

# Freedom on the Seas

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## Introduction

This is a scenario for Sorcerer which is published by Adept Press. Hopefully you're familiar with it, if not please contact me before the game and I'll try to bring you up to speed with the mechanics. This scenario follows a very specific style, and you'll find that things differ quite a bit from your standard convention scenario. You won't find a list of events leading up to a finale. The idea is to put the construction of that finale into the hands of the players.

The scenario consists of four characters with an interlocking history who encounter each other for the first time in some time. The scenario consists solely of this meeting and its consequences. Each of the characters also has a demon, a force they have used in the past to change the world in some ways. These demons are still around and are the main antagonists. If things seem to be resolving too easily then one or another of these demons is likely to be inconvenienced and will act to assert itself. It is by this that the scenario drives itself forward. At any time any of the characters may decide to summon a new demon or banish an existing one and these choices should be accepted and incorporated into the game.

Look for the Player handout which accompanies this scenario. This details who each of the characters are. This sheet details all the characters, and should be handed to all players at the beginning of the game. There is little attempt to restrict player knowledge to what their character would know in Sorcerer, and the players should be familiar with all characters motivations. Similarly, any action taken by a character must be revealed to the group.

This document firstly describes the setting, premise, sorcery and humanity. It then describes each of the demons in detail along with their motivations. It then gives rules for resolving ship to ship and combat and finishes with a list of Bangs that can be used to get the scenario moving.

## Setting

This game takes place in the summer of 1665 at the height of piracy in the Caribbean. It should be easy to grab all the familiar piracy stereotypes. France, Holland, England and Spain all compete for control of the area, and with the Spanish in decline, the other three powers have turned their attention to each other. The second Anglo-Dutch war began in May 1665 (the first happened only a couple of years previously.) Some islands in the region change hands many times over this period. In this environment piracy is thriving, and the European powers are unable to commit sufficient resources to control their holdings in the Caribbean. The various powers have each issued Letters of Marque to privateers, legal pirates with authority to target enemy shipping.

The characters are members of two important families from St Kitts (the capital is Basseterre) and members of the English colonial upper class. Some of them are operating out of the pirate port of Tortuga, which although nominally controlled by the French is a haven for pirates.

## Premise

This is a game about the search for freedom. Each of the characters is in flight from a life that they see as restrictive and destructive. The characters see the sea and piracy as an opportunity to escape and have called upon demons to make this escape possible. At the same time they find themselves trapped by some force that means that a life of piracy is not the liberating experience they would like it to be. Samuel is fleeing the duties and responsibilities of normal social connections and but finds himself bound by duties to his demon which force him to be greedy and brutal. Katherine is fleeing the abandonment she has found in a society that forces her to seek freedom through a partner and finds herself trapped in a relationship with a demon that leaves her feeling lonely although theoretically living her dream. Richard has accepted a set of unfair rules which allow him to operate with impunity, while hunting those who do exactly the same thing he does. Charles is trapped entirely by his own self-expectations and his own belief that he is incapable of achieving anything worthwhile. The hope is that some of these questions will arise during play, and that some sort of answers will be reached.

## Sorcery and Demons

Sorcery comes in many varieties in this setting. The trappings are typically a mixture of voodoo and piracy. The clearest exception is the sorcery practiced by Richard's coven: sorcerers of this type are more like lawyers than anything else, and sorcery involves long complex legalistic ceremony. In general, you do not have to do very much, the important thing is a clear commitment to summoning a demon. For example, Katherine summons a demon simply by dreaming of the pirate she would like to deal with, and calling out for him to come and rescue her.

*Samuel threaded water as his boat sank around him, but he was unwilling to drown. He grabbed two pieces of wood and pressed them together screaming that he could not drown. He called upon his boat to come back together, to give him one last opportunity at revenge upon the young woman who had left him to drown.*

## Humanity

Humanity is the characters freedom, the ability to do live their own life day to day rather than a mess of expectations, duties and commitments. A character makes a Humanity gain check whenever they take an action which shows them making an effort to change their lives. They make a Humanity loss check whenever they allow themselves to accept the easy routine solution.

*Charles sees his sister fall into the water, he looks around and realises that Lanoria isn't there and that no one else can help. He dives into the water, risking his life and taking decisive action. He rolls to gain Humanity.*

*Richard sees Samuel's rowing boat crawling through the water. He calls to the men to bring his brother aboard. As Samuel feels the Letter of Marque shake in its bag. He reaches in and pulls it out. He reads the charges his brother faces and the requirement that he be placed in chains. He grimaces and orders the men to lock Samuel in irons. He rolls to lose Humanity.*

Humanity is a metagame mechanic, not something that exists within the world. Any character dropping to zero Humanity is no longer capable of changing and is now an NPC.

## **The Antagonists**

### **Hook Tooth's Treasure**

This treasure chest is potentially a very silent demon, so keep an eye out for opportunities for it to make itself felt. It's Need is for plundered riches, and it is not happy about it's prospects at the moment. With the loss of Samuel's ship it sees itself the property of a pirate without a ship. Ideally it would like Samuel to take control of one of the other ships. It will show up next to Samuel, full of gore to show it's discontent. If brought on board another ship it is likely to try and steal valuables from that ship. It's desire for greed is a desire to see it in others, and won't be happy to see pirates expressing desires other than untold wealth.

