god. In the old world, men are slaves to a fiction, an idea. But when the Company enslaves a Théan criminal or a Rahuri headhunter or an Ifrian prisoner of war, it does so by imposing its will and strength upon that weaker being—a being of such little internal value that it deserves, nay, craves bondage! Thus, I have allowed even these wretches to realize potential beyond their wildest dreams. Moreover, the best among them earn enough money to buy their own freedom. I am the rising tide which lifts them, as well. The best of them thank me for bringing them here and the worst soon become thankful—or else perish in ignorance, to be replaced by someone better and more deserving.

I must also thank those of you of noble birth who have come with us this far, and those of you with religious conviction. Though I may not share your outlook, I welcome challenges to my ideas. Freedom of thought and strength of mind can only exist in an atmosphere of competition. I myself am technically of noble birth, although I voluntarily set aside those privileges to prove to myself and to the world that victory comes not from the name you're born with, but the content of your character.

I also fully support the religious pursuits of others, whether or not I share their spiritual convictions. My Chief Procurement Officer and old friend, Flemming Rudd, is a devout Vaticine who will gladly explain to you how the Company's mission, and our slavery department in particular, are instrumental in bringing the Prophets' wisdom to Atabean and Ifrian heathens, who would otherwise die unimproved and unenlightened. The Company facilitates an estimated 68% of evangelical missions in the Atabean Sea. Of those, a definite 92% succeed, establishing a long-term presence in the New World and achieving an unprecedented average heathen conversion rate of 75%.

We live in a degenerate world of spurious masters and undeserving slaves, but the Atabean Trading Company, the wild adventure to which you have contributed your investment and your patience in confidence in a greater reward, shows us another way. This world doesn't need gods and kings. It needs freedom, because freedom breeds heroes. And that's what we do here, friends. We're in the hero trade.

Twenty years ago, a team of Vendel and Avalon merchants founded a shipping concern destined to grow into the world's first multinational corporation. Answering to no Crown, the Atabean Trading Company terrifies Théan Nations. Pursuing wealth with bloody pragmatism, it terrorizes Atabean natives and Ifrian captives. But let them fret and cower. The Company knows the truth: it is the future.

The Company's Philosophy

Explore dangerous, uncharted locations. Meet unsuspecting natives. Kill them. Take what's theirs. Over their remains and the remains of their societies, build anew in your own image. Link the things you build together into a circulating system of ever-growing profit. And laugh in the face of any so-called authority who would demand you do anything but what suits and enriches you.

This is the Atabean Trading Company's philosophy and mission: riches and freedom built on the disenfranchisement and enslavement of those weaker than you. It is a tale as old as time, but brought to life with a frightening precision and acumen, built with Théan money and power into something uniquely evil.

The Company is a classic Villainous megacorporation: sprawling, ruthless, efficient, caring only for its bottom line. Yet its principles eerily resemble those which inspire many heroic adventurers. The Company provides players ample opposition, impediments to or targets for their escapades. But should a puissant Hero fall, should the temptations of profit or power over others consume them…the Company waits with a handsome commission. There is no sin, according to the Company, in settling for what should be rightfully yours.

It is a clarion call to young men and women across Théah, a philosophy that entreats the best and brightest to use their talents and skills for the most noble of pursuits—the betterment of all—without an understanding of what that betterment will cost.

The Company's motto, emblazoned on corporate stationery, is simple: "Neither Will Nor Power Save Mine."

Company Operations

Like a wicked octopus, the Company is smart, subtle, and good at using unconventional tools, wrapping its tentacles around various lucrative ventures.

Goods and Shipping

A good third to a half of the Company's business is buying, selling and moving goods. From spices to sugarcane to food to liquor to timber to Atabean sea monsters' valuable corpses, if someone somewhere will pay for it, the Company gets it there.

They purchase goods cheaply by buying in bulk. Then they use their network's breadth to focus on the customers who will pay the best price. But they won't just move their own product. If you need to move goods from Gosta to San Sancha, the Company is the cheapest way to get them there.

They undersell every other company for a few reasons. First, they own either all of or a share of more vessels than any other company—more, in fact, than most navies. Second, they cut every conceivable corner on their ships, which are notoriously uncomfortable, unsafe, and ill-defended. Third, the company loses little cargo because of the deals it makes with pirates.

The Devil You Know

Pretend you are a pirate captain (we have a feeling you will be good at this). One day, you spy a particularly ugly galleon sailing the Atabean Sea. Your spyglass reveals few armed defenders aboard, so you hoist the black flag and give chase.

By the time you're close enough for grapnels and boarding planks, the smiling captain has laid out a tea service on deck. When he invites you aboard, you realize you cannot remember the last decent cup of tea you drank. You swagger on board, sit down and demand the surrender of their goods (or, if you're suspicious, yell at them over the gunwale). You don't care about seizing the ship itself because you cannot determine how such an ill-wrought contraption stays afloat.

Of course, you're welcome to his cargo, says the captain. But why settle for a single payout when you could enter into an arrangement that will provide plunder as reliably as a tree bears fruit? What if sparing Company vessels guaranteed you accurate and up-to-date charts, cheap repairs, discount slaves, safe fortified harbors and a reliable buyer for your ill-gotten gains?

The captain unrolls a contract, weights it down with teacups and bids you look it over. The benefits start out modest. But they increase with every pirate captain you convince to sign on with the same deal offered to you—and of course they'll sign, with a deal this good coming from as obviously imposing and influential a figure as yourself. You get an address in the free city of Fort Freedom where you can take your contract and receive recompense if the captains you recruit confirm their recruitment at your hands.

You sail away, your hold empty of cargo, with confidence unimaginable riches are just over the horizon.

The Devil You Don't

The Atabean Sea abounds in non-contracted pirates. How does the Company handle pirates uninterested in their scheme?

The Company's barely seaworthy galleons are neither defensible nor worth defending. Elite Company warships escort high-value shipments, but these vessels are rare. It's after you rob a Company ship that you have to worry. The Company's swarms of paid informants mark you wherever you dock. Contracted pirates hunt you to reap more Company benefits. If you're reputed to be particularly dangerous, Lærke Ulriksdottir and her corporate security *einherjar* will hunt you themselves. The first time they catch you, they'll brand your hand with a letter P. If you captain a ship or you already bear the P, they'll execute you and spike your head on Fort Freedom's battlements.

Most pirates have already steeled themselves to the danger of boarding an enemy ship and crossing swords with armed guards. They're even prepared to lose an eye or limb, knowing their quartermaster will reward their bravery and sacrifice handsomely. But after an Atabean's crew quietly loads their cargo into your hold and lets you go, you live in fear. You know the Company keeps meticulous records of what they buy, ship, and lose. You know anyone who sees you sell your merchandise might recognize and report it to a Company agent. You know your new drinking buddies from a dockside tavern might check your face against a wanted poster when they notice how freely you spend.

The feeling is not unlike one that most pirates joined this life to leave behind: guilt.

Company Shipping in Your Game

Oftentimes a GM needs to place someone or something Heroes care about somewhere one wouldn't expect them. The Company affords ample opportunities to move them there, just as if you were their customer. The Rahuri sculptors' guild robbed at gunpoint of their lives' work saw their masterpieces sail away on a Company freighter. The renegade archæologist evading New World authorities stashed her magical treasure among those sculptures.

Drop some hints and watch the Heroes chase that freighter, or the pirates who robbed that freighter, or the sea monster who devoured those pirates, to wherever your story wants them.

Furthermore, if the Heroes want something and you don't know where they could possibly get it, maybe the answer is "on a Company ship." The world's widest-ranging shipping outfit can get some literally far-fetched things into the Heroes' most convenient port.

The Company's piratical pyramid scheme plays on pirates' greed and ego to make them either recruit or eliminate their competition. If the Heroes, their friends or their rivals are brigands, sooner or later someone scary will demand they choose sides.

Exploration

The Company thrives on information. It wants the most valuable ports, easiest-defended harbors, most fertile plantations and safest sea routes. While they pay top Guilder for quality chartwork, they prefer to find these resources before anyone else does.

Company explorers are always full employees working directly under Flemming Rudd. No one wants to risk independently contracted archæologists using Company ships, sailors and equipment to keep their finds for themselves—or to sell them off to governments eager to humiliate the Company. Salaries are steady, bonuses a generous fraction of your find's value…but the rights, land and slaves go to the Company.

The Company lures explorers with its best equipment and ships, far outclassing its shipping craft: galleons fast enough to outrace the competition, durable enough to weather a gale and armed heavily enough to repulse locals with strong feelings about immigration.

Heroic explorers and archæologists full of desire and talent but not of money, supplies or crew will always—always—find a helping hand in the Company. A sharp-eyed corporate scout with a trustworthy smile, an impressive hat and a miserably complex contract will turn up in the tavern to offer them the devil's own job: all the tools to realize their ambitions, at the price of everything truly valuable that might come of them.

Evangelism

Many Théans see the New World as a prime opportunity to spread the glories of their religion. The end of the War of the Cross instituted an effective moratorium on open warfare between Objectionists and Vaticines. But the Atabean Sea offers zealots a return to old-fashioned faith-based bloodshed.

Evangelical missions tend to be long on money, personnel and enthusiasm, but short on logistical support and travel experience. The Company's packaged missions provide a crew, a ship and all the supplies and charts needed to find one's way in the New World. The Company-appointed captain logs events, notifying the company of interesting territorial finds. An often-overlooked subclause in the contract guarantees the Company rights to any lands the mission discovers.

Still, in many cases, captains nudge expeditions toward "discovering" regions the Company has already scouted to keep the map a chaotic chessboard of Objectionist and Vaticine holdings instead of letting one faith or the other consolidate a defensible front. Allowing either Objectionists or Vaticines a superior strategic position could end the ATC's schemes of playing the sides against each other.

Flemming Rudd is indeed a devout Vaticine, but Annie Goldenflower is just as devout an Objectionist. The handful of religious folk who work for the company are evenly balanced between both sides. Rudd and Goldenflower get along, ostensibly; and while Goldenflower is silent on the topic, Rudd actually relishes the chance to compete—violently or otherwise—with Objectionists.

War profiteering is difficult enough when you only support one side, but the Company has quietly played both sides against one another. Missions failed due to disease or sea monsters tend to discourage future endeavors. Missions which run into violence at a hated rival's hands, though, engender more missions: if we just spend a little more money and hire a few more soldiers, we'll get them back for what they did! The Company remains officially neutral in such conflicts. Chief Ulriksdottir's security forces never get personally involved, though the Company aggressively sells off captured military equipment in careful balance to both sides.

SLAVE, NOT VICTIM

The slave and former slave are classic heroic archetypes we see in Spartacus, Nat Turner, King Zumbi and Harriet Tubman. **7th Sea** is a game about larger-than-life Heroes and Villains, about inspiring heroism and unabashed wickedness. This distinction is often wide and clear. But it's easy to apply that mindset to other divisions between people: the brave and the cowardly. The strong and the weak. The actors and the victims.

We must caution you about this last division. The Company's crimes are many, but perhaps the most appalling is its classification of slaves as possessions, animals or benighted savages who benefit from bondage. Seeing slaves as innocent victims is a small step up, but not enough: a victim is a victim before he is a person. Slaves in Terra's past and present are people first and foremost. They've suffered violence, disenfranchisement and loss, but none of these removes their personhood. They have strengths, weaknesses, senses of humor, families, vices, loves and hates like every other character in your game and your world.

In a game where victims of injustice need rescue and vindication, it is okay for slaves sometimes to be those victims, as long as their victimhood never eclipses their personhood. Game worlds are always richer when even background characters have names and faces. Don't miss this opportunity here.

Enslavement

Despite the Vaticine Church's clear stance on slavery—it is a sin in the eyes of Theus—the practice has existed in Terra in various forms throughout history. But the Company has brought new meaning to the word. Théah's appetite for tobacco, molasses and rum has stoked the greed of countless planters in the Atabean Sea—a greed driving them to force other human beings into bondage. The Company gladly greases the wheels that crush human bodies and lives,

THÉAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS SLAVERY

Avalon has outlawed slavery explicitly. Memories of occupation still sting.

Castille does not mention slavery in its law codes. The Church's prohibition more than suffices.

Eisen law wildly differ between königreichs, but all explicitly permit forcible military conscription. They vary in regulations and protections of conscripts' or conscriptors' rights.

All joking aside about the value of a law in **Montaigne,** no legal prohibitions exist against slavery. In previous centuries, the clergy stood strong against such exploitation. But in these decadent times, an honest cleric is harder to find. Many peasants are little better than slaves to aristocrats.

The Sarmatian Commonwealth not only forbids slavery, but also enforces that prohibition. Almost all Sarmatians will alert local administration of any such maltreatment.

As you might guess from the state of their peasantry, **Ussura** has not outlawed slavery. It probably never will. Ussurans often describe themselves matter-of-factly as slaves of their Czar; it's just a feature of their lives, not a moral judgment.

Foreigners sometimes miscategorize the workers in **Vesten** called "thralls" as slaves. However grueling the thralls' work may be, and however strict their employers' control may be, they retain fundamental human rights and can even bring suit against their employers in a thing. Things may also hand down a sentence of thralldom in place of a punitive fine if the offender cannot pay. Aside from that, the question of slavery is up to the thing, but what thing would stand for the kind of indignity a Company slave suffers?

Vodacce has outlawed slavery, but no one there seems to have noticed.

delivering slaves where they are needed no matter the raw human cost.

Many Atabean islands are extremely fertile, hot and humid: ideal terrain for the luxury crops of tobacco and sugarcane. The first Théan settlers to plant the Atabean recognized there were riches to be made here, but they struggled. Their Théan laborers were shocked and unprepared, suffering sunstroke, disease, exhaustion or horrific sugar works accidents: hands lost to limb-snaring mill wheels, lives to the heat of the boiling house. News of mounting casualties trickled back to Théah, discouraging further workers. Théan planters in the Atabean were in financial trouble.

The Company sprang into the business of lending to struggling or prospective planters. Once myriad tobacco and sugar plantations throughout the region owed them money, George Rourke and Flemming Rudd made their move. Leaning on their Vendel League contacts, they fixed sugar and tobacco prices lower and lower until dozens of planters, insolvent and humiliated, were forced to sign their property over to the Company.

On their first tour through their new acquisitions, Rourke and Rudd saw not only suffering, but also opportunity. Théan workers, they realized, still saw themselves, fundamentally, as their employers' equals—as the same species, as it were. They needed to create an underclass to get the most from their investment.

They started with Atabeans, primarily Rahuri. Visually distinct from lighter-skinned Théans, Rahuri could not escape or blend in with their captors as easily as Théan criminals who made up a small minority of the slaves. Training overseers to whip and work darker-skinned natives like animals proved shockingly easy. Yet mortality in captivity remained high. One slave for every four free Théans on a plantation wasn't enough. War-torn Ifri, with its mounting populations of prisoners of war, addressed their problems. Because the Ifrians looked different, they were easier to dehumanize. Moreover, Rudd suspected they would adapt well to the similar Atabean climate. But waiting for Ifrian wars to supply enough captives still wasn't enough. They had to be proactive.

The future, after all, wasn't going to arrive without the Atabean Trading Company greasing the wheels.

A Théan Slave Trade

Within a year, the Company had fomented enough distrust and resentment among Ifrian vassal states to start a civil war. They framed leaders for crimes against their neighbors, waged guerilla warfare to destroy key targets and offered "intelligence" that always led toward violence. Soon enough, the Company laid siege to the capital of Lougua, capturing slaves, hostages and land in equal measure.

Soon a brisk trade in slaves was on its way across the ocean, avoiding Théah where the Vaticine Church could denounce this crime. Once the Company staffed its plantations with human chattel, it realized that to work slaves to death and then kidnap new ones in Ifri was cheaper than to invest in their survival and well-being.

To keep up with their competition, many other Atabean planters followed suit. Even those initially disgusted by the idea of slavery often changed their minds after reading Flemming Rudd's religious pamphlets, which described slavery as a Theus-given benefit to the slave's intellectual and spiritual character.

How Could This Happen?

Théans make up between three and eight percent of all Atabean slaves. Théan governments reacted with acclaim to the Company's offers to purchase convicts en masse. While all Nations outlaw selling free Théans into slavery, Théans who make enemies of the powerful wind up in servitude nonetheless.

The Company prefers to transport Aztlan and Ifrian slaves via independent contractors. Slave ships are unpleasant, high-risk investments. Revolt, disease, and other threats require the Company to heavily insure the few slave ships it actually owns. It much prefers to buy slave cargoes from independent slavers, many of whom are former pirates the Company has nudged into a slightly safer business.

After the living hell of a slave ship hold, slave quarters at a Company fort or plantation seem palatial. Slaves dwell in unassuming villages far from the plantation's great house, or catacombs far below the fort. New slaves sleep in communal halls. Those who demonstrate obedience and usefulness to captors get to maintain family huts and small plots of land where they can grow their own crops. Since keeping slaves alive and encouraging them to reproduce are low priorities, such holdings are few.

The Inside Game

The tragedy of slavery gave rise to the Atabean region's most notorious martial art, best known by its Odisean name: Jogo de Dentro, the Inside Game. Perhaps the name refers to life "on the inside," in jails, slave enclosures and ghettos where the game developed. Perhaps it refers to the extremely close range of engagement, their bodies swirling and rocking over, under, and around one another like oil and water.

An outsider who wanders by the tight circle of people singing and playing music as two forms vault and twirl at their center, who asks someone what's going on, will learn they are merely dancing. And they are dancing, for sure. But the shard of glass stuck in one player's shoe and the straight razor spinning in the other's hand are easy to miss.

Most Ifrian martial arts train combative rhythm using musical accompaniment, teaching a fighter to read foes' somatic polyrhythms, defending on the beat and striking off-rhythm. In captivity, the Ifrians traded lances and shields for prison shivs, glass shards and barbers' razors. They dialed back the quick all-or-nothing killing strikes that field engagements demanded, emphasizing unbalancing or disorienting attacks that wouldn't bring Company security around asking about a dead overseer. The result was a fighting style of subtlety, trickery and dishonorable tactics, ideal for an exhausted Ifrian slave fighting a better-fed and -equipped Théan.

Freedom?

It is in a slave owner's best interests to allow slaves to accumulate their own meager wealth. Revolution is easy when you have no family, no hope and nothing to lose. When you've worked hard to gain and keep some paltry sum, suddenly that sum is the whole world to you—and risking it on a slave revolt is a daunting prospect.

In the inhumane conditions of an Atabean plantation or Company fort, to accumulate enough wealth to buy your own freedom is a monumental task. Yet some slaves manage to purchase their own freedom, or their children's, leading to the still-difficult life of a freed slave on the Atabean Sea. Company vessels offer such individuals free passage to Fort Freedom to start a new life, hoping to prevent them from heading to Jaragua to join the freed slaves there.

The Seahorse Express

The Company's newest and fastest-growing venture is also its only irreprehensible department: it delivers the mail. While most mail simply travels on the same shipping vessels that move sugar, slaves and monster carcasses, more urgent materials go to the Seahorse Express.

Company couriers, often called seahorses, are fast, honest and often suicidally bold, given that their job description prominently features outracing sea monsters. They are the noble servants of the Atabean Sea, delivering good news and bad, respected by all.

Penny dreadfuls about attractive, daring, selfless, tragic seahorses abound in Théan ports. The Company has diverted some of its copywriters and illustrators to create more of these entertainments, since they aid recruitment and improve public relations, but the independently created ones have the best stories.

Mesquite, the mysterious figure on the Company board who showed up out of nowhere to found a postal service, masterminded the seahorses and personally trained the postmasters who direct them. Mesquite patterned seahorse routes and systems on Aztlan courier networks, which maintain communications and supply chains in large empires with rigorously organized armies. The Atabean post has met such success and acclaim that the Company, whose employees think the Board invented the postal service whole cloth, now considers expanding the system to the Théan mainland.

So sacred is the mail that the (relatively few) pirates who take a Company ship for their own will send a runner under a flag of truce to leave mail and packages at a Company dead drop, marked with the Postmaster General's sigil. Even Rahuri rebels tend to let the seahorses alone, truthfully convinced that they serve a much higher ideal that then the rest of the Atebean Trading Company chooses to serve.

Playing a Seahorse

While most Company activities aren't fit for Heroes, some noble souls do find themselves working for the Company as seahorses, moving mail around the Atabean. But it's a hard thing to be ignorant of the Company's true activities, and any Heroes who work for the Company will eventually have to face the truth: the Company may be the single most Villainous organization in the world.

Thus, there's some beautiful tension to playing a seahorse (or a crew of seahorses). The Company may have brought you to the Atabean, paying your way in exchange for years of service...but what will you do when you discover the truth of their activities? Who will you side with when the Rahuri show you what the Company has done?

Personnel

Most Company employees are clerks, analysts, accountants and bureaucrats, spending their days pushing papers, allocating resources and reconciling accounts behind a desk in exchange for steady pay. Most are Théan, a few are New Worlders, fewer still are Ifrian and none are freed slaves. Mind- and heart-numbing drudgery defines their days. The Board elevates employees with charisma and ambition strong enough to survive such privation. They become managers, recruiters or marketers, striking out from the Company offices to find new markets or new employees.

President: George Rourke

"But enough about me. Tell me about your adventures."

George Rourke is an Avalonian man, tall and slender, with golden-brown hair in a ponytail, blue eyes, high cheekbones and a brilliant smile. His speech is always fiery and earnest, his outfits always perfectly tailored.

Rourke is the third son of Avalonian gentry of some means, but little social standing. His oldest brother inherited land and title, his second-oldest brother became an Objectionist cleric, and George himself was expected to make his way in the military. He became an adventurer instead, participating in a series of enterprises which ended in the death or imprisonment of everyone involved but himself. Then he got involved in the Vendel League.

Rourke flourished among the Vendel merchants, mentored by Flemming Rudd, an old family friend and his future chief procurement officer. But by this time, Rourke was growing disillusioned with the Vendel League. Vesten customs, he thought, still bound merchants and guildsfolk unnecessarily. He began to resent nobles in general, having failed to trade on his own birth for much success, or to inherit any magical powers. Thus, he developed the egoistic personal philosophy that guides Company business, focused on the value of personal genius, strength and achievement—and their monetary rewards.

This philosophy preached that those who advance via advantages of birth such as nobility or citizenship reap undeserved rewards—but unlike the Rilasciare, Rourke saw compassion as weakness. While few entrepreneurs in Théah embraced this viewpoint with Rourke's single-mindedness, it made waves and won prominent investors—some of whom were themselves nobles.

Rourke's commodities-trading skills were good, but his speech and smile were better. He also had an eye for synergies others missed. He founded the first office of Rourke & Rudd in Montaigne, for no reason other than an affection for its culture and art. But when the Emperor discovered Rourke's bizarre and unprecedented plan to create a corporation answering to no national government, he deployed a squad of Musketeers to Rourke's headquarters. They attacked at night when the offices were mostly empty. One of them fabricated a threat to R&R's ships to lure Lærke Ulriksdottir away. The rest stormed into the offices, beat up everyone they found, confiscated the papers and torched the place. Of course, Rourke had backup copies hidden on his personal vessel, but the attack still wounded his pride and budget. But he learned—and he built his new headquarters across the sea. Thus Rourke & Rudd became the Atabean Trading Company.

Playing President Rourke

Friendly, confident, inspiring and inspired. Make no mistake, President Rourke is the Atabean Sea's arch-Villain, arguably (and he would be first to argue it) the region's most powerful individual. As an evil corporation's charismatic yet self-serving head, he's a classic antagonist. The trick is making him hard to kill.

When you portray President Rourke, call on all the charm and social grace you can muster. When he interacts with the Heroes, he's excited to speak to them: excited about their exploits, excited to hear their thoughts and ideas and plans. When it's his turn to offer information, he'll be full of fire and dreams. He's generous with the little things—drinks, tobacco, party invitations—to mask his selfishness with land, capital and human lives. Remember, you're playing the man who inspired thousands of people to reject nobility and country—and to embrace the dehumanization of thousands more.

Chief Procurement Officer: Flemming Rudd

"To educate, uplift and occupy the savage is our Theus-given purpose on Terra."

Flemming Rudd is a pale, corpulent man in a wig and spectacles, of Vendel and Avalonian parentage, an old friend of the Rourke family. It was Rudd who first invited a struggling George Rourke to join a Vendel shipping guild, initiating the young man's transformation from failed adventurer to shipping magnate.

Flemming is a devout Vaticine, a rarity in both his Nations of parentage. He felt marginalized and stifled by the Objectionist leanings of both countries and all his neighbors. He views the ATC as an opportunity to spread Vaticine values beyond the borders of Nation or color, whether its recipients want them or not. He maintains that Théah blesses the Ifrians and Rahuri whom it converts (and enslaves) by bringing them the light of civilization, science and faith.

The hold of any slave ship proves Rudd wrong, wrong, wrong. Yet he does from time to time put his money where his mouth is. He encourages the construction of *cabildos*, ethnically typed clubhouses for slaves and freedmen. These clubs often have a sponsor in the form of Vaticine clergy or other religiously minded member of the Company establishment. The cabildos host dinners, dances and other social events. They also educate their members in Vaticine catechism and (if slave-owners don't object) literacy and math skills.

Outwardly, Rudd backs George Rourke's plan to pit Vaticine and Objectionist pilgrims against one another. Inwardly he worries. He has always hoped Rourke would one day see the light and join the Vaticine Church, after years of his own quiet influence. Rourke, though, sees no light but his own. Now Rudd begins to see shadows everywhere. What else doesn't he know about his own corporation? And can he really trust the Objectionist Annie Goldenflower?

Playing Chief Rudd

Avuncular, devout, down-to-earth. Like President Rourke, Flemming Rudd is a natural antagonist because of his privilege and his support for slavery. The hypocrisy of his evil deeds beside his religious conviction makes him exactly the kind of fat cat players love to hate. But if you set him up as a cackling, monologuing Villain, the Heroes will shoot him in the face and run away: briefly satisfying, but not the kind of gaming story that really stands the test of time. Instead, emphasize his soft-spoken, kindly nature. Remember, this man truly believes he's helping out the people he enslaves.

Chief of Security: Lærke Ulriksdottir

"A mighty swing, to be sure! But let me show you what you can do if you shorten your grip a hand or two. This is a lesson you'll take to your grave."

Lærke Ulriksdottir grew up in far-flung Vesten territory. She held an axe and shield before she could walk. She accompanied her mother as an aide as the older woman went from mercenary job to mercenary job, finally accepting a stultifying position guarding a guild outpost in Kirkjubæjarklauster.

Lærke didn't much like urban life when she got there. Vendel merchants talked a big game about how they used their trade network for good, but they lacked the forthright honesty she'd grown up with. Years working security for various merchants, seeing cowardice in each of their failings, embittered and disillusioned her. When George Rourke came to her speaking of conquering the Atabean Sea and bringing it to heel, she saw something in his plans that reminded her of her upbringing. She came home one last time, to recruit a core security team of the hardest raiders she could find, then set sail for the Atabean with President Rourke.

Chief Ulriksdottir is a tough, no-nonsense woman who loves her job, especially the part where she gets to crack heads. She's happy to stand in the background with a cup of coffee and a dirty look when President Rourke needs to intimidate someone, but she's happiest when natives need pacifying and she gets to strap on her armor and shield and put her axe to some necks. It's been a long time since she's fought an enemy whose martial skills are comparable to her own, though. Hopefully one of the Heroes will provide sufficient sport.

Playing Chief Ulriksdottir

Tough, decisive, in love with her job. Chief Ulriksdottir is a Vesten's Vesten, the baddest cop of them all. The only thing she likes better than scaring someone to death is killing someone to death. That said, as a martial challenge, she works best as a looming but silent menace. When another Company executive makes a subtle threat, have Chief Ulriksdottir or one of her goons stalk past the doorframe, sharpening a blade. She will always accept a challenge to single combat, but she'll do it in full armor with an axe and shield.

