

GURPS

Fourth Edition

*Supporting Cast:*TM **Age of Sail Pirate Crew**TM



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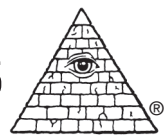
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It is, it is, a glorious thing to be a pirate king.
– W.S. Gilbert, *The Pirates of Penzance*

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INTRODUCTION

5th day of April in the year of our Lord 1716.

Forty-five days out of Bristol and my life changed forever. Our merchant brigantine was today captured by the pirate sloop *Adventurer's Revenge*. I fear I may never see England again.

The two ships came together with a jarring crash. We had made a good race of it, spreading all sails, even the flying jib and the tiny studding-sails, but the pirate sloop chasing us must have had a clean bottom and a skilled master.

The first pirate to board was terrifying. Fully a foot taller than me, the man was dark, like the African porters you see working in the Wapping docks. He leapt from ship to ship wielding a boarding pike and roaring in a foreign tongue. Around his neck he wore the strangest adornment: small pieces of shriveled leather on a thin lace.

"Hell's teeth!" said Captain Malin. "Those are ears. Men's ears."

I nearly retched as my eyes confirmed the truth. What kind of man wears human flesh for decoration?

More pirates flowed onto the deck. The black man advanced, and we shrank back.

"That will do, mister." A short, rotund man with a florid face and a brace of pistols in his belt limped forward. Unlike the other pirates, he was dressed in ordinary seaman's clothes with none of the ribbons or sashes that festooned many of the crew.

"Who's the master here?" he demanded.

Captain Malin took a deep breath and stepped forward. "I am."

The backhand blow took him by surprise, and he staggered backward. "That's for making us chase you."

Malin straightened. "Sir, I beg you. We surrendered without a fight. Your crew are unharmed, and the vessel is yours. But please sir, do not harm the crew. I appeal to you to be merciful. As one gentleman to another."

The change in the pirate captain's demeanor was instant and shocking. His face flushed and turned a deep puce. On his left temple, a vein stood proud, throbbing with each beat of his heart. Without a word, he reached to his belt, pulled both pistols, and fired them at our hapless captain. Malin was dead before he hit the deck.

"I am no gentleman," he said to the empty air.

— From the journal of Will Deakin

The year is 1716. The trading routes of the Atlantic and Caribbean have reopened after the War of the Spanish Succession. Merchant vessels sail from Europe to Africa to sell cloth and manufactured goods in exchange for slaves. The slaves are sold across the Atlantic, in the Caribbean or on the Eastern Seaboard of the American colonies. The merchants travel home laden with the wealth of the New World: sugar, indigo, cacao, tobacco, silver, gold, precious stones.

If they make it past the pirates.

Adventurer's Revenge is a small ocean-roving sloop with a tight-knit crew based in the Caribbean Sea. With a skilled captain and vicious quartermaster, the fast, agile craft has had a successful career preying on small merchantmen and fishing boats. The captain of *Adventurer's Revenge* has built a reputation among seafarers: generous to sailors, vicious to ship's masters, and with a legendary temper. Ships that surrender swiftly are well-treated, but woe betide the merchant vessel that flees or, even worse, tries to fight. Retribution is rapid and ruthless.

Adventurer's Revenge and its crew are intended as an NPC party of pirates. With a little modification, it could be transported to space, the present day, or any era and region where piracy was rampant. The ship and crew could even be

used as the kernel of a PC group.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nicholas Lovell is a writer and entrepreneur. He has contributed to *Pyramid* on topics ranging from Age of Sail privateers to a how-to guide on money laundering. He is the founder of gamesbrief.com, a blog on the business of computer games, has written a book called *How to Publish a Game* and was most recently CEO of GameShadow. He owns a sailing boat, *Tripitaka*, which he keeps in Mallorca in the Mediterranean and runs a sailing website at sailinmallorca.com. He lives in London with his wife, baby, and two cats. The cats appear to have adjusted to life with a baby. He hasn't.