It uses Warp to turn rocks into temporary gold and to consume real gold placed inside it. It uses Perception to guide the shaping of gold into perfect coins. It uses Confuse to dazzle people with a vision of unbelievable riches and Psychic Force to hit people who look inside and gore and horrors.

### **Captain Black Deed**

Black Deed is at the same time deferential and polite to Katherine, while also being incredibly possessive. Any other company will be seen as a threat to his Need for sex. It is essentially impossible for Katherine to make a strong connection to another character without either getting rid of Black Deed or imposing her will very strongly up on him. He is extremely ruthless and his desire for violence should be used to highlight his nastiness. This is particularly useful if the characters have decided to fight it out for control of both ships. The crew of Katherine's ship are confident that they can win any action with Captain Black Deed leading them.

He uses his Cover to guide the ship, his Special Damage to massacre opponents with his sword. Link allows him to keep an eye on Katherine, both to protect her and to make sure she won't betray him. Remember, he can turn the link off if he needs to act without her knowledge.

### **The Letter of Marque**

The letter Needs to see pirates brought to justice and wants to see the letter of the law followed. In this case, the occupants of both the other ships are pirates and must be brought to justice if at all possible. It communicates by the changing text that appears upon it. It is utterly inflexible and a major obstacle to any happy ending.

It confers Hold and Mark to Richard. Hold(Ranged) allows him to call upon a criminal to stop causing them to be frozen to the stop, he can call repeatedly to paralyse them almost completely. He can also label someone an outlaw so they can be recognised by other members of the coven. The Letter can also Boost his Will.

## **Lanoria**

Lanoria is the expression of Charles' dreams and desires and delights in having the adventures he never could. She Needs his attention and is likely to become unhappy if he finds a life of his own. Her normal activity is to lie with and use her confuse ability to give him visions of an exciting life. She can be very mischievous and will carry out his commands with perhaps excessive enthusiasm.

She's a nastily powerful demon. She's inconspicuous with Confuse which she uses to cause people to see things. She can Shapeshift into a mermaid, in this form she has the ability to Hold(Ranged) with her hypnotic singing. She can also Shapeshift into a ship made out of water, in which case she is Big and can Transport others.

## **Bangs**

A bang is an event that forces the characters into action because it demands a decision on the part of the characters. The first bangs are the kickers. Each of these are possible bangs that may or may not be appropriate.

- Black Deed murders Celeste because he feels that she'll take Katherine away.
- Hook Tooth's treasure steals from one of the other ships.
- The letter of marque demands that a someone be arrested who otherwise wouldn't be.
- Lanoria causes someone to go overboard and drown.
- The crew demands of Richard that Samuel be removed from authority.
- Black Deed insists that they can take the other ship by force.
- The Treasure offers itself to another sorcerer, deciding that it would be safer there than with Samuel.
- Lanoria chides Charles for trying to do something she could have done for him.
- Black Deed expresses his jealousy towards another PC.
- Lanoria demands Charles attention when he's doing something else.
- The treasure attacks a member of someone's crew.
- A member of the Katherine's crew appeals to her regarding some behaviour of Black Deed.

## **Naval Warfare**

This game is not about naval warfare, and therefore fights, should they break out, must be resolved quickly. However, at some point diplomacy may break down and the players will start using the word "broadside" in an inexplicable manner. Here's the quick and dirty ship-to-ship combat rules.

Get announcements of the actions of each ship. At this point the characters have lots of time to do things onboard each of the ships. Ship to ship combat is much slower than most other types of action. Bonuses and penalties from these actions can roll into the eventual roll. Each side rolls a suitable naval cover (or 1 die if none is available) and whoever wins gets their way. Victories from this action can transfer to following actions.

*Richard orders his ship to close quickly on Katherine's vessel and sink it with the cannons. Black Deed orders the crew to try to close in so that they can board Richard's ship. Charles orders Lanoria to swim in the water around the other ship to distract the sailors. (Lanoria's Will vs Black Deed's Cover, the two victories for Lanoria act as a penalty to the ship-to-ship roll.) Samuel and Katherine move to stop Lanoria, which has no effect on the combat. The ship-to-ship resolves and Black Deed rolls Cover-2 dice against Richard's Cover. Despite the penalty Black Deed wins and successfully boards the other ship. The victories from this roll act as bonuses to the boarding action.*

Each ship is assumed to have 5 dice worth of crew for the purpose of boarding actions. Once again this large fight resolves more slowly than other than other actions, and the players individual combats happen before the big fight. Damage inflicted to crew transfers as penalties to the boarding action. Whichever crew loses the boarding action is assumed to be defeated and dead, surrendered or hiding in the hold.

*Katherine's crew leaps on to the other ship. Black Deed announces that he will use his special damage to cut down the enemy crew. Richard uses his Cover to direct and inspire his crew. The success of these actions transfers to the eventual boarding roll. In the next round Charles engages Black Deed, and the result of this conflict no longer effects the battle raging around them. Black Deed however inflicts a huge seven lasting penalties on the enemy crew in his attack and easily wins the day.*

## Conclusions

Well, they could be anything. Maybe they all agree to go home together. Maybe Richard convinces everyone to join up as privateers. Maybe Katherine sinks everyone in vengence for deserting her and takes off with all four demons. Hopefully this all doesn't seem too scary, and works out.