Chief Financial Officer: Annie Goldenflower

"I'm sorry, I really can't take time away from my books to—wait, a message from whom?"

Annie Goldenflower never knew her father, but her mother was Rahuri. She and her sisters inherited her father's fair skin and light hair, and can pass as Théan. After a series of bookkeeping jobs of increasing responsibility, she got a job offer from the Company. She knew the Company's reputation, knew what violence and oppression it had done to her people.

But perhaps she could change things from the inside. She'd keep her head down and do what she was told while she waited for an opportunity to betray the company to the Rahuri. Then they could launch a hostile takeover and nationalize the Company, ending its crimes and bringing its resources to Rahuri interests.

Her plan hasn't worked. She's an important leader at the Company, controlling allocations and keeping records, but she still hasn't found an opening to control some element of the company so crucial it could hamstring the whole operation. She's also struggled to coordinate with Rahuri leadership. The need for secrecy prevents her from revealing much even to allies.

What's more, Annie Goldenflower is Objectionist. Her quantitative mind was naturally attracted to the respect for science and progress she saw in so many of her faithful acquaintances. As much as she wants other Rahuri's trust, she has no interest in making her religion a secret or a lie. If a Rahuri ally asks her to choose between her people and her faith, she chooses faith.

Playing Chief Goldenflower

Mousy, focused, the smartest person in the room. Annie Goldenflower is in a bad position. She's stuck as an accessory to atrocities while she frantically searches for an opportunity to start a revolution which she's ill-qualified to lead. She's a Hero at heart, but she's stuck in a job whose dead end is villainy. She needs help—ideally from someone sympathetic, but outside the Company. Annie's all about secrecy, but don't let verisimilitude stop you dropping hints the Heroes need to get involved. Remember that mysteries on the Atabean Sea need an overabundance of clues to progress at 7th Sea's swashbuckling pace.

Postmaster General: Mesquite

A shadowy figure in a wide-brimmed hat and a rain cape showed up on Rourke's Tower's doorstep one morning, while a hurricane kept every ship in the harbor and every sane person in Fort Freedom indoors. The figure—who appeared neither male nor female—announced, in a gravelly tenor, "I have business with the Board."

Baffled guards showed the stranger inside to where the four Board members were eating breakfast. Wordlessly, the stranger unrolled a weathered map of the region, as accurate as any in the Company's libraries, with lines and arrows in cochineal red carefully drawn from settlement to settlement, island to island, following the courses of trade winds and ocean currents, deftly skirting monster-infested waters. "You have a communication problem," they announced. "My name is Mizquitl. This is how I'll fix it."

Mesquite, as the Company has come to call them, founded the Seahorse Express to regiment the movement of news, information and the written word between every port in the Atabean and every coastal factory in the New World. Mesquite also personally trained the senior couriers, the Postmasters, who are as dedicated and secretive as any Vagabundo or Daughter of Sophia.

Mesquite remains silent through every meeting. They meet any question not concerning route selection or mail transmission with a glare or a shrug. None of the Board can remember ever really getting a good look at them. Their office in Rourke's Tower is a belfry with no bell, no glass in the windows and an iron desk literally bolted to the floor, which they generally sit on top of, even during storms.

A GOD?

Among Théans, beliefs about the gods vary a great deal. Devout followers of the Vaticine Church claim there is no other god but Theus. Others presume the gods chose to (or had to) distance themselves from humankind in the ancient past. Some believe that any stories or rumors of gods are evidence of Syrneth influence, given how advanced their civilization was.

In Aztlan, the gods are both very real and very active. They have had a tremendous influence on the region's history, and some, like Mesquite, are traveling the world to pursue their agendas. Theoretically, anyone the Heroes meet could be a god in disguise—extra incentive to be nice to strangers, don't you think?

Playing Mesquite

The truth is that Mesquite is a god, albeit a very small and easily forgotten one. They were worshipped hundreds of years ago in Aztlan, when the first roads cut into the mountains and the rainforest. But their worship dwindled slowly until they had no temples and no priests. They aren't proud, just dedicated to what they do best; and they've decided the Company is the best way to do it.

As a god, you have long-term goals. Daily minutia fascinate you, looking at all the tiny pieces falling together to create the future. Having lost all your worshipers, you value human allies— realizing they are far more valuable than obedient servants—and you will protect them with all your power.

International Relations

Avalon

"As often as my people's foibles frustrate me—particularly their religious attitudes—Avalon, Inismore, and the Marches originated much of the spirit which inspired me and young George to do business the way we do. We make a lot of money on sugar and tobacco in Avalon. In fact, we have more noble investors there than anywhere else in Théah. You'll find many an Avalonian in the Company ranks, from the Board down to the greenest cabin boys."

—Mr. Rudd

Castille

Castillians, and Odiseans especially, deal extensively with the Company, though the highest social strata rail against President Rourke's contempt for nobility and government. Since the loss of the Armada, the Company has frequently stepped in to fulfill rich Castillians' shipping needs.

Eisen

It's no secret that George Rourke greatly admires Nicklaus Trägue. In fact, he modeled Rourke's Tower visually after Freiburg's Wachtturm. Freiburg is the most profitable city in Théah to the Company, as well as the most cordial to Rourke's philosophy.

Montaigne

"Oh, I hope he tries to do business in my country again. Maybe this time I'll get to set Monsieur Rourke himself on fire."

—l'Empereur Alexandre

Numa

Numa and the Company have a tense working relationship. The Company craves Numanari mint and spices. Numa craves the many manufactured goods and other substances their islands can't provide. But while Company and Numanari philosophies both extensively use the word "freedom," the similarities end there.

The Sarmatian Commonwealth

"Fascinating. I could talk about the Commonwealth for days. So much potential, such good fashion sense, such respect for liberty…but ultimately, they disappoint. 'Sarmatism' is yet another excuse for the weak to leech off the strong. That business about ennobling everyone is exactly the wrong way to go about the right thing, and everything about their King and his Walezy Articles vexes me. Still, doing business there is straightforward enough. If their government has any problems with my Company, it's too busy bickering with itself to express it."

—President Rourke

Ussura

Ussura's import needs and export offerings suit the Company well, but of late the increasingly hostile Vendel League has used its geographic proximity to usurp Company business there. In response, Rourke has publicly decried Ussura's backward and superstitious attitudes as not worth his business. Only Flemming Rudd knows how incensed Rourke really is at this development.

The Vendel League

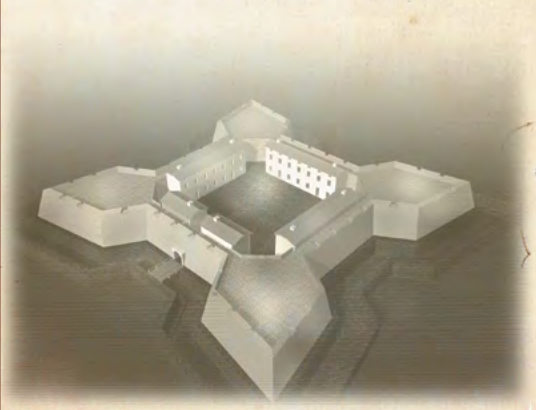
"Damn those honorless whelps! The Vendel League made Rourke and Rudd. Their corporation could never have existed without our Guilders, our customs, and our organization. We were fools to think they would stay loyal to the League even after they monopolized the Atabean Sea. Rourke would have you believe otherwise, but trade is about relationships, and relationships are about trust. Our Guilders represent the trust which Théan markets place in a system which helps us all. When one merchant, especially one so fortunate as those traitors, sacrifices honesty and respect, the very concept of trade itself suffers. Well, if it's a trade war he wants…"

—Harald Hermansson of the Sailors' Guild

Vodacce

"Rourke seems like a good fellow. We do a lot of business together."

—Giovanni Villanova



Bird's-Eye View

Front View

Rourke's Tower

ground floor

1. Barracks
2. Refectory
3. Kitchen
4. Privy
5. Larder
6. Wine and Spirits
7. Armory
8. Gun and Powder Room
9. Storeroom
10. Guardpost
11. Commander's Quarters
12. Well
13. Shooting Range

Fort Freedom

George Rourke founded Fort Freedom on a rocky, hilly island in the Atabean Sea inhabited by peaceful natives he enslaved shortly after making landfall. Then-First Mate Ulriksdottir pointed out the island's fine natural harbor. Its bottleneck allowed individual ships or small numbers to pass easily in and out, but also proved a tactical headache for a proper navy to enter in force—an issue prominent in Rourke's mind after l'Empereur flattened his previous headquarters. They built a fortified keep, Rourke's Tower, on the island's highest point, then expanded the fortifications to overlook the harbor. They christened these structures Fort Freedom.

Rourke and Ulriksdottir popularized their island by disseminating word that it was a great place for pirates to hide from their enemies. Crews who came ashore found ample, cheap liquor, coffee and other addictive substances. Supplies came fresh from Théah.

The companionship of similarly minded individuals flourished without any particular laws to impede anyone's fun, although Ulriksdottir and her toughs swiftly cracked down on challenges to the Company's interests. The first round of settlers were either Company employees or retired pirates, but now Fort Freedom contains every stripe of Atabean. Now Fort Freedom is a full-fledged city, dueling Aragosta for the title of largest city in the Atabean Sea.

Fort Geography

The island is shaped like a flat-topped croissant, with fortified cliffs facing off all sides except the C shape of the inner harbor. Countless piers jut from the shore into the brine, pointed towards the central island where a statue of George Rourke towers over the passing ships, inviting everyone in to join his profitable crusade.

Rourke's likeness peers out across the water, shading his eyes with one hand, as his other hand hoists the Freedom Bell which peals every morning at daybreak to remind everyone in town how free they are. Fortified turrets look over the points of the C. Ships flying all flags dock here: pirates beside Company vessels beside merchantmen belonging to Vodacce or the Vendel League or Castille. None who can pay for a berth are turned away. There's only one important rule in the harbor: no ship-to-ship combat within the harbor, not unless you want all the guns of the fortress and every ship currently crewed to turn against you.

A few notable locations in Fort Freedom include:

- The **Shallow Graves** occupy an arc of the harbor on the eastern wing, the only area where ships are not docked. Here, the water at high tide is only ankle-deep. Piles, adorned with memorial stones or plaques to the dead, sink deep into the beach. Their memory rests here for eternity, forever lapped by the waves until Fort Freedom sinks into the sea.
- Just off the harbor, various **warehouses** and *senzalas* (slave quarters) loom over side streets, shops, taverns, and other smaller establishments squashed between them like mortar between bricks.
- **Taverns** are common, each one with a gimmick to attract clientele amidst the competition. No glass blocks the windows, only oiled hides or shutters, so bouncers can eject patrons as efficiently as possible.
- Fort Freedom experienced no urban planning whatsoever, so its sprawl features tenements beside fine hotels, shops and offices beside grimy manufactories. However, the **highlands,** enclosed by walls and closer to Rourke's Tower and its inner wall, tend to house Company employees and company stores and service buildings to keep their money circulating where the Board wants it. Chief Ulriksdottir's security patrols march up and down the main thoroughfares that lead from the water to the highlands, ensuring that amidst the chaos and violence of the city, Company people go unmolested.

Coastal Fortifications: The Snowflake

A massive gray fortress dominates Freedom Island's west side, the most viable approach for an attacking fleet. The Snowflake, named after its perimeter's shape, is Lærke Ulriksdottir's headquarters, where she trains Company security and plans reprisals against pirates too dangerous to ignore. It is one of the world's most advanced fortifications, designed by Vodacce combat engineer Cinzia Pontecorvo. She originally came to the New World to fortify Castillian holdings. But when the Company made her an offer, she bolted to Fort Freedom and took all her plans with her. The Castillian King is enraged, but with his Armada at the bottom of the sea, what is he going to do about it?

The Snowflake's outer rampart rises directly from the sea, except where a moat and drawbridge separate it from the island on its landward side. Atop the rampart sits a stone parapet a meter and a half thick. These are not the polygonal or round walls of ancient castles, which leave "dead zones" where assailants might hide from cannonballs. Instead, triangular or kite-shaped bastions of alternating depths protrude from the outer wall. This pattern, the Vodacce Star, allows the batteries and gunners on the walls to fire upon every angle of approach.

Inside the ramparts are barracks, a senzala where slaves are quartered, and multiple magazines where the garrison can reload and resupply. At the center of the yard, a citadel with its own star-patterned wall rises from the Snowflake's center, housing the mess hall, smithy, and other essentials. This is Chief Ulriksdottir's base.

Not all the Company's coastal forts follow this pattern. Most, in fact, are purchased or captured medieval-style castles built in the Théan expansion's early years, scheduled for renovation when time, funds and labor force permit. These might feature only a ditch enclosing a square stone wall with a yard inside and a small keep of coral stone. The Company's most valuable holdings have star-pattern forts like the Snowflake, though.

Organized and Disorganized Crime

Fort Freedom develops street gangs with alarming rapidity. They draw the young, especially orphans, into their ranks early, starting them off as runners, scouts or pickpockets before teaching them to fight. Gang leaders started referring to themselves as "Rourkes" fifteen years ago, but since then "Rourke" has corrupted into "rook." Constant combat breeds sophisticated fighting styles, to the surprise and misfortune of many an overconfident Duelist looking for trouble in Fort Freedom's back streets. Many gangs practice distinctive sub-styles of the Inside Game, called "rhythms."

Gangs are an important part of Fort Freedom's ecology. They fight each other not only for pride and territory, but also to catch the attention of those higher in station. Hiring a street gang is often the fastest (if not the most loyal) way to accumulate some quick muscle. Sometimes the job is as simple as guarding a warehouse full of conspicuous cargo (in which case you're paying as much for ensuring the gang isn't trying to steal the cargo as for their defending it from someone else). Other times, pirate crews bring gangs aboard to fill out their ranks as they assault a sea fortress.

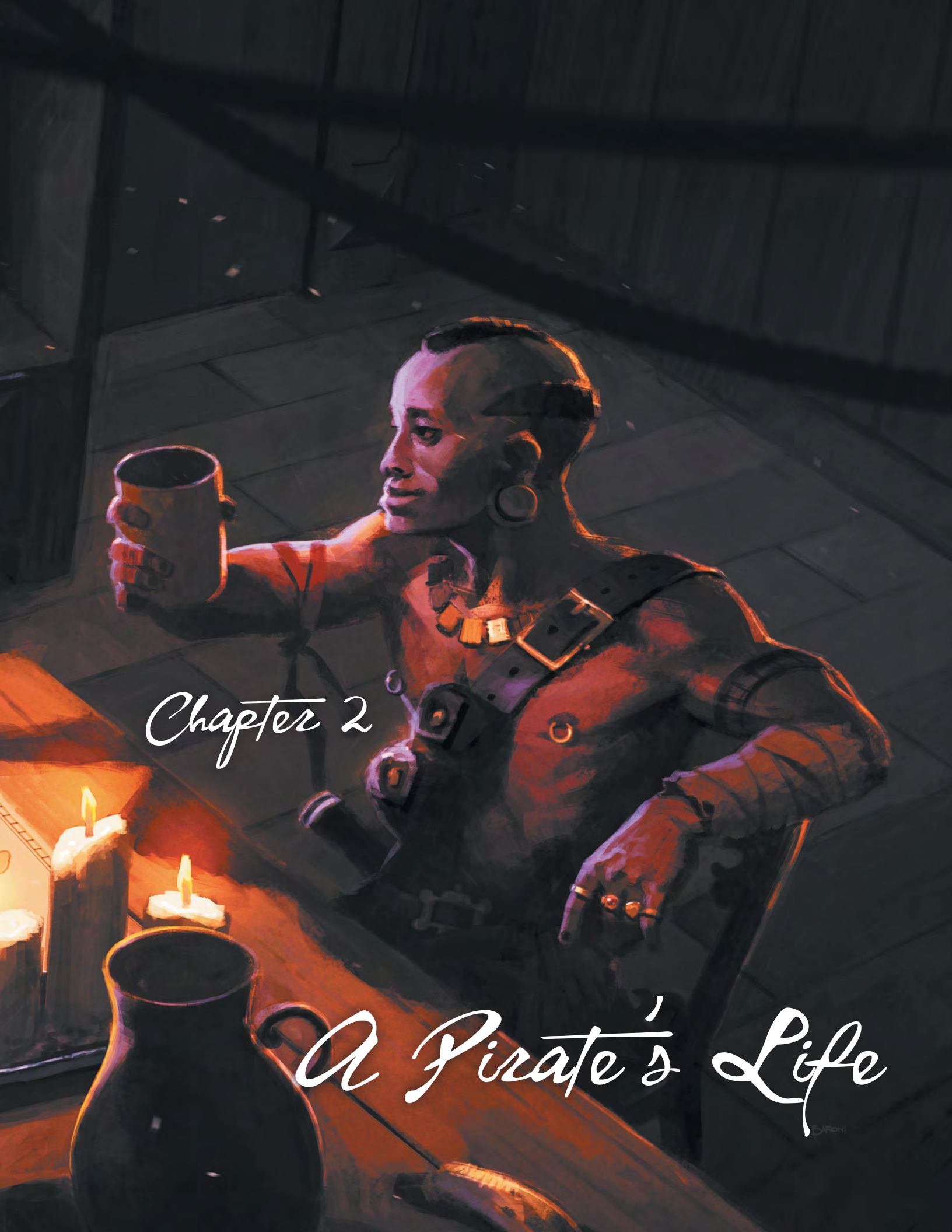
Since attacking a fortress often demands multiple ships' combined efforts, extra numbers help you both during combat and afterwards when you're fighting for your fair share of the spoils. Most controversially, Lærke Ulriksdottir sends scouts from her own security force to observe high-profile rumbles, inviting the toughest fighters there to pick up the Company's shield and make some real money. Many gangs view accepting this invitation to be the ultimate dishonor, turning your back on the community that raised you, kept you alive and taught you to fight; but there's little they can do to take revenge once a soldier "goes corporate."

- The **Cipactli Gang** is made up of New Worlders of Tzak K'an and Nahuacan extraction. They are particularly feared for the rumor they sacrifice captives to the gods of the New World. They go to great lengths to conceal the truth, which is actually worse: they sell captives into slavery.
- The **Wayward Sons** and **Daughters** are the misbehaving children of dispossessed nobles and Fort Freedom's rich, sneaking out of the good neighborhoods uphill for excitement and danger. Other gangs perceive the Waywards as weak children of privilege. To offset this perception, the Waywards fight with berserk ferocity, heedless of their own safety.
- The **Anglerfish** are a Rahuri gang, probably the largest numbers-wise of all Fort Freedom's gangs. Their numbers are a blessing and a curse, as they frequently fall into internal disputes, and challenges for leadership are commonplace and violent.
- The **Bad Guys** (yes, that's their name) are an Ifrian gang, about half of whom are freed slaves. The best Inside Game players among them wear bright white clothing to advertise the fact that they haven't been struck or knocked down.
- The Aztlan ball game called ulama is a beloved pastime here. The major **ulama teams** in Fort Freedom each have small but ferocious and alarmingly organized gangs of hooligans. Sometimes the ulama players will lend their own muscle, as well.

Secret Societies in Fort Freedom

As disdainful as George Rourke may be of most secret societies' philosophies and business, he encourages them to take root in Fort Freedom so his people can keep an eye on them. A great deal of spycraft goes on between the Company's corporate infiltrators and the secret societies' agents. One side's secrets sell well with the others.

- The **Brotherhood of the Coast** has no formal base here. They don't need one: meetings in the corners of loud taverns suit them fine.
- **Die Kreuzritter** monitors the movements of Atabean sea monsters. They also keep tabs on powerful Théan newcomers to the Atabean, lest infernalists hide in the farthest corners of the Sea.
- **The Explorer's Society** has a prominent, well-appointed clubhouse on the edge of the highlands district. President Rourke knows they're his competition, but he respects them—and relishes their propensity for annoying the Vaticine Church. May the best explorers win.
- **The Invisible College** maintains a handful of hidden laboratories in Fort Freedom. George Rourke has subtly encouraged their development, hoping the Company can steal their discoveries. Any time the Company gets close to finding one, greedy for the technology within, the scholars there shutter it and destroy any evidence of their operations, dispersing to other safehouses. But how long can they keep running within a single Company-dominated city?
- **The Knights of the Rose & Cross** have their work cut out for them here. The Company represents the antithesis of everything they believe. Their leadership thinks Fort Freedom too dangerous for a proper chapterhouse, and they're probably right. Knights are advised to keep a low profile. Their brand of heroism doesn't go over well with Lærke Ulriksdottir.
- A handful of **Los Vagabundos** have arrived in the Atabean region to connect with Rahuri leadership. As with the Knights, the risk involved in establishing a Fort Freedom base has been too great so far. The Company has not yet detected their presence, but Rourke and Ulriksdottir would like nothing better than to beat down these sycophants of undeserving nobility.
- The **Močiutės Skara** is probably the best-established secret society in Fort Freedom after the Explorers. Company watchdogs have occasionally warned the Board about the threat the Shawl might pose to their interests, but the Board seems unconcerned—and they definitely don't know where the society's base of power lies. The Močiutės Skara generally meets in the middle of large crowds in the open, relying on coded patter to transmit information and assignments. They focus their limited resources primarily on small and unglamorous jobs. Their higher-ups have reached out to Rahuri leadership to determine what help they can be in averting the war of conquest which much of the Atabean Sea worries is next in Théan-Rahuri relations.
- The **Rilasciare** cell which operated until just weeks ago in Fort Freedom has evaporated without a trace. George Rourke harbors a particular hatred for the secret society which promotes a philosophy that resembles his own, but takes it to diametrically opposed ends. Rumor has it that their recent strike against a Vaticine official who robbed his congregation was too bold and too obvious. Lærke Ulriksdottir located one of their safehouses and disappeared the members of the mob they gathered to wreck the official's house. Now the hand itself has vanished—but of its own accord, or Chief Ulriksdottir's?



Chapter 2

A Pirate's Life

A Pirate Hero

Théah is rich with adventure, mystery and intrigue, but it isn't the only place in the world to explore. Now, not only can you visit these faraway places, but you can also play Heroes from distant shores. Out on the Seven Seas, outside of Théah, Heroes still exist. They may not look the same, but they are Heroes nonetheless. Whether your Hero is a first mate on a pirate ship, an Atabean rook, a Buccaneer spy or a Rahuri wave hunter, you still believe in courage, discipline and compassion. You may be a pirate, but you're still a Hero.

Pirate Heroes in 7th Sea

This chapter covers everything you need to make a Hero from the Pirate Nations. The rules for making a Hero are still the same—you'll be using the same steps from the **Core Rulebook**—but **Pirate Nations** expands your choices to Heroes outside of Théah.

There are General Backgrounds and Nation Backgrounds, just like the **Core Rulebook**, so if you've read about the Mawon of Jaragua and you want to play one, you can. This chapter also includes a bunch of new Advantages, new Arcana and new Stories. You can even find new Sorceries, new Dueling Styles and new Ship Origins and Adventures later in the chapter.

Mix and match bits from the **Core Rulebook** with this one, but pay close attention to the limitations. Your GM may allow exceptions—such as a Rahuri with Sorte—but those should be rare. Yes, Heroes are exceptions to the rules, but those exceptions require both explanations and the possibility of future stories. For example, the Rahuri with Fate Magic may have gotten it from her mother who was out in the Atabean Sea. A mother who is now lost and whose daughter is looking for her so she can understand her powers.

And while the rules may be different out on the waves, Villains still prey on the weak. That's why you're needed out there. So, go be a Hero.

Step 1: Traits

Every Hero has five Traits defining what that Hero's core strengths are. The Traits are:

Brawn is a Hero's strength and physical power.

Finesse measures a Hero's coordination and agility.

Resolve is a Hero's willpower and endurance.

Wits measures how quickly a Hero thinks on his feet.

Panache is a Hero's charm and personal magnetism.

Every Hero begins with all of her Traits at 2. You have 2 additional points you can spend to increase your Traits.

Step 2: Nation

The Nation you select for your Hero affects your Traits, and also grants you access to Nation-specific Backgrounds and Advantages. Apply these bonuses after you have spent points on Traits.

NATION	BONUS
Aragosta	+1 Panache or +1 Finesse
Jaragua	+1 Brawn or +1 Finesse
La Bucca	+1 Panache or +1 Wits
Numa	+1 Resolve or +1 Wits
Rahuri	+1 Brawn or +1 Resolve

Step 3: Backgrounds

In the world of 7th Sea, few pick their own life path. Often, a child's parents pick his career for him. Your Hero is probably no different. Your Backgrounds represent what your Hero did before the game begins. Were you trained to be an artist or a soldier? Did your parents send you to sea to learn the life of a sailor? Perhaps you were raised with a wandering troupe of actors, jugglers and other performers. Or, maybe you were born into a life of luxury as one of Théah's many nobles. This isn't where your Hero ends up, but it is where he started.

Backgrounds represent your past. You were a sailor, you were a performer, you were an assassin. While these things had a strong influence on you, they are not necessarily whom you've become.

Backgrounds give you a few things that make your Hero distinct from others.

Restrictions: Some Backgrounds have restrictions. Make sure you follow these; they are a part of your Hero's story.

Quirk: Backgrounds come with a Quirk, a personality trait that is common among people of that Background. If you act in accordance with a Quirk from your Background, you gain a Hero Point. You may only gain a Hero Point from a particular Quirk once per session.

Advantages: Backgrounds give you Advantages. Advantages are abilities most Théans will never have. If your Background lists an Advantage, you may add that Advantage to your Hero Sheet at no cost.

Skills: Each Background also gives you a set of Skills, which begin with 1 Rank. Skills are specific bonuses for specific tasks. Like Traits, Skills have Ranks that tell you how many dice they give you. A Skill's Rank can only go as high as 5.

Two Backgrounds

First, pick two Backgrounds from the following list.

You get all of your Backgrounds' Advantages. If you have duplicate Advantages, take another Advantage of the same point cost, your choice.

You get 1 Rank in all your Backgrounds' Skills. If you have duplicate Skills, add 1 more point (for a total of 2 points) to the duplicate Skill.

General Backgrounds

ATABEAN ROOK

You may not be royalty, but the alleys of Fort Freedom are your kingdom; its forgotten urchins are your subjects.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you use your reputation or status to help another character.

Advantages	Skills
Salty Dog	Intimidate
Eye for Talent	Sailing
	Theft
	Warfare
	Weaponry

COMPANY ESCAPEE

You escaped the ATC's clutches and now strive to make every day the Company exists more costly than yesterday.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you subvert the Company's plans or sabotage its income stream.

Advantages	Skills
Duelist Academy (Jogo de Dentro)	Athletics
Valiant Spirit	Brawl
	Hide
	Notice
	Theft

SEAHORSE

Only the brave or foolhardy would take a job delivering the mail across the Atabean Sea. Guess that means you.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you deliver an important message—written or otherwise.

Advantages	Skills
Married to the Sea	Athletics
Wheel Man	Notice
	Perform
	Ride
	Sailing

THÉAN OUTCAST

Your crimes (real or imagined) caught up to you. Well, if Théah doesn't want you, you don't want it either!

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when siding with your adopted homeland in favor of Théan tradition gets you into trouble.

Advantages	Skills
Cross the Palm	Brawl
Opportunist	Empathy
	Hide
	Sailing
	Theft

Aragosta Backgrounds

FREEBOOTER

The deck beneath your feet, sun on your face and wind at your back. With those three things, nothing else matters.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you convince another character to join you on a journey at sea.

Advantages	Skills
Married to the Sea	Aim
Atabean Traveler	Convince
Eye for Talent	Intimidate
	Notice
	Sailing

TROUBLESHOOTER

The distant sight of an enemy captain directing his crew to open fire. Nobody could make that shot...nobody but you.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you spend all your Raises on shooting a target and suffer Consequences because of it.

