

Mightier Than TM the Sword

by Cris Dornaus,
Lee Garvin,
and Eric Vaubel



7th
Sea





A Pair of Adventures That Prove Just How Dangerous The Pen Can Be

Every swashbuckler has a fine blade to depend on, but wise men know of far deadlier weapons – those written on parchment with quills of ink. Writing can unleash floodgates of emotion, start a revolution, or inspire a nation to feats undreamed of. In the two adventures contained in these pages, they can do much, much more.

In “Music of the Spheres”, Charouse is alive with excitement about *l’Empereur’s* latest protégé – a young musical phenomenon who has charmed the Montaigne nobility with her grace and talent. A lavish masquerade ball is thrown to honor her, but something goes badly astray... and danger waits for the band of Heroes who seek to put things right.

Unknown perils lurk beneath the gilded surface of the Sun King’s golden city, a mysterious artifact hold dark secrets within its haunting melody, and an ancient evil must be vanquished to rescue a very special damsel in distress. Can your Heroes save the day and avoid the wrath of the most powerful man in Théah?

In “The Golden Head of Korlak ur-Nagath,” the danger comes from a much baser source – the tawdry novels of an overblown hack. But within his clichéd romances lurks a map to a fabulous treasure. It’s over nine feet tall. It’s made of solid gold. It may just be the most valuable artifact in all of Théah. And your Heroes know where it is.

Unfortunately, so does the most wretched collection of rogues, scoundrels, and villains ever to sail the seas. The question is not only whether you can get to it first, but how you’re going to keep it. In a raucous race like this one, nothing is taken for granted.

Mightier Than the Sword contains two complete adventures for the *7th Sea* role-playing game, complete with detailed NPCs and optional challenges to be inserted as desired. It requires the *7th Sea Players’ Guide* and *GMs’ Guide* for play. Copies of the *Montaigne* and *Pirate Nations* sourcebooks are recommended, but not required.

\$11.95 M.S.R.P.
AEG 7106





Mightier Than the Sword

Being a pair of tales presented for the edification and amusement of 7th Sea players

“The Music of the Spheres” Written by Cris Dornaus with Eric Vaubel

“The Golden Head of Korlak ur-Nagath” Written by Lee Garvin

Additional Material: Kevin Wilson

Art Direction: jim pinto

Cover and Interior Artwork: Cris Dornaus

Map: Jennifer Wick

Design and Layout: Steve Hough, Brendon Goodyear

Cover Design: Cris Dornaus, Brendon Goodyear

Line Developer: Rob Vaux

Editing: Rob Vaux



Table of Contents

<i>The Music of the Spheres</i>	3
Introduction	3
Part One: To the Rescue!	7
Part Two: Come Join the Masquerade	8
Part Three: Down in the Underground	16
...And They Lived Happily Ever After?	23



<i>The Golden Head of Korlak ur-Nagath</i>	24
Introduction	24
Part One: Lunatics and Bad Fiction	28
Part Two: Off to the Island	33
Part Three: Home Again, Home Again... ..	40
The Competition	42

The Music of the Spheres

*Lo! 'tis a gala night
Within the lonesome latter years!
An angel throng, bewinged, bedight
In veils, and drowned in tears,
Sit in a theatre, to see
A play of hopes and fears,
While the orchestra breathes fitfully
The music of the spheres.
— from *The Conqueror Worm*
by Edgar Allan Poe*

Introduction

Music of the Spheres is designed to include several different “flavors” of adventure — mystery, intrigue, politics, exploration, and combat. Heroes will have the opportunity to rescue innocent passengers from road bandits, solve a missing persons case, venture into the Syrneth sewers of Charouse, fight a creature whose evil has kept it imprisoned for millennia, rescue a very special damsel in distress and make the Emperor of Montaigne extremely happy... or, if they fail in their endeavors, extremely upset.

As usual, a balanced party would be ideal for this adventure. Those with Montaigne connections or courtier skills will have a chance to use them at *l'Empereur's* royal court. Characters skilled at combat will be handy as well, when the party faces villains and monsters. At least one Hero should speak Montaigne, and preferably read it as well. Heroes with knowledge of the sewers and musical lore will also have an advantage, but these skills are not necessary.

The monster encountered at the end of the adventure can easily be modified to suit the skills of the party, but it should be strong enough to give them a challenge worthy of their abilities. Optional dangers have also been included that the GM can throw in if he or she wishes. The *Montaigne* sourcebook contains more information about Charouse, *l'Empereur*, the Syrneth undergrounds, and sewer hunters, but is not necessary to run this adventure.

Music is a central theme in this adventure, so you may want to play certain pieces during the game. Selections from the 17th and 18th century are ideal. Harpsichord music is a good way of conjuring up the atmosphere of the Royal Court. A fast-paced violin sonata will add a lot to the fight scene with the sewer hunters, as will most classically-based movie soundtracks.

Charouse: City of the Arts

This adventure takes place in the Montaigne capital, Charouse. Designed to be a paradise for the wealthy elite, the city stands as a wonderland of elegant architecture, exclusive shops, and entertainment of every type. It is also known for its sewers — Petite Charouse — which contain mysterious passages that existed long before the rise of man. Unknown dangers haunt these dank tunnels, and tribes of sewer hunters lurk in the subterranean mazes, scavenging for their lives in a savage society all their own.

The nobility of Charouse enjoy a life of luxury and leisure. Friends of *l'Empereur* spend their time playing games, throwing lavish parties, and engaging in their uniquely Montaigne brand of courtly intrigue. They enthusiastically support the arts, enjoying theatre, opera, and a new sensation called “ballet,” as well as sponsoring galleries of fine painting and sculpture. For more information on Charouse, refer to the Montaigne sourcebook.

The Prodigy of Prevoe

The latest sensation at *l'Empereur's* court is a young woman by the name of Madelene Prevoe. The 16-year old

daughter of a middle-class music teacher, Madelene showed exceptional musical promise from her earliest days. Her father, Alfonse Prevoye, a widower since Madelene's mother died of fever ten years ago, delightedly encouraged her talents and she has made stunning accomplishments in her field. She is skilled at playing the violin, harpsichord, flute, and Castillian guitar, and has composed an impressive portfolio of concertos, symphonies, waltzes, and operas. Her music has been lauded by critics as "sent from heaven," and she is regarded as an almost saintly prodigy, possessing talent far beyond normal musicians. Many consider her second only to the Eisen prodigy Wolffrond von Hazel in sheer musical talent.

Madelene's appearance and personality have also helped to engender this reputation. She is lovely in countenance — slender with delicate hands and a halo of blonde hair. She is always humble about her talent in public, but realizes she has a unique gift and drives herself mercilessly to use it well. She is soft-spoken and charming in most social situations, but can become passionate and obsessive when the conversation turns to her art. When composing her music, she goes into a state of almost trance-like concentration, and does not like to be disturbed when "the muse flows."

When l'Empereur heard of the young lady's talents, he sent an invitation for Madelene and her father to visit Château du Soleil. He commissioned her to write an opera in honor of himself (and Montaigne), and to entertain the court at her leisure. When the adventure begins, she has been residing at Château du Soleil for two weeks. The royal family and attending nobility dote upon her to no end and listen breathlessly when she plays. For the moment, it seems, she has all of Montaigne in the palm of her hand.

Enamored of his talented guest, l'Empereur has arranged a masquerade ball at Château du Soleil in honor of her. Guests are to wear their most fantastic and outrageous costumes — masks and all — and Madelene is to play selections from her opera for the first time in front of an audience. The ball is the talk of Charouse, and the upper class is in a fit of excitement over the event.

Empereur Leon Alexandre du Montaigne XIV

Villain

Brawn 2, *Finesse* 2, *Wits* 6, *Resolve* 5, *Panache* 2

Reputation: -115

Arcana: Hedonistic

Advantages: Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Montaigne Accent (South), Noble, Servants (as many as needed)

Courtier: All Knacks at 5

Scholar: History 4, Law 4, Mathematics 2, Philosophy 3, Research 2, Theology 2

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4

Hunter: Stealth 3, Tacking 3, Trail Signs 3

Rider: Mounting 2, Riding 3

Porté (Apprentice): Attunement 3, Bleeding 3, Bring 4, Pocket 3

More information on l'Empereur can be found in the *Montaigne* sourcebook.

Part One: To the Rescue!

The opening is designed to set the scene, make important introductions and get the Heroes involved in the adventure. It takes place on a country road outside of Charouse; the GM should determine exactly how and why the party is there. There are limitless motivations for visiting the capital city of Montaigne. A few examples are provided below:

- The Heroes are heading to Charouse to sell valuable goods from a previous adventure.
- The Heroes are diplomats or foreign emissaries, coming to pay respects to l'Empereur.
- The Heroes are servants, dispatched to Charouse to procure supplies.

The Music of the Spheres

- The Heroes are soldiers or musketeers, assigned to patrol the roads around the capital.
- One of the Heroes belongs to a secret society, and must make contact with a fellow member in Charouse (perhaps even at *l'Empereur's* party).

Whatever the reason, whether the party is dispersed or together, the journey is a pleasant one. The countryside around Charouse is green and inviting, and the sun shines cheerfully in a bright blue sky.