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The title “carpenter” and the common nickname “Chips” are somewhat misleading. The carpenter was often the most skilled crew member of a naval or merchant vessel, an experienced shipwright who had served his apprenticeship in a naval or civilian dockyard before going to sea. As well as maintaining the ship (see *Careening*, p. 14), the carpenter and his crew were vital in repairing shot holes below deck during battle, particularly those between “wind and water,” which could lead to serious flooding.

All pirate vessels had a cook and a sailmaker, even if they were not particularly skilled and simply drawn from the ranks of the crew. Well-crewed ones would also have a gunner, surgeon, navigator/master, and cooper (who maintained cargo barrels). These roles were sufficiently prized by pirate crews that any skilled hand in a captured vessel could expect to be pressed into pirate service. Specialist crew members rarely led or partook in boarding raids because they were too valuable to risk in a fight – or to let them have an opportunity to escape.

SHIP’S ARTICLES

Pirate crews typically held a council before embarking on their voyage. They drew up a set of Ship’s Articles by which all crew members were bound and were required to sign (or make their mark for those who were illiterate.) Anyone “recruited” from other ships during the voyage would also sign the Articles.

The imperatives contained in the written articles varied from ship to ship. They set out the basic rules for shipboard life, the punishments for those who broke those rules, and the compensation payable in the event of injury in battle. For example, the code of conduct set out in Exquelemin’s *Buccaneers of America* (first published in 1678) specifies payments of 600 pieces of eight for the loss of a right arm, 500 for the loss of a left arm or a right leg, 400 for the loss of a left leg, and 100 gold pieces for the loss of an eye or a finger.

The Articles also dictated how the loot would be split. Generally, the total plunder would be divided into “shares.”

Each ordinary seaman got one share, with officers receiving more than one. If the captain provided the ship, he would receive additional shares, perhaps five to six shares in addition to his personal share. Specialists might also receive fixed payment. Sources show carpenters and sailmakers who had mended and rigged the ship before the expedition getting 100-150 pieces of eight and the surgeon earning 200-250.

Pirate crews were extremely concerned with fairness. They forced all members to swear a solemn oath that they would not conceal any treasure from the crew. Anyone who was found breaking this rule was marooned: left on an uninhabited island, usually with a gun, a few shot, a bottle of water, and a flask of powder.

On board *Adventurer’s Revenge*, the crew subscribe to a code of conduct very similar to that of the notorious pirate Bartholomew Roberts (below).

Bartholomew Roberts’ Articles (1720)

This is an actual code of conduct agreed upon by Bartholomew Roberts’ crew as reported in Captain Johnson’s *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*, published in 1724.

I. Every Man has a Vote in Affairs of Moment; has equal Title to the fresh Provisions, or strong Liquors, at any Time seized, and may use them at pleasure, unless a Scarcity makes it necessary, for the good of all, to Vote a Retrenchment.

II. Every Man to be called fairly in turn, by List, on Board of Prizes because, (over and above their proper Share) they were on these Occasions allowed a Shift of Clothes: But if they defrauded the Company to the Value of a Dollar, in Plate, Jewels, or Money, MAROONING was their Punishment.

III. No Person to game at Cards or Dice for Money.

IV. The Lights and Candles to be put out at eight o’Clock at Night: if any of the Crew, after that Hour still remained inclined for Drinking, they were to do it on the open Deck.

V. To keep their Piece, Pistols, and Cutlass clean and fit for Service.

VI. No Boy or Woman to be allowed among them. If any Man were to be found seducing any of the latter Sex, and carried her to Sea, disguised, he was to suffer Death.

VII. To Desert the Ship or their Quarters in Battle, was punished with Death or Marooning.

VIII. No striking one another on Board, but every Man’s Quarrels to be ended on Shore, at Sword and Pistol Thus: The Quartermaster of the Ship, when the Parties will not come to any Reconciliation, accompanies them on Shore with what Assistance he thinks proper, and turns the Disputants Back to Back, at so many Paces Distance. At the Word of Command, they turn and fire immediately, (or else the Piece is knocked out of their Hands). If both miss, they come to their Cutlasses, and then he is declared the Victor who draws the first Blood.