Advantages	Skills
Married to the Sea	Aim
Sniper	Athletics
Sea Legs	Intimidate
	Notice
	Sailing

RUM RUNNER

You said you'd make the delivery, and you'll be damned if something as minor as a blockade is going to stop you.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you sail your ship into forbidden waters.

Advantages	Skills
Married to the Sea	Aim
My Word Is My Bond	Notice
Sea Legs	Sailing
	Tempt
	Theft

LOST SOUL

Once, you sold a sliver of your soul. And you'll never let anyone make the same mistake.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you prevent the Devil Jonah from claiming another soul.

Advantages	Skills
Married to the Sea	Intimidate
The Devil's Due	Notice
Insistent	Sailing
	Theft
	Weaponry

Jaragua Backgrounds

NGANGA

Your people trust you to interpret the will of the spirits and to aid them when they need it most.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you use your spiritual knowledge and skills to aid a community.

Advantages	Skills
Sorcery	Convince
Sorcery	Empathy
Cast Iron Stomach	Perform
	Scholarship
	Weaponry

MAWON

The enemies of Jaragua may think you are weak and cowardly, but the opinion of the dead means little.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you defeat an enemy using guerilla tactics.

Advantages	Skills
We Share Our Victories	Athletics
Reckless Takedowns	Brawl
	Convince
	Hide
	Warfare

JARAGUAN PROVOCATEUR

Jaragua needs allies, coin and trade. You know how to get what your Nation needs.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you gain a new ally for Jaragua.

Advantages	Skills
Connection	Brawl
Sweeten the Pot	Empathy
	Hide
	Tempt
	Theft

ENSPEKTÈ

The horrors of Jaragua seek to break your people, but you are their protector and you are unbreakable.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you learn a secret about a Monster or anti-Jaraguan conspiracy.

Advantages	Skills
Duelist Academy (Bugu Takobi)	Athletics
Nerves of Steel	Empathy
	Notice
	Scholarship
	Weaponry

La Bucca Backgrounds

SIREN

There is no sixth Chapter. Not until you're needed.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you resolve a problem using stealth and subterfuge rather than direct confrontation.

Advantages	Skills
Dynamic Approach	Aim
Patron	Hide
	Intimidate
	Theft
	Weaponry

CHAPTER MEMBER

La Bucca only functions when the Chapters work together.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you fulfill the duties of your Chapter.

Advantages	Skills
La Palabra	Convince
Cross the Palm	Perform
	Tempt
	Theft
	Weaponry

SENTINEL

In La Bucca, you have two options. Be quick, or be dead. You favor the former.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you beat another character to the draw.

Advantages	Skills
Speed Load	Aim
Quick Reflexes	Athletics
	Intimidate
	Notice
	Weaponry

LOS NIÑOS

The Mother brought you here for a reason. And when you arrived, she whispered it into your ear.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you protect a brother or sister.

Advantages	Skills
Whisper to Mother	Aim
Cast Iron Stomach	Hide
	Notice
	Perform
	Theft

Numa Backgrounds

DOCENT

Is Théah worthy of the friendship of Numa? You will put them to the test.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you push another character to live up to his potential, even when it means trouble.

Advantages	Skills
Duelist Academy (Lakedaimon Agoge)	Athletics
Team Player	Empathy
	Scholarship
	Warfare
	Weaponry

HAIMON

Your glory lies there, before your eyes. Nothing will stop you from claiming it.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you take on a dangerous task for no other reason than it will bring you glory.

Advantages	Skills
Seize Your Glory	Athletics
Indomitable Will	Sailing
Survivalist	Tempt
	Warfare
	Weaponry

MYSTAI

The human spirit is capable of incredible things. You will demonstrate this to the world.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you thwart the mystai of Hecteba.

Advantages	Skills
Sorcery	Athletics
Sorcery	Convince
Time Sense	Intimidate
	Warfare
	Weaponry

MYRMIDON

Théah has forgotten the name of Numa for too long. It's time for you to remind them of the Father of the World.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you impress the crew of a foreign ship with your daring.

Advantages	Skills
Married to the Sea	Athletics
The Ocean's Favorite	Intimidate
	Sailing
	Warfare
	Weaponry

Rahuri Backgrounds

BORIQUA

By the weight of your words or the strength of your arms, you will protect your people.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you win a diplomatic contest with a threat of violence.

Advantages	Skills
Lyceum	Aim
Direction Sense	Convince
	Intimidate
	Tempt
	Weaponry

WAVE HUNTER

The only thing you need to bring down fearsome Monsters is your wits and your harpoon.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you defeat a Sea Monster.

Advantages	Skills
I Cannot Be Broken	Aim
Eagle Eyes	Athletics
	Notice
	Sailing
	Weaponry

BOHITI

Ambassador to Soryana, bridge between your people and their predecessors. This is your sacred responsibility.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you solve the problem of a Lost ancestor.

Advantages	Skills
Seeker of Soryana	Convince
Direction Sense	Empathy
	Perform
	Scholarship
	Sailing

HORIZON CHASER

The Atabean is a wonder to behold, but you dream of places even more amazing. There is an entire world to see.

Quirk

Earn a Hero Point when you set foot in a place you've never visited.

Advantages	Skills
Atabean Traveler	Athletics
Wheel Man	Ride
	Sailing
	Tempt
	Theft

Step 4: Skills

You gain 10 points to add to existing Skills from your Backgrounds or to add new Skills to your sheet. Each point buys you one more Rank of a Skill, whether you already have any Ranks in it from your Background or not. You cannot raise a Skill above Rank 3 when making your Hero.

Achieving certain Ranks in Skills grants your Hero additional bonuses beyond dice.

- At 3 Ranks, you gain the ability to Re-Roll any single die when you make a Risk using that Skill.
- At 4 Ranks, you gain the ability to earn 2 Raises per set by creating sets of 15, rather than only 1 Raise per set for creating a set of 10.
- At 5 Ranks, all dice that roll a 10 Explode, allowing you to roll an additional die and add it to your total.

AIM

Use Aim when you point a pistol at someone and pull the trigger. Use Aim when you throw a knife across a crowded room with pinpoint accuracy.

ATHLETICS

Use Athletics to swing across a room on a chandelier, jump from rooftop-to-rooftop, or otherwise perform a dangerous physical stunt.

BRAWL

Use Brawl when you punch or kick someone. Use Brawl when you drag someone into an alleyway.

CONVINCE

Use Convince when you appeal to someone's better nature. Use Convince when you assure someone you're being honest with her and she should trust you.

EMPATHY

Use Empathy when you want to tell if someone is being genuine. Use Empathy when you determine someone's general mental state—afraid, nervous, etc.

HIDE

Use Hide when you keep a weapon or other item hidden, and avoid it being found if you are searched. Use Hide to sneak around or attack an unsuspecting victim.

INTIMIDATE

Use Intimidate when you make someone do what you want under threat, physical or otherwise.

NOTICE

Use Notice when you investigate a crime scene or search a Villain's study for clues. Use Notice when you want to pick out fine details at a glance.

PERFORM

Use Perform when you try to captivate an audience with your showmanship. Use Perform to get across a particular message to your audience or to elicit a specific emotion from them through performance.

RIDE

Use Ride when you engage in a high-speed carriage chase. Use Ride when you ride a horse at a gallop.

SAILING

Use Sailing whenever you navigate your way through a ship's rigging. Use Sailing when you attempt to steer a ship during a pitched battle at sea, or through a dangerously narrow channel.

SCHOLARSHIP

Use Scholarship when you consult your knowledge to fill in the details on a subject. Use Scholarship when you call upon medical training to tend to an injury.

TEMPT

Use Tempt when you bribe someone to do something for you that she really shouldn't agree to do.

THEFT

Use Theft when you swipe something from someone's pocket without him noticing. Use Theft when you pick a lock, crack a safe, or something similar.

WARFARE

Use Warfare whenever you need tactical expertise, such as when you're breaching a castle's defense. Use Warfare when you lead an army in battle.

WEAPONRY

Use Weaponry when you attack something with a sword, axe, hammer or knife in your hand.

Step 5: Advantages

Although you already have some Advantages from your Backgrounds, you may now buy new Advantages. These are distinctions that set you apart from everyone else.

You have 5 points to buy new Advantages.

Advantages cost between 1 and 5 points and may cost different amounts depending on your Hero's Nation of origin. Some Advantages have restrictions.

All Advantages may only be purchased once unless explicitly stated otherwise.

An Advantage with the Knack tag (K) requires a Hero Point to activate, but no Raises—meaning that it doesn't take an Action, even though it is probably activated on your turn.

An Advantage with the Innate tag (person) can only be selected at Hero Creation.

1 Point Advantages

DIRECTION SENSE

As long as you have some point of reference, you are never lost. That isn't the same as knowing exactly where you are—if you're knocked unconscious and wake up in a dungeon, you don't necessarily have any idea what city you are in, but if you manage to escape your cell you will never get turned around in the winding tunnels that make up the dungeon.

EYE FOR TALENT

When you spend Wealth to hire a Brute Squad, that Brute Squad's Strength is 1 point higher.

LETTER OF MARQUE

You or another Hero must possess the "Married to the Sea" Advantage

Choose a Théan Nation. You have a Letter of Marque from that Nation's government, giving your Ship's crew permission to operate your vessel. Any privateers or military vessels from that Nation will not harass you so long as you present them your Letter, and you suffer no legal ramifications from "privateer activities" from that Nation. The agents of other Nations are typically unimpressed, although on rare occasion Théan politics may play to your advantage.

2 Point Advantages

AGOGE WEAPON MASTERY

Requires Lakedaimon Agoge

Choose an additional weapon from the list of agoge weapons (page 174). You gain the appropriate bonus when you wield it.

CROSS THE PALM

When you spend Wealth to Re-Roll a die in a social Risk swayable by money, you can Re-Roll up to 2 dice instead of 1.

DEVIL DOG (K)

You or another Hero must possess the "Married to the Sea" Advantage

Spend a Hero Point. Any Crew Squads under your command this round roll 2 Bonus Dice on any Risk.

INDOMITABLE WILL (K) (1 IF NUMANARI)

After another character attempts to intimidate, seduce or otherwise goad you, spend a Hero Point to automatically resist.

INSISTENT (K)

When you apply Pressure to another character, spend a Hero Point. The effect of your Pressure lasts until the end of the Round.

MARRIED TO THE SEA (1 IF ARAGOSTAN)

You have access to a Ship. If you and your allies already have access to a Ship, your Ship gains an additional Background. See the Sailing chapter in the **Core Rulebook** for more information.

SPEED LOAD (K)

Spend a Hero Point. You reload a single firearm you are carrying with only a single Raise, rather than the 5 it would normally take. You can do this once per Sequence.

TAVERN FAVORITE

When you make a Perform Risk in a "low-class" place such as a dockside tavern, a street corner or somewhere similar, you gain 1 Bonus Die.

3 Point Advantages

ATABEAN TRAVELER (2 IF RAHURI)

Spend a Hero Point while within the Atabean Sea to know the direction to the closest land, find fresh food or water or ask the GM a single yes-or-no question about your environment or a creature you've encountered.

DYNAMIC APPROACH (2 IF BUCCANEER)

Spend a Hero Point to change your Approach during an Action Sequence or Dramatic Sequence.

FROG MAN

When you make an Athletics Risk that involves swimming, you gain 1 Bonus Die.

NERVES OF STEEL (2 IF JARAGUAN)

Whenever you spend a Hero Point to give yourself Bonus Dice in a Risk against a creature or character with a Monster Quality, you gain 1 Re-Roll in addition to the normal effects of your Hero Point.

POWDER MONKEY

When you make an Aim Risk to fire a ship's cannons, you gain 2 Bonus Dice.

SWEETEN THE POT

Spend one Wealth to bribe a character during an Action or Dramatic Sequence without spending a Raise. You can do this once per Sequence.

THE OCEAN'S FAVORITE

You must possess the "Married to the Sea" Advantage
As long as you are Captain of your Ship:

- Before you roll dice at the beginning of a Round, you may spend a Hero Point to reorganize your Crew Squads.
- Spending a Hero Point to aid a Hero onboard your Ship, gains her 4 Bonus Dice instead of 3.
- You gain 1 Bonus Die for any Risk you take aboard your Ship.

WHEEL MAN

Gain a Bonus Die when you make a Risk to steer a ship through treacherous waters or avoid enemy fire, or when your expertise at the helm would come in handy during another dangerous situation.

4 Point Advantages

THE DEVIL'S DUE (2 IF ARAGOSTAN)

You cut part of yourself off and tossed it into the sea, offering it to the Devil Jonah. In return you were granted a gift, a unique (and often grisly) artifact with strange properties. But the cost for this was more than a pound of flesh; Jonah took a sliver of your soul, as well.

Choose a piece of your body that you have lost. In its place, you possess a magical artifact, a gift from Jonah with unique abilities. You can spend a Hero Point to activate your object's special ability, and it continues to function for the remainder of the Scene.

You should work with your GM to choose an appropriate artifact, but some examples are…

- A bronze-and-silver-colored spike covered in strange sigils and made of much harder material. Only as wide as a pike shaft, it replaces a leg and grows into the stump. It never tarnishes and can smash through even the thickest of doors. You can kick through the equivalent of a foot of solid wood effortlessly, and if you spend a Raise to kick another characte, he takes 1 more Wound than he would otherwise.
- A spyglass made from hollow bones and fitted with blue faceted gems. Only the gift giver can see through it like a normal spyglass, but it also lets her see through the sides of a ship or the walls of a building to see what is happening inside.
- A pair of boots made out of dried...leather. They never get wet and the wearer can walk on water or wet surfaces as if on dry land. Of course, if the wearer leans over into the water, his boots will continue to float while he falls into the water and potentially drowns.

SALTY DOG

You learned the ways of life and survival aboard the pitching deck of a ship at sea. When you make a Risk using Sailing, Theft or Intimidate, all of your dice gain +1 to their value.

SEEKER OF SORYANA (RAHURI ONLY)

You know the secret pathways to Soryana, the Isle of the Dead. When exploring the wilderness or sailing, you can spend a Hero Point to find Soryana and gain an audience with Locuo. You can plead your case before him, and if he finds your cause just he will grant you the companionship of an appropriate ancestor.

Your ancestor will follow you as a ghostly, translucent specter but interacts with the world the same as any living character (she can only walk across solid surfaces, she can lift and carry objects, etc.). She has her own free will, but will generally help you to achieve your goals. Typically, this means a Story, but some Seekers (or their ancestors) will return to Soryana earlier or later, depending on the circumstances.

Your ancestor has 3 Ranks in all Traits. You and the GM each choose 1 Background for your ancestor, granting her all the associated Advantages for that Background, as well as 2 Ranks in each Background's Skills. Your ancestor can take 10 Wounds before her soul is unraveled and lost for eternity.

Your ancestor's tie on this world is tenuous. At the beginning of each game session, you must spend a Hero Point in order to maintain your connection to your ancestor and allow her to keep her grasp on her sanity. If you do not pay this cost (either because you choose not to, or because your ancestor has wandered away from you), you lose your tie with your ancestor and she becomes an angry, insane spirit Monster (Strength 10, Monster Qualities Destructive and Horrifying, and she keeps any Advantages she had before). Her connection to your Hero is broken, and she preys upon the living.

Locuo does not take lightly to Seekers who let their ancestors become Lost, and is unlikely to view future petitions from such characters in a favorable light. If your ancestor becomes Lost, you must either find and destroy him or discover a way to return his sanity before Locuo will grant you another ancestor's aid.

This Advantage also allows you to serve as a guide for another character who wishes to visit Soryana and petition Locuo. In this case, the other character pays the Hero Point to maintain the connection, and the ancestor follows her rather than you. If a character that you guide to Soryana fails to uphold her connection or doesn't return her ancestor to the island, the responsibility falls to you to correct this.

WHISPER TO MOTHER (BUCCANEER ONLY)

Spend a Hero Point and spill a small amount of your own blood into your hand (typically the Whisperer will bite her lip or tongue, or lay a small and shallow cut on her palm). You cup your hands in front of your mouth and whisper the name of a brother or sister, or choose to address Mother. You can make a single statement or ask a question, and the other person hears you. Then you cup your hands to your ear, and you can hear her whispered response (responding does not require the expenditure of a Hero Point, although it could be quite suspicious if you are speaking to someone and then suddenly stop to whisper into your hands). Longer conversations are possible, but require an additional Hero Point for each further exchange.

5 Point Advantages

I CANNOT BE BROKEN (3 IF RAHURI)

When you spend a Hero Point to gain Bonus Dice on a Risk that directly relates to completing a Step in your Hero Story, you gain 2 Bonus Dice instead of 1.

MY WORD IS MY BOND (3 IF ARAGOSTAN)

Spend any number of Hero Points and make a promise to another character. For the rest of the Scene, when you make a Risk in pursuit of fulfilling your promise, you gain 1 Raise for each Hero Point you spent to activate this Advantage. If your promise is unfulfilled at the end of the Scene, you lose all Hero Points and you cannot gain Hero Points for the rest of the game session. If your promise is fulfilled before the end of the Scene, you gain a Hero Point. A Hero may activate this Advantage only once per Episode.

A promise made in this way should be something important, difficult or dangerous. "I promise to attend your birthday party" is not a suitable promise…unless, of course, you are making this promise to the daughter of the murderous Duke who wants you dead.

LA PALABRA (3 IF BUCCANEER)

You are familiar with the surprisingly complex code of gestures and phrases that La Bucca uses to conduct business quietly. When you speak with another character who has this Advantage, you can give that character a message that others do not understand or do not notice (unless, of course, they also have this Advantage).

Overly complex ideas cannot be communicated through this code, but simple requests or common statements are easy to understand. Some examples include "I need help," "I need to speak with you privately," or "I am an agent of the Chapters," as well as simple single-word phrases such as "yes," "no," "liar," or "thief." If the code contradicts words that are spoken, the other party will usually assume that the code is the truth.

You can teach another character how to make a single gesture in order to pass a message to a third party, but the character you teach cannot understand replies or use any phrases other than the one you show her. For this reason, most agents teach common phrases such as "I need to speak to you privately" or "I am carrying an important message" and, once they are free to speak more openly, they can then pass on more complex messages.

SEIZE YOUR GLORY (3 IF NUMANARI)

Choose a second Virtue for your Hero. Your Hero can still activate only one Virtue per game session.

WE SHARE OUR VICTORIES (3 IF JARAGUAN)

When you help another Hero complete a Step in his personal Hero Story, you gain a Hero Point. Whenever another Hero helps you complete a Step in your personal Hero Story, he gains a Hero Point.

Step 6: Arcana

For your Hero, you choose a Virtue and Hubris from the **Core Rulebook** (page 156). They do not need to be from the same card.

You may only activate your Virtue once per Session.

You may only activate your Hero's Hubris once per Session. Activating your Hubris gives you a Hero Point. The GM can offer a Hero Point to activate a Hero's Hubris, but the player may refuse. If he accepts, he gains the Hero Point and must act in accordance with his Hubris.

The Devil Jonah

Virtue: Vengeful

Activate your Virtue when you enact poetic justice, make someone pay his due or force someone to follow through on a bargain. For the next Risk, when you determine Raises, every die counts as a Raise.

Hubris: Petty

You receive a Hero Point when you refuse to aid someone until she begs youfor help or when you otherwise demonstrate your petty, vengeful nature.

The Drowned Man

Virtue: Tenacious

Activate your Virtue when you would be killed. Through some twist of fate or circumstance you survive, but are immediately and forcibly removed from the Scene.

Hubris: Doomed

Activate your Hubris when you take 1 or more Dramatic Wounds. You gain a Hero Point for each Dramatic Wound you just endured.

The Fisherman

Virtue: Humble

Activate your Virtue after you roll dice for a Risk. You lose half of your Raises. All other Heroes in the Scene with you gain as many Raises as you lost.

Hubris: Timid

You receive a Hero Point when you avoid the spotlight, insist that you're nothing more than a simple man or refuse to take credit for something that would be advantageous for you to claim as your own work.

Step 7: Stories

While Heroes work together to tell a larger story, every Hero has her own story to tell. Your Hero is no different. Stories are more than the things you tell everyone you'll accomplish one day. Stories are also the road you'll walk to get there. You can read more about the mechanics for Stories and Advancement in the **Core Rulebook** (page 159).

Nautical Stories

While most of these stories are not new, we're offering some new examples of how to tell each story with a nautical and/or piratical slant fitting for your Hero.

- Amnesia
- Cursed
- Hunting
- Lost Love
- Rivalry
- Romance
- Vendetta
- Aid (new)
- Intrigue (new)
- Rahuri Spirit Quest (new)

Amnesia

Perhaps you were pulled from the sea or found on a deserted island and remembr nothing about your past. Maybe your ex-partner wanted to cut you out on splitting some booty, or you were double-crossed by a Villain who thought the plunge into the icy water after hitting you on the head was the end of you.

Endings

- My Hero reclaims the ship he once captained.
- My Hero discovers the location of his rightful treasure and takes his fair share.
- My Hero prefers his new life over his previous life and moves on from the past.

First Steps

- Passing fisherfolk pull my body from the sea, revive me, and deliver me to their first port.
- I am given a ticket to reclaim a sea trunk that I owned before losing my memories.
- I see my face on an official wanted poster for a notorious pirate—is that me?!

Cursed

Pirates of the Caribbean revolved around a cursed treasure, and the crew and captain of the *Black Pearl* certainly suffer for it. But you always need to determine what caused the curse, what the curse effect is and what can you do to end the curse.

Endings

- My Hero returns the last piece of stolen Aztlan gold to the cursed treasure.
- My ancestor removes the curse she placed on me.
- I destroy my "gift" from the Devil Jonah with a Dracheneisen weapon.

First Steps

- I accept a gift from the Devil Jonah, and it extracts a terrible toll upon my soul.
- I shot an osprey while sailing on a voyage and realize that is why we are cursed in the doldrums.
- Hunt down the Jaragua nganga who placed this curse on you.

Hunting

Pirates are always looking for treasure and many a sailor has stories about the fish that got away. Perhaps the greatest of these is *Moby Dick* and Ahab's hunt for the great white whale. Whatever you're hunting, make it epic.

Endings

- I find the lost treasure of Captain Roberts!
- My Hero befriends Captain Redbeard despite once hunting for him.
- My Hero enters the lair of Tiburon and slays the beast that had devoured her former family.

First Steps

- I discover a tooth of the creature that killed my family embedded in my uncle.
- My Hero meets a stranger in an inn who sells me a map to the treasure of La Noche!
- The Portmaster tells me Captain Redbeard told him that he and the crew were sailing to the Atabean with my ship.

Lost Love

Captain Blood's main subplot is a story of lost love. Blood meets a wonderful woman, but she's the daughter of his archnemesis and to gain his freedom he must leave. His searching for her brings him no end of grief until the two are finally reunited.

Endings

- Discover that I no longer love the one I lost and instead love my companion who has always had my back.
- Save my lost love from the Company gallows!
- I discover the remains of my lost love buried with his treasure.

First Steps

- Read the letter that my love left for me on my bed in my rooms.
- Follow the ATC ship *Gorgon* into port after they captured my love's ship at sea.
- My love's first mate tells me that he's the only known survivor when their ship wrecked off the coast of Aztlan.

Rivalry

Tales of rivalry are replete throughout nautical stories. Captains racing one another to a specific destination and two enemies who face off against each other time and time again at sea battles are just two examples of common nautical rivalries.

Endings

- My Hero ends her rivalry with her enemy the Duchess and they become allies.
- I kill that dastardly scallywag Vanderberg and send him to Devil Jonah's locker.
- I beat Captain Pereko to Aragosta and deliver my cargo first!

First Steps

- I meet Captain Pereko and issue my challenge about reaching Aragosta first.
- Vanderberg bested me in a sword duel and gave me this scar! I must find him.
- The Duchess denounces me before the Council of Captains! I will show her I'm better than that!

Romance

The true story of Anne Bonny's love for Calico Jack Rackam is just one example of piratical romance. Will Turner and Elizabeth Swan's grand romance in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies is another. Who will your brigand love on the waters of the Atabean?

Endings

- My Hero decides she loves Captain Black—not her other suitors—and marries him.
- I watch as my love Esmeralda is hung from the gallows.
- I realize that Captain Jones is married to the sea and my love for her dies.

First Steps

- Captain Black saves me from an Atabean Trade Company reaver fleet.
- I arrive in Aragosta and meet the beautiful pirate Esmeralda.
- I return to my ship to find Captain Jones has filled my cabin with flowers.

Vendetta

Captain Jack Sparrow has a vendetta against Captain Barbossa in *Pirates of the Caribbean*. His loaded pistol is the symbol of his vendetta. Barbossa left Jack that pistol when he marooned Jack. Jack could kill himself with the pistol before dying of thirst or hunger. Jack saved it so he could kill Barbossa with it. It's a classic Vendetta story.

Endings

- My Hero embraces the darkness inside of her after killing her target and becomes a Villain!
- My Hero ruins the surviving Black Spot Fleet captains and lets the Vendetta go.
- I embrace my nemesis Thorsdottir and leap out over Spirit's Plunge Falls.

First Steps

- Get off this island I was marooned on.
- The blaggard Connolly escaped! Find out where she went.
- Thorsdottir dragged me off the cliff by Spirit's Plunge Falls, nearly killing me; I must recover.

Aid (new)

Someone needs your help. Perhaps you have a unique skill, or your ship is the only ship that can perform a particular task...or maybe you're the only one around who can help. His reasons for approaching you could be anything from destiny to desperation. Whatever his need, you've decided to help him either because you're a good hero, or he promises to pay you well.

Endings

- I drive off the Atabean Trade Company reavers for the villagers.
- I deliver the much-needed medical supplies to the partisans on Numa.
- I fight as champion for an injured Captain.

First Steps

- A group of villagers asks me and my friends to help them defend a village from reavers.
- I discover that the medical supplies I stole were bound for desperate partisans on Numa.
- My father's old friend Whitmore is leading an Explorer's Society expedition and asks me to be the Syrneth translator on the voyage.

Intrigue (new)

The Pirate Nations are filled to the brim with double-dealings, skullduggery and mischief around treasure, treason and revolution. You might decide to help keep Jaragua free, discover the truth of the Creature that guards La Bucca or even try to infiltrate the Company itself to protect the Republic of Pirates.

Endings

- I thwart an invasion of Jaragua by sabotaging a Company fleet of warships.
- I discover a new way to control the Creature off the coast of La Bucca for Allende.
- I learn Inquisition secrets from a stolen letter.

First Steps

- A crew of friendly Mawons offers to transport me and my friends back to Aragosta.
- I escape a slave ship sailing near La Bucca.
- A contact in the Invisible College begs me to transport a fugitive to the Atabean Sea.

Rahuri Spirit Quest (new)

Your dead relative has asked you to accomplish something for her. It was likely something important to her, while she was alive, that she never completed before dying. Family is everything, and perhaps she was your favorite aunt, or you her favorite child in life. Maybe she's promised you a reward for helping her clear up her unfinished business. Is it reconciling with a scorned lover? Finding a lost treasure, or exacting revenge on a surviving enemy?

Endings

- My Hero is excused from his obligation by his ancestor.
- My Hero accomplishes his ancestor's quest.
- My Hero gives up and abandons his vow to help his ancestor.

First Steps

- Meet with my ancestor and find out what she needs me to accomplish.
- Travel to the Isle of the Dead to meet with my ancestor.
- Be visited by my ancestor on a cold, lonely night to receive her demand.

Step 8: Details

Your Hero's **Reputation**, **Wealth**, and **Wounds** are all identical to those of a Théan, and work the same way. For more information, see **Core Rulebook** (page 164).

Your Hero can join a **Secret Society**, as well. All of the Societies from Théah are open to you; this book presents two new ones: **La Cosca** and **the Riroco**.

La Cosca

Founded originally in Vodacce but uprooted by a coalition of Merchant Princes, this loose confederation of criminals operates below and outside the law to protect those the law chooses not to protect. Read more about La Cosca on page 178.