As the party approaches Charouse, they notice a commotion on the road ahead of them. A coach emblazoned with the colors of the Montaigne family has been surrounded by a gang of bandits (the number of ruffians can be adjusted to give the party a good fight, but one the Heroes should win with some style). The bandits speak with a rural Montaigne accent and wear rough clothes with scarves tied around their faces to avoid recognition. Two of them ride lean horses, and the coach's team has been cut loose from their yoke (the four horses

haven't wandered far, and can be seen grazing in the fields nearby).

The bandits are armed with a variety of weapons, from simple farming tools to stolen pistols and swords. The frightened, elderly coachman grovels on his knees next to the coach, guarded by one of the bandits. The rest of the brigands have formed a close circle around the coach and are arguing harshly with its passengers, demanding that they surrender all the money, valuables and weapons they possess. From inside the coach comes a frightened female cry.

Any Heroes worth their salt will jump at this chance to defend innocent (and possibly important) people from such villainy. The GM can make the fight as quick or as drawn out he likes. If the combat needs some spice, have the bandits leap onto the coach or drag the passengers out as hostages. Once the fight starts, the man guarding the coachman shoves him sprawling into the dirt, and the old servant will crawl to the safety of a nearby tree.



Bandit Leader

Henchman

TN to be hit: 25

Brawn 3, *Finesse* 3, *Wits* 2, *Resolve* 3, *Panache* 2

Attack Roll: 6k3

Damage: 2k2 (Rapier), 4k3 (Pistol)

Skills: Dirty Fighting 2, Footwork 3, Rider 3, Attack (Fencing) 3, Attack (Pistol) 2

The leader carries a pistol and a rapier, and is mounted when the scene begins.

Bandits

Henchmen

TN to be hit: 10-15

Brawn 3, *Finesse* 2, *Wits* 1, *Resolve* 1, *Panache* 1

Attack Roll: 5k2

Damage 3k1

Skills: Attack (Dirty Fighting, Firearms, Heavy Weapon or Knife) 2, Footwork 2

Brutes

Threat Rating: 2

Usual Weapons: Clubs and swords (Medium)

TN to be hit: 15

Attack (Appropriate Weapon) 1, Sprinting 1

There are three passengers inside the coach; Madelene Prevoye, her father, Alfonse, and a nobleman named Donadiou Deneuve du Surlign. Ideally, all of them (including the coachman), should survive. The bandits are not as cruel as they seem, and will hesitate to spill the passenger's blood. They don't really want to be murderers, only thieves (most convicted murderers in Montaigne face the hangman's noose, while robbers are merely imprisoned). If the fight turns against them, they will attempt to escape.

Once the bandits have been chased off or subdued, Donadiou praises the Heroes heartily for their bravery. Alfonse will be tearfully grateful for the protection of his

beloved daughter, and Madelene will be unabashedly impressed by their derring-do. Donadiou suggests that the party accompany them back to Château du Soleil, where Madelene and Alfonse are staying as special guests of the Emperor himself. He intimates that the King will be quite appreciative – Madelene has become a favorite of his – and may even reward the Heroes. Madelene asks them to attend a masquerade ball being held in her honor in two days, and her father heartily agrees. Donadiou assures the Heroes that they may stay at Château du Soleil until the event if they so desire, as a reward for their heroics. Alternately, they can find ample accommodations in Charouse.

Wherever they choose to stay, Donadiou provides them with a letter of recommendation that ensures entry to Château du Soleil as honored guests. News of their daring rescue of Madelene and her escorts will circulate rapidly through the court, and the Heroes will subsequently be treated with respect and admiration. You may even wish to have l'Empereur summon them to a private audience, where he personally thanks them for their selfless preservation of his adored guest (oh, and her father and the court composer). He will offer them the use of the Château and its staff for as long as they wish, but makes no other offers of compensation.

Until the Ball

At this point, you may choose to skip ahead two days to the night of the ball. Or you could make the two days at Château du Soleil an adventure in itself. This is a perfect opportunity for the Heroes to hobnob with the elite of Montaigne society, gain allies (and make enemies), play games, and enjoy the finest that the Royal Court has to offer. Some suggestions to fill this time are listed below. More ideas of how the Montaigne entertain themselves and details about important people can be found in the *Montaigne* sourcebook.

Things to Do at Château du Soleil

- Play tennis, cards, gambling games, and trade stories.

Alfonse Prevoye

Hero

Brawn 2, Finesse 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3, Panache 3

Reputation: 20

Advantages: Wealthy Patron (l'Empereur), Small

Artist: Composer 2, Musician (violin, guitar, harpsichord, flute) 2, Teacher 4

Alfonse is a short, slight man of 45, with graying hair and a nervous smile. He is a pleasant man, very excited about attending court and thrilled to see his daughter adulated by the nobility. He acts in a mild and obsequious manner to the nobles, and regards the Heroes as personal champions (after they have saved him from the bandits, of course). He has a habit of becoming very emotional when things are going especially well, or especially poorly. He dotes on Madelene constantly: fussing over her, reminding her to be on her best behavior, and stressing the importance of this visit to her career. His long experience as a teacher comes out when he is around young people. In such a situation, he appears more at ease and takes on the tone of a wise and gentle mentor.

- Chat with some of the most notable people in Théah. *L'Empereur's* court overflows with important nobles, foreign diplomats, and famous personages from all Nations. The *Players' Guide*, *GMs' Guide* and *Montaigne* sourcebook have ample NPCs to populate the court, or you can introduce some of your own NPCs. Perhaps an old flame of one of the Heroes is present, or a dangerous rival shows up. Almost anyone with noble bearing (and a few without) can justifiably be found within Château du Soleil.
- Attend the theatre, opera, or ballet, or visit galleries of fine art.
- Shop in the upscale merchant district.
- Visit the many classy restaurants, taverns, and Jenny Houses (or the many less-than-classy restaurants, taverns, and Jenny Houses).

- Participate in a friendly (or even unfriendly) duel.
- Assemble costumes for the ball (see Part 2).

What People are Talking About

The list below is a summary of the topics du jour in Charouse. More can be added if you wish. Details on many of these issues can be found in the *Players' Guide*, *GMs' Guide*, and *Montaigne* sourcebook.

- *Le Petit Charouse* – the mysterious Sryneth sewers beneath the city and the growing problems with sewer hunters.
- The unpleasant peasantry and preposterous rumors of an uprising.
- The War in Castille, and General Orduño's audacious assault against the Montaigne blockade.
- Montegue's foray into Ussura.
- Flattering anecdotes about *l'Empereur* and his kin.
- Excitement and adoring words about Madelene and her music.
- The issue of Church vs. Sorcery.
- The latest exploits of the Musketeers, or the local Knights of the Rose and Cross.
- The economic impact of the Vendel Merchant's Guild.
- The Heroes and their rescue of Madelene and her escort.
- A recent circulation of revolutionary literature.

The Heroes also have a chance to get more familiar with Madelene. They will find her charming and pleasant, though she spends most of her time locked in her chambers working on the opera commissioned by *l'Empereur*. She carries a strange box with her at all times, usually tucked into a velvet purse. For more on this, see page 11. She should inspire loyalty and fondness in the Heroes – there is not much to dislike about her.

If you like, Madelene might develop a mild crush on one of the Heroes. She is at the appropriate age for such infatuation, and the Heroes' earlier rescue affected her quite

deeply. She might flirt subtly and pay special attention to a kind and charming Hero, or an especially handsome member of the party. This would add a more personal note to the adventure, and give the player an opportunity to role-play a romance, or find a way to gently rebuke her interest. It could even develop into a more serious relationship that could reverberate throughout the entire campaign.

Part Two: Come Join the Masquerade

The night of the masquerade ball, Charouse buzzes with anticipation. Guests decked out in lavish costumes and exotic masks arrive at Château du Soleil in gilded coaches. An orchestra plays in the main ballroom, which is decorated like a fantastic scene from ancient mythology. Old Republic columns line the ballroom, festooned with grapevines and flowering plants. Gauzy drapes of transparent fabric hang from the lavishly gilded ceiling. Couches swathed in rich velvet line the walls. A huge banquet table is laden with all manner of exotic and artfully presented delicacies, and fine wine flows in sparkling cascades from ornate serving fountains.

It is standard policy for guests to leave their weapons at home or at the door, and attendants at the entrance will stow them safely in an antechamber. *L'Empereur* has many enemies and death threats are an almost daily occurrence at the palace. However, this is a costume ball, and weapons can possibly be concealed beneath a bulky or voluminous outfit. The attendants will not argue if guests insist that a sheathed sword is a part of their costume, but ask them to tie a ribbon around the hilt as a formality.

The Heroes should decide beforehand what costumes they are wearing, and what accessories and weapons they carry. Most guests are imitating *l'Empereur* and adopting a classical

Donadieu Deneuve du Surlign

Hero

Brawn 3, *Finesse* 3, *Wits* 3, *Resolve* 3, *Panache* 3

Reputation: 40

Advantages: Noble, Connections (numerous members of the Montaigne court), Patron (*L'Empereur*)

Courtier: Dancing 3, Etiquette 4, Fashion 4, Oratory 4, Mooch 3, Sincerity 4

Artist: Composer 4, Musician (violin, harpsichord, flute) 3, Singing 3

Fencing: Attack 3, Parry 3

Donadieu is the current court composer at Château du Soleil, and serves as Madelene's guide and coordinator during her visit, as well as acting as Master of Ceremonies for the masquerade ball. While Madelene is at Château du Soleil, he is committed to her completely.