IX. No Man to talk of breaking up their Way of Living, till each had shared one thousand pounds. If in order to this, any Man should lose a Limb, or become a Cripple in their Service, he was to have eight hundred Dollars, out of the publick Stock, and for lesser Hurts, proportionately.

X. The Captain and Quartermaster to receive two Shares of a Prize: the Master, Boatswain, and Gunner, one Share and a Half, and other Officers one and Quarter.

XI. The Musicians to have Rest on the Sabbath Day, but the other six Days and Nights, none without special Favor.

ELECTED OFFICERS

The captain was the most important position aboard the ship. Historically, the quartermaster was less important, but aboard *Adventurer's Revenge*, tradition and strong personalities have elevated the quartermaster to a rank second only to the captain.

In the democratic world of a pirate ship, the two men's roles overlapped (and occasionally clashed). Both the captain and the quartermaster knew that they retained their positions through the trust, respect, and fear of the crew, and avoided direct confrontation with each other. See p. 4 for descriptions of the roles of the captain and the quartermaster.

He makes a habit of killing the captain of every ship he captures that resists or attempts to escape him. He then will either release the crew or, if he is short of men, press them into his own ship. He figures that if a crew of a ship that he is chasing knows that they will be spared if they are captured, they will be unlikely to fight. On several occasions, he has boarded a vessel to find the captain tied to the foremast by his own crew.

The captain maintains contacts with respectable people in the port of Nassau on the island of New Providence in the Bahamas: Deputy Governor Thomas Walker, and Richard Travers, a merchant who fences the crew's booty at a reasonable price (20-40% of market value). The captain uses a fictional persona (as English trader Adrian Collett) and avoids attacking ships in the vicinity of the port to maintain this valuable safe harbor for maintenance and trading.

The captain of *Adventurer's Revenge* dresses in ordinary seaman's clothes, with a broad red sash running from shoulder to hip. The sash holds a cutlass and two flintlock pistols tied with short cords. He suffers a limp as a result of a wicked pike thrust received in a boarding action a decade ago.

ST 10 [0]; **DX** 12 [40]; **IQ** 13 [60]; **HT** 11 [10].
Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 13 [0];
Per 13 [0]; FP 11 [0].
Basic Speed 5.75 [0]; Basic Move 4 [-5]; Dodge 8;
Parry 9 (Shortsword).
5'8"; 190 lbs.

Social Background

TL: 4 [0].
CF: Western European [0].
Languages: Arawak (Accented/None) [2]; Dutch (Broken) [2]; English (Native) [0]; French (Accented/Broken) [3].

Advantages

Alternate Identity (English trader Adrian Collett; Illegal) [15]; Contact (Bahamas trader Richard Travers; Merchant-15; 12 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [4]; Contact (Deputy Governor of Providence Thomas Walker; Administration-21; 9 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [4].

Perks: Penetrating Voice. [1]

Disadvantages

Bad Temper (15) [-5]; Code of Honor (Pirate's) [-5]; Enemy (Royal Navy; Hunter; 9 or less) [-20]; Intolerance (Gentlemen) [-5]; Reputation -1 (Pirate; To seafarers) [-3]; Reputation -2 (Pirate; To naval authorities) [-3]; Reputation -4 (Pirate; To merchant captains) [-6].

Quirks: Minor Handicap (limps on left leg); Refers to ship-board officers as Mister; Refuses to dress like a gentleman. [-3]

New Traits

Many of the pirates in this supplement make use of the Born Sailor Talent. They were created with a fairly realistic setting in mind, but in a more cinematic game, some or all of their knowledge may be represented by the far more versatile Pirate! wildcard skill. Other adventurers may wish to take the Naval Training perk to eliminate penalties from fighting aboard ship.

New Talent: Born Sailor

5 points/level

This Talent (p. B89) gives +1 per level to Boating, Knot-Tying, Meteorology (or Weather Sense), Navigation (Sea), Seamanship, and Shiphandling. *Reaction bonus:* all sailors.