The Riroco

An organization of aggressive abolitionists and Rahuri cultural traditionalists, these brave freedom fighters travel the Atabean and rid it of horrors both human and inhuman. Read more about the Riroco on page 180.

Pirate Sorceries

Théan Sorceries are far from the only magic found amongst those who sail the Atabean Sea. Pirates have access to a variety of powers; some draw upon dark and ancient magic rituals while others are modified forms of magic that were brought to the region by the many travelers who found themselves journeying through the Atabean. Either way, any Théan who expects to rule the Pirate Nations by magic alone faces serious opposition.

Charter Magic

Forty years ago, Reis and the other First Captains of Aragosta used a Syrneth ritual—signing their names in blood—to create the First Charter that birthed the Republic of Pirates and defeated the Black Spot Fleet. The original sorcerous pact was known only to Reis, but bastardizations of it have passed down through oral tradition, each version of it containing enough power to bind a crew to a similar pact.

The ritual practiced now on Aragosta may contain elements that are not necessary, but are included just in case. For example, nobody knows if it really needs to be signed at 3:00 AM or if it needs to begin in a circle around a fire, or even if the words spoken have anything to do with it. But, just to make sure…

Signing the Charter

The ritual begins with a circle around a fire on the shore. Each person involved takes a dagger from another in the circle and cuts her hand. Then, a bowl is passed around; each participant squeezes blood into the bowl and speaks her name—her *full and true* name—and then passes the bowl to the next person in line.

The bowl goes around the circle *widdershins* (counterclockwise). Each participant then places a bleeding hand into the fire—yes, *into* the fire—and squeezes blood onto the embers. If the ritual has been successful, the fire will blaze and then immediately die. Finally, all the participants sign the Charter using blood from the bowl. They must write their *full names* or the ritual will not work. Names cannot be added to the Charter once it has been signed.

How It Works

If your crew wants to sign a Charter, they must follow the ritual described above. (The GM may provide you with a slightly different ritual or may determine some of the elements aren't as important as others. Ambiguity is a feature here, not a bug.) Then, each player pays one Hero Point (NPCs may pay Danger Points instead) and the Charter's blessings and curse are upon all of you. For better or worse.

The Blessing

We suggest your make a copy of the Charter—complete with signatures—and put it in the center of the table or some other place accessible to the players. It's a part of your crew's tale now, and you all should be reminded of the weight it puts on your shoulders. If you follow the Charter true, you'll reap the rewards. But if you break your solemn vow, you'll pay a terrible price for your selfishness.

The mechanics of the Charter are simple: for each Hero or Villain who pays a Hero Point or Danger Point, the Charter gains one point into a Luck Pool. Each Luck Point is a d10. Thus, if six Heroes or Villains sign, put 6d10 Luck Points on the Charter.

At any time during the game, any player can draw as many Luck Points as he wants from the pool and add them to a single roll. However, once a d10 is used, it is gone for the rest of the game session. The Luck Pool restores at the beginning of each game session.

Those who signed the Charter receive good luck so long as they maintain the rules of the Charter. If they break any of the rules, they suffer a horrible curse.

The Curse

If a Hero or Villain breaks the agreement laid out in the Charter, she becomes "doubly damned." Most—if not all—Charters use this language specifically, a reminder that the consequences of breaking a sworn promise to your brethren are not to be taken lightly.

The curse suffered by unfaithful brigands is called "the black spot." For each *other* signature on the Charter, the character receives an additional "black spot." Thus, if there are six names on the Charter, the character receives *five* black spots (one for every other name on the Charter).

VILLAINS AND CHARTERS

You'll notice that we've included rules for adding Villains to a Charter. The Pirate Nations aren't for the faint of heart—you might find yourself in need of some Villainous aid to defeat the worst murderers and criminals who sail the Atabean Sea.

But beware! Villains who have signed a Charter aren't Heroes. The moment you forget their Villainous nature is the best opportunity they have to stab you in the back.

The Black Spots

Listed below are the curses a character could receive for having one or more black spots. The GM selects which effects apply for each spot the character receives, but he can let the player make the choice if he wishes. For each black spot, the player may:

- Lose 1 rank from one Trait.
- Lose 2 ranks from one Skill.
- Lose any Advantage (2 Points or less).
- Pay an extra Hero Point to gain the benefit of a single Advantage (3 Points or higher), in addition to whatever other cost is usually associated with activation.

The only way to free yourself from the curse is going to each other signer of the Charter and pleading forgiveness. To gain forgiveness, each participant must cut her hands and hold them together, the supplicant asking, "Do you forgive me?" and the other saying, "I do." If forgiveness is granted, then one black spot disappears and your Traits, Skills and Advantages return as normal, freeing you from (part of) the curse's effects.

If all members of the Charter die, the Charter burns with a blue flame. Since so many Charters are kept in the Bucket o' Blood on Aragosta, the pirates who drink in the tavern always observe a moment of silence when a Charter burns. Most say it's bad luck to sign a new Charter the same day that an old Charter turns to dust, but the bravest on Aragosta dismiss such superstition, even going so far as to mix in a bit of ash from the old Charter in with the blood used to create a new pact with a new crew.

Kap Sèvi

"We have long made deals with Lwa. But always outside. The Thèans helped us bring them inside."

Back in Thèah, sorcerers often bargain with powers from outside of Terra. The Žynys make pacts with them, the Knights inherit their mantles, and those touched by Matushka have felt her might imposed upon them. But none of them do what the practitioners of Kap Sèvi (kahp SAY-vee) do. Known as the Sèvitè (SAY-vee-tay), they are the brave (or desperate) few who set part of their soul aside, inviting these forces into the hollow where it once resided.

The Lwa

The cornerstone of Kap Sèvi is the worship of ancient spirits called Lwa (lo-WAH) and a practice tracing back to West Ifri called Kurwa (kur-va). The Sèvitè not only expanded what the Kurwa priestesses could do, but have found new, perhaps hidden, aspects of the Lwa. While the relationship between Kap Sèvi, Kurwa, and the Lwa appears to be straightforward, some Sèvitè believe they have only scratched the surface of the Lwas' power.

In West Ifri, only female priestesses practiced Kurwa, making offerings to the Lwa in exchange for favors. When Kurwa believers found themselves enslaved and brought to Jaragua, the brutality of their captors drove the believers to petition the Lwa in a new way: dismissing a piece of their soul and making room for the Lwa to fill that void.

This invitation for possession helped the believers tap into the Lwa's darker, more vengeful, aspects and also offered a modicum of reprieve from the waking nightmare they suffered as slaves. It was in this time of pure desperation the Lwa sensed the anguish of their people and opened doors for men to summon the Lwa as well as women. Thus, the practice of Kap Sèvi was born from this torment and its use often reflects the dire circumstances the Sèvitè found themselves enduring as slavery became a routine practice for the Company in the Atabean Sea.

How It Works

When you acquire the Sorcery Advantage, you pick a Lwa you know how to summon along with the Gran Met (grahn-met), or power, you know how to ask for. Asking a Lwa for the wrong Gran Met or asking for a Gran Met without knowing which Lwa to ask can cost a Sèvitè his soul. Each time you acquire the Sorcery Advantage, you learn one Gros (groh) Gran Met, or Great Power, and two Ti (tee) Gran Met, or Little Powers. These Gran Met can either be from a new Lwa or a Lwa the Sèvitè already knows how to summon.

Once the Sèvitè summons a Lwa, she invites that Lwa inside her body by offering parts of herself to the spirit. If the Sèvitè wishes to use a Lwa's Gros, she must offer up her Virtue; if the Sèvitè wishes to use a Lwa's Ti, she must offer up one of her Quirks. While the Lwa occupies her body, whatever was offered up is beyond the reach of the Sèvitè and cannot be activated or invoked.

A Sèvitè can only ask a Lwa for one Gros and two Ti at a single time. A Sèvitè can offer more of himself to the Lwa after the initial summoning, but once power has been given to the Lwa, it may not be taken away. The Sèvitè's Virtue and Quirks return only once the Lwa has departed.

Hosting a Lwa

Once invited, the Lwa remains inside the Sèvitè's body until sunrise the following morning. There are no known ways to drive out an invited Lwa and there are no reports of a Lwa ever departing from a host early. Once the pact is made, the Sèvitè must play host to the Lwa until the next sunrise, with his own soul tucked away to make room for the Lwa.

The Lwa do not enjoy sharing a host. In fact, a Sèvitè can only be ridden by a single Lwa at a time. The riding Lwa will block any attempts to summon a second Lwa and then refuse the Sèvitè access to her Gran Met. Not only does this strip the Sèvitè of any powers the Lwa was granting but also leaves her without her Virtue or Quirks until sunrise.

Interestingly, however, a Lwa can ride multiple Sèvitè at the same time. Some speculate this is because the Lwa don't fully inhabit a Sèvitè. Only a piece of the Lwa reaches inside of a Sèvitè, leaving plenty of power to journey into other souls.

The Lwa

The following section lists only a few of the hundreds of worshiped Lwa. These five are by far the most popular and prominent Lwa in Jaragua, but they should not be regarded as a full and complete list.

Badagris (baah-dah-GREE)

When Badagris appears, she often wears a leather apron, carries a set of tongs and smells of soot and hot metal. In a moment, however, her visage may change to that of the warrior. Clad in armor and wielding a blackened sword of unearthly construction, Badagris controls justice, protection, war, violence, fire and steel. Her name means "She Tore" and while she's known for killing any that would offend her, she's also a respected craftswoman and is renowned for helping others. She is the sister of Jakuta and often forces her brother to assist her in her patronage.

Gran Met

A Sèvitè inviting Badagris to ride him tends to be hot to the touch. He becomes angry quickly, but his rage can be just as quickly doused if he can be shown how people are making the world a better place. Sèvitè ridden by Badagris are prone to acts of charity and goodwill or sudden bursts of violence. Both appease Badagris.

Hammer **GROS**

To Badagris, the human body is another tool to be used; when your tool breaks, you do not throw it out. Instead, you reforge it in the fires and seal the break. While ridden by Badagris, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to instantly heal all the wounds between her third and fourth Dramatic Wound, including the third and fourth Dramatic Wounds.

Nail **GROS**

For many, there comes a time when their presence has been overstayed. For those people, Badagris will gladly craft the coffin spike and drive the nail into their bodies. When ridden by Badagris, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point while causing another character's third Dramatic Wound to immediately render that character Helpless. A Sèvitè can activate this Gros only once per session.

The Hunger **TI**

The flames of the forge take constant tending: a well-fed fire produces the strongest steel. While ridden by Badagris, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to consume *anything* and gain nourishment from it. Dirt. Metal. Wood. Anything that can fit into the Sèvitè will nourish him.

Unchained **TI**

Badagris knows the weaknesses in every chain; she cannot be held. While ridden by Badagris, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to escape from any shackle, prison or restraint.

Blackened Skin **TI**

The heat of the forge has covered Badagris's body in callouses, helping her tolerate the heat of the fires and remain steadfast while at her station. While ridden by Badagris, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to withstand any fire or flame. The Sèvitè does not take any damage from any source of heat.

Blackened Soul **TI**

The heat of battle has covered Badagris's body in scars, helping her to remain straight-backed and uncowed while enduring the pain of injury. While ridden by Badagris, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to temporarily overcome being Helpless. Instead of being able to take only a single Action, the Sèvitè can act as normal for a full Round while Helpless. In addition, during this normal Round, the Sèvitè gains two extra dice for any Risks she attempts. However, the effort of Blackening a Soul is exhausting to Badagris and she can muster these effects only once per Episode.

Bawon Gé (BA-won GAY)

Nearly universally depicted wearing a top hat (a fashion no doubt picked up from the Vestenmennavenjar traders), black coat, and either a skull-like face or an actual skull for a face, Bawon Gé is the Lwa of death, tombs, gravestones and cemeteries. Legends say that she was the first person to be wrongfully condemned to death and it's because of that miscarriage of justice that she was given her station among the Lwa. She is married to Baron Lakwa, another Lwa who helps Bawon Gé in her patronage.

Gran Met

A Sèvitè inviting Bawon Gé to ride her often shouts obscenities and spits. Gé can be temperamental: if presented with food she does not like, she will try to bite the arms of the Sèvitè. To keep Bawon Gé in check, the Sèvitè must remind her of the pleasures of life, often with rum and cigars.

No Grev **GROS**

It is said that no one can die until Bawon Gé digs their grave. While ridden by Gé, the Sèvitè decides which graves are dug and which are not. While ridden by Bawon Gé, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to protect any character from being killed. As long as Bawon Gé rides the Sèvitè, the selected character cannot die, even when he is rendered Helpless.

Lamèci (la-may-see) **GROS**

Sometimes a person does not die when it is his time. Instead, he lingers among the living bringing misery and sorrow to his closest friends and family. When this happens, the family often prays to Bawon Gé to take their loved one before his proper time. While ridden by Bawon Gé, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to kill a willing Helpless character. This does not cause Corruption.

Eternal Guardian **TI**

As the patron of the dead, Gé is also responsible for their earthly remains. While ridden by Bawon Gé, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to protect a corpse from the effects of Sorcery, including Kap Sèvi. For example, bodies touched by the Eternal Guardian cannot be raised as specters by Hexenwerk and the Lwa cannot communicate with them.

Sacred Ground **TI**

Beyond securing gravesites, Gé's purview also includes keeping the holy sites of the Lwa safe from outside forces. While ridden by Bawon Gé, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to consecrate a small area. Sorcery cannot be used while standing on the Sacred Ground; any Hero Points spent to use a sorcerous power are returned to the sorcerer.

Windows into the Soul **TI**

When the dead arrive off schedule, sometimes Bawon Gé finds out what killed them and ensures things are set right. While ridden by Bawon Gé, the Sèvitè may touch a corpse and spend a Hero Point to see—through the corpse's eyes—the last few moments of her life.

Cemetery Walls **TI**

Many believe the walls of a cemetery are built to keep out the living, but the truth is that they also keep in the dead. While ridden by Bawon Gé, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to secure a wall. As long as the Sèvitè ridden by Bawon Gé stays within the confines of the wall, nothing inhuman may cross the wall, neither entering or leaving.

Mareaux (may-ROH)

Some Sèvitè believe Mareaux is two Lwa—a brother and sister—but anyone who has been ridden by Mareaux quickly realizes the truth. Mareaux's gender is undefined and constantly in flux. This can sometimes lead to male Sèvitè taking on feminine traits or female Sèvitè picking up masculine habits. Mareaux holds power over the night, secrets, darkness, mysteries, truth and reason. Other Lwa see Mareaux as a divine child and go out of their way to help in the completion of their duties.

Gran Met

A Sèvitè inviting Mareaux to ride him suddenly sees the world in a new light. Bias and belief are stripped away, and a kind of universal understanding washes over him. As such, the Sèvitè becomes lost in his own thoughts and tends to wander off. As enlightening as Mareaux's perspective can be, it is sometimes seen as a distraction.

Egregore (EHG-rah-gohr) **GROS**

Those closest to Mareaux often find Mareaux's voice inside their heads. While ridden by Mareaux, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to include someone in her thoughtform. Everyone with access to the thoughtform may communicate freely (though nonverbally), as long as Mareaux rides the Sèvitè. After Mareaux departs, the network ceases to function.

Unafraid **TI**

Mareaux will have you believe there is nothing to fear in the darkness. While ridden by Mareaux, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to ignore any and all fear, including supernaturally inflicted Fear caused by Monsters, Sorcery or other magical effects. Note that this does not convey the same resistance to your companions.

Nuit Jumeaux (noo-EE ZHOO-moh) **GROS**

Mareaux containst mysteries. While ridden by Mareaux, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to turn his own shadow sentient. The shadow becomes semi-corporeal, obeying simple commands. The shadow is capable of scouting, eavesdropping and other such activities, but can't pick up objects or interact with other people. If it takes a dangerous action, it is Strength 5 (rolling 5 dice) and spends Raises accordingly. If it takes a single Wound, it instantly returns to the Sèvitè and refuses to be reanimated until the next sundown.

KAP SÈVI A RELIGION?

Kap Sèvi isn't a traditional religion in the Théan sense. Besides the obvious borrowing of beliefs, spirits and traditions from multiple religions, Kap Sèvi doesn't have a creed, a set of books or even a unified oral tradition. Kap Sèvi is more an attitude about the way the world is: in Vaticine terms, it's more of a science than a religion. Practitioners know about the Lwa and what they can do to influence them and use them to gain power. Kap Sèvi is more of a way of acting than a set of beliefs or a creed one tries to practice or deities one worships. It is a set of rules anyone can practice to gain a powerful benefit in the same sense one follows certain rules and practices to turn a lump of ore into a well-crafted piece of jewelry. Of course, telling a practitioner that Kap Sèvi isn't a religion might be a good way to start a fight.

Unknowable **TI**

Mareaux has studied the shadows of the world, sussing out the world's secrets. While ridden by Mareaux, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to peer into the shadows to see a place she cannot currently reach. The Sèvitè can use this power to read a ledger hidden in a desk drawer or watch an illicit act being performed under the cover of night. The Sèvitè must know where to look and the area must be completely shadowed. The Sèvitè can't see anything in light while using Unknowable.

Unforgettable **TI**

Things happen in the light that Mareaux will never forget. While ridden by Mareaux, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to commit anything to memory and never, ever, forget it. This gives the Sèvitè perfect recall, even when a sorcery or trauma would remove the memory.

Unforgivable **TI**

Things happen in the night that Mareaux refuses to let you forget. While ridden by Mareaux, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to commit something to another's memory. The scene is burned into her brain until the day she dies (and perhaps even longer), resistant to all attempts to remove it.

Papa Ahron (AH-hrohn)

Sometimes called the Silent Lwa or the First Father, Papa Ahron appears as an old man carrying a cane, wearing a broad-brimmed hat and smoking a pipe. He's always accompanied by a dog he calls Ati-Gbon or Atibon. Papa Ahron holds domain over missing people, silence, confusion, the lost and the Lwa. He is seen as a father, or grandfather, figure to all of the Lwa, but never asks his children for help in his duties.

Gran Met

A Sèvitè who invites Papa Ahron to ride him finds speaking difficult. He is prone to forgetting words or grammar and can develop speech impediments like stutters or lisps. Various Sèvitè have found these problems lessen when in the presence of a dog or if his lips are moist and his thirsts quenched.

The Lost Voice **GROS**

While Papa Ahron never speaks for himself, he speaks for those who cannot. While ridden by Papa Ahron, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to speak as proxy for anyone, living or dead. The Sèvitè must be able to touch either the target's body or something of extreme personal value belonging to the target. There must be another participant to join the conversation, as the Sèvitè cannot talk to herself. This does not give the Sèvitè any insights into what her target desires, it only allows the Sèvitè to act as a vessel for the target to speak through.

Li Bliye (lee BLEE-yay) **GROS**

Memory is a tricky thing and people tend to forget more than they remember. For Papa Ahron, this can be a great advantage. While ridden by Papa Ahron, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to vanish from memory for a Scene. Anyone interacting with the Sèvitè can see him, speak with him, and hear him, but as soon as the Sèvitè leaves, she forgets everything about the Sèvitè ever being there.

Lucidité (lu-SEED-ee-TAY) **TI**

The stories say that Papa Ahron, being the oldest and wisest of the Lwa, knows where all his children are at all times. That when he closes his eyes he sees through theirs. While ridden by Papa Ahron, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to form a connection with any other person ridden by Papa Ahron. The Sèvitè knows the general location of the other possessed, detects her current mood and can see through her eyes.

Crossroads **TI**

Among his many powers, Papa Ahron also acts as gatekeeper to the Lwa. He alone decides when a mortal is allowed to speak with the Lwa and will quickly grab away his voice if he speaks the wrong words. While ridden by Papa Ahron, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to ask the Lwa a single question and gain unnatural insight into the world. The Lwa are obligated to answer honestly, as lying to Papa Ahron is a serious offense. The GM must provide a direct answer to the question asked, but is not required to elaborate.

San Yopa Sound **TI**

Silence is golden and Papa Ahron knows not to waste it. While ridden by Papa Ahron, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to move without making noise for a Scene. The Sèvitè can still be seen, smelled, or felt, but no audible presence can be detected. The Sèvitè must still be subtle while using San Yopa Sound; the Lwa cannot hide actions that would be egregiously obvious such as firing a gun next to someone's head or screaming in her face.

San Yopa Sight **TI**

There are times when a father wants to see but not be seen, and Papa Ahron has mastered that craft. While ridden by Papa Ahron, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to move without being seen for a Scene. The Sèvitè can still be heard, smelled, or felt, but no visual presence can be detected. The Sèvitè must still be subtle while using San Yopa Sight; the Lwa cannot hide actions that would be egregiously obvious such as stabbing someone in the chest or throwing handfuls of flour into the air.

Sousson (SO-sahn)

Descriptions of Sousson are sparse and most Sèvitè agree it's because of how vile he appears. Sousson is often emaciated, with thinning hair and sallow skin, and is covered in sores, boils, warts and seeping wounds. Despite his appearance, Sousson is a jolly Lwa. His patronage extends to disease, injury, mental illness and perfumes. While having no wife, Sousson has many children. All share his appearance and he often has them help him in his duties.

Gran Met

A Sèvitè inviting Sousson to ride him develops blisters, sores and rashes; however, these skin conditions are purely cosmetic and cause no suffering to the Sèvitè. Unlike with the other Lwa, the Sèvitè rarely has a need to placate Sousson, as he seems to be inexplicably exuberant at all times.

Zonbi (ZAHN-bee) **GROS**

There are many myths and stories about Kap Sèvi's ability to animate the dead. Unfortunately, if there is a Lwa with that power, she has not made herself known to the Sèvitè. The closest thing comes in the power of Sousson to create Zonbi. While ridden by Sousson, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to mask any signs of life in a Helpless person. His heart rate slows, his eyes become cloudy and his muscles stiffen. He also becomes susceptible to suggestion and can be directed to taking simple actions on the instruction of the Sèvitè.

Unlikely Allies **GROS**

They say everywhere Sousson goes, he is in the company of friends, yet he leaves nothing but enemies in his wake. While ridden by Sousson, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to instantly befriend anyone. This includes Villains. However, once Sousson has left the Sèvitè, this effect fades and the target may resent the Sèvitè, depending on how she was treated.

Purify **TI**

Purity is the biggest reason Sèvitè worship Sousson. His gift for clearing a body of illness, both physical and mental, is coveted by many who seek the Sèvitè for help. While ridden by Sousson, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to wash away any non-supernaturally induced ailments, diseases or illnesses a person is experiencing. This does not heal Wounds and cannot be used to cure diseases or illnesses resulting from Monsters or Sorcery.

Mask of the Pariah **TI**

They say no one looks a leper in the eye. While ridden by Sousson, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to make other people avoid him as if he had the plague. The Sèvitè's appearance grows more horrific and he produces an aura that causes people to avoid eye contact and steer clear of the Sèvitè's path. If a Hero wishes to even approach someone wearing the Mask of the Pariah, he must either spend a Hero Point or, if part of a Sequence, spend a Raise; any physical interaction requires an additional Raise on top of whatever the Action itself would cost.

Cleanse **TI**

Sousson believes prevention is often the best medicine. While ridden by Sousson, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to remove any contaminant from any object, material or substance. This can be used on bedsheets infected with the plague or water carrying harmful bacteria.

Bon Zanmi (bohn zan-MEE) **TI**

A life of curing disease often leaves many people grateful, and Sousson is always able to find someone he once helped. While ridden by Sousson, the Sèvitè may spend a Hero Point to know someone nearby that she's treated previously and who now owes her a favor.

Mystírios

Numa's magical traditions are quite different than those on mainland Théah. Practitioners of Sanderis and Glamour derive their power from supernatural beings, and are thus (to varying degrees) beholden to the desires and whims of those beings. The *strega* of Vodacce manipulate external forces to their advantage. Eisen *hexe* blend together various magical components to achieve a desired effect.

The *mystai* of Numa allow themselves to be inspired by the tales of the gods, but the gods do not grant them power. The power of a *mystírio* comes from the human spirit; the stories of the gods simply reveal a Hero's hidden potential and show him how to use it.

The Heroes of Numanari epics are deeply flawed beings with limitless potential. The power of the human soul is remarkable, and even the power of the gods themselves pales in comparison to the potential of a mortal's spirit.

Many of these stories are about such mortals who best the gods, either in battle or through cleverness, and the immortals being thoroughly impressed with the wits or courage of their mortal counterparts. The message of these stories is clear—anything is possible, if you have the conviction to strive for what you wish.

How It Works

When a Hero purchases this Sorcery, he chooses one of the Numanari gods and learns that god's mystírio, or mystery. This process involves a long, guided ritual where secrets of the particular god's devotees are shared. Each mystírio also comes with an *apokálypsi* ("revelation") a secret that only the devotees to that god are privy to that relates to the god's motivation or true desires.

Once the ritual is complete, the Hero becomes a *mystai*, one who is initiated in the mysteries of the god. She learns some insight into the god's wisdom and grows to better understand her own capabilities. This unlocks a portion of her limitless Heroic potential, granting her capabilities that may be less flashy than the effects of other sorcerous traditions…but are no less potent.

Activating Mystírios

To activate a mystírio, a Hero spends a Hero Point and gains a benefit that persists until the end of the Scene or until the Hero activates the associated apokálypsi (at no cost), whichever comes first. Each mystírio may be activated only once per Scene, and a Hero can only have only a single mystírio active at a time. An apokálypsi can only be activated after a Hero has activated a mystírio, and thus can be activated only once per Scene (or less frequently, depending on the mystírio).

Dithyrambos, God of Plenty

Dithyrambos' story is one of pain and regeneration. The God of Plenty's tale teaches mystai that pain is temporary, and that a Hero must endure if she wishes to triumph. Even the wrath of the father of the gods cannot crush the body (or the spirit) of the God of Plenty. He returns every spring from the dark of winter, and his mystai learn to claw their way back to their feet the same way.

Mystírio of Dithyrambos

Each time you take an Action, you heal a single Wound. If this mystírio would cause you to heal a Dramatic Wound, your apokálypsi activates immediately and this effect ends.

Apokálypsi of Dithyrambos

On your Action, you can activate this apokálypsi to immediately heal one Dramatic Wound.

Potnia Agrotera, Goddess of the Hunt and War

The mystírio of Potnia Agrotera is perhaps the best-kept secret amongst all of the hiereia of Numa. Potnia's secret story of love and sacrifice is sometimes seen at odds with her more common portrayal as a brash, bloodthirsty goddess of war and battle. What her adherents grow to understand, however, is that if you truly wish to fight for something you must love it, and must be willing to sacrifice for it. And what greater sacrifice could be made of a warrior than to give your life—immortal or mortal—in order to save another?

Mystírio of Potnia

When you spend Raises during a Risk to prevent Wounds to another Hero, you cause 1 Wound to whatever character tried to harm him.

Apokálypsi of Potnia

On your Action during an Action Sequence when you use Aim, Brawl, or Weaponry as your Approach, you may activate this apokálypsi instead of spending a Raise to take an Action. This also means that you can act again immediately—your effective number of Raises hasn't gone down, so it is still your turn.

HECTEBA

JAILED GODDESS OF MYSTERIES, MURDER AND DARK MAGIC

Hecteba is the patron goddess of bloody-handed killers, those who take pleasure in robbing others of life. The worship of Hecteba is outlawed in many parts of Numa, and for good reason—murder is considered something of a sacrament to her adherents, a holy act of devotion to be celebrated and admired. Indeed, the learning of Hecteba's mystirio culminates in a cold-blooded ritual killing, performed by the new would-be mystai of the Goddess of Murder.

This mystírio **may be learned only by Villains.**

MYSTÍRIO OF HECTEBA

When you make an Aim, Brawl, or Weaponry Risk, you can increase the face value of your dice based on your Strength. For example, if you have a total of 6 Strength, you can increase the face value of any of your dice by a total of 6 (increasing a single die of 1 to a 7, or increasing a 4 to a 6 and a 5 to a 9).