He is struggling with conflicting emotions about Madelene. On one hand, he admires her talent and dedication, and can't help but like her personality. On the other hand, her skills make his pale in comparison, and he worries about losing his hard-won position.

He considers his position as *l'Empereur's* favored musician a valuable opportunity to do what he loves — make and perform music — in an environment that appreciates and craves it. He fears that he would not excel in any other role, and takes his duties very seriously, for his own sake as much as the court's. Secretly, he finds Leon's fickle nature and imperious ways distasteful, but never lets these thoughts show. He is always obsequious and polite to a fault around *l'Empereur*, and will do whatever he can to keep the man content, and his position intact.

Donadieu is an elegant man in his late forties. His hair is starting to go gray, but he usually wears a powdered wig to cover it. He is meticulous about his appearance and always keeps pace with courtly fashion. He has a deep, melodious voice and a smooth, courtly manner.

The Music of the Spheres

motif, but some brave souls wear alternate costumes to provide a little variety. Montaigne fashion allows for a broad range of choices – costumes representing animals, historical or mythical figures, even mockeries of exotic foreign dress are acceptable. If the Heroes choose something too outrageous or constricting, it may prove a hindrance – let them pay the consequences. Some guests simply dress in their most fabulous gowns and coats, with masks and veils adorned with jewels and feathers.

Crowds of spectacularly attired guests wander about the ballroom, chatting, drinking, eating and dancing. As the evening goes on, those enjoying the wine may begin to get a bit livelier. All manner of gossip runs throughout the crowds, providing an opportunity for the GM to throw in a few red herrings to intrigue them. Feel free to role-play the Heroes through any verbal encounters you wish; the ball provides an excellent opportunity to lay threads for future adventures. If you want to throw in a little action here, you might have a drunken guest insult one of the Heroes, or somehow take offense and challenge them. Montaigne nobility are a proud and haughty lot, and an argument gone wrong could lead to an unruly scuffle, especially if the wine has been flowing.

Everyone is talking about Madelene, usually gushing praise. Several courtiers will approach the Heroes, asking for details on their rescue attempt and wondering “how well” they know Madelene. A few jealous hangers-on whisper remarks about how she locks herself away in her chambers for hours, obsessing over her music. One or two may mention the curious “music box” she carries with her (see boxed text).

L'Empereur makes the rounds dressed in an elaborate blue and gold toga with an ivy wreath atop his powdered wig; his golden mask is the grinning face of Bacchu, ancient god of wine and revelry. When the Heroes arrive, he has Madelene on his arm, attired in a stunning gown of white feathers, a delicate silver swan mask and a pair of white-feathered wings. He introduces her proudly to select guests, and announces that she will perform her new music at 9 o'clock (still a few hours away). They eventually disappear into the



crowd. The Heroes will see no sign of Madelene at the ball for the rest of the evening.

Whatever happens, make sure the Heroes are on hand for Madelene's performance.

Presenting Madelene Prevoye...

As 9 o'clock grows near, the crowd gathers around the orchestra, anxiously awaiting young Madelene's performance. The room is already packed with spectators when the Heroes arrive, but there is an open space near the curtain to the right of the orchestra.

The musicians tune up, *l'Empereur* takes his throne to the left of the orchestra to listen, and Donadieu Deneuve du Surlign makes a flourishing introduction... and nothing happens.

Hushed whispers run through the throng and Leon glances about, curious but not yet alarmed. Donadieu disappears behind the curtain near the Heroes, and the conversation below (in Montaigne), can be overheard by keen ears (GM's discretion). Heroes may recognize the other voice as belonging to Madelene's father, Alfonse:

Donadieu: "Where is she? *l'Empereur* is waiting! The guests..."

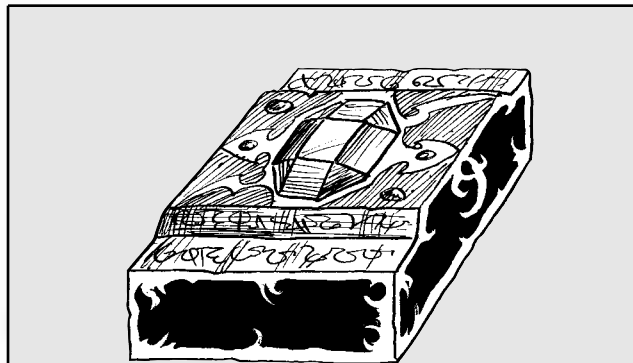
Alfonse (alarmed): "I do not know! I have not seen her for over an hour! She was supposed to be here a half-hour before the performance and she has not arrived!"

Donadieu: "Have you checked her chambers?"

Alfonse: "Yes! She is not there! I don't know what could have happened to her... this is not like her at all! She takes these things very seriously, you know."

Donadieu: "We must find her! *L'Empereur* will be most upset!"

Alfonse: "*L'Empereur*? Forgive me, Monsieur, but my daughter is missing!"



The Music Box

Over the last week, Madelene has been seen carrying a small box with her. It is about the size of a deck of cards and has curious designs etched on it. On top is a large faceted gem of glass-like material, set into it like a gaudy jewel. Strange markings are etched onto the surface. Madelene claims it is a music box, but no one has heard it playing music, and she will let no one touch it. She is also reluctant to talk about it, or where it came from. All she told her father was that it was a gift from an admirer.

Donadieu reappears through the curtain a moment later, a false smile on his face. He cues the orchestra to play something to appease the crowd, then he approaches Leon. Bowing and toadying, he explains that Madelene had been delayed and that every effort is being made to correct the situation. The Heroes will not be able to hear their conversation, but it should be fairly clear what Donadieu is saying.

If the Heroes decide to act now, they find Alfonse Prevoye behind the curtain, wringing his hands in distress. He is sure something has gone awoul; Madelene would never purposely delay a performance – much less one before the King! He fears for his daughter, but cannot think of anyone who

would have any reason to do her harm. Perhaps she has met with some unfortunate accident?

If the Heroes wait to see what happens, they stand among the fidgeting crowd as the orchestra plays. *L'Empereur* looks slightly annoyed, and the Donadieu is frantically attempting to sooth him. He goes back to the curtain and finds that nothing has changed, and Alfonse only grows more frantic

as each minute passes. After listening to his frightened suspicions, he decides that a search is in order. At this point, Donadieu notices the Heroes in the crowd and motions them over to assist in this alarming and embarrassing plight.

Where is Madelene?

What exactly happened to Madelene, and where is she now?

About a week before the ball, a man approached her at a theatre performance she was attending. He told her his name was Paul Etalon du Toille and gave her a peculiar box that he said belonged to his grandfather. When held, it emits a strange sort of distorted music in the holder's mind – painful and disorienting, but somehow seductively beautiful (for more information on the box, see The Music Box, page 10).

Paul told Madelene that his grandfather was a composer like herself, and that the music it emitted was his last work – a sonata written in honor of his daughter, Paul's mother. But his grandfather had inadvertently angered a disguised Sidhe and the creature had cursed him, erasing all memory of his composition from his mind and trapping the music in the box, where it became warped and scrambled. His grandfather passed away not long after; the entrapment of his greatest work, and his inability to reproduce it caused him such distress that he fell ill with despair.

Now, Paul claimed, his mother was dying, and she had never been able to hear the music clearly. He heard stories Madelene's incredible musical gift and hoped that she could break the spell. Musically talented people often heard the music more clearly. His fondest wish was for her to write the piece down and perform it for his mother before she dies.

He left the box with Madelene and said he would return in ten days to mark her progress. He promised her a monetary reward for her services, and his eternal gratitude. His offer of compensation was unnecessary – she had already become enchanted with the box, and agreed to the challenge. As the days passed she grew more and more obsessed with the box and its music, which teased her with

Madelene Prevoye

Hero

Brawn 2, *Finesse* 3, *Wits* 2, *Resolve* 2, *Panache* 3

Reputation: 60

Advantages: Appearance (Above Average), Wealthy Patron (*l'Empereur*), Small

Artist: Composer 6, Musician (violin, guitar, harpsichord, flute) 5, Singing 5

Image: Madelene is petite young woman of 16, with a sweet, pretty face, sea foam green eyes and wavy light blonde hair. She is often described as “angelic”. Her hands and fingers are delicate and graceful and when she holds a musical instrument, viewers get the impression that it becomes an extension of her. She is generally soft spoken, charming and humble about her gifts. She always acts politely around guests and admirers, but when she is working, she tends to withdraw into a trance of concentration and can become impatient if interrupted.

moments of heartbreaking clarity among the warbled notes. She eschewed the Emperor's commission and worked instead on writing down the music in the box. Along with the music in her head, she began to feel drawn toward some mysterious location nearby, deep in the earth. She had dreams and visions of a door with strange designs on it, similar to the marks on the music box. She had heard of the famous Surneth sewers and believed that the call came from below the city.

Even the Emperor's ball in her honor could not keep her from her compulsive task. She slipped away from the festivities to work on her “translation” of the box's music. Her father found her there and told her she must return to the ball soon, then left her alone. She ignored his request; the siren call of the music box and the Door were more alluring than ever. At last, she finished her transcription. The final note of the imprisoned music was hastily written down, and she suddenly felt an undeniable urge to find the Door in her dreams. Somehow, she knew the music was meant be played in front of it.