New Wildcard Skill: Pirate!

DX

Some people are just natural swashbucklers. They can sail any ship, fight any enemy, scamper through rigging, and subdue a merchant crew with a glance. This wildcard skill (p. B175) replaces Acrobatics, Boating, Brawling, Climbing, Gunner (Cannon), Guns (Pistol), Intimidation, Jumping, Knife, Knot-Tying, Seamanship, Shiphandling, and Shortsword.

New Perk: Naval Training

1 point

You've trained at fighting on a rocking ship or boat. You may ignore the -2 to attack and -1 to defend for bad footing under those circumstances.

THE CAPTAIN: ALAN CUTLER

150 points

The captain of *Adventurer's Revenge* is a former officer who quit the Royal Navy when it was made clear to him that he did not have the right breeding to pass as a "gentlemen." He harbors a deep hatred of those who believe that their status offers them protection, and a plea for mercy "from one gentleman to another" may lead to a bloodthirsty outburst from the normally controlled captain.

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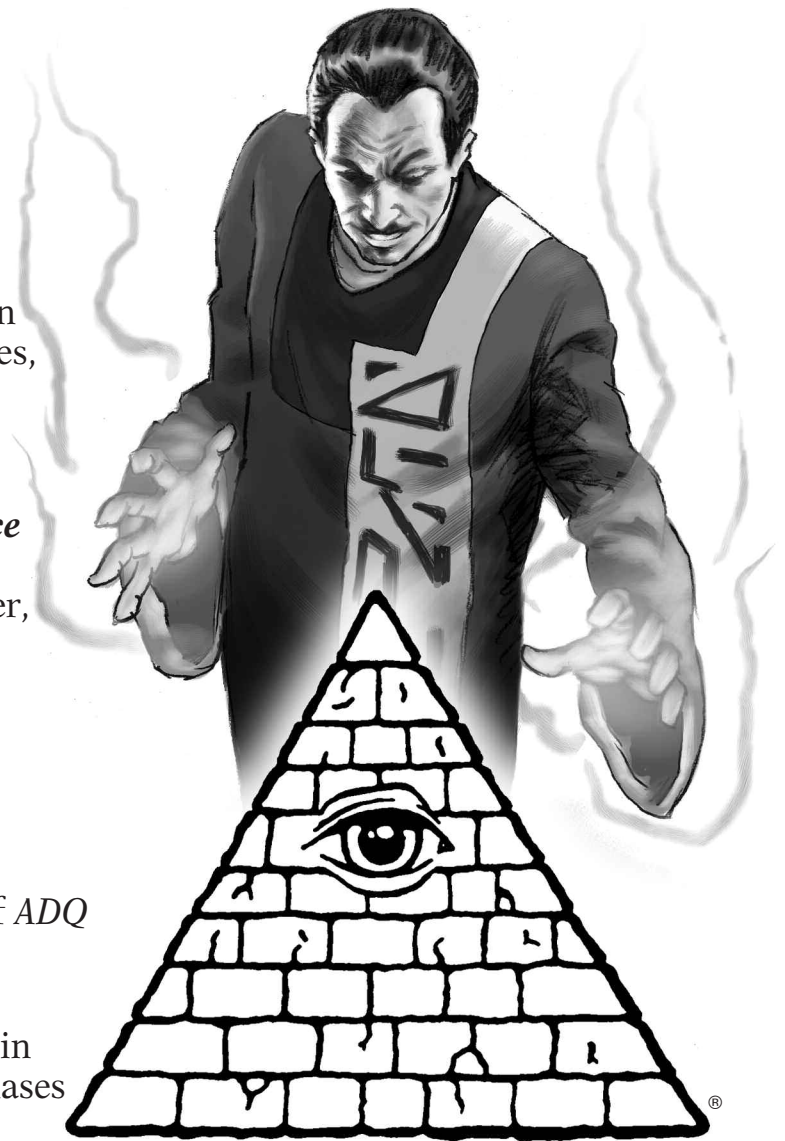
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