APOKÁLYPSI OF HECTEBA

When you announce your intention to commit murder, you may activate this apokálypsi. If you do so, you only need to spend only a single Raise in order to succeed in your murder (meaning you may still take additional Actions during this Round, although your murder still isn't complete until the very end). A mystai can activate this only once per Episode.

Supati, Diety of Writing, Language and Magic

Supati is the patron of scholars and tricksters alike. Devotees to the enigmatic Supati place great value upon knowledge, especially when it has practical applications and clearly benefits others. While more esoteric knowledge can be useful, adherents of Supati are less interested in purely academic studies.

Mystírio of Supati

Whenever you make a Wits Risk, any dice that roll a 1 may be Re-Rolled, but you must use the new result. This effect takes place before any other Re-Rolls you earn (such as from Skill Ranks or Advantages).

Apokálypsi of Supati

On your Action during a Risk, you may activate this apokálypsi. Any Heroes (including yourself) who are under Pressure may take an immediate Action (although they must still spend Raises to do so, as normal).

Salacio, God of the Underworld and the Sea

Salacio is, in many ways, the patron god of commitment. Once the course of the river is set, nothing short of divine intervention shall change it. This makes him simultaneously reliable, at least insofar as completing a task, as well as incredibly stubborn. This, in addition to his loyalty to Zendio (illustrated by the lengths to which he was willing to go in order to defeat Hecteba), are the god of the deep's most defining traits, and the truth of his mystírio: stay the course, maintain faith in yourself and your actions, and nothing shall knock you from your course.

Mystírio of Salacio

You are immune to Pressure.

Apokálypsi of Salacio

You may activate this apokálypsi when you make a Resolve Risk. You may Re-Roll any dice that roll a value lower than your Resolve Rank, but you must use the new result. Dice Re-Rolled in this way cannot have their values further modified in any way and cannot be Re-Rolled by other effects (such as high Ranks in Skills or other Advantages).

Theonoa Dianoia, Goddess of Craft and Wisdom

Theonoa prides herself on knowing just where to move to tip the battlefield in her favor—be that battlefield literal or a formal state banquet. The mystírio that she teaches shows them that her adherents must always adapt. And her apokálypsi? When you can't win by playing by the rules…change them.

Mystírio of Theonoa

You may spend Raises during Action or Dramatic Sequences to modify the timing of an Opportunity or Consequence. Spending 1 Raise allows you to change the timing by 1 (for example, if a Consequence occurs on 3, you can spend a Raise to make it occur on 4 or 2). A mystai may influence an event this way only once per Round, but can influence as many separate events as she wishes (so long as she has Raises to spend to do so).

Apokálypsi of Theonoa

When you use Empathy, Scholarship or Warfare as your Approach in a Dramatic Sequence, you may activate this apokálypsi. You immediately gain Raises equal to your Ranks in the Skill that you chose as your Approach. A mystai may activate this apokálypsi only once per Episode.

Caledon, God of Medicine, the Home and Family

The mystírio of this beloved god is one of simple mercy and giving. The apokálypsi tells the full story, however—each hurt that Caledon heals, each home he gives his protection to and each union he blesses takes something out of him. He cannot do this forever.

Mystírio of Caledon

Any Hero in a Scene with you who is under Pressure (including yourself) may have the additional Raise required to take an Action paid by any other Hero in the Scene.

Apokálypsi of Caledon

Activate this apokálypsi to allow all other Heroes in the Scene to heal all Wounds on the current tier of their Death Spiral and 1 Dramatic Wound. You take 1 Dramatic Wound. A mystai can activate this apokálypsi only once per Episode.

Mohwoo

A decade after the last of the Black Spots were finally sent to the Devil Jonah's locker, a castaway was picked up by Zwarte Hoop's ship, *Angstrdroom*, near the eastern coast of Aztlan. She didn't speak a word of any known language, and even the Jaraguan and Aztlan crew members found her unfamiliar, as her language and clothing were strange to everyone.

When she undressed to wash the salt water from her body, the crew was shocked to see nearly every inch of her body was illustrated with colorful ink that seemed alive. The fish sparkled as they swam through flowing water of her side, on her shoulders the monkey's fur seemed to ripple in the sun, and the stars and night sky on her back sparkled between the bamboo that swayed in an apparent night breeze.

Soon after, she impressed the crew by saving Zwarte Hoop as he was dragged to the deck by rigging and a broken spar. She leapt from the deck to the ratlines to the falling Zwarte Hoop and pushed them both overboard to prevent them from crashing to the deck. They were dragged under by the rigging, but she continued to breathe air into his mouth for long minutes while he untangled them. Her uncanny agility and ability to hold her breath for longer than even the most experienced pearl divers impressed and amazed everyone, especially Zwarte Hoop.

When asked how she could do these things, she simply pointed to her tattoos and said, "Whoa Sherr Whenshen." Wenshen stuck as her name, and *mohwoo* was her magic.

How It Works

Unlike other Sorcery disciplines, mohwoo has no national ties. Any Hero can harness the power of mohwoo, provided she earns the respect of Madam Wenshen or one of her *huajia*. A Hero who already possesses a Sorcery can choose to purchase mohwoo, but she loses access to her previous method of Sorcery when the mystical tattoo is complete.

When a Hero purchases this Sorcery, he gains a tattoo from Madam Wenshen (or one of her huajia, her trusted and skilled students). The process of gaining a mohwoo is a mystical interview, not unlike a Vodacce *strega's* reading of cards or a Vesten *seidr* peering into the future.

The mohwoo chosen for the recepient is always something that suits the recipient—referred to from then on as *qing* (king)—as well as something that he may need. It isn't uncommon for a qing to request a particular tattoo, but his huajia to insist on something different that, much later, the qing realizes was the best choice all along.

Gaining a mohwoo takes longer and is more painful than a typical tattoo. Mohwoo's strange and mystical inks burn more, and the custom needle sets are sharper in some places and not as sharp in others. At several points in the process, the mohwoo is wrapped in a foul-smelling seaweed for an hour to let the inks "set in." A simple tattoo may be completed in a few days, but larger tattoos take most of a week.

When you first purchase the Sorcery Advantage, you choose one mohwoo. You gain the major and the minor version of that mohwoo. You also choose one additional mohwoo, and you learn the minor version of that mohwoo, as well.

Each additional time you purchase Mohwoo as a sorcery, you gain two new minor mohwoo that you do not already possess, two major mohwoo associated with minor mohwoo you already possess or one of each (a minor and a major).

Activating Mohwoo

To activate the power of a mohwoo, a Hero invokes the tattoo in some way (sometimes by touching the tattoo or muttering a particular phrase that has personal import, others by simply concentrating for a moment—the process for activation is always unique and personal) and spends a Hero Point. Some mohwoo may have an additional cost or some restriction as to when they may be activated, but this cost or circumstance is always in addition to the Hero Point expenditure.

The nature of a mohwoo's power isn't fully understood (many believe that even Madame Wenshen doesn't know how it works, only how to make it work), but the tattoos sometimes have a mind of their own.

A GM may always spend a Danger Point to affect a qing in the following ways.

- Cause the tattoos to animate, glow, or otherwise become obviously supernatural. The qing cannot conceal her tattoos or their magical nature from anyone who sees them. The tattoos will glow through clothing, crawl out from beneath a shirt sleeve, or otherwise make themselves known. This effect lasts for the Scene.
- Cause the environment to react in a way that is appropriate to your tattoo. A qing with the shark tattoo might find himself in the midst of a slew of sharks, while one who possesses the wind mohwoo might have the window she just snuck through slammed shut by a sudden gust. This effect is instantaneous, although individual effects might persist longer (the slew of sharks appear more or less immediately, but they don't leave as quickly).
- Apply Pressure to the qing to act in accordance with her mohwoo for one Round. Taking any Action other than something explicitly within your mohwoo's nature costs 2 Raises, rather than one. A qing with the crab mohwoo will find it difficult to do anything other than directly protect and defend, while one who possesses the mark of the fish would seek to discover a secret at the cost of everything else.

Fish

The fish mohwoo represents a search or discovery, usually one that is personal or that the seeker is not even aware of. This could be the revelation of a truth from the person's past or a journey of self-discovery and understanding.

Minor

The Hero does not need to breathe for the rest of the Scene. She cannot be choked or strangled, she cannot suffocate or drown, and airborne poisons do not affect her.

Major

Activate this mohwoo in place of spending a Raise during an Action or Dramatic Sequence when your task involves swimming, or when being in water (at least half-submerged) would be advantageous to the Action you wish to take.

Crab

The crab is a protector and guardian. This mohwoo is a sign that the Hero places great importance on the guardianship of some thing or person, often to the exclusion of all other things. This could be something physical (such as a Hero's young daughter or new husband) or something more ephemeral (such as a Hero's sense of personal honor).

Minor

Activate this mohwoo when you spend Raises to take Wounds in place of another character. The Wounds you take are reduced by half (rounding down, to a minimum of 1) before you take them; they may be cancelled by spending Raises or trigger a Riposte or Parry (as normal).

Major

When you activate this mohwoo, you can prevent another character's Murder by spending only a single Raise to protect the character, rather than all of your Raises (**Core Rulebook**, page 181). A qing may activate this mohwoo only once per Episode.

Squid

The squid has an unbreakable grip, and will die before it lets go. This often applies to a Hero with the squid mohwoo, but less literally. Such a Hero often finds herself becoming attached quickly and having difficulty letting go of others, or admitting that she is wrong. She is often described as stubborn by enemies, and steadfast by friends.

Minor

Activate this mohwoo when you spend a Raise to apply Pressure. In order to act against your Pressure, another character must spend 2 additional Raises instead of 1. A qing may use this ability only once per Episode.

Major

Activate this mohwoo when you deal Wounds during a Brawl Risk. These Wounds cannot be negated except by supernatural means (such as Sorcery, artifacts, or something similar). A qing may use this mohwoo only once per Scene.

Anchor

The anchor is representative of a qing who takes on burdens so that others don't have to. He is reliable and self-sacrificing. He literally throws himself into the deep so that others will not be lost, regardless of who those others are. This is contrasted with the crab, whose motivation in being a guardian is often personal.

Minor

Activate this mohwoo to allow another Hero in this Scene to gain a Hero Point. A qing may activate this mohwoo only once per Scene.

Major

Activate this mohwoo and select another individual. You are bound to the person you choose, and the two of you always know the direction and distance to the other, requiring nothing more than a moment's concentration. This effect lasts until the next sunrise or sunset, whichever comes first.

Turtle

The turtle is cautious and wise, moving only when her course is certain. This mohwoo is indicative of a thoughtful and careful individual who knows that doing something right is more important than doing something quickly.

Minor

Spend your first Raise in a Round to activate this mohwoo. For the rest of the Round, you take 1 fewer Wound from all sources.

Major

After you activate this mohwoo, you may negate the Wounds inflicted on you from any single attack. You must activate this mohwoo on your turn (spending a Raise to do so). A qing may activate this mohwoo only once per Scene.

Shark

The shark is a restless hunter. An aggressive and decisive Hero is often given the shark mohwoo when she prizes immediate action over a more passive "wait and see" approach to problem solving. The shark can also represent a Hero who is chasing something, as opposed to the fish who wishes to discover something.

Minor

When you activate this mohwoo, no characters can successfully avoid your notice (either by making a Hide Risk or similar means) unless they have a supernatural ability to do so, such as Sorcery or an artifact. If they do have such means, the two effects cancel one another out—they can attempt to Hide as normal, and you can attempt to Notice them as normal. A qing may activate this mohwoo only once per Episode.

Major

Activate this mohwoo and specify a single individual as your prey. The GM will tell you the direction and approximate distance to that person. Any physical Risk you take in order to pursue your prey gains 1 Bonus Die (such as if you need to make an Athletics Risk to sprint after him, or a Brawl Risk to grapple with him). This lasts until the end of the Scene, unless you pay another Hero Point to maintain the effect. A qing may activate this mohwoo only once per session.

Swords, Ships & Secrets

Pirates who roam the Seven Seas seeking gold and plunder harbor a multitude of skills and resources, all turned toward survival on the open waters. With the Company, Reis and Fevrier searching the Atabean for vulnerable pirates, privateers and pirate hunters haunting Theah's seas, and the Devil Jonah waiting down below, Heroic pirates must use their swords, ships and secrets to stay one step ahead of those who would put an end to freedom.

Foreign Duelists

The relationship between the schools of La Bucca, Jaragua, Numa and the Rahuri is much less defined than those of mainland Théah. This is something that the Duelist's Guild is actively seeking to change—by and large, the Guild respects the talents and traditions of these other places and wishes to integrate them as equals to the other Styles of Théah.

The Duelist's Guild has two primary tactics that it employs to achieve this integration. First, they have begun to establish guild halls in these far-flung lands, offering masters who teach and their students memberships in the Guild so long as they prove their skill at the blade. The Guild goes to great lengths to make certain that they approach such teachers with respect and reverence. The Guild *wants* them to join; a larger guild means more members, more resources, and…more Guilders.

Second, the Guild uses its connections and influence to aid masters of these foreign styles in the establishment of schools back in Théah. This offers prospective teachers an entirely new crop of students to teach, and offers an opportunity for would-be masters to establish a reputation. It also creates bonds of camraderie and trust between Duelists who might one day meet on the field.

Any foreign Duelists who agree to join the Duelist's Guild are expected to abide by the same rules and guidelines as their Théan guildmates, but they are sometimes granted some leeway on minor infractions that occur due to ignorance or cultural differences. The Duelist's Guild is quite thoughtful about rules of engagement, and sees no reason to punish members for slight differences in perspective.

Maneuvers

No matter where you studied or who mentored you, all Duelists learn how to perform Maneuvers. Maneuvers are specific steps and ways to wield a weapon that may vary slightly from style to style, but share the same basics. Attending any Duelist Academy grants access to all Maneuvers.

To perform a Maneuver, a Duelist spends a Raise on his Action. A Duelist can perform one, and only one, Maneuver on each of his Actions. A Duelist can never perform the same Maneuver twice in subsequent Actions (for example, you cannot perform Slash, then on your next Action perform Slash again).

- **Slash**: When you perform Slash, deal a number of Wounds equal to your Ranks in Weaponry.
- **Parry**: When you perform Parry, prevent a number of Wounds equal to your Ranks in Weaponry. You can only perform Parry on your Action, and you must perform it on the Action immediately following the Maneuver which caused the Wounds you are preventing.
- **Feint**: When you perform Feint, you deal one Wound, and the next source of Wounds on your target this Round deals one additional Wound.
- **Lunge**: When you perform Lunge, spend all of your Raises. You deal a number of Wounds equal to your Ranks in Weaponry + the number of Raises you spend. These Wounds cannot be reduced or prevented.
- **Bash**: When you perform Bash, you deal one Wound, but the next time your target deals Wounds this Round they deal 1 fewer Wound for each Rank you have in Weaponry.
- **Riposte**: When you perform Riposte, you prevent a number of Wounds equal your Ranks in Weaponry, and deal your attacker a number of Wounds equal to your Ranks in Weaponry. You can only perform Riposte on your Action, and you must perform it on the Action immediately following the Maneuver which caused the Wounds you are preventing. A Duelist may only perform this Maneuver once per Round.

Duelist Styles

At the beginning of a Round during an Action Sequence (when gathering dice to make a Risk), a Duelist selects one—and only one—of the Styles she knows. She gains the benefits of that Style for the Round, so long as she fulfills the Style's requirements (usually based on wielding particular weapons).

When a new Round begins, a Duelist can change to a different Style, so long as he knows it. A student who knows a Style can always recognize his own way of fighting—this means that if a Duelist's opponent uses a Style that the Duelist knows, he can identify the Style as soon as his opponent takes an Action.

Bugu Takobi

One of the fighting techniques brought from Ifri uses a short sword and misdirecting movements to unbalance an opponent and create advantages. A machete works best for the technique and relies on quick slashes while moving swiftly in and out of range of the opponent. The dance-like motions and quick steps confuse the opponent, allowing for darting slashes and sidesteps to move out of harm's way.

The Mawon perfected the Style and its ability to obfuscate from which directions attack would come and used it to fight their Atabean oppressors. Today, there are a handful of schools from which to learn Bugu Takobi in the Atabean Sea. The two best known are Makaranta Takobi (literally "Sword School," found in the Southern Arc of La Bucca near Sunset Haven) and Taiyewo's Memorial (found in Kap-Kalfu in Jaragua, in the shadows of the Twin Princes). Recently, it is rumored that a master of Bugu Takobi has traveled to the Sarmatian Commonwealth in hopes of opening a school there.

Style Bonus: Takobi Gudana

When you wield a small hand-held weapon (such as a machete or hatchet) in one hand and nothing in the other, you gain a special Maneuver called *Takobi Gudana*, or "Sword Flow." Takobi Gudana prevents a number of Wounds equal to your Ranks in Weaponry, and the next Maneuver you perform this Round that deals Wounds deals an additional Wound. You can perform Takobi Gudana once per Round.

AGOGE WEAPONS

The Lakedaimon Agoge teaches its students to choose one weapon and make it as an extension of themselves. With time, however, students are also encouraged to add additional weapons to their arsenal, once they have mastered the first.

If you wish to master a second weapon, take the Advantage "Agoge Weapon Mastery", page 150.

Jogo de Dentro (Inside Game) Style

Jogo de Dentro ("Inside Game") fuses dance and combat. *Mestres'* stances are dance steps, hand balances, and acrobatic dodges—ideal for combat close to the ground in cramped quarters. Their weapons are kicks, sweeps and prison shivs held in hands or feet—ideal for fighting with bound hands. Their tactics unbalance and evade rather than kill, relying on deception and trickery to fight stronger, healthier Théans with authority on their side.

You'll learn the Atabean Sea's most unpredictable fighting Style at no Duelist Academy (although recently, Mestre Gavião has been doing his best to gain enough prestige and wealth to open a formal Academy in southern Castille, on the Odisea Peninsula). For now, the only paths to mastery lurk in the back alleys of Fort Freedom and the hell of slavery. Developed by anonymous Ifrian and Rahuri prisoners, Jogo de Dentro has no named progenitor. Practitioners call themselves *malandros*, reclaiming an Odisean insult directed at urban lowlifes and freed slaves.

Style Bonus: Riso da Malandragem

When you wield small, improvised blades (barber's razors hidden up your sleeves, shards of glass embedded in the soles of your shoes, etc.), you gain a special Maneuver called *Riso da Malandragem*, or "Scoundrel's Laugh." Riso da Malandragem deals one Wound each to two targets (two Villains, or two Brute Squads, or one Villain and one Brute Squad, etc.); the next time those targets deal Wounds this Round, they deal 1 fewer Wound for each Rank you have in Weaponry. You can perform Riso da Malandragem once per Round.

Additionally, when you make an Athletics, Brawl, Hide or Perform Risk you gain one Bonus Die so long as you describe how your mastery of Jogo de Dentro aids you in the Risk.

Lakedaimon Agoge

Adversity breeds greatness. That simple motto serves as the guiding principle for the *docents* of the Lakedaimon Agoge. They strive to push their students to be worthy of their divine heritage, descendants of the goddess Potnia Agrotera. They carve their own spear. They forge their sword, side by side the master swordsmiths of Lakedaimon. They sleep with their bow cradled in their arms.

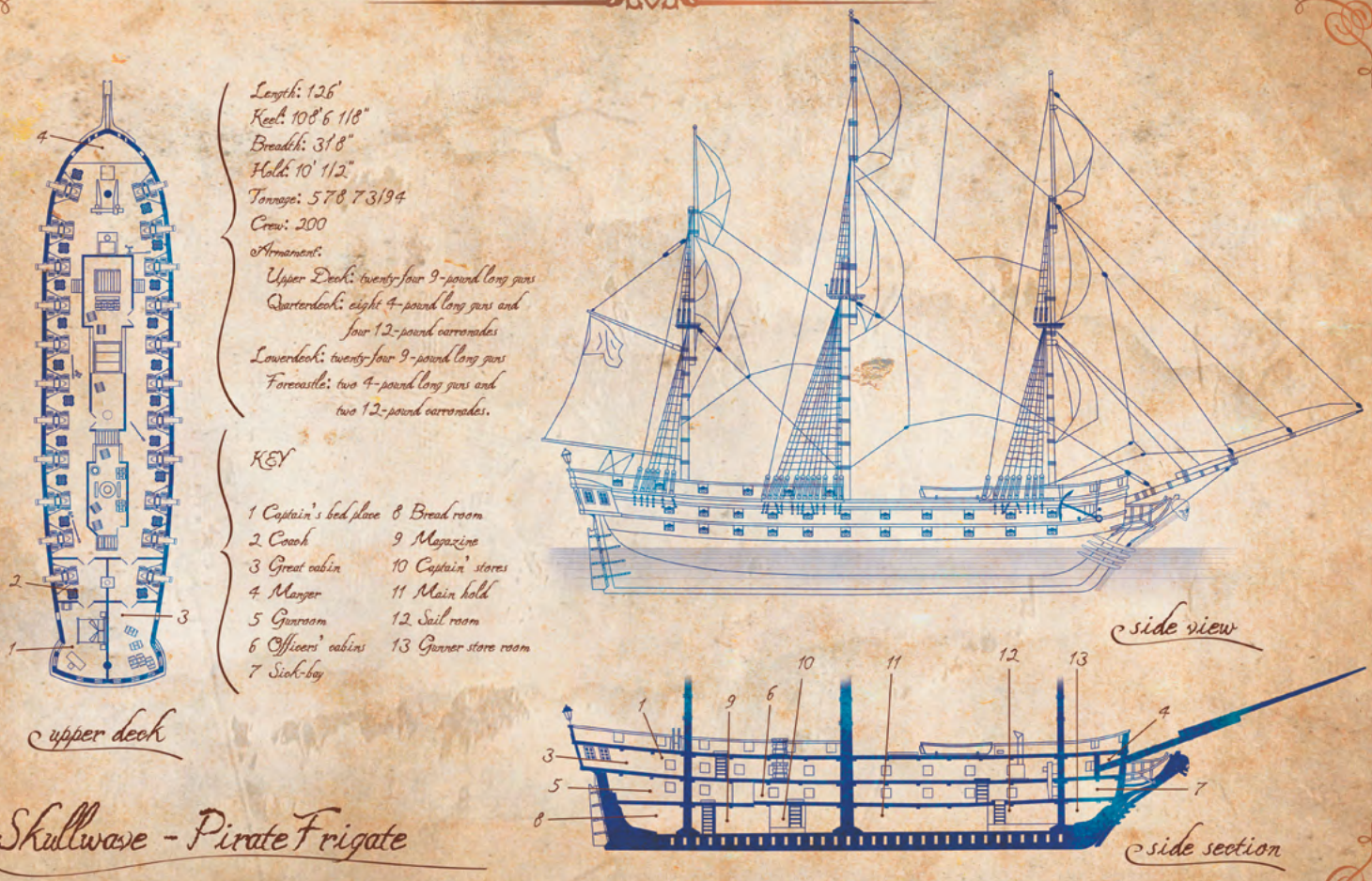
All graduates of the Lakedaimon Agoge learn this quintessentially Numanari dueling Style, though the Style has since spread beyond the survival school's graduates. Numanari agoge have become somewhat chic amongst the young social elite of Théah, though almost all of them lose their stomach for the rigorous training methods after only a few days. Docent Euthalia, one of the toughest and most respected docents of the Lakedaimon Agoge, has taken it upon herself to leave the isles and travel to the Théah mainland. She has founded a new school in the Vodacce city of Joppa, in order to test the heroic spirit of the Théans in search of any students she deems worthy of being named Numanari.

Style Bonus: Agoge Thrust

When you learn the Lakedaimon Agoge Style, you choose a weapon from the spear, the sword or the bow. When you use your weapon with the Lakedaimon Agoge Style, you gain the following benefit.

- If you choose the sword, you take your first Action in a Round as if you had 1 additional Raise.
- If you choose the spear, you may Re-Roll 1 die for an Athletics Risk you take if you describe how you use your spear to aid you.
- If you choose the bow, you use Aim (instead of Weaponry) to determine the effects of your Maneuvers when using that ranged weapon.

When you wield your chosen weapon, your Lunge Maneuver is replaced by the Agoge Thrust. Agoge Thrust deals a number of Wounds equal to your Weaponry plus the number of Raises you spend, but you must spend your next Action this Round to recover and regroup, spending 1 Raise to do so.



Ship History

A Ship has an Origin. This is the Nation, region, or area of the world where your Ship hailed from during its maiden voyage. Different cultures have different ideas of the best way to construct a Ship, and no two Ships are quite the same.

Some Origins grant Bonus Dice under certain circumstances. These circumstances are left purposefully vague and up for debate—the GM ultimately decides if a Background or Origin grants Bonus Dice—but our advice is to be generous with them. When such a bonus does apply, however, it can be used by only a single Hero at a time.

Origins

Aragosta

Other sailors love their Ship because they rely on it to get them home safe. To an Aragostan, the Ship *is* home. An Aragostan ship *always* gains one additional Raise in any Risks that she or her Crew take at sea.

Atabean Trading Company

Elite Company Ships are fast, light and sturdy, a combination that has led more than one pirate to commandeer one of the Company's finest vessels as her own. Of course, it's easier to steal a Company Ship in the dead of night than take one on the open seas; such elite vessels are difficult craft to catch and board. Once per Episode, a Company Ship can repel all boarders for a single Round of an Action Sequence.

Jaragua

Jaragua Ships and their sailors make a habit of thumbing their noses at the Atabean Trading Company, operating in areas that other Ships would find difficult if not impossible. A Jaraguan Ship earns 1 additional Wealth for any goods they sell in a port under Company control, and her Crew always has 1 additional Raise during any Risk against the Company.

La Bucca

La Bucca Ships benefit from their status as something of an anomaly in the world, coming from a Nation that works with everyone but is beholden to no one. Once per game session, a La Bucca Ship's Crew may present a Letter of Marque from any Nation in Théah. Once the Letter is presented, it becomes useless—let's be honest, it was probably a forgery anyway.

Numa

Of all the nations of the world, Numa most celebrates the idea of the heroic spirit. Whenever a Hero aboard a Numanari Ship activates any Advantage with the Knack tag, the Hero Point cost can be paid by any other Hero on the Ship.

Rahuri

The Rahuri specialize in prowling the waters of the Atabean, defending the area from monsters both human and inhuman. Rahuri Ships and their Crews always take 1 fewer Hit or Wound (minimum 1 Hit or Wound) from any other Ship or Monster, so long as the battle takes place in the Atabean Sea.

Ship Backgrounds

Backgrounds grant Advantages to your Ship, but more importantly they inform you about your Ship's epic and unique tale. These are the events in the Ship's past that build a reputation, that contribute to the Crew's pride, that turn your vessel from "just a boat" to "a Ship."

A Ship may have a specific Background only once. Each Hero who purchases the Married to the Sea Advantage (page 150) contributes one Background to the Ship's History.

Black Flag

Your Ship was once a renowned pirate vessel, flying the black flag of no Nation. When you meet a pirate NPC in a non-violent encounter, you can spend a Raise or a Hero Point. If you do so, the NPC treats you with respect and as a comrade until you give her reason not to.

Port of Ghosts

Your Ship has visited Soryana, the Rahuri Isle of the Dead. When any Hero has the service of an ancestor using the Seeker of Soryana Advantage, he can reforge his tie to their ancestor and bring her back to sanity. So long as both the Hero and the Lost ancestor are aboard the Ship, the Hero may spend a Hero Point and return the ancestor to sanity. A particular ancestor may be "rescued" in this way only once—if she loses her connection to the mortal world again, it is forever shattered.

Salacio's Favorite

Your Ship has visited the ports of Numa, and in so doing received a blessing from a *hiereus* of Salacio, the Numanari god of the sea. The first time a Hero gains a Hero Point each session while aboard this Ship, she gains an additional Hero Point.