Caught up in the spell of the box, she gathered her music sheets (knocking over an ink bottle on her desk in the process), took her violin case, and ordered the coachman who had been placed at her disposal to drive her into the city. She followed the call in her mind, directing the coachman into the Theatre District. There, she spotted a sewer entrance and squeezed her way in, ignoring the coachman's feeble protests. She pursued the insistent call of the Door through the passageways under Charouse, heedless of the danger surrounding her.

Halfway to her mysterious destination she encountered a group of hostile sewer dwellers, belonging to a tribe known as the People of Pegre. They regarded the Door as a part of their territory. Before she came to any harm, though, one of them recognized her – and Madelene recognized him as well. He was Paul Etalon du Toille, the man who brought her the music box a week before. But Paul was not what he



Alfonse Prevoye

formerly seemed. His fine noble clothing had been replaced with dirty rags, and his friends referred to him as Renard, the Fox – one of the senior members of the People of Pegre.

The box is not the product of a Sidhe curse, but a Synchronic artifact that the tribe found near what they called the Room of Spheres. Their leader, the Ragged King, had reckoned that the box held some sort of musical key to the door there – and that beyond the door lay an ancient treasure that they could use to prepare themselves for an attack on the hated world Above. They concocted Renard's identity of Paul Etalon du Toille in order to persuade Madelene to help them decipher the secret of the key box. Once she has done her part they plan kill her, so she cannot reveal their plans.

They had not expected her to show up in the sewers, however. She was nearly frantic to get to the door – its call eclipsed all other concerns. Renard led her to the Room of Spheres, and she stared in wonder at her visions come to life. She knew she must play the box's music in the room, to open the door and release whatever lay beyond it. She took her violin in hand and began to play.

She will be in the midst of her performance when the Heroes come upon her and the People of Pegre in the sewers (see page 19).

The Needle in the Haystack

How the Heroes go about their search for Madelene is up to them, but Donadieu emphatically stresses that *l'Empereur* and his guests should not be alarmed or disturbed if at all possible. The King has a terrible temper, and the interruption of one of his royal events would surely have dire consequences for all involved. If any harm came to Madelene, he would be furious.

It would be wise for the Heroes to bring Alfonse along during their search of the grounds, for he will be able to identify if anything is amiss.

Available clues are listed below. The GM should role-play those involving NPCs, and allow the Heroes to glean clues based on the questions they ask.

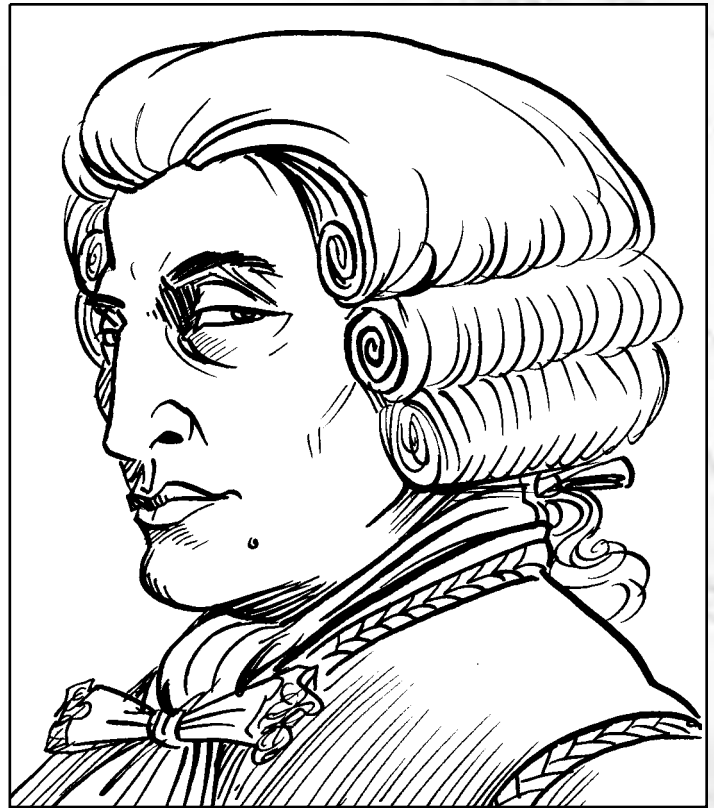
What Alfonse Knows

Madelene's father knows that the girl has been acting strangely over the last week. She appeared nervous and distracted and spent an unusual amount of time locked in her study, obsessively working on her composition for Leon. He assumes the pressure of working for such an important patron caused her anxious state. She hadn't been sleeping well either, often staying up all night experimenting with her violin and scribbling down notes. She seemed unusually concerned about the composition, and wouldn't even show him what she'd written.

If asked about the music box, he explains that her behavior regarding that has been strange as well. She claimed it was a gift from an admirer. He was wary of the box, for it appeared like none he had ever seen. He thinks it may be some sort of artifact, like those trinkets the Explorer's Society is always fiddling with. When he held it, he heard strange music in his head – an unpleasant, distorted sound that disturbed him. But Madelene seemed enamored of it, and took to carrying it with her wherever she went.

He noticed her missing from the ball about an hour and a half ago. He found her in her chambers, furiously scribbling away at her music sheets. She seemed quite frantic, and said she was just putting some finishing touches on the piece she would play this evening. She adamantly kept the music sheets from his view. Knowing her perfectionist nature and her apparent nervousness about the performance, he left her to work, admonishing her to return to the ball as soon as she could. This event was in her honor, and it wouldn't do to be anti-social.

When she did not show up a half-hour before her performance, he went to her chambers to look for her but she was no longer there. He did not bother to search the place carefully once he saw she wasn't present.



Donadieu Denuve du Surlign

The Ballroom

There is not much of use to be found in the ballroom. No matter how thoroughly they search, the Heroes can find no sign of the feathered dress, the swan mask, or Madelene. Questioned guests report seeing her earlier, but none of them have seen her for the last hour or so. If they interrogate the servants, one butler had spotted her about 45 minutes ago, in the hall leading from her chambers to the main foyer. She was wearing a cloak over her feathered gown and carried a sheaf of papers and her violin case. She was heading towards the palace's main entrance, so he politely directed her back to the ballroom. She thanked him and continued on her original course. It was not his place to question a guest of *l'Empereur*, so he returned to his duties and has not seen her since.

None of the other servants knows anything worth reporting.



Madelene Prevoye

Madelene's Chambers

Madelene and her father have been staying in a suite of rooms in the south wing. The suite includes two bedrooms, a main foyer and a music room. Alfonse tells them that she spent most of her time locked in the music room, composing.

Upon examination, Madelene's bedroom seems undisturbed – the bed is made and everything appears to be in order. The door of the wardrobe stands ajar, however, and her cloak is missing. Alfonse's room also appears normal.

The floor of the main foyer contains a few white feathers, identical to those from Madelene's costume. More feathers can be found in the music room, as well as Madelene's swan mask, lying on the desk. The music sheets she had been working on are missing, and a bottle of ink has been overturned. The ink has mostly dried, except for a couple of heavier puddles. A quill lies nearby, filled with dried ink,

its tip mangled. This upsets Alfonse, for Madelene has always been fastidious about her materials. He fears she may have been abducted.

The music sheets cannot be found in the room, nor can the music box. Alfonse assumes she has it with her.

Her violin case is missing from its usual place.

Main Entrance of Château du Soleil

About a dozen coachmen and attendants stand at the main entrance of the Château, with numerous coaches lined up along the lane. The vehicles include two royal coaches and several private coaches belonging to guests, as well as a large number of public "taxis" waiting to take inebriated dignitaries home.

More white feathers can be found on the ground here.

If asked, many of the attendants saw Madelene get into the third Royal Coach and order the driver to leave. They drove out through the main gate. The attendants don't know where they went, and thought it odd that she would leaving, but knew better than to question an esteemed guest of the King. She was wearing a cloak over her swan gown and carried a sheaf of papers and her violin case.

The Royal Coach is identical to the one they rescued from the bandits earlier, and will be easily recognized. Several witnesses along its route have noted it, and can direct the Heroes along its path. They eventually find the coach in the Theatre District, near one of the sewer entrances

Theatre District

The coach is parked near one of the entrances to the sewers. The old coachman sits there, looking befuddled. The Heroes recognize him from the bandit attack two days ago. When they arrive he seems both relieved and frightened. He fears that something has gone wrong, and that he will get into trouble for it, but hopes the Heroes can help him keep Madelene from harm.

He tells the Heroes that Madelene ordered him to leave Château du Soleil, but didn't give him a specific destination. As they went, she directed their course. She seemed

The Music of the Spheres

agitated and excited about something. When they got to the Theatre District, she spotted the sewer entrance and asked him if it lead to the passages under Charouse. He told her it did, but that it was locked to all but the King's Musketeers and the occasional sewer cleaner. She nodded, thanked him and hopped out of the coach, carrying her violin case.

He called after her, but she ran to the sewer gate, and managed to squeeze through the bars and disappear into the catacombs. He didn't know what to do, but did not wish to leave *l'Empereur's* guest – so he opted to wait with the coach in hopes she'd return.

If the Heroes search the coach they will find the sheaf of music. Heroes with musical training (or Alfonse if you're feeling generous) will note (Wits + Composition check, TN 10) that the melody is very odd – not at all like traditional music, but alien and haunting. Alfonse says it reminds him of the horrid song from the music box. He is quite flabbergasted it – the apparent product of all her hard work – and fears the King's anger and criticism at hearing such a piece.

There is no doubt that the music is written in Madelene's hand.

The Music Sheets

The notations on the music look hastily written, and grow increasingly haphazard throughout the piece. It should be clear to the Heroes that Madelene was growing more and more manic as she worked on the composition. Series of notes have been scribbled out, and slightly altered versions written further down. The last line was re-worked several times, each successive scrawl becoming more urgent. The final line of notes is underlined emphatically several times.



There are also notes in the margins – scribbled and difficult to read, but a Hero fluent in Montaigne should be able to make them out:

“...getting clearer...”

“...it's calling to me...”

“...echoes from below...”

“It sings with me... I cannot deny it.”

“I must find the Door.”

At the bottom of the last page is a sketch. It looks like some kind of door with strange glyphs etched upon it, and a circle of gems at the center. Explorer Heroes or those familiar with Syrneth research may recognize the markings as Syrneth. Alfonse says it resembles the designs on her music box.

Another note has been scribbled next to the sketch:

“The dream grows more vivid each time...”

Sewer Entrance

A few scraps of delicate fabric from Madelene's gown cling to the wrought iron bars of the gate and several white feathers are scattered nearby. The space between the bars is about a foot wide— just wide enough for a slender girl to slip through. The Heroes must find another way into the sewers if they cannot get through the bars. They may be able to summon someone with a key, pick the lock, or force the gate. Allow them to come up with their own solutions. The bars require a simple Brawn check of TN 30 to bend. Reduce the TN by five for every additional Hero assisting in the effort. Destructive options will cause the coachman dismay, but he will not try to stop them.

Alfonse is wary of venturing into the sewers, and will choose to wait with the coachman, unless otherwise persuaded. He pleads with the Heroes to bring his daughter back safely.

Part Three: Down in the Underground

The Charouse sewers have no lighting system — the Heroes must bring some sort of light source to see here. Lamps can be found along the nearby streets, but removing them involves more vandalism and may draw the attention of the Musketeers. The exact layout of the sewers is up to the GM, but the Heroes should have to follow Madelene's trail through several twists and turns before the sound of her violin leads them to the People of Pegre (see below). The dangers of the journey is up to the GM; we have included several optional challenges below.

Once they get into the sewers, Madelene's trail is not hard to follow. A channel of filthy water runs down the center of the passage, and the whole place is damp and dirty. Her footprints are easily seen in the muck, and she has left a sporadic trail of feathers leading into the darkness.

Dangers of Petit Charouse

There are many dangers in the sewers, and if the GM wishes, he or she can throw in some of the creatures and challenges below.

Traps

The Heroes are approaching the territory of the People of Pegre, who don't take kindly to uninvited visitors. The sewer dwellers have riddled the passages surrounding the Room of Spheres with haphazard traps designed to keep trespassers out and alert the residents to intruders. Most of them have safety features, so that "authorized" persons can bypass them without injury. They are usually made from found objects and make good use of the features of the sewers themselves. Below are a few examples. Feel free to design more as you see fit. Keep in mind, however, that

Madelene has passed before the Heroes, so all traps should have a plausible way for her to pass them unharmed.

Drag Lines

This trap consists of length or two of looped rope laid across the passage, trailing into a nearby sewage channel. If someone steps on the rope, it triggers a spring mechanism hidden in the water. The victim's foot is caught in the rope, which drags him or her swiftly into the fetid water. The sewer channels are normally no deeper than 4 feet, and the victim will not usually be harmed. The victim must untangle himself from the rope (requiring a simple Finesse Check at TN 10) and climb out of the water. Until he changes his clothes and bathes, he smells of putrid sewage. Sewer hunters familiar with the area know enough to avoid stepping on these.

Pivot Bridge

At one point the floor of the passage ends abruptly at the edge of a sinkhole about five feet across. More of Madelene's feathers lie on the other side. A rickety makeshift bridge made of old wooden planks appears to be fastened to the far edge of the gap with a bolt that serves as a pivot. It has swung halfway over the gap, but must be pulled all the way across for them to pass. A grappling hook or similar tool could be used, requiring a simple Finesse check at TN 15. Once they have a hold of the bridge, it swings over quite easily. Even with the bridge in place, the crossing is treacherous, and the gap below is quite deep. The bridge swings loosely on its pivot, and sways dangerously as they cross. Nasty GMs may want to require another Finesse check. Failure means that the Hero has slipped and now dangles precariously above the precipice (requiring a Brawn check — and possibly another Finesse check — from his friends to pull him up).

Alarms

The People of Pegre have placed several alarm mechanisms through their territory to alert them of unwanted visitors. Some of these are very simple and obvious — a tangle of bells blocking the path, or trip wires that knock over teetering piles of noisy debris. Others are more subtle —

floor tiles or switches disguised as random clutter that trigger hidden bells or balanced stones.

If the Heroes set off any of these alarms, they may encounter a few sewer hunter Brutes (see page 19) before reaching the Room of Spheres (see page 19).

The Ragged King

Villain

Brawn 4, *Finesse* 3, *Wits* 4, *Resolve* 4, *Panache* 4

Advantages: Toughness, Montaigne

Background: Hunted

Arcana: Commanding

Hunter: Fishing 3, Stealth 4, Survival 4, Tracking 3, Trail signs 3, Traps 4, Ambush 4

Streetwise: Socializing 2, Street Navigation 3, Scrounging 3

Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 4, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 3, Eye-gouge, Kick, Parry (Improvised Weapon) 3

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 4, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 4

Knife: Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 3, Throw (Knife) 3

The Ragged King carries a heavy staff with nails and shards of glass driven into it (Heavy Weapon) and a brace of 4 throwing knives, which are old, but kept in good condition.

The Ragged King is a tough opponent, but will hang back and send his followers into the fray before becoming personally involved. The People of Pegre jump at his command without question, and will die fighting for him. If the fight starts turning against his side, he will jump into the fray, battling with a brutal ferocity. If he is wounded and can make an escape, he will – after all, survival is the marrow of his philosophy.

His age is difficult to surmise through the dirt and grime, but he is most likely over thirty years old. He dresses in layers of filthy rags, with a grizzled beard and blazing eyes. His long hair hangs in tangled masses over his shoulders and his voice is powerful and deep.

Creatures

Black Wolf (Villain)

TN: 20 (see special abilities as well)

Brawn 4

Finesse 3

Resolve 3

Wits 2

Panache 3

Attack Roll: 5k3 (Bite)

Damage Roll: 4k2 (Bite)

Skills: Ambush 5, Footwork 3 Tracking 4

Image: A shaggy, dirty wolf with black fur. Their eyes glow with an unnatural light.

Special Abilities: Limited *Porté* abilities: add +10 to its roll when using Ambush. It may spend 1 Action at any time (ignoring the Interrupt Action Rules) to automatically make a successful Active Defense against any Attack Roll that is not more than 20 times its Defense Knack Rank (e.g., if their Defense Knack is 4, it can Defend against an Attack Roll of up to 80). Unless an opponent takes some sort of precaution, such as backing up against a wall, the wolf will always try to attack from the rear.

The Black Wolf can teleport at will; no Blooded object is needed. When attacking, it prefers to leap out of nowhere using their *Porté* ability, and go for the neck. It is adept at avoiding missiles hurled or fired at it, blinking out of sight in an instant.

Black Wolves are rare in the sewers, especially in an area actively patrolled by the People of Pegre. But the occasional solitary wolf still wanders through, looking for lunch. More background info on Black Wolves can be found in the *Montaigne* sourcebook, pages 113–114.

Sewer Spiders (Brutes)

Threat Rating: 1

TN: 15

Usual Weapons: venomous bite (see below)

Image: These arachnids, about the size of a fist, lurk in the dank shadows of the sewers and feed mainly on rats. They



The Ragged King

cling to the ceiling and corners, making bulging cobweb nests in which they store their paralyzed prey.

Special Abilities: While they don't usually attack humans, they react violently if their nests are disturbed, and may drop down from above to deliver painful bites that inject a mild poison. The venom numbs a two-foot area surrounding the bite for a duration of 3 turns. If a spider bites a limb, the Hero's Finesse and Brawn are considered 3 below normal (minimum 0) whenever that limb must be used. The effect lasts for three turns when the poison wears off. If the bite is on the head or neck, the Hero will be disoriented and get a headache, and their Wits suffer a -3 penalty (minimum 0) until the poison wears off. If the bite is on the torso, they will be wracked with painful convulsions and their Brawn will be at -3 (minimum 0) until the poison wears off.

Once these threats have been disposed of, the party may continue along the trail. Eventually (whenever the GM

decides they've had enough distractions), they will hear the distant strains of a violin up ahead. The melody is strange and haunting, and Heroes who can read music will recognize it as the melody written on the music sheets. It is being played with a frenzied intensity.

As they continue along the path, sharp-eared Heroes (Wits check, TN 20) may notice sounds from ahead and behind that could be stealthy footsteps. Lights are soon visible ahead, where the music is coming from. As they round the last corner, several figures step out of the shadows, surrounding the Heroes.

“None Shall Pass!”

When the Heroes round the corner, they can see that the passage widens into a larger room. The architecture of the passage is different from most of the sewer ways — the Sryneth architecture taking on a grander feel. At the far end of the room is a large archway, its stone door shoved aside and cracked. Beyond this doorway they can see into the Room of Spheres (see below). They can see Madelene inside the room, along with a few ragged-looking men, who are standing awestruck as she plays her violin.