Smuggler Queen

Your Ship excels at getting into places she isn't supposed to, either breaching a blockaded port under the cloak of night or landing at hidden smuggler ports. When you seek to sail your Ship into forbidden waters and avoid notice, you may spend a Hero Point in order to do so.

Adventures

Adventures grant the Heroes bonuses and abilities the first time they do something specific with their Ship during play. An Adventure is not always a positive experience (getting robbed by pirates or running aground on a remote island is rarely pleasant), but the Ship and her Crew learn and grow from the experience.

The first time you, your Ship, and her Crew accomplish an Adventure during play (not in pre-game discussions, not in a talk about what the Heroes do between sessions or over downtime, not in your Ship's Background, but during actual play at the table), your Ship gains a new bonus or ability associated with that Adventure. The bonus for completing an Adventure is gained only the first time you do something.

Remember that the bonuses from Adventures are in addition to whatever the Heroes and the Ship would have gained or lost from the events that lead to the Adventure's occurrence. The Adventurers listed here are not an exhaustive list, but should serve as a good baseline for how a GM can design his own Adventures and associated rewards.

A Family Matter

Have a member of La Cosca call in a favor that you owe the organization, and succeed in fulfilling your obligation. You can now perform basic Secret Society functions with La Cosca (buying and selling information, requesting the aid of agents, etc.) using Wealth instead of Favor. If you are a member of La Cosca, you instead gain 5 Favor.

Clap 'Em in Irons!

Escape from the Atabean Trading Company's clutches after being captured or enslaved. Each Hero gains one of the following Advantages of her choice: Slip Free, Streetwise, or Team Player. In addition, gain one Bonus to future attempts to resist capture by the Company.

From Hell's Heart I Stab at Thee!

Kill a Sea Monster with 10 or more Strength without losing your Ship. While at sea, when the GM spends a Danger Point to activate a Quality possessed by a Monster, you can spend a Hero Point in order to prevent it.

More Teeth than Stars in the Sky

Successfully hunt a creature bigger than the Ship you use to do so. When a creature with a Monster Quality renders you Helpless, you can spend a Hero Point to immediately heal your final Dramatic Wound and all Wounds on that tier. If you are rendered Helpless again before the end of the Scene, you immediately die.

Mother May I?

Transport a member of Los Niños from a hostile or dangerous place back to La Bucca safely. When you are in La Bucca, you can spend a Raise or a Hero Point to make contact with one of Los Niños. He treats you as a friend, until you give him reason not to.

Original Harpooner

Kill a Sea Monster with the help of a Rahuri ancestor without losing the ancestor or Ship. The first time each Round your Crew or Ship deals Hits or Wounds to a Sea Monster, they deal 1 additional Hit or Wound.

Sailor Overboard!

Rescue a marooned NPC (either lost at sea, on a deserted island, etc.). Add 1 Strength to your Ship's total Crew. You may complete this Adventure multiple times, but only once per Episode.

She Sailed, She Sank, She Sailed Again

Have your Ship sink, and then be rebuilt using a memento. Your Ship keeps her former Origin benefit, and gains a new one based on the Nation where she is rebuilt or the background of the shipwright who rebuilds her.

Spit in the Devil's Eye

Survive an encounter with the Black Freighter or the Devil Jonah. All Heroes aboard your Ship gain the Reputation Advantage, with a descriptor that relates to the encounter with the Freighter or with Jonah. These descriptors should be approved by the GM.

To the Victor Go the Spoils

Claim an Atabean Trading Company Ship, intact and with a full cargo hold. Each Hero gains 3 Wealth, and 3 Favor with his Secret Society.

Secret Societies

Many Secret Societies operate in the Atabean Sea, but a few such organizations originate in the region. They may lack the size and scale of The Rose & Cross or Los Vagabundos, but each of these organizations is no less capable of making a mark on the future of the Atabean and the people who call it home.

La Cosca

When Cardinal Ordunez founded La Palabra de Dios, the Merchant Princes of Vodacce saw an opportunity. They had long been plagued by individuals too well-connected to execute or effectively imprison. These individuals were leaders in a powerful and shadowy organization that had, for generations, operated just out of sight all throughout Vodacce. They had leveraged their wealth and connections into significant influence, political and otherwise, and were seen by many as folk Heroes that could be trusted when the official channels of the banks, the Church, and the government could not.

In a sweeping, coordinated action that took place across nearly the entirety of southern Vodacce, the Princes arrested members of this organization in a single night and shipped them off to this new island prison, far away from their allies and their money. Satisfied that this burgeoning threat had been dealt with, the Merchant Princes went back to their schemes and politics.

The exiled members of La Cosca (literally "the Family"), however, had no intention of fading away. Instead of withering and dying as the Princes of Vodacce intended, La Cosca set down roots in La Bucca and flourished. When La Palabra de Dios crumbled under the weight of the White Plague, La Cosca and their leaders (called *Zios*, literally "uncles") were ready. First, they reestablished their foundation on the new "free Nation" of La Bucca and, once that was finished, they set their sights upon returning home. Their plans, like the plans of the Merchant Princes, are patient and inescapable.

If official channels have failed, you can turn to La Cosca. If the bank will not give you a loan, you can turn to La Cosca. If the police will not arrest the man who killed your son, you can turn to La Cosca. They are the honest accountants of a dishonest trade, the most honorable thieves on the Seven Seas and a terrifying foe to face if you have broken your word to them.

Favor with La Cosca

La Cosca considers itself a family, concerned with community and shared wellbeing. Those who have fallen through the cracks of an existing system, or those who such a system have outright abandoned, often appeal to local members of La Cosca for aid or for justice. But asking for help always comes with a price, usually a debt of honor or obligation rather than money, and La Cosca take these commitments very seriously.

A Hero who belongs to La Cosca can earn Favor in the following ways…

- **Recruiting a useful contact or asset, or aiding such an asset** is worth at least 4 Favor, and can be worth more depending on the importance and usefulness of the asset in question. La Cosca is very particular about the kind of individuals allowed into their ranks, but much less discerning when it comes to those that they work with. Individuals who are in unimportant but useful places (dock worker crew leaders, bureaucrats in key businesses or government offices) who come under the sway of La Cosca reflect well upon the member who recruited them, especially when they get results. This Favor is not for continued results, but for the initial recruitment and proving period—once you work for La Cosca, you work for all of them.
- **Helping La Cosca spread their influence back to Vodacce** is worth 6 Favor. While La Cosca has recovered from their exile to La Bucca, it will be years before they are prepared to fight the Merchant Princes directly. Any act that gets them closer to their return will merit reward from the Zios.
- **Defending or protecting La Cosca at personal cost** is worth 8 Favor. This can include taking the fall for a La Cosca operation that results in significant legal punishment (such as imprisonment) or going out of your way to hunt down a rogue La Cosca member who has earned the organization's ire and punish them for their crimes.

A Hero who belongs to La Cosca can call upon them for aid in the following ways…

- **Any aid requested** by an agent of La Cosca costs half the Favor it otherwise would if the agent directly aids in the completion of the task, so long as her aid isn't implicit in the task itself (for example, if you ask La Cosca to help you escape from prison, it doesn't cost you half as much due to your involvement—your involvement is implied in the task itself). La Cosca believes in helping those who need it, but they also believe that if you want something that badly you should be willing to get your hands dirty in getting it. Do you want a bank robbed? La Cosca is happy to lend you a few Cousins for the task…but you're going in with them.
- **Asking La Cosca to collect on a debt or avenge a wrong for you** costs 6 Favor. La Cosca is quite efficient at delivering justice, swift and merciless, or obtaining something lost to unscrupulous brigands…but they can't waste all their time making people pay. If you want someone to collect for you, however, you'll find no one more capable of securing what is yours, provided you're willing to prove to La Cosca in advance that you're the kind of person they should be assisting.
- **A hard coin payout** costs 1 Favor for every 2 Wealth, but can be redeemed only at the time the Favor is earned and not at a later date. La Cosca understands that it's hard out there on the streets, and sometimes their allies need hard coin more than anything else. An agent can never sacrifice more than half the Favor she earns for a task in such a way—for example, if you earn 6 Favor, you can choose to spend up to 3 of it immediately in return for Wealth, gaining 2 Wealth for each point of Favor you sacrifice.

LA COSCA'S HIERARCHY

The rank structure in La Cosca is quite simple, and uses familial titles as a way of illustrating their close internal bond as well as obfuscating their organization from outsiders.

A ***Zio*** or ***Zia*** ("uncle" or "aunt," respectively) is an important and respected member, an officer and leader, typically someone who has served La Cosca for the majority of her life and earned the respect of the organization as a whole. She often is responsible for entire towns or cities, or large areas of major cities. If multiple Zios or Zias share a territory, they usually settle disputes or disagreements through discussion or voting.

A ***Cugino*** or ***Cugina*** ("cousin") is a member in good standing, someone who answers directly to his Zio or Zia. Such members are often grouped into teams to handle particular tasks or responsibilities, and are expected to work together as equals (although most respect seniority and age, and will defer to fellow Cuginos who are older or more experienced than themselves).

A ***Nipote*** ("nephew" or "niece") is a junior member, one who is either new to La Cosca or has not yet proven himself. While treated with respect, he always defers to Cuginos and are often given more minor everyday tasks until he proves himself or earns La Cosca's respect in some way.

An ***Amico*** or ***Amica*** (literally "friend") is a loose affiliate of La Cosca, someone that they have placed value on or consider useful. An Amica has no authority over any members of La Cosca, and many hope that they can earn their way into full-fledged membership through continued faithful service. Such cases aren't unheard of, but they are rare—a lifelong Amica is probably more useful in the place where she sits. If La Cosca sees potential in an Amica, she will be invited to become a Nipote relatively quickly.

The Riroco

With the arrival of the Atabean Trading Company and the establishment of a lucrative and devastating slave trade, the Rahuri have been on the front lines of a war to preserve their people. A resistance movement called the Riroco, or "valiant memory," seeks to end the kidnapping of Rahuri people by the Company. Lead by Rahuri princess Tanama, the Riroco have groups all along the Atabean, striking out against ATC targets in guerilla raids and sabotage wherever they can. Many units put an emphasis on freeing captured slaves and smuggling them to freedom back within Rahuri territory. The most radical members of the group focus instead on capturing ships and turning them into warships meant to raid Company ships and meeting places.

For the most part, the Riroco are peaceful to anyone but slavers and slave owners. However, as time goes on and the Atabean Trading Company grows more powerful, the Riroco are frustrated with their lack of progress. They've started counting any ally of the Company as an enemy, too, and attacks by the Riroco now often leave behind few survivors.

Riroco ships can be identified by their red flag with a long right-to-left diagonal slash. Their decks are often filled to the brim with dead ancestors, brought from "the other side of the island" to help free enslaved Rahuri. Just the sight of a Riroco ship packed full of furious dead is enough to send slaver raiding parties or Company merchants screaming for port at all speed. The Riroco brand captured slavers with a jagged X on the cheek. The marks are meant to warn other Riroco and Rahuri people that the person is a slaver and should be treated accordingly. Most marked survivors live only long enough to tell their terrified stories, thereby spreading the Riroco legend before being found dead, their eyes gouged out.

While the resistance seeks aid from others to end the slave trade, the Riroco are equally mistrustful of those non-Rahuri who claim to fight against slavery. Non-Rahuri must prove themselves willing to fight to the bitter end before they earn trust. Once someone gains that trust, however, the Riroco are stalwart friends and ferocious allies, provided that person is dedicated to stomping out slavery in the Sea of Monsters.

Favor with the Riroco

The Riroco's most important interests are keeping the people of the Atabean safe from monsters who roam the Atabean Sea and the lands in the area, foreign influences threatening to overwhelm local culture and traditions, and the Atabean Trading Company.

A Hero who belongs to the Riroco can earn Favor in the following ways…

- **Striking a blow against the Atabean Trading Company** is worth at least 6 Favor. This includes going out of your way to free those exploited by the Atabean Trading Company, exposing Company criminal actions to authorities who then take action against them, or direct and violent action such as raiding Company ships or storehouses.
- **Slaying an inhuman Monster threatening the Atabean or its people** is worth Favor equal to half the Monster's Strength rating. This reward is granted only once per outing, and considers the highest-Strength Monster that is slain in such a way.

A Hero who belongs to the Riroco can call upon them for aid in the following ways…

- **A favorable introduction to a Rahuri cacique** costs 4 Favor. Such an introduction might come in the form of a letter or a token from an individual whose opinion the cacique values, a particular passphrase that will allow the speaker an audience, or a personal introduction. The cacique will listen respectfully, though cooperation is not guaranteed.
- **Requesting the aid of a Seeker of Soryana** costs 6 Favor. This grants the Hero the aid of a Seeker (page 152) who will guide her to the Isle of the Dead to gain the aid of an ancestor. The Hero must pay the Hero Point cost associated with the Advantage's upkeep at the beginning of each Episode, and a Hero who allows her ancestor to become Lost is expected to hunt him down herself and set things right or be named a traitor to the Rahuri.

Pirate Charters

Each crew has a unique Charter that provides guides for behavior, divvying the spoils, and meting out punishment. Each crew member signs or swears to uphold the Charter with a ritual. Some crews swear upon the Book of the Prophets. Others use a human skull or crossed pistols, and some even have the crew members sit atop the largest or oldest cannon aboard the ship. The ritual for the Charter varies as much as any such thing can vary between pirate crews.

Regardness, each crew member signs the Charter. Always. No exceptions. It be terrible luck to sail the open seas with members of the crew who have not yet signed the ship's most important documents.

In some instances, some signatures are noted as under duress. This may save those members from the hangman's rope if the ship and crew were to be captured. Skilled crew members, such as surgeons and carpenters, are many times granted special dispensation when signing a Charter; if their skills are desparately needed, they can sometimes find a unique arrangement with the rest of the crew.

The Pirate's Code

Many pirate crews go beyond a simple Charter to make use of the Pirate's Code, a specific Charter based on the First Charter signed by Captain González and the Devil Jonah. All pirates, at some level, feel themselves to be bound to these traditions, but not every crew wishes to follow the old ways when it comes to swearing a ritual.

That said, the Pirate Code is something greater than just superstition and wives' tales. Mother Ocean will grant favor to those that keep to the Code and those that betray the Code shall have the Devil Jonah's Eye upon them. Committing to the Pirate's Code is an action not to be taken lightly. It can damn a sailor to a hanging if caught, but it can also unlock unimaginable wealth. Pirates are a superstitious lot, with many tall tales and taboos.

The Pirate's Code, as codified in the original Charter, contained three core principles: the Moment of Truth, Parley and the Vote for Captain.

The Original Code

We Pirates, servants of Mother Ocean, do abide by the following Code, lest we dishonor Mother Ocean and curse our brethren to unluck while upon her waves.

I. In the Moment of Truth, fly yer True Colors. If asked, admit you be a Pirate, for if ye deny the Code, the Code will deny ye. When ye begin an attack, remove any false Colors and raise yer True Colors.

II. Never refuse the crew a vote for Captain. When the crew is strongly against an action proposed by the Captain, they can call a single vote for a new Captain, or the Captain can concede to their demand.

III. Parley. Never refuse parley with any party who calls for it. We be Brothers and Sisters o' the Sea.

IV. Don't set sail when the sunrise is red. A red sunrise is a warning from Mother Ocean to stay home and be safe, or face her wrath at sea.

V. Don't anger the denizens of the sea. The sea is their home and ye be a visitor.

VI. Give the first take/treasure of a prize/haul to Mother Ocean. She be the source of all our bounty and we shan't scorn her.

VII. If pulling a sailor from the sea when the sea is calm, pay to the sea a reward of equal value. Don't steal from Mother Ocean.

VIII. Don't go back for a sailor who has fallen overboard in a storm. Mother Ocean has claimed him and rescuing him when she be angry will only bring her wrath to ye.

IX. Don't save a sailor who's been marooned. She be bad luck and will bring it aboard your ship.

Brotherhood of the Coast

Each Brotherhood of the Coast ship carries a copy of the First Charter, though each crew may add new articles unique to their ship and goal. Common articles include how officers and sailors are to behave aboard the ship, settlement of disputes, lengths of watches and shifts, and even forbidding gambling aboard the ship. Each crew member signs the Charter in his own blood.

The Brotherhood Charter

I. Every hand to have a vote in the affairs; equal title to the provisions and liquors, and may use them at pleasure, unless scarcity makes it necessary to vote to a rationing.

II. Every hand to be called fairly in turn, by list, on board for duty.

III. If any defraud the Brotherhood to the value of a Guilder in plunder, marooning shall be his punishment.

IV. No person to game at cards or dice for money.

V. All souls aboard a captured ship shall be set free and determine amongst themselves, by vote, the course they set once their hull is plundered.

VI. Nor member of a crew to be harmed if she surrendered without violence.

VII. Every hand to keep his piece, pistols and cutlass clean and fit for service.

VIII. To desert the ship or his quarters in battle is punished with death or marooning.

IX. No striking one another on board, but every hand's quarrels to be ended fairly ashore with fists, or sword and pistol.

X. If in service to the Brotherhood, any hand should lose a limb, or become cripple he should have 600 Guilders, or 500 Guilders for limb, or 100 Guilders for an eye or finger.

XI. The captain and quartermaster receive two shares, the sailing master, boatswain, and gunner one and a half shares, and other officers one and one quarter shares.

The Crimson Roger

The dreaded *Crimson Roger* also carries a Charter. The Pact of the *Crimson Roger* is written upon the flesh of a long-forgotten soul, his back acting as the canvas, branded with the articles and covered in bloody fingerprints. The Pact is simple. Swear allegiance to Captain Reis in both this life and even beyond and the spoils of the sea will be yours. It is said that Captain Reis demanded the inclusion of the final article. "Should you perish in the service of The Captain, your family shall receive your share of the take plus an amount equal to your service to The Captain."

The *Crimson Roger*'s Pact

We, the crew of the *Crimson Roger*, swear loyalty to Captain Reis 'til death and beyond. Should we betray or disobey her, may our souls burn in the blackest pits of the Abyss forever. We will do as she commands without hesitation, even if it puts our lives in peril, for such orders will be for the good of the crew.

In exchange for this I, Captain Reis, promise a fair share of all plunder taken, that you will not be punished without reason, and that your family shall receive your share of the take should you be killed in the line of duty.

La Bucca's Letter of Marque

The Buccaneers often carry with them a Letter of Marque. These crews are recognized as privateers. A Letter of Marque provides state-backed authority for taking booty from enemy vessels. It is a thinly veiled attempt at legitimacy. Crews may have multiple Letters of Marque from other Nations, switching them out depending on which colors an enemy ship shows.

The Théan Ambassadors residing in La Bucca sign such writs and letters, as well as broker deals for prizes and goods returned to La Bucca. Specific rules concerning engaging ships less than one day's sail from the island are often included, as well as the recognized neutrality of La Bucca. Letters of Marque contain specific language concerning expiration and behaviors of the crews. The wording creates plausible deniability for the issuing Nation in the event the victim ship protests in the courts of Théah. The Nations of Théah provide Letters of Marque to privateers sailing from Théan ports, as well, although the vast majority of such Letters are signed in La Bucca.

Whereas, by Her Majesty's Commission

under the Great Seal of Avalon, the Queen's Commission for executing the office of the High Admiral are required and authorized to issue forth and grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal to any of Her Majesty's Subjects or others, whom we shall deem thy qualified to that Behalf for apprehending, seizing, taking the Ships, Vessels, and Goods belonging to those who are acknowledged enemies of the Queen and Crown of Avalon or to any persons whom the bearer of this document has judged to be enemies of the Queen and Crown of Avalon and that those persons shall be brought to Justice within her Majesty's Courts, or if such an order cannot be carried out with due swiftness, that the bearer of this document shall render his Judgement within the jurisdiction of the Queen's Good Name, according to the Laws of Admiralty and the Laws of Nations.

This Document transfers these powers to _____,

Commander of the Ship _____.

This ship shall be mounted with guns and cannons, armed with marines and shall defend the ports and cities of Avalon, both home and abroad. She shall capture the Goods and Belonging held by Pirates and return them to Avalon's shores; those ships who do not fly the Avalon flag and seek the downfall of Her Majesty the Queen, under the laws of Admiralty, are guilty of treason against the Avalon Crown and shall be treated accordingly, as prescribed by the bearer of this document. Engagement of Vessels shall not occur within one day's sail from the shores of the Island of La Bucca. La Bucca is considered to be Neutral Territory and granted provision as such. Any man or woman who serves the bearer of this document shall receive a Commission to which the Captain of the Vessel and The Crown see fit and shall henceforth be given the title of Noble Sailor and shall be treated as the Laws of the Land prescribe.

We do ask that all those who consider themselves friends of the Crown of Avalon and Her Majesty do recognize the bearer of this document and all who serve him as official representatives of Her Majesty the Queen and afford them every favor, courtesy, accommodation and service with the understanding that they shall receive like treatment in return for their inconvenience.

The bearer of this document shall keep a Journal of Proceedings and document all Prizes taken, the time and place of capture of such Prizes, the value of such Prizes and from what Flag the Prizes were taken.

This Letter of Marque and Reprisal shall expire exactly _____ *days from its date of issue.*

The Agreement is Blessed by her Majesty the Queen, and is bound by her Great Seal on this day _____

Jaragua

The crews that sail from the shores of Jaragua swear to a specific Charter. The Mawons are a loose organization founded on the principles of freedom, a philosophy you will find reflected in the articles of their Charter. Mawon crews show no mercy to ships carrying slaves or people in bondage. Freed slaves are granted first choice of joining the crew, as well as fair share of the prize taken from the originating ship. Mawon crews are often a chance for a new life and the opportunity to learn new skills far away from home.

Since Jaragua's freedom has been secured, the number of Mawon crews sailing the Atabean has expanded dramatically. The Atabean Trading Company has orders to destroy Mawon ships on sight, but has so far had little luck stemming the tide of free men and women setting sail from Jaragua.

The Mawon Charter

I. Each Man and Woman granted fair share of the Prize. The Captain is allowed two shares. Officers are allowed one and one half shares. The Soul that spots the Prey originally is allowed first pick of a small arm or the equivalent cost in Guilders as a Prize.

II. No Man or Woman regardless of origin shall be taken as Prize. If a soul is Enslaved, Indentured, or in Bondage upon a Prey, they shall be freed and given a fair portion of the take to begin a new life of Freedom.

III. A Man or Woman Enslaved, Indentured, or in Bondage can choose to join the Crew but must swear to this Charter. If they choose not to join the Crew, they will be ferried to Safe Harbor and placed in Trusted Hands to be Free.

IV. No Man or Woman is allowed to gamble aboard the ship while at Sea. Punishment is additional shift and a reasonable loss of share dictated by the Fair and Honest Quartermaster.

V. Each Man and Woman who has signed this Charter is allowed a vote in matters concerning the welfare of Ship providing the Ship is not engaged with an enemy, at such time the Captain's word is Law until said engagement is over. The Captain will hold the safety and welfare of the Crew tantamount to her own.

VI. All Men and Women aboard are to be Fair and Honest, and Officers are to be held as Paragons to these virtues. To lead is a Gift to those under you and that Gift can be revoked if abused. Revocation of Officership is decided by two votes, the initial from the fellow Officers, and ratified by a Majority of the Crew. The offending Officer shan't be punished lest his actions dictate so.

Pirate Lingo

Pirates developed their own slang, a curious patois learned from ship to ship. Grabbing words and phrases from here and there, combining words from different cultures, pirates stole not only golden treasures but also languages and turns of phrase.

Not only do pirates have their own lingo and de facto language, but the vocabulary of a sailor is also much different from that of a landlubber. Nautical terms and ship descriptions can also add to the flavor of the game. Do not feel as though you need to be an expert, and feel free to get a few wrong in your pirate speak. No one is expecting you to be perfect. Fall into your character, embrace the sea, feel the ship move beneath your feet, the salty breeze across your brow, and set sail for adventure.

Here are a few nautical and sailing terms to incorporate into your game to give it a more "authentic" feel, but remember pirates and sailors come from all corners of Théah and new words can be added. These terms are only as important as you want them to be and are as correct as your table needs them to be. When in doubt make up something. Sailors did. Game designers do, too…we give you permission.

Sounds

Sentences structure departs from traditional grammar:

- The word "be" holds a special place in pirate-speak. "Is," "am," and "are" are replaced with "be."
- "You" becomes "ye."
- "Your" becomes "yer."
- The "G" at the end of words becomes nonexistent.
- Singular words become plural and plural words become singular.
- An "R" sound end words that end in a vowel.
- The crying baby "A." The sound found in "blather" and "ran." It replaces the sounds of "awe" as found in "father" and "water."
- Short "E." "E" is always short, as in "get" and "set."
- "Oi." The pirate "I" has an Australian sound to it. Or like Popeye's "Oi yam what Oi yam." If you notice, the words nearly slur together between 2 vowels. "I am" turns into "Oi yam."
- The Minnesotan or Canadian "O." "About" sounds like "A boot," "Out" becomes "Oot."
- The monkey "U." In pirate speak, "U" is a short-clipped sound almost like an "oo." Imagine a cartoon monkey making an excited "oo, oo" sound. This makes words such as "cup" sound like "coop" and "nuptial" sound like "nooptial."
- The serpent "S." Each "S" is accentuated and elongated, especially at the end of sentences.
- The hard pirate "R." ARRRR. The "R" sound is very distinct and simply focusing on each "arrr" sound will make you sound like a pirate.

Syntax Inversion

Modern English normally places nouns before verbs. E.g., "I do," "He does." In pirate speak, place verbs in front of nouns. Channeling Master Yoda will help. "Wise you must be," and "To Captain Roberts do you listen!"

ROBERT NEWTON'S LONG JOHN SILVER

Robert Newton made this style of speech popular in the classic pirate movie *Treasure Island*. He exaggerated his West Country Welsh accent to create a new voice for pirates. His vision of Long John Silver and Blackbeard have influenced the way everyone now sees pirates. We tip our rum in his honor and we hope our players will do the same. Drawing inspiration from movies such as the *Pirates of Caribbean* series (particularly Geoffrey Rush's Hector Barbossa) can also add more to your time at your table. The key is learning moderation, even though pirate speech is intended to be over top. Do not let your pirate speak become a distraction, but instead look at is a fine spice plundered from the Atabean Trading Company. Used sparingly, it can enhance your table's experience.

Arr' Matey! Speekin' like this, ye'll be doin' in no time!