Between the Heroes and the Room of Spheres is an unfriendly welcome party.

The number of sewer hunters who ambush the party can be adjusted according to the party's capabilities. Most of them will be Brutes, and easily dispatched. The sewer hunters are dressed in filthy rags and wield battered weapons scrounged and made from whatever they found. They will fiercely attack the party, trying to keep them from entering the Room of Spheres. Most are disposable, but at least one — Renard (a.k.a. Paul Etalon du Toille) or the Ragged King — should be left alive if the Heroes want to get the whole story behind Madelene's disappearance from the ball.

Three of the sewer hunters are in the room with Madelene. The rest can be adjusted to make a fitting challenge for the Heroes.

The People of Pegre

One of the largest and most powerful tribes of sewer hunters, the People of Pegre dwell beneath Charouse, ruled by a mad king and living by a savage code of ethics that places survival and loyalty above all moral standards. They harbor a deep resentment for those who live Above, and seek to do them mischief whenever they can. However, they have few resources with which to implement any lasting damage. They regard the suspected treasure trove locked behind the door in the Room of Spheres as a means to further this cause. With the funds beyond the door, they hope to procure weapons and supplies to arm themselves for a violent uprising.

“Pegre” is the Montaigne word for the Underworld of ancient Republic myth. They consider their society, brutal as it is, superior to the pampered, deceit-filled way of life Above. They have a “survival of the fittest” philosophy, and see the money-driven society of Montaigne as a flawed system that enables the weak and unworthy to hold undeserved power.

The undisputed leader of this tribe is a menacing figure known as the Ragged King. Dressed in layers of filthy rags, with a grizzled beard and blazing eyes, he is a paranoid, charismatic fanatic whose passionate speeches and merciless displays of unyielding authority have made him the most feared and respected man under Charouse.

No one’s sure how old he is, what his real name is, or where he came from, but no one questions his edicts or philosophy. He preaches self-preservation and the value of strength and skill. Those who have nothing to offer, and who cannot fend for themselves are callously cast out of the tribe’s territory, or executed in barbaric public rituals. His followers respectfully refer to him as “Your Lowness”.

Behind his mad raving and quiet brooding lies a mind filled with warped genius. He is a keen plotter and a flexible survivalist. The plan to deceive Madelene into aiding their entry into the trove was his idea, and none of his minions dared suggest an alternative.

People of Pegre

The number and composition of the gang of sewer hunters can be adjusted to the strength of the party. We suggest one Henchman per 3 Brutes, and they should collectively outnumber the Heroes 2 to 1.

Brutes

Threat Rating: 2

Usual weapons: Medium (broken and improvised weapons, clubs)

TN 15

Skills: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 2, Footwork 2

Henchmen

TN 20

Brawn 3, *Finesse* 1, *Wits* 2, *Resolve* 2, *Panache* 2

Attack Roll: 5k2

Damage: 3k1

Skills: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 2, Footwork 2

The Room of Spheres

This room, built by the original Syrneth designers of the subterranean labyrinth, is a large circular chamber with two doors. One is a large arched entryway; its stone door shoved aside and cracked by the sewer hunters. The other door is a massive stone slab firmly entrenched in the rock walls. The archway has strange glyphs etched upon it and glittering gems inlaid in a circular pattern at the center. The Heroes may recognize it from the sketch on Madelene’s music sheets. Chisel marks mar the stone around the gems, but apparently any past attempts to pry them out failed.

The domed ceiling stands about twenty-five feet high at its apex. In the center of the room is a sort of pedestal. A large globe rests in a shallow depression upon it, spinning rapidly. No visible means of propulsion is apparent, and efforts to stop its spinning will automatically fail. The globe is a dark, transparent purple, and flashes of light pulse at its center at a rate of one pulse per 40 seconds. When Madelene begins

to play, the flashing quickens, and eventually meshes with the sound, pulsing in rhythm to the music.

The Portal Yawns

Madelene plays frantically as the Heroes fight the sewer hunters. Once one or more of the Heroes fights their way into the room, something begins to change. The globe in the center of the room begins to pulse rapidly, its color changing from purple to red. A deep rumbling sound makes the stone walls tremble and bits of rock and dust waft down from above. Madelene continues playing, so absorbed up in her music that she doesn't seem to notice.

The gems on the door light up, and begin flashing in a pattern, pulsing to the sounds of the violin. The sewer hunters in the room look toward the door, expressions of rapt anticipation on their grimy faces. A puff of dust bursts from the seams around the door, and it slowly begins to swing outward.

Seeing that the door is opening, and having orders to kill Madelene once she has accomplished her task, one of the sewer hunters in the room draws a rusty dagger from his belt and crosses in front of the Door towards Madelene. Nearby Heroes may attempt to stop him — but something else gets to him first.

A massive, skeletal claw reaches from the darkness beyond the Door, grabbing the sewer hunter with an audible crunch of bones, and throwing him against the far wall. The man's choking

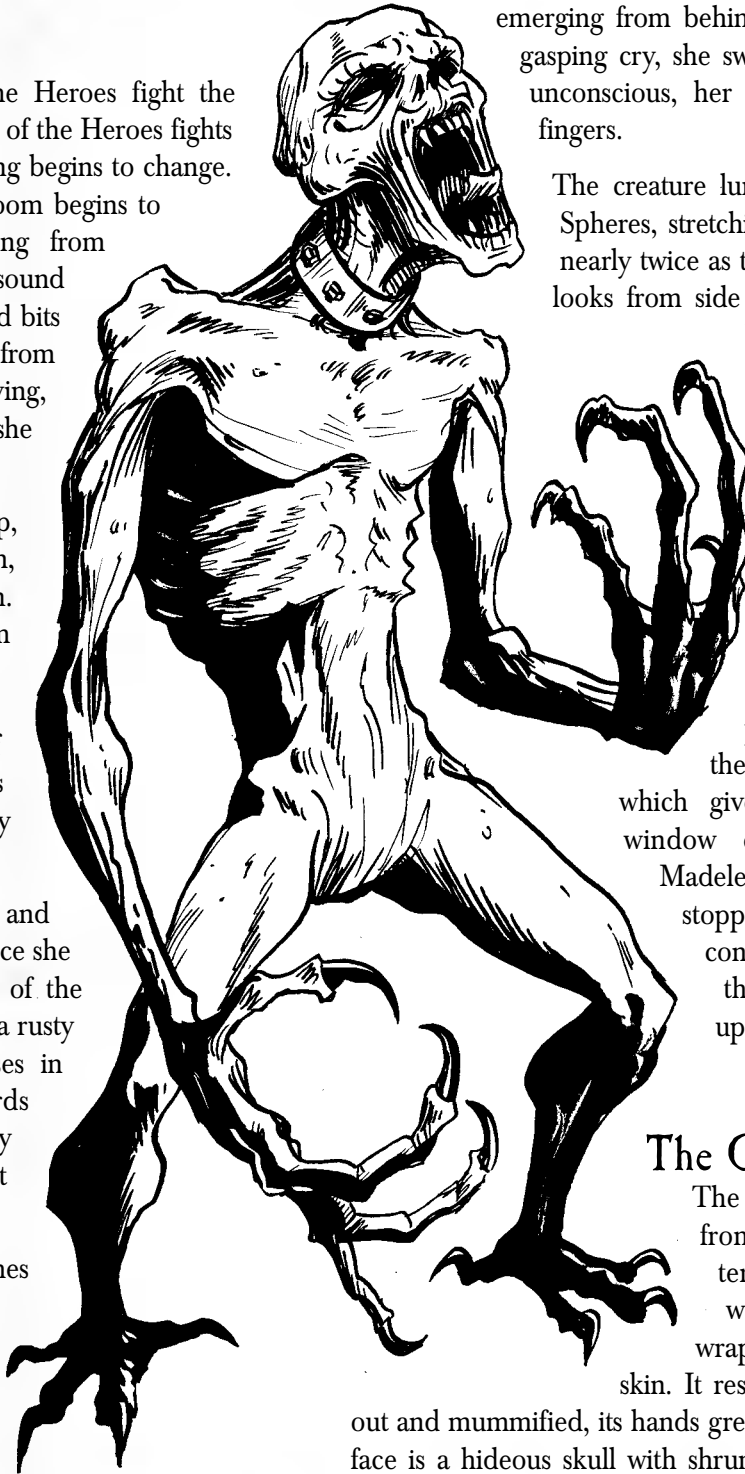
scream startles Madelene from her reverie. She drops her violin, looking up to see a nightmare in flesh emerging from behind the stone slab. With a gasping cry, she swoons, falling to the floor unconscious, her violin slipping from her fingers.

The creature lumbers into the Room of Spheres, stretching up to full height. It is nearly twice as tall as a full-grown man. It looks from side to side, its glowing eyes blinking in confusion. Then it seems to recognize where it is, and opens its mouth in a silent scream.

As the Heroes and their foes look on, the monster flies into a blind rage, attempting to kill anything in its path. It will focus first on the remaining sewer hunters, which gives the Heroes a short window of opportunity to get Madelene to safety. Unless it is stopped, however the beast will continue its rampage through the sewers and eventually up into the city above.

The Caged Beast

The creature that emerges from the doorway is a terrifying skeletal thing with long creaking limbs wrapped in sagging, shriveled skin. It resembles an ape, stretched out and mummified, its hands great long-fingered talons. Its face is a hideous skull with shrunken flesh clinging to the bone like ancient parchment. Its eyes glow like fanned



The Caged Beast

Villain

Points: 200

TN 20

Brawn 5, Finesse 3, Wits 1, Resolve 4, Panache 4

Advantages: Toughness

Attack Roll: 5k3 (Claws) 5k2 (Grapple)

Damage: 3k3 (Claws), 3k3 (Grapple)

Skills: Footwork 3, Claws 4, Grapple 3

Note: Stats can be adjusted to reflect the strengths of the party.

The creature stands about 9 feet tall, and is hideous to behold. It reeks of decay and its muscles creak and stretch like old leather. It attacks with blind fury, and has no particular plan in mind other than killing anything in its path. It will strike out with its claws, or attempt to grab an opponent and crush them, then throw them aside.

embers, and its breath reeks of decay and the rot of eons. The creature's mouth stretches wide in fury, but only a labored hissing sound emerges. Clasped around its neck is a strange sort of collar, with several glowing gems imbedded in it and a circular depression at the back.

Unbeknownst to anyone involved (or indeed any human on Théah), this creature is the last living member of an ancient race who built the Syrneth sewers in ages past. A fanatical villain who played an instrumental role in the downfall of its civilization, it was imprisoned by its own people within the locked chamber. They designed the prison to hold it for all eternity, never letting die, but slowly rotting in its dark, soundless confinement. The collar around its neck is a silencing device, preventing it from making any vocalizations.

The once criminally brilliant mind has fallen prey to the terrible madness of countless millennia of silent isolation with only its own twisted thoughts to entertain it. What rational abilities it once possessed have withered to blind, pain-filled rage. It is still physically strong, and its strength is

aided by its seething hatred. Its only thought is of slaughter and revenge — on whoever happens to be in its path.

The sound of Madelene's violin, however, is the one thing that can break through its shell of wrath. The notes — a form of the race's ancient language— are distracting, even soothing after its interminable, soundless confinement. If she begins playing again, it will pause at the sound of the music, its head tipping to the side as it listens to the alien melodies. For several minutes it will be entranced by the notes, then, as it recognizes the tune as the key to the very prison it so loathed, it will begin to rage anew, its anger focusing on the source of the taunting message — Madelene and her violin.

Protecting her is vital if the Heroes want to remain in *l'Empereur's* good graces. The creature must be killed or somehow incapacitated to prevent it from reaching the surface and wreaking havoc on the Sun King's precious city.

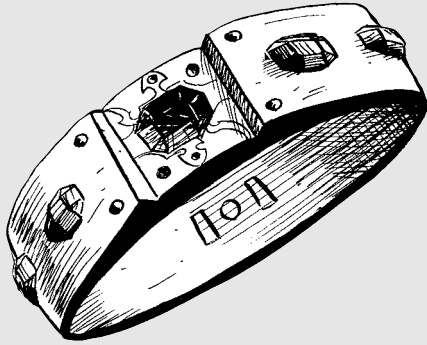
Solving the Puzzle

Presumably, the Heroes will be able to keep Madelene safe, and hopefully destroy the creature before it causes any more harm. If they save the girl, but are unable to kill the beast, it goes staggering off into the catacombs.

If the party manages to keep Madelene safe, she will tell the authorities about how Paul Etalon du Toille approached her with the box, how its strange song enchanted her and how she left the ball in search of the door. She seems quite shaken, and feels as if she has just awakened from a twisted dream. There is a tearful embrace when she is reunited with her father, and he expresses humble gratitude for all the Heroes have done.

If the Ragged King and/or Renard have managed to survive, they can be arrested and questioned. If the party is up to it, the GM can make hunting down these men through the sewers another adventure in itself. Both Renard and the Ragged King make excellent recurring villains, and can be used as future foils for your party if you wish.

On the other hand, if the party is exhausted and you're ready to wrap up the adventure, they may discover the pair



The Collar and the Key

The collar on the beast was a protective measure taken by its captors to prevent it from speaking and making noise. The music heard from the box was a recording of a verbal command that unlocked the prison. The jailers did not want to take a chance on the prisoner using its voice to escape.

The collar is locked around the beast's neck, but the key to open it is nearby. (Show the players the illustrations of the music box on page 10.) The panel at the back of the collar bears etchings and an indentation that coincide exactly with the marks on the box and the gem on the top of it. A simple Wits check (TN 15) confirms this. If the gem is fitted into the depression on the back of the collar, the lock will spring open and the collar can be removed from the beast's neck. Once unlocked, the gems set in the collar will go dark.

If someone places the collar around their neck, it will automatically snap shut and can only be removed by unlocking it with the box. The gems will begin to glow again once it is fastened. Within a few seconds, the wearer will feel a dull numbing in their throat can no longer make any sounds beyond exhalations, hisses and coughs. The wearer will remain effectively mute until the collar is removed.

(Note that while this device could easily silence a captive, or even keep someone from revealing a secret, the captive can still sign and gesture, and write, if literate.)

lying nearby, wounded from the battle and unable to flee into the safety of the labyrinth. Renard is angry and disillusioned with the outcome of this endeavor, and will be blunt and surly. But he has no wish to die, and answers questions when threatened. He confesses that he had been sent by the Ragged King to seek Madelene's aid with opening the Door. He explains that the story of the Sidhe curse was a fabrication designed to manipulate her, and that the Ragged King had believed the Door hid an ancient treasure. He admits that they had planned to kill Madelene after she had done her part.


The Ragged King will be less straightforward. He is in a state of rage as they arrest him. He has always regarded those from the world Above as inferior beings, and yet his philosophy of "survival of the fittest" indicates that the successful Heroes are superior. His pride has suffered a terrible blow, his plans ruined, his treasure a fleeting dream and his tribe reduced considerably. He will be as uncooperative as possible, and may try to escape a few times or harm his captors. Eventually, however, he sinks into apathetic despair and tells the Heroes about his plans to launch a raid on the city above with the funds from the treasure he hoped to find behind the Door.

Both will be found guilty of treason and attempted murder. Their delivery to *l'Empereur* will earn high marks, as the King's disdain for the sewer-dwellers is well known.

...And They Lived Happily Ever After?

When they get back to Château du Soleil, many of the guests have gone home. Some are still around, however, waiting to see if Madelene ever turns up.

While they were away, Donadiou tried to keep the King and guests occupied for as long as he could, but eventually Leon



The Music of the Spheres

demanded to know what was going on. When *l'Empereur* discovered that Madelene was missing, he dispatched his guards to sweep the city. The Heroes will run into one of the search parties as they emerge from the sewers.

Alfonse and the waiting coachman have told the guards what they know. If Madelene is brought out alive and well, there will be much rejoicing and praise for the party. If she is brought out badly wounded, they are less jubilant, but grateful for her return. If she has been killed, they will be distraught, and fearful of Leon's reaction.

If they've detained Renard, the guards will be very pleased: he has a long criminal record and has managed to elude capture until now. They express their delight at the prospect of questioning him about the sewer dwellers' secrets.

If they've arrested the Ragged King, the guards will be even more excited. With their leader gone, the People of Pegre are likely to split up and become less of a threat. They mention that the "True King" will no doubt take express pleasure in torturing and executing this mockery of a King.

If the Heroes have managed to kill the Caged Beast, its body will cause astonished and disgusted gasps. The guards will express relief that the thing never made it to the surface. Leon will subsequently order the Room of the Spheres to be destroyed, eliminating whatever secrets lies within. There could be interesting complications if a member of the Explorer's Society (possibly one of the Heroes) finds out about the creature, the collar and the Room of Spheres.

If the party was unable to keep the creature from reaching the surface, it will eventually emerge elsewhere in the city. It goes on a terrible rampage, killing many innocent civilians before the Musketeers finally destroy it. If you wish, the Heroes may take part in the fight, which helps erase their failure to stop it earlier.

If the creature has been incapacitated, but is still alive, there will be much discussion about what to do with it. Some wish to study it as a unique biological specimen. Others want to destroy it before it can break free again. A few even wish to transport it to *L'Il du Bête* (see *Montaigne*, page 31 and the adventure *Scoundrel's Folly*) where the idle rich can hunt it

for their amusement. Regardless of what the Montaigne decide to do with it, it soon withers and die. Without the sealed atmosphere of the Domae prison to preserve it, it begins to weaken and decay, and will perish in a matter of days.

Successful Heroes should be rewarded with an appropriate amount of experience points.

Renard (Paul Étalon du Toille)

Villain

Brawn 3, *Finesse* 4, *Wits* 3, *Resolve* 3, *Panache* 3

Advantages: Montaigne

Background: Hunted

Arcana: Proud

Hunter: Fishing 3, Stealth 4, Survival 3, Tracking 3, Trail signs 3, Traps 3, Ambush 3

Spy: Shadowing 3, Stealth 3, Conceal 2, Sincerity 3, Disguise 4

Streetwise: Socializing 2, Street Navigation 3, Scrounging 3

Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 3, Sprinting 2, Throwing 2

Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 4, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 3, Eye-gouge 2, Kick 2, Parry (Improvised Weapon) 3

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 3

Knife: Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 3, Throw (Knife) 3

Renard carries a battered rapier and a rusty dagger

Renard is an adequate swordsman, and fights with a bit more style than the rest of the sewer hunters. However, he has no qualms about using dishonorable means to win a fight. He, too, would rather escape alive than fight to the death, and will attempt to flee if things look dire.