Popular Pirate Phrases

Many terms and phrases are drawn from nautical terms. Below is a sampling of phrases:

- **Ahoy:** hello; a general greeting.
- **Aloft:** anything above head, notably the rigging and tops.
- **Avast ye:** pay attention.
- **Aye:** yes; an affirmative response.
- **Arrr!:** used like salt or a spice to flavor sentences, also for interjections and moments of uncertainty.
- **Bilge:** the filthy water that seeps to the bottom of the boat, used in conjunction with an animal term, like bilge rat, as an insult.
- **Blow me down:** an exclamation of surprise.
- **Blow the man down:** an order to kill someone.
- **Booty:** treasure, prize or take is also used for the term treasure.
- **Buccaneer:** a pirate from La Bucca.
- **Bucko:** a diminutive form of buccaneer.
- **Cat o' nine tails:** a short whip or flogger with nine strands used for punishment.
- **Corsair:** pirates from the Northern Coast of Ifri.
- **Crow's nest:** the lookout point near the top of the mast.
- **Dead men tell no tales:** leave no survivors.
- **Go on account:** to start a life of piracy.
- **Grog:** water, light rum, grapefruit juice, orange juice, pineapple juice, cinnamon, and honey. A proper pirates' drink. Also could be water, rum, lime juice, and cinnamon.
- **Hornswoggle:** to cheat.
- **Keelhaul:** a brutal punishment and possible execution, tossing someone over the front or bow of the ship and dragging him across the bottom until he exits at the ship's rear or aft.
- **Lad**: a young male.
- **Land ho!:** land has been spotted.
- **Landlubber:** someone without sea legs or who has never been aboard a ship.
- **Lass:** a young female.
- **Maroon:** being left on an island alone with a sidearm, a saber, and small amount of rations as a punishment.
- **Matey:** my friend.
- **Me hearty (or heartie):** my good friend.
- **Mutiny**: a vote by the crew to overthrow the captain or ship's officers; a nautical rebellion.
- **No prey, no pay:** pirates split the prizes from the treasures they take.
- **No quarter:** no mercy.
- **Plunder:** to take by violence if necessary; also as a noun describing the goods from plundering.
- **Rum:** the vital essence of pirates. Created from sugarcane and molasses. The islands of the Atabean Sea and the plantations of the New World have provided this flavorful alcoholic beverage.
- **Sail ho!:** a ship has been spotted. Or simply called out "Sail!"
- **Savvy:** do you understand?
- **Scurvy:** a disease caused by the lack of vitamins found in citrus fruits and most importantly grog. Drink yer grog or ye get scurvy, me heartys.
- **Scurvy dog:** an insult.
- **Shiver me timbers:** an exclamation of surprise; timbers represent bones, and the surprise shook the person to her core.
- **Strike yer colors!:** surrender by lowering your flag.
- **Swabby:** a shipmate; a term of endearment.
- **Three sheets to the wind:** having imbibed too much rum or grog, inebriated, or having all three sheets of a sail broken loose to the wind in a storm—a very dangerous thing to repair and deadly to a ship if not fixed quickly.
- **Under bare poles:** a ship with her sails drawn up.
- **Walk the plank:** an execution in which you are forced to walk off a plank into Mother Ocean; pray that the Devil Jonah doesn't claim you first.
- **Wench:** a serving girl; can be considered rude when not speaking to a waitress.
- **Wet me pipe:** to take a drink.
- **X marks the spot!:** treasure be buried thar!

Sea Monsters

Oh, it's stories of the sea you're wanting? I've spent my whole life at sea, and seen things most sailors would shit themselves to even think about. Buy me a mug of something, the stronger the better—talking's thirsty work, and there's some things best remembered three sheets to the wind…

Sea Monsters

Sea Monsters follow the same mechanics as other Monster types (**Core Rulebook**, pages 196-198). Like other Monsters, they most likely have only Strength—no Influence—but they can have any number of Monstrous Qualities. We've added a few new Monstrous Qualities at the end of this section to help flesh out your aquatic beasts!

That said, sailors have reported seeing Monsters all over the world, including near Théah and Ifri, off the coasts of Numa, and (obviously) near La Bucca. These Monsters appear to be spread all over Terra: some of them unique beasts and many of them creatures that sailors see over and over again. Either way, wise captains know to prepare for the worst, and often bring specific supplies (barrels of gunpowder, chum, etc.) to fend off the worst of the beasts.

Giant Clams

I took to the waves when I was just a girl. Early on, I dove for clams bigger than I was, sharp-shelled beasties capable of clamping shut on a limb and holding you under 'til you drowned. We didn't think much of it at the time; even made a game of poking our toes in and then snatching them out before the clams could close. Stupid little ones playing stupid games, not realizing how close we was to disaster.

Although mostly stationary, giant clams can prove dangerous to those who do not respect their unyielding strength. Giant Clams are Strength 5, Chitinous, Suffocating Monsters. Although they live in the water, their static existence means they don't get the Aquatic Monstrous Quality.

Giant Crustaceans

Once we were big enough, my friends and I hunted crabs. We floated in the shallows until one ventured near, then dropped onto its back, grabbing the big claws at the first joint where they couldn't snap at us. We rode on them, using the claws to steer, racing them until they were too tired to fight. After that, those who hadn't been lucky enough to snag a mount helped kill them, driving a long sharp stick between their plates into vital areas. Then, we flipped them over and dragged them back home for dinner. The races seemed good fun, but we all grew wary after one of our companions lost a hand to their claws.

Human-sized crabs, lobsters, or giant shrimp offer little peril, but their claws are capable of debilitating damage, and their shells make them difficult to slay. Rahuri Crustaceans are Strength 7, Chitinous, Destructive Monsters. Although some split their time between the shore and sea, they do not attain the Monstrous Quality of Aquatic.

Predatory Fish

As we got a bit older, we spent hours diving down to pry loose barnacles from beneath ships' hulls. The sailors tossed coins down to us, to encourage us to clear their hulls without having to pull the ships up into dry-dock. It wasn't bad work, most of the time, but the barnacles' shells were razor-sharp, so much that even a bad cut often wasn't noticed until later. Barracuda in the bay swarmed at the scent of blood in the water, and if one of us got cut, we spent the rest of the day watching for that silver flash that meant the 'cudas had arrived. Those things were as long as we were tall, and half mouth. My elder brother made the mistake of thinkin' he was too big for the 'cuda to mess with. What the fish left wasn't even enough to bury by the time we got it to shore.

Whether barracuda, piranha, pike or gar, Predatory Fish are Strength 8, Aquatic, Swift Monsters. If exposed to blood, Predatory Fish gain the Relentless Quality until their victims leave the water. Optionally, schools of small Predatory Fish can be treated like one or more Assassin Brute Squads (**Core Rulebook**, page 192). Represent the Relentless Quality by spending Danger Points to add additional Squads when exposed to blood.

Whales

My first time as part of a sea crew was hunting whales. I can't say I enjoyed whaling, at least not after the first few months. Seemed like there wasn't a moment I wasn't haulin' rope, or butchering whale meat, or fletchin' blubber, or tending the big copper pots on board where we rendered the fat down into oil. You'd think watching a crew hunt and harpoon a whale as big as the boat would be a thrill, but after a while it was all just fish-smell, fire, blood, and exhaustion.

Until it wasn't, that is.

You see, whales come in all kinds of shapes and sizes. And while an experienced whaler with a good crew can handle almost anything the sea throws at it…almost ain't everything.

I'd been with the ship about a year by then. I was up in the crow's nest and saw the first spout of mist; I called out to those below, and we wheeled the ship to engage. It was a cow and calf that had gotten separated from their pod. A bit on the small side, but between the two, worth the time to hunt. We'd taken the calf, and had the cow on the line when all hell broke loose. Something swam beneath us from port to starboard, and I swear, it was as wide as our ship was long. Even from my vantage point, I couldn't see it full on at that point—the water was too thick with blood from the whales we'd already taken—but whatever it was gleamed white under the clouds of crimson. It disappeared so fast that I don't think anyone else saw it—right up until the creature breached alongside us and almost swamped the ship.

Now, I'd seen a dozen kinds of whales by that time. Cunning grampus stole in to tear at our catches with their dagger-like teeth; their black and white markings led some of the sailors to call them bandit whales, but their meanness earned them the name "killer." Blunt-headed cachalot were our main quarry, squid-chasing creatures with their brains full of wax and their bellies full of ambergris. Rorqual were less profitable, but also less work; their docile natures made them easy hunting, and their size meant one kill would keep us working for weeks processing down the oil. They were the biggest whales I'd ever seen—the biggest I thought existed—until that day, at least.

While there are a broad variety of Whales, most share the same Monstrous Qualities: Aquatic and Powerful, with a 12 Strength.

The Great White Whale

The Great White Whale left the water like it was shot from a cannon. It rose up from the water's surface, until its eye was staring at me dead-on in my perch in the crow's nest. It hung there, for what seemed like a lifetime, that giant eye just staring at me as the creature's body cast the whole ship in shadow. Then the whale turned and fell back into the water. The wave it kicked up covered the entire ship, sweeping overboard anyone who wasn't fortunate enough to grab hold of something, or strong enough to keep his grip. The ship rocked back and forth, tipping the crow's nest nearly down to the water as we rode the trough of the whale-made waves.

The Great White Whale's second attack hit us from beneath and shattered the ship into kindling faster than we could react. One minute I was crouching in the crow's nest, praying for my ancestors to watch over me, and the next, the entire mast broke loose and tumbled through the air like a mis-thrown spear.

When the world stopped spinning, I scrambled up onto the side-turned crow's nest and scanned the horizon for the ship. The water was littered with broken bits and more-broken bodies; nothing bigger than one of the dinghies we used to go ashore to resupply remained. Thankfully, the whale didn't bother to come back a third time; I'm guessing it was more mad than hungry, and it had proven its point by destroying our ship. A handful of us made it back to port by lashing together some of the debris into a makeshift raft…But that was the last time I went out whaling, I tell you.

After that, I decided that if I was going to risk it all, I was going to get paid better for it.

What hunts the whale hunters? The Great White Whale! A legendary creature with a 15 Strength, this Aquatic, Colossal Monster is Powerful, but Slippery enough to plague a hunting fleet (or pirate crew) for an entire story arc. While ordinary whales can prove dangerous to an unprepared crew of sailors, the Great White Whale can hunt down and destroy even the most resolute and hardened whaling crews.

Sea Serpents

I signed on with a crew that was hunting sea serpents next. While they made it clear that the work was dangerous, my share of the profits would be more than I'd made my entire stint whaling, just for a few week's work. Sounded like a good deal to me, but then I was young, and dumb, and thought I was going to live forever.

My family wasn't so pleased. Before the Théans made their way here, we were smart enough to leave the great sea snakes alone. Even the biggest don't have enough meat to warrant hunting, they've no blubber like whales, and their bones are too soft for crafting or art. Only their teeth—and the poison they deliver with it—have value, and the price paid to reap them is far too high for most. But Théan markets bring with them Théan profits, and greed is a powerful force As I proved myself, sufficient Théan gold can buy young Rahuri bravery and stupidity in equal measures.

We caught a single serpent on that first voyage. Its body was two or three times as long as I was tall, sleek blue-black with a head only slightly wider than the rest of it. All in all, it seemed no more threatening than any snake that size might be—until it opened its mouth.

I have no idea how it had hid its fangs, as they were easily as long as my forearm and just as big around. The rest of its teeth were smaller, but no less sharp, and every one of them was stained yellow with thick-viscous poison that hissed and sizzled on the wooden deck. The merchants who financed the voyage sent their own people to harvest the venom, a precaution I was grateful for. The scars left in the ship's deck made me think twice about signing on again for such an endeavor.

Sea Serpents can vary significantly, but two major types exist. Sea Snakes are the smaller of the two, ranging from boa to bigger-than-human sized, with a Strength ranging from 5 to 10. Their main weapons are bites and venom, making them Aquatic, Slippery, Venomous Monsters.

Much larger, Sea Dragons take on entire ships, and have Strength 18. They have the Monstrous Qualities of Aquatic, Colossal, Slippery and Suffocating (due to poison breath).

Makara

Luckily, sea serpents aren't the only high-stakes hunting available for an enterprising young sailor. I spent the next few years on a makara crew, hunting them down for the pearls they grow in place of teeth. Makara aren't big, not by sea monster standards anyways, but they're smart, and that—along with their horns and hooves—makes them dangerous.

There's all kinds of makara, just like sea snakes and whales. The most common ones look a bit like a sheep or goat in the front, only way bigger. They have horns and long noses, like an elephant, that they can use to grab things...or people. Their back ends are like a fish… or sometimes like a snake. They breathe air, but can dive deep, and they use their powerful tails to launch themselves up out of the water and onto rocky outcroppings, using their hooved forelegs to pull themselves into place so they can bask in the sun.

Makara like rough seas, places where there's deep water and steep cliffs, which is why most folk will never see one. They scrape loose lichen and sea grass from the rocks, sharpening their hooves and horns on the stone in the process. When they get spooked, they'll dive deep, trusting that most predators can't maneuver in the turbulent breakers as well as they can.

This makes hunting them no easy task. They're nigh impossible to sneak up on by land; even if we managed to get onto the opposite side of the little islands they were so fond of, they almost always heard us coming. Shooting them from the water wasn't any better; at the first sign of attack, they leapt for the water and were gone, pearls and all. Best strategy we found was firing nets out of cannons at them while they slept up on the rocks, and hoping it kept them in place long enough for a crew on the far side of the outcropping to scramble over and put them down. Even this wasn't easy, though—those horns and hooves were sharp enough to work through our nets in a hurry—and even if we made it before they got free, they'd turn the same on us given the chance. Still, pearls is pearls, and I've never seen prettier than makara teeth.

Along with Crustaceans, Makara are some of the only Sea Monsters who spend a significant portion of time on land. They can be treated as Strength 6, Destructive (using their hooves and horns), Slippery Monsters, often found in groups of 3 to 8 Monsters (treat them as individuals, rather than a Brute Squad).

Mabuya

There's a living to be made out on the Sea of Monsters—fish and flesh enough to feed the Winged One, Apocoatl Himself, and plenty to spare for the likes of us for generations on end. Oil and whalebone, sharkskin and ambergris, and more…

There's a price to be paid for greed, though. Your people, for all they think they know everything, are not of the Sea of Monsters. They are foreigners here, and the Sea will not give up its wealth easily to them. Many have tried—a few succeeded for a time. Some have sought Rahuri guides and crew, but the most knowledgeable of our people are often those who have paid for their wisdom with their lives.

Don't look so surprised, lad. Surely, you've heard of our ancestors coming back from Soryana to aid our people? Few ships, even those of foreigners, bear the white stripes of monster hunting without a crew that contains at least a few of those King Locuo has released to aid our tribes.

But your people are not our people, and your hungers do not feed our bellies. Sometimes, by sweet words, threats, or outright trickery, those King Locuo has granted passage back to the lands of the living end up not serving the good of the Rahuri. This is profanely wrong, and the price is greater than a failed whaling expedition or a single ship lost.

When the venerated ancestors' duties are corrupted, they cannot return to Soryana. They appear only as mabuya—rotting sea creatures who lurk beneath the waves just waiting to grab the living and drag them down below with them. In the dark, they might be mistaken for ancestors, but one thing always gives them away—their feet are backwards, ensuring they can never make their way home.

Some claim mabuya are demons sent to plague our people. Others say the mabuya are the defiled ancestors themselves, and that they are simply driven mad with loneliness. Regardless, there is no reasoning with a mabuya, no making sense of its keening cries. One can only get away from the water they are haunting, or drive them off with sacred artifacts blessed by King Locuo himself.

Mabuya are soul-shaking creatures, wearing the faces of disgraced ancestors. They act as a reminder to all Rahuri of the dangers of violating their tribal honor. Although a single Mabuya's Strength is fairly low (range of 5 to 7), it is an Aquatic, Horrifying, Regenerating, Suffocating Monster.

WHY SO MANY MONSTERS?

The Explorer's Society and other armchair theorists love to exchange theories about the sheer volume of sea monsters in the Atabean. William Jameson, who claims to have explored the most Syrneth ruins in the Atabean, has his own ideas. He claims that the gods of the New World might be Syrneth descendants, or maybe servitors, or warriors, that part he isn't clear about. But he's certain that the sea monsters were both a food source and a defense system against invaders. They were bred in the Atabean then used to feed the New World gods who he thinks had some sort of apocalyptic power to defend the New World from Sidhe invaders. Most members think he's a crackpot and his theory began with a bad experience he had with a Sidhe in his native Inismore. Whatever the truth, he refuses to return to the Glamour Isles, and is obsessed with finding a Syrneth ruin he calls The Focus.

Giant Squid

Now, you've heard of giant squid, right? They're big—two, three times as big as a sailor, sometimes bigger. And, they're good eating. Dangerous, sure—suckers with teeth all along them arms, and the biggest ones got hooks at the ends that can tear through a sailor's belly like a hot knife through butter. But they're still food. Most deaths when squid-hunting are either from stupidity or sheer accident. Squid'll flail about when you try to bring them on board, and those hooks end up going every which direction. Or their tentacles grab and crush; they'll shatter a limb if they get wound around it.

Worse death I ever seen from a squid was when this new hand got wrapped around the middle. Before they could get him cut loose, the damned squid squeezed him near in two. Weren't a damned thing the surgeon could do for him after; his insides was mostly outside, squeezed out both ends like a piece of overripe fruit. Damned shame, but it was just bad luck, death throes on the squid's part, and being too damned slow and green on the sailor's.

Giant Squid are massive, muscular creatures, with Strength of 12. They have the Monstrous Qualities of Aquatic, Destructive, Powerful, Tentacled (10 tentacles).

Kraken

Ain't never seen Kraken actually eat a person. But I've seen sailors torn, limb from limb. I've seen them drowned, or beaten against the ship-deck until there weren't nothing left but a chunky red paste. Kraken don't attack ships out of hunger or self-defense; they do it because they hate people, because they don't want us in their territory, and mostly because they can.

Yes, I said they. Most folk'll swear up and down that there's just one Kraken. Wishful thinkin'. But wishin' don't make it true, and I know for a fact that there's more than one. There's three at least. I know. I seen 'em.

My first time, we were with a small fleet, closing in on a Castillian schooner, hoping for an easy mark, when a Kraken got the same idea. Black-green tentacles shot out of the water on either side of the ship, taller than the mizzenmast, and three times as big around. The crew fought, but what can you do against a beast bigger than your boat? The powder room went up, with a big enough explosion to drive the monster away, but by the time it did, the ship was nothing but fire and flotsam.

I lost my eye to my second Kraken. What, you thought I was born with this makara pearl in the socket? That monster was fleshy pink, and I swear, it had thorns all over it, like some sorta stickerbush. We weren't as lucky, that time…it was our ship that pissed off the beast. I washed up on the shore, short an eyeball, but luckier than most. Took me a year to get back into sailin' shape; I'd hoped that I'd seen the last of the Kraken.

I wasn't that fortunate. I saw them again the last time I set foot on the deck of a ship, and the last time I set foot anywhere without the help of this crutch. That one was red as sunset, blotched all over with white like you see sometimes on wildcats in the jungle. I didn't see it long, but long enough to know it wasn't either of the others I'd run into. And, by the way of the world, if there's three big nasties out there, chances are there are more. Most folks are just fortunate enough never to see more than one.

Guess I'm just not that lucky.

So few Kraken exist that most believe there is only one. Their Strength is 20, and they have the Monstrous Qualities of Aquatic, Colossal, Destructive, Powerful, and Tentacled. Because of their size, their Tentacles are Strength 10, and take 2 Dramatic Wounds to destroy. They have many, many Tentacles.

Mama Tortue

Aw now, lad, don't you look so worried! Not everything out in the great dark seas is out to get you. There's some benevolence out there, as well.

I mean, I've heard tale of sailors rescued by dolphins after a shipwreck. The friendly fishies swam right up underneath them and ferried them to shore when they'd surely have drowned otherwise. Some of them claim that the dolphins even waited with them in the shallows until they woke up enough to clamber up onto the beach on their own—what kind of sea monster would do that, am I right? Course, those are the same folk who sometimes claim the dolphins took human form and made sweet-sweet love to them before shifting back into fishes and returning to sea, so…who knows how crazy the truth might really be.

My point is, not everything out there is evil, or even dangerous.

I saw Mama Tortue once, with my own eyes. It was way off in the distance; at first I thought it was an uncharted island. I mean, it looked for all the world like a big ol' hill out where nothing was supposed to be, with bushes and rocks—even trees growing on it!

Then I realized it…no, She…She was movin'. And with a quickness! Before I could call down to have the navigator change our course, She was practically out of sight, even with the spyglass. We'd have never caught up with Her, even with our sails full unfurled. But I swear, before She disappeared, She arched Her head up outta the water and turned Her long ol' neck to look full at me.

For a moment, I couldn't even breathe; I mean, how often do ya get to look into the eyes of a goddess and have Her look right back at ya? She blinked one time, all slow like it was some kinda message, and then turned back the way She was headin' and disappeared over the horizon. Her eyes was green as seaweed. It was years ago, now, but you don't forget somethin' like that. You never forget.

Of all the Sea "Monsters," Mama Tortue is the least likely to be an antagonist, but should such come about, Her Strength is 20. She is an Aquatic, Colossal, Elemental (Sea), Teleporting goddess of the ocean.

Tiburon

Don't you be lookin' at me like that, boy. Some day you might get lucky enough to encounter Her yourself, and then you'll understand. Or maybe you'll run into Him, instead…Him, who?

Why Tiburon, of course. The Reaper. The Protector. The Great Shark of the Sea.

He is the Master of the Monsters, attended by schools of creatures that make the other things I've told you about seem like guppies in comparison.

Great gulper eels with mouths so big they can swallow a schooner whole. Caiman that sing with the voices of sirens, luring sailors to jump into the water and be consumed. Lusca, huge sharks with octopus tentacles protruding from their bellies. Poison tides that engulf ships and poison the air so the crew can't breathe. Even the Bo'Jaiba, the Lobster Who Never Dies, serves Tiburon as he patrols the bottom of every ocean, knowing that the Maw Who Consumes is the only creature capable of devouring even him.

Oh, I know your people don't believe in Him, but we Rahuri know better, and if you want to take to the sea, you will learn. The sea is life. The sea is death. It is our ward and our guardian, that which gives us life and that which can snatch it away just as quickly.

And Tiburon, whether He swims beneath your fleets or walks beside you without you knowing his identity, is the sea embodied. He is all that may rise from the depths, from your darkest nightmares, to consume you whole...without mercy. Know this and you will finally know the sea as we know it.

Roll your eyes if you will, young Théan, but if you take to the ocean you will find my words to be true in time. The bounties awaiting there are endless—but so is the suffering you will endure, should you not respect that which you encounter there. Tiburon is merely the most obvious end you can meet. There are worse fates even than His sharp maw.

Counterpart to Mama Tortue (although far less benevolent), Tiburon's Strength is also 20. He is an Aquatic, Colossal, Horrifying, Powerful, Relentless, Slippery Monster. He also has the power of Shapeshifting, although all of his forms have multiple rows of teeth. Teeth upon teeth upon teeth.

Wu'a

Legend says the Wu'a is like one of them angler-fish, 'cept it's so big it can't live off of luring other fish into its mouth. So, instead, it comes up to the surface and dangles that lighty-bit up over its maw, and the water rushing in makes a whirlpool so big it could suck a whole boat down into the beast's gullet. That beacon shines so bright and so high, you'd swear it was one of them Vesten lighthouses.

We sailed right for it, hoping to find a port when we got blown off course during a storm. Luckily for us, the gal in the crow's nest had sharp eyes, and saw the whirlpool in time for us to steer clear. If we'd have been caught in the current, we'd have never been able to change our course enough to break free. It would have been around-and-around and then…Gulp. That's all she wrote.

The Great Whirlpool, Wu'a, rivals the most powerful Sea Monsters (Strength 20), and has the Monstrous Qualities of Aquatic, Colossal, Horrifying, and Suffocating (as it drags entire ships under).

New Monstrous Qualities

These new Monstrous Qualities can be combined with those listed on pages 197-198 of the **Core Rulebook** to create a new world of underwater antagonists.

Colossal

Truly too large for a single Hero to handle, this Monster takes on entire armies, ships or ports. The Monster can take 8 Dramatic Wounds before becoming Helpless.

Destructive

Whether crushing claws snip off hands, corrosive acid melts artifacts, or particularly sharp weaponry gouges out eyes, the Monster can spend a Danger Point to destroy an item or non-vital body part on a Hero.

Slippery

Due to sliminess or cunning planning, this Monster may spend a Danger Point at any point to escape a Scene. This ability may be used once per Episode.

Suffocating

This Monster literally takes your breath away, dragging you underwater, choking you with tentacles or worse. Spend a Danger Point to select one Hero and deal double damage to him for the rest of the Round.

Nautical Campaigns

In this section, we give the GM a few hints, tricks and tools for bringing his game to the Seven Seas. It's really a hodgepodge of stuff.

Note that some of this material appeared in a different form in the first edition *Pirate Nations* book.

Traveling on a Ship

It's easy to think of a pirate campaign in terms of a bunch of folks sailing on a ship. You might think all you need is pirates, a ship and plunder. But there's more to a pirate campaign than a ship.

You've got to start thinking outside the ship. Here's a few suggestions for campaign hooks and twists to get you going.

And, let's be frank: travel on a ship is *boring*.

Now, don't get me wrong, exploring foreign places is a lot of fun. But when you get in your car for a long haul or squeeze into your cramped airplane seat or hunker down for a train ride, you know you're in for hours of boredom. That's why you bring a laptop and headphones.

Once you're at the destination, travel is fun. But getting there…that's another story. I've been on 12-hour plane trips. Spending an entire day in one small place with strangers, awful food and inconvenience. And once your laptop or smartphone battery dies, you're stuck. The best you can hope for is sleep.

Now imagine a journey that takes months. You're traveling in cramped quarters with strangers. No laptop or smartphone. To make matters worse, you could be killed at any moment. A storm comes along and blows you off deck. A sea monster reaches its tentacles up over the side of the ship and drags you down into its hungry maw. A mutiny breaks out and you're on the wrong side. Or a winch breaks and cracks your head open before you even knew what happened. Or, some superstitious sailor thinks you're the reason for all the bad luck and starts spreading the rumor. And, on top of all that, you have backbreaking work to pass the time. Hours of it. Swabbing the deck, rolling up the sheets, keeping watch for the black flag. Work makes the time a little less tedious, but it's still work. And, in a way, that just makes it worse.

Traveling on a ship is boring.

That's why, as the GM, you have to be very careful with how you present it to the players. All too often, I've seen GMs reduce travel down to a series of dice rolls. Make a navigation roll to find the next port. Make a Sailing roll to keep from falling from the sails. Make an Athletics roll to dodge the flying piece of rigging. These are tedious, meaningless rolls. Sure, the intent is great: you're trying to create a little drama on the way. But it's busy work. The rolls really don't mean anything or lead to anything interesting.

Never do this. Never ever do this.

Forcing the players to make arbitrary rolls for survival will not increase the drama of your game. Nor will it get your players emotionally invested. There are other ways to do this. More intriguing ways. Let's talk about them.

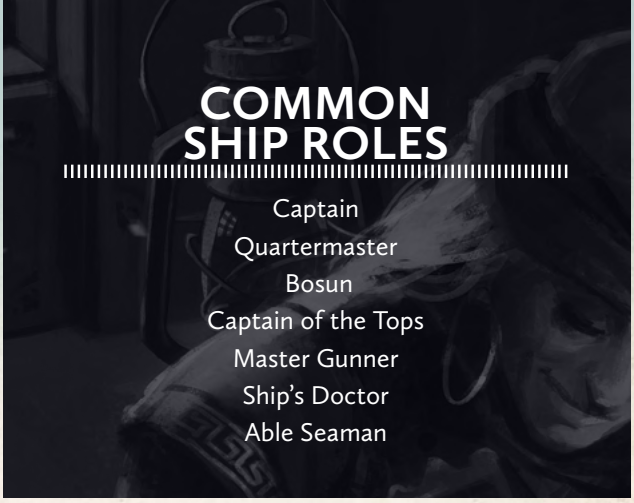
Crewing the Ship

We designed the Ship rules in the **Core Rulebook** with one intent: to make your players emotionally invested in their vessel. It wasn't for authenticity, and it wasn't to create a Ship simulator. Nope. We wanted the players to fall in love with the Ship. The Ship rules in the **Core Rulebook** take care of that, but now, let's take it a step further. Let's find a way to get the players to care about the crew.

What you want to do is invoke what makes sailing adventure novels so exciting. And that's camaraderie.

There's a reason sailors become such fast friends. The more friends you have on board, the more your survival rate goes up. The more people who see you as an ally and a valuable crew member, the more likely someone is looking out for you, the more likely they'll go out of their way to help you and the more likely they'll risk their own neck to save yours. Sailors face life-and-death decisions every day. Going up a tall mast to roll up the sails is no easy task. Add a storm to the mix and you've got seven different kinds of trouble. But the job becomes easier if the people you're working with are people you trust.

But how do you do that? How do you get that sense of friendship, that emotional bond? How do you get the players to care about the ship? You get them to care about the crew.