Renard has an athletic build and a handsome face under the layers of dirt. He wears a ragged shirt and britches, with homemade sandals on his feet. His hair is shoulder length and pulled back in a greasy ponytail.

The Golden Head of Korlak ur-Nagath

The battered ship limped into the bay.
 The crew, each a hero in his way,
 Bore the scars of blade and storm and beast.
 Tanthus longed for his home in the east.
 The Island of Nagath was quite grand,
 And they had despaired of reaching land.
 Astride the bay stood a man of gold,
 In one great hand, a horse he could hold.
 Carved on the pedestals was the name:
 Korlak ur-Nagath, King of Great Fame.
 The boat put in at the empty port,
 And the crew searched through the haunted fort.
 – from the *Tanthusiad* by Gurlan (Avalon translation,
 by Sir Ronald Trace, 1545)

Introduction

This is how most of Théah (the educated ones at least) know about the legend of Korlak ur-Nagath (or at least his statue). The *Tanthusiad* is one of the most important pieces of literature in the world – a classical Numan epic recounting the twenty-five year voyage of General Thanthus, who struggled to find his way home after an Avalon storm blew he and his shipmates off course. It has been the subject of countless plays: the greatest playwrights of *l'Empereur's* court have expanded on their favorite adventure from the epic poem. Vaticine scholars have written countless books, analyzing and dissecting Gurlan's most famous work, while countless Montaigne dinner parties have been ruined by pretentious fops quoting from it endlessly.

Like all good legends, the *Tanthusiad* has a factual basis. There really was a general of the Old Republic named

Tanthus. He belonged to the occupation army on Avalon until the Sidhe spirited the islands away in 573 AUC. He and his men managed to escape in a small fleet of ships, and his ship was quickly separated from the rest of the fleet by a freak storm. Blown off course and hopelessly lost; it did, indeed, take him twenty-five years to return home. Most scholars believe that he and his crew did indeed have many harrowing adventures, encountering creatures and foreign lands and mysteries throughout their journey. In fact, history attributes the first known encounter with the monstrous Sea Queen with Tanthus and his crew.

In spite of that, many adventures in that epic poem probably came solely from Gurlan's imagination (for example, Tanthus's encounter with a committee of sharks is a thinly disguised political satire of the Imperial Senate). Thus, most of the stories were dismissed as the fancies of a brilliant poet and storyteller.

The tale of Korlak ur-Nagath, in particular, doesn't hold up to scrutiny at first glance. The narrative places the island of Nagath in a stretch of the Trade Sea that has since borne a staggering amount of traffic, yet there no one has found any trace of an island that would support a city like Nagath. Scholars scoff at the idea of a ninety-foot tall statue of solid gold; such an artifact would quickly collapse under its own weight. Others quickly point out that the Syrnych were capable of seemingly impossible feats of engineering, but the Syrnych never created anything in human form, and seemed to shun representational work of any kind.

Fifty years ago, however, during a sea battle, a Castillian sailor made a startling discovery. Under the water, he saw the ruins of a great city, matching the descriptions of Nagath almost exactly. Scholars and explorers investigated the site with ships and divers and soon came to the conclusion that that city of Nagath, as described in the *Tanthusiad*, did indeed lie beneath the waves. The island had sunken before the fall of Numa as a result of a volcanic eruption. Even the existence of the statue seemed plausible. Two pedestals marked what was once a narrow inlet to the island's bay, spaced far apart enough for a ninety-foot tall statue to stand. Unfortunately, no trace of the statue itself was ever found.

The Golden Head

Stories quickly surface regarding the statue and many other items from the *Tanthusiad*. Scoundrels and rogues have made small fortunes selling maps to Trogel, the Island of Talking Beasts (and large fortunes selling maps to Listruta, the Island of Willing Maidens). Charlatans have produced countless fakes of the masks of the Hornet Men, and one enterprising mountebank has built an entire industry around buying and selling the fangs of the Serpent of Tryphus.

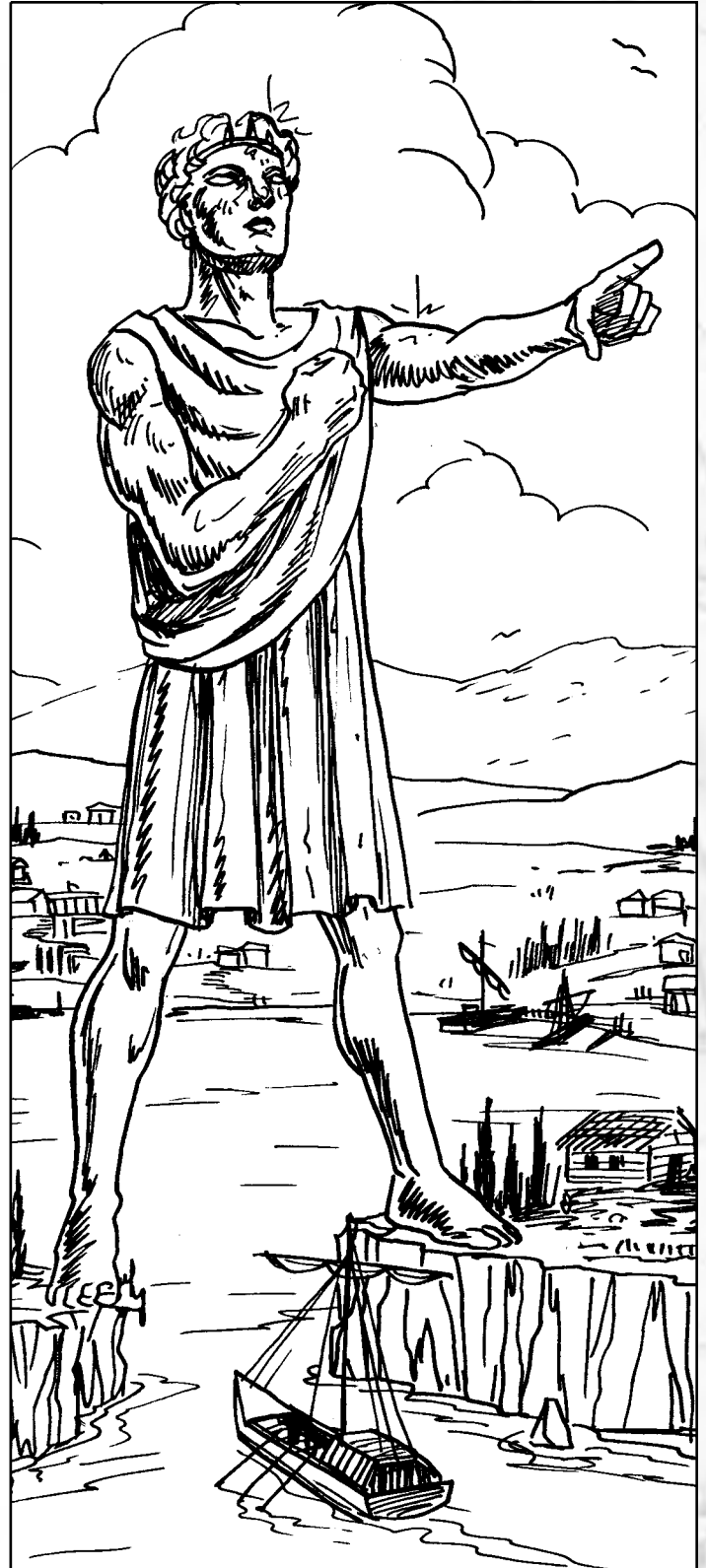
The great statue of Korlak ur-Nagath, though, is the most sought-after prize of them all. Many members of the Explorers' Society have dedicated themselves to follow any leads, no matter how flimsy, on the statue's whereabouts. Many pirates, as well, would literally kill for a chance at such a treasure.

Twenty years ago a pair of scoundrels inadvertently found a big piece of the puzzle. A Montaigne merchant ship, the *Suzette's Promise*, was sailing among the islands of the Midnight Archipelago. Venturing far south, hoping to find new markets for their merchant captain, the ill-fated crew ran afoul of the savage Kiri-Rapu, a tribe native to an uncharted island south of the Archipelago.

The Kiri-Rapu outnumbered the crew nearly twenty to one, and quickly overwhelmed them. They took the survivors captive and, over the next several weeks, mercilessly slaughtered them, a few at time, to appease the Kiri-Rapu's brutal god – a god embodied by a nine-foot tall statue of a giant head, apparently made of gold.

Six of the sailors eventually escaped, making their way back to the *Suzette's Promise* and setting out desperately for civilization. Four of the escapees succumbed to their injuries before they made it back to civilization. The final two survivors, Paul de Stwallaque and Jacques Campion, eventually arrived on Montaigne soil, and vowed to each other that they would return one day to claim the golden head together.

Campion, naturally, took the first opportunity to cut his shipmate out of the deal. When de Stwallaque went home to see his wife and son, Campion attempted to steal a small boat – one that he could man himself – to return to the



island on his own (he hadn't thought it out very far). He was quickly caught, and thrown into prison.

De Stwallaque, in the meantime, made other arrangements to insure that he would be able to get his hands on the head someday. It has been twenty years. Jacques Campion was released from prison a week ago, and he is dying.

The Structure