Now, here's another way to do that. Use the ship's roster in the Appendix (page 207).

The roster gives you each crew member's name, Nation and position and a space for quirks. These can either be Quirks—as in, game mechanics—or a peculiar behavior or habit that helps you communicate who that crew member is. Either or both.

You don't need to fill out all the spaces. In fact, you should probably fill out only spaces for the officers at first, filling in the lesser roles—able seamen—at a later date. I often let the players create sailors as we go, handing the sheet over to them and letting the players fill in the blanks. More minds, more diversity.

You can't push a crew member on the players. You can work for hours carefully crafting an NPC, then on game night say, "Hey! Look at this cool super detailed NPC I made!" and the players will go, "Oh, that's great. Yawn." Don't do this. Just don't.

Instead, throw caricatures at them. Quick characters you've thrown together. Like ten or twelve per session. Then, pay attention. Pay attention who the players talk to. Pay attention when they reach shore and when you ask, "Who are you bringing with you to the tavern?" The answer they give you is the NPC they've invested in. And, if the answer is, "Nobody," you know you haven't done your job right.

You know your friends. You know what kind of characters they like. Their favorite characters from movies and TV shows and books. Which side do they pick? Then, make a character who also picked that side.

Also, when you let the players come up with crew members, you're giving them the power to populate the crew with NPCs they want. You don't have to speculate or guess, they're literally doing your job for you. Let them. You may also want to allow players to roleplay certain crew members. Again, more minds, more diversity.

Crews vs. Navies

The **Core Rulebook** does a good job of describing the main roles of the various officers and mates on any sailing vessel. However, pirate crews and privately owned merchant ships differ in several significant ways.

While there are some minor variations on naval vessels nation by nation, like the Captain assuming some or all of the Master's duties, most are as described in the **Core Rulebook**. However, the Captain is always the be-all, end-all authority on any naval vessel. His word is literally the law, and to break that law brings harsh and draconian penalties and often death.

The same cannot be said for pirate crews or merchant crews. Merchant vessels are run for profit and so the faster the ship and the smaller the crew the more profitable the voyage. The final word for merchant ships is the owner. Some such ships do not even have a Captain, just a Master, and most do not have any military or offensive weapons or crew. Most crew members fill multiple roles. The Master might also be the Purser, the carpenter might also be the surgeon. The more each crew member can do, the less warm bodies the owner has to hire.

Pirate crews are a third path. They too seek profit from their voyages, but their aims are for higher risks and rewards, and that usually requires very large crews, crews that democratically elect their two leaders: the Captain and the Quartermaster. The Captain is in charge of the ship and crew during combat and also the one charged with coming up with the plan for the voyage: where and what to attack. The Quartermaster is in charge of the ship at all other times. She assumes many of the duties of the ship's Master, but her main job is to make sure that ship and crew are cared for and to secure and fairly divide all booty when the voyage is over.

Voting

Tell me if I'm wrong, but I suspect your crew will probably be either pirates or privateers. You could be part of the Montaigne navy or the Castillian Armada or a crew on a Vodacce merchant ship, but I'd bet you'd rather be sailing under the black flag or with a Letter of Marque. So, with that in mind, let's talk about voting.

Pirate ships are floating democracies. They allow the crew to vote on where the ship goes, which ships or forts to attack and just about everything else. To handle this, actually allow the players to vote! Put forth a proposition and ask for a show of hands. The majority wins.

You can also, as the GM, allow the rest of the crew to vote. Every NPC officer on the ship not represented by players should get a vote. And, if you like, give the general crew a voice as well. You can give the rest of the crew a single vote—which still gives the Heroes a lot of say in what goes on—or you can divide the ship's crew into three or four or five votes and encourage the Heroes to make speeches, trying to sway the rest of the crew to their side. Risks are appropriate here with the players assigning Raises to each voting bloc of the crew. For example, if you divide the crew into five voting blocs, players can assign their Raises to the blocs, hoping to sway their votes.

Navies

There are other options for nautical adventures other than privateers and pirates. In fact, most ships on the sea aren't pirates. Let's take a moment to explore this option.

Avalon

You can run a game with the players as officers on official naval ships. Granted, most of Avalon's navy are privateers, but they're also the most formal privateers on the Seven Seas. At this point in history, the great Avalon naval tradition is just getting started. The hierarchy of the crew is becoming much more formal and a central command is starting to organize ships into a naval power. Some captains are straining against this new formality, but allegiance to the Queen comes before all else, and that power is greater than a captain's pride any day of the week. "So She commands, so I go."

Castille

The Castillian Armada took a pounding a few years back when it tried to invade Avalon. A combination of chance, bad storms, Avalonian nautical skill and Castillian incompetence pulled off the greatest upset in the last 100 years. Good King Sandoval tried to rebuild the Castillian Armada, but the Inquisition put priorities in different places. The Armada slowly regained its strength, but it was far from its former glory. That is, until the discovery of the New World. Once new resources and cultures made themselves available, the Inquisition reset the allocation of funds, and now the Castillian fleet is one of the most well-funded in Théah. Castillian ships are some of the most disciplined in the world, filled with highly skilled sailors and officers with years of experience. There are more Castillian ships on the waves than of any other Nation, bringing massive wealth to Castille's shores.

Eisen

Eisen has no formal navy, only a few mercenary ships sailing out from the Hoppe Channel. The Vesten control those waters and demand high taxes for any ships passing through, an expense most of Eisen cannot afford. That's why they hire mercenary ships to smuggle goods in and out of the northern waters.

Montaigne

The Montaigne navy is…well, it's a bit of a joke. With no discipline and too much formal structure—l'Empereur changes the rules every day, it seems—Montaigne ships are a mishmash. Some ships are run by competent captains and crews, but most are floating examples of nepotism, incompetence and indulgence. The ships are huge and beautiful, over-stocked with supplies they don't need, loaded with guns and sailors in immaculate uniforms run by buffoons with no understanding of life at sea. But the exceptions are truly exceptional. When a Montaigne ship has a competent captain and crew, it can be one of the most deadly vessels on the sea. They have large, well-built, well-armed ships supplied with more than everything they need. And that is a dangerous combination.

Sarmatia

The Sarmatian Commonwealth has used merchant ships for decades, but only recently has begun to construct warships to protect them rather than hiring mercenaries. For decades, the Sejm refused to fund a navy, finding mercenaries cheaper and easier to deal with, but after Golden Liberty, the Commonwealth has finally turned its attention to the growing interest in controlling the sea. Still in its infancy, the Sarmatian navy has a long way to go to compete with its neighbor Nations, but spending Guilders to hire foreign captains and admirals to raise its navy has been successful so far. Serving on a Sarmatian ship means being on the bottom floor of a new endeavor and her captains are torn between the rigid discipline of the Castillian fleet and the democracy of a pirate ship.

Ussura

Land-locked with only a few ports in the northern ocean, Ussura has little navy to speak of. Even when their ports aren't frozen over (nine months of the year), keeping ships afloat is a challenge at best. Ussuran ships have little organization: there's a captain, a quartermaster, a bosun and that's about it. They have few warships, but many whalers and other fishing vessels.

Vestenmennavenjar

The lords of the North, the Vendel League controls half of the northern oceans and holds a tentative peace with Avalon, which controls the rest. Their subtle trading war with Vodacce has nearly turned into a full-fledged conflict. Vesten ships are on the cutting edge of modern design and technology as well as having some of the best crews on the waves. They keep strict discipline on their ships, all devoted to the various trading routes going from Vesten to the rest of the world and back again. Whether it is on a merchant ship or a fighting ship, the crew are dressed in uniforms, drilled and trained to peak efficiency.

Vodacce

The famous (or infamous) Vodacce merchant fleet still controls most of the southern waters of Théah, despite creeping up in age. Many of the ships are older than the standard ship on the waves, but their sheer numbers make up for their age. Much like Vodacce itself, their ships are the furthest thing from democracies. The captain is lord and master of the ship, his word unquestionable. Many Vodacce captains are legends for their cunning, taking newer, faster and stronger ships with nothing more than deception and quick thinking. The merchant fleet has no real admiral to command it: each ship owes its allegiance to the Merchant Prince who owns the ship. Thus, there is no true "Vodacce fleet," only a vast number of ships who work together only when there's a profit to be found on the other end of cooperation.

"And Then" vs. "Because"

The oldest rule in storytelling is "Show, Don't Tell," but there's another lesser-known rule that's just as important: using "Because" instead of "And Then." Oddly enough, ship stories are great for illustrating how this rule works.

In stories, plot happens either by blind chance or because of a consequence from something that happened earlier. For example, a common plot element in a seafaring story is a dangerous storm. Now, there are two ways you can introduce your storm to the players. You can throw it at them arbitrarily or you can force them to deal with the storm because of their choices.

The Storm

"And Then" GM: You're sailing along and suddenly, you see black clouds on the horizon! A storm approaches!

"Because" GM: You're catching up to the ship you're chasing—the one with the captured prince on board—but it looks like that ship is turning into those black clouds you've been spying from the south. Do you turn into the storm to maintain the pursuit?

Old Smokey

"And Then" GM: A hook falls from the rigging! Make an Athletics Risk to get out of the way!

"Because" GM: Last night, you caught Old Smokey deep in her cups. You chose not to chastise her because "sailors will be sailors." This morning, Old Smokey was up in the rigging and dropped a hook, clubbing the ship's doctor in the head, knocking him unconscious!

See how these work? One example has a problem dropped onto the players because pacing! The GM says, "Let's use a roll to make things interesting!" The second examples use the players' choices to show the world has consequences.

The best literature lets us see a character's choices, understand those choices, sympathize with those choices *and* watch those choices return to stab the character in the back. Your GM instincts may tell you to force the players to make random rolls to make things interesting. Ignore those instincts. Murder that voice with fire. Instead, plant seeds. Instead of making your players roll, then make choices, get them to make choices, then force them to roll.

Two Common Questions

These are the two most common questions I get about running a 7th Sea campaign. Well, at least as far as nautical stories go. Here are my best answers.

"But What if I Don't Know Anything about Boats?"

First, they're not boats, they're ships. A boat is small enough to be carried by a larger vessel and a ship is large enough to carry other vessels. Also, there's the bit about a ship having more than one sail and…

Oops. Sorry. Let's start that over.

You don't need to know all that much about ships and boats. Honestly, you don't. Chances are, there's someone in your group who does. Defer to him knowledge. Let him be the expert on nautical lore and get out of his way. Spend a moment to tell your group, "Look, everyone. I don't know a lot about this stuff, but Sam here does, and we're going to look to him when we need to know something, okay?"

That's a good way to start. But the next step is a little harder. Ready? Here it is…

Get smarter about ships.

Watch *Pirates of the Caribbean*. You don't need to know anything about sailors or ships to appreciate that movie. Once you're done with that, graduate up to *Master and Commander*. You'll learn a whole lot about historical sailing watching that movie. Enough to run a campaign. Then, when you feel like you're ready for the graduate class, get one of Patrick O'Brien's books and read it cover to cover. If you have any love at all for this kind of literature, you'll thank me.

The more time you spend with this kind of literature, the more familiar you'll become. Yes, it means you have to do some homework, but we've done a lot of that for you. This book is loaded with stuff you can use. So, use it!

"What Kind of Stories Can I Run?"

There's more to being a pirate than digging up buried treasure—although, there's a whole ton of fun in that! Here are some of the more common stories you can throw at your players.

The Atabean Trading Company

If we haven't made it clear enough, we've provided you with a bunch of Villains for your players to rally against. The ATC is, and let's not mince words here, clearly evil. Thwarting their plans should give you a ton of material for stories.

Want a good hook? Need a good reason for a Vodacce duelist, an Avalonian privateer, a Castillian alchemist and a Vestenmennavenjar merchant to work together? Throw them into an ATC slave camp and have them plot an escape. Then, once they escape, they probably have a whole lot of grudges to follow up on. What? You mean, they don't? Well then, you should probably give them grudges to follow up on. As in, who betrayed them and sent them up the river? Why are they in the prison in the first place?

If you're a Hero, you probably didn't deserve getting thrown into chains. But what if you're not a Hero? What if you were a Villain when you went in (I'm looking at you, Vodacce duelist) but your time in the prison has transformed you into a Hero? Hm…

Not only can the players go after the ones who betrayed them, but they can also start planning how to bust up the prison that once held them. And that is gonna take some major planning.

Of course, this is where I tell you to let your players help you build the prison island. Give them a blank map and work with them to come up with the island's defenses, weaknesses and secrets. I've taught you how to do this before, so I'm not going to do it here again.

Smuggling

The Vendel League makes a lot of money from taxes and tariffs. Some Nations even forbid certain cargo from entering the country. For example, Montaigne keeps an eye on how many muskets enter the country. L'Empereur has banned their import. To avoid these fees and restrictions, many merchants have turned to smuggling, and what better way to bring illegal and illicit cargo into port than hiding it or disguising it as legal cargo?

Most Nations also forbid removing Syrneth artifacts from their borders. Nearly every monarch in Théah has a keen interest in its ancient finds and does not want other Nations getting their hands on them. Of course, the Explorer's Society is keen to get their hands on artifacts and has relied on pirates to sneak them out. But before these goodies get on a ship, someone has to steal them…

Pirates carry a lot of different kinds of dangerous plunder in the hold, but Syrneth artifacts may be the most dangerous. Gold and silver don't explode when you expose them to sunlight. Guilders don't suddenly come to life under the full moon and start eating your crew's eyes out. And as nasty as a Fate Witch hostage may be, she can't burn your entire ship to a cinder if you drop her. Well… maybe she can, but the fact remains that raiding Syrneth ruins is dangerous, but shipping the artifacts you find back to mainland Théah can prove to be even more so. Dangerous, but profitable.

The most profitable cargo, however, is people. Moving soldiers from one Nation to another, moving Fate Witches out of Vodacce, moving slaves from their homeland to work camps… these shipments will fill your coffers fast. And people are always interesting.

Capturing Ships

Many Nations pay a pretty penny to get hold of other Nations' ships. This particular task is most likely carried out by privateers working for a particular monarch, but pirates have been known to capture Castillian ships and drop them off in Avalon harbors.

Pirates also capture ships for raw materials, breaking down the damaged wreck into wooden planks and melting down the lead cannons. Sometimes, the salvage from a ship can be as valuable as its cargo.

Of course, there's always the possibility of adding the ship to your own collection. "Commodore" sounds so much more dignified than "captain," doesn't it?

Ransom

Ransom is not unique to the waves; Théan nobles have been ransoming each other's family members for centuries. But with the advent of piracy, capturing wealthy nobles and merchants on ships has provided pirates with a steady source of income. You know the merchant's family is wealthy. All you have to do is figure out how to get the money. Now, under most circumstances, this would be considered Villainous activity, but there could be some exceptions. For example, prisoner-for-prisoner exchange. The ATC has one of your allies held on a prison island and you want her free, so you capture one of their officers and offer an exchange.

Yeah. Good luck with that.

Or, you could have a young Hero who has been married against his will to an unsavory Villain. The Hero hires our pirates for illicit passage out of the country. The Hero and the pirate captain fall in love and dream up a scheme to kidnap the Villain in question and hold him for ransom. "What's the ransom?" you ask. Why, it's an annulment of the marriage, of course.

The Crimson Raiders

We've also given you a bunch of Villainous pirates to deal with. Reis' Crimson Raiders are nothing to scoff at. Reis has a fascination with Syrneth artifacts and arms her ships with them. She never takes prisoners, murdering her way across the Seven Seas as if she were on some kind of personal, secret mission. And maybe she is. Maybe she's trying to find a way to get rid of the curse she got when she betrayed the Brotherhood of the Coast. Maybe she's running from the Devil Jonah. Or maybe it's something even darker. Reis has a goal. Figure out what it is, then show it to your players bit by bit.

Mutiny

A Villainous officer on board offers you the opportunity for a political prison break swashbuckling adventure! Mutiny puts friends against friends. Yes, Heroes can agree with a Villain's motives…if the Villain is convincing enough…or if you have a Heroic captain obsessing too much about a particular white whale… or if the captain's personal sense of duty is tearing the ship apart…

Mutiny can be tricky. But it can also be a lot of fun.

More Adventure Hooks

The Treasure Map

Ah, the treasure map. Key to hidden goodies. Let's take this classic trope and put some twists in it.

First, give your Heroes part of a treasure map. Let them know (through an NPC) that there are three more pieces…and let them know who has them. Now, the Heroes have three different locations to visit. Sure they know who has the other pieces of the map, but where those people are now is another question.

Once they've got all four pieces together, they have to figure the whole thing out. After all, what self-respecting GM would give her Heroes a map that tells them exactly where the treasure is without a riddle or two?

With all the pieces together, the Heroes discover the map is written in ancient Théan (very different from the scholarly Old Théan the learned folks speak today), which means they have to get a Church scholar to translate it. That's another evening's worth of adventure that doesn't take place on board a ship. And, of course, our scholar probably has a few problems of his own the Heroes could handle.

Finally, they've got all four pieces, they've got it translated, and they've figured out the riddle. Now all they have to do is get to where the treasure is and dig it up, right?

Wrong.

The treasure is in a Syrneth ruin, surrounded by beasties, death traps and… hey! What are those other pirates doing here? Well, it turns out there were two copies of the map, and a rival pirate ship has the second copy. Now it's a race to the center of the ruin to get the treasure. Racing through a ruin filled with traps. That sounds like fun.

Saving Vodacce

Duty is a powerful motivation. A motivation you should not underestimate. Whether your Heroes are privateers serving a monarch (Sea Dogs) or straight-out pirates bound by a common ideal (the Brotherhood of the Coast), we can throw problems at duty-bound Heroes.

A group of Fate Witches come to the docks, looking for a crew. They tell the captain that they need to go to a distant island right away and offer the captain a great deal of money. Over the course of the voyage, the captain learns from one of the witches that they've foreseen a great earthquake in Vodacce's not-too-distant future and that only a Syrneth artifact can save the island chains.

Now the question here is simple. Vodacce is clearly a land run by Villains. Maybe the pirates should allow the earthquake to happen. It would certainly shake up the system. On the other hand, many innocent people will die if they don't finish the mission. Make one of the Fate Witches a Villain and now the Heroes are helping out a Villain…for a heroic cause?

The Hot Potato

A "hot potato" story involves something the Heroes have that everyone else wants. Let's take a peek at a few ways to handle this one.

The Heroes capture a treasure ship and find a small copper box. They can't open it and there's no obvious lock. Soon enough, they see Reis's sails over the waves. Reis wants the box. They don't know why and she ain't talkin', but she's going to get it…by hook or by crook.

You might be able to hand it over. Reis may spare your lives. But chances are, she won't. Unless someone convinces her you're willing to join her growing fleet… maybe then? In the meantime, you have to find out what's in the box. After all, it can't be anything good if Reis wants it.

Conflicting Loyalties

The Heroes learn of a plot to murder a fellow pirate captain, a fellow member of the Brotherhood of the Coast. Problem is, the captain is a Villain and the Hero looking to kill him has every right to do so. The Villain tortured and murdered the Hero's family and made her watch it. The Hero escaped and vowed revenge…on the graves of those she lost.

Now, our Heroes can thwart the plot, or aid it. What do they do?

Playing Politics

Privateers usually have a noble or merchant patron, someone who pays for their ship and crew. You turn in a portion of your take and the patron uses political pressure to clean up any messes you get into. Now, as a GM, you could make this patron an NPC, but where's the fun in that? The ship's sponsor should be a player. After all, you can't have a bunch of ratty, scurvy-ridden scum speaking with the Queen of Avalon, can you? The Heroes need a spokesperson and it's a cop-out to make him or her an NPC.

Once they've got a sponsor, the Heroes will find themselves doing much more than just raiding enemy shipping lanes. They'll be transporting dignitaries, carrying secret messages, rescuing hostages, looking for new lands and resources, sabotaging other ships and looting ruins in their spare time. It's a busy life, this privateering business. Anything to keep the Crown's hands clean.

And what happens when the patron gets captured by a Villain? Well, there's only one way to handle that…

Finally…

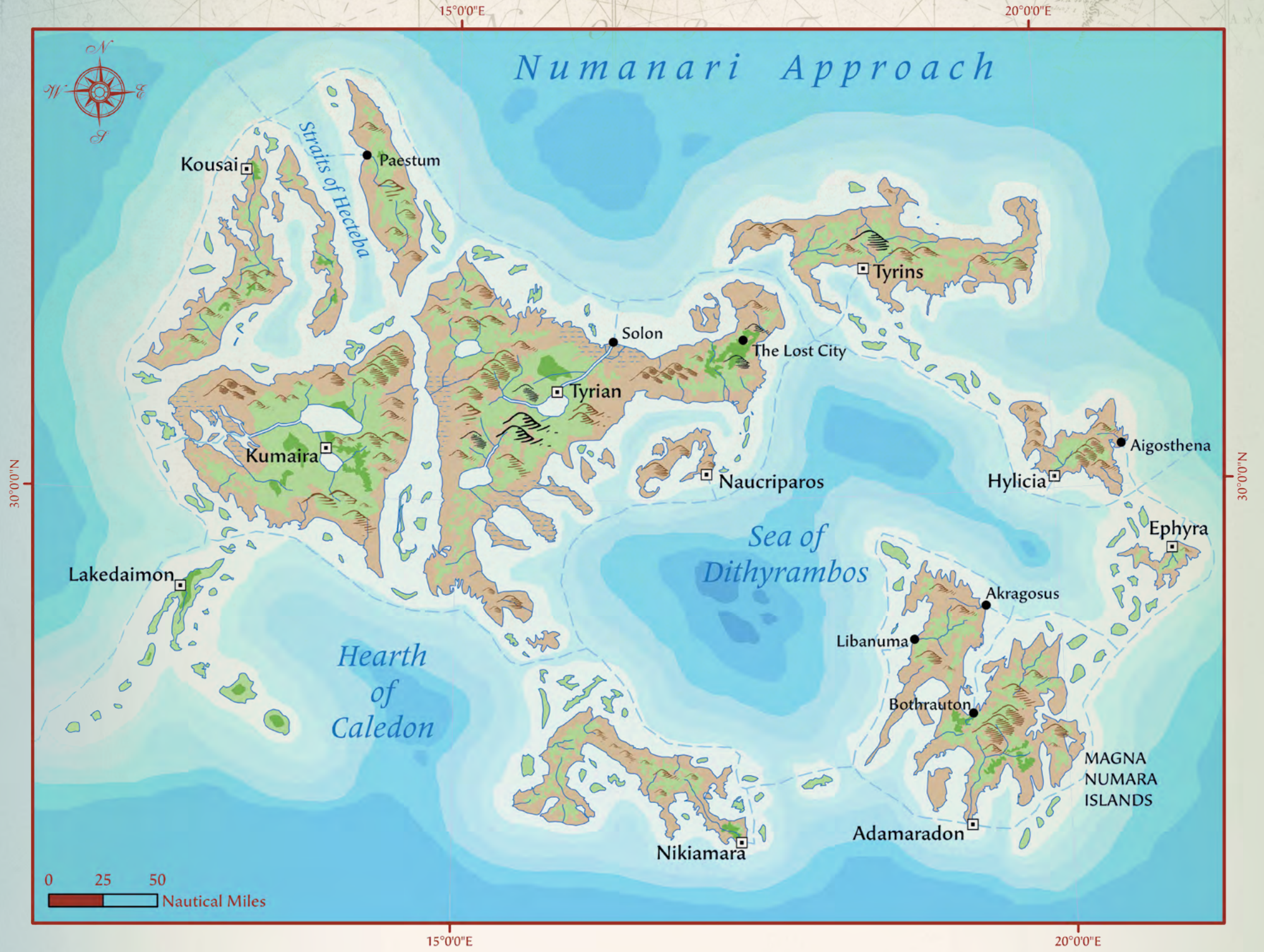
Remember my advice from the core book? You're going to do fine here. Sure, you knew nothing about ships and boats before you started reading this book, but now you've got a whole ton of information to help you out.

So, get some planning done. Get yourself acquainted with a few nautical terms, and set your players off on a seafaring adventure!

Appendix

PIRATE NATIONS OF THE ATABEAN SEA
LEGEND
Settlements
Capital
Major
Minor
Fortification
Nations
Castille
Glamour Isles
Montaigne
Rahuri
Vestenmennavenjar
0 100 200 Nautical Miles
90°0'0"W
75°0'0"W
60°0'0"W
30°0'0"N
15°0'0"N
NAHUACAN ALLIANCE
AIRICAIBO
THRANDIN'S SPIRES
Aragosta Island
ARAGOSTA
BotC
MACDUFFTOWN
THEAN COLONIES
Isla Santa del Bajo
CIUDAD DE LAS FLORES
COLINA VERDE
CENTRAL RAHURI
MUCARO
Borequen Cay
BOREQUEN
SAN SANCHA
SAN SORCIER
Guare Cay
Devil's Strait
LA DOMINIQUE
BILLET-DOUX
ALLVADERSBERG
ATABEAN SEA
FORT FREEDOM
SNOWFLAKE ATC
NEW CARLEON
SAN CRISTOBAL DE BORIKEN
Isla Boriken
Kiskeya Kay
NACA'AN
ROUSSPORT
MARIANA
PORTA OZAMA
ZILE NAN MÒN
MANGROVE BASE
BURIED LABORATORY
Les Alpes Azurées
JARAGUA
KAP-KALFU
CONTREDANCE
Île de Sylviette
SYLVIETTE
BATEM RATE
EASTERN RAHURI
ITAMINI
WESTERN RAHURI
Yamaka Cay
YAMAKA
TZAK K'AN
Fortunato Cay
FORTUNATO
SAN FELIPE DE BEGUIA
Isla Beguia

17°6'0"W
17°5'30"W
17°5'0"W
17°4'30"W
28°10'30"N
28°10'0"N
28°9'30"N
28°9'0"N
N
W
E
S
THE NORTHERN ARC
Port Sacred
The Crown
Le Gros Vert
Gibbit Lake
SUNRISE HAVEN
The Planks
BLACK SPOT BAY
Free Balconies
Brown Hall
THE HOOK
The Bilge
Deadlights Island
Grapeshot Falls
Jacobs Ladder
SUTLER BAY
SUNSET HAVEN
Jack Ketch Cliffs
Betting Barnacle
Yellow Fin
The Maze
St. Reneé's
Jenny's Jungle
Ruins
THE SOUTHERN ARC
0
0.25
0.5
Miles


15°0'0"E
20°0'0"E
30°0'0"N
Numanari Approach
N
W
E
S
Straits of Hecteba
Kousai
Paestum
Tyrins
Solon
The Lost City
Tyrian
Kumaira
Naucriparos
Aigosthena
Hylicia
Ephyra
Sea of Dithyrambos
Lakedaimon
Akragosus
Libanuma
Hearth of Caledon
Bothrauton
MAGNA NUMARA ISLANDS
Adamaradon
Nikiamara
0 25 50
Nautical Miles

SHIP NAME

Class

SHIP HISTORY

Origin

Background

CARGO

Treasury

ROSTER

Name Position Nation

Quirks:

Name Position Nation

Quirks:

Name Position Nation

Quirks:

Name Position Nation

Quirks:

Name Position Nation

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Name Position Nation

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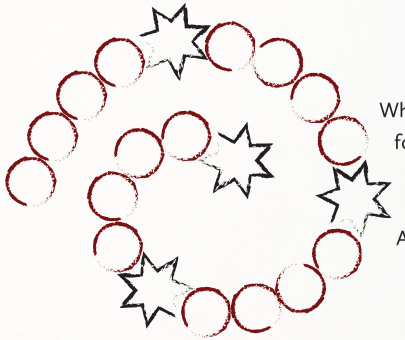
☐ CREW IS MUTINOUS

ADVENTURES

HIT TRACKER



When a Ship takes her fourth Critical Hit, it becomes Crippled.

A Crippled Ship that takes a Hit is Sunk.

7TH SEA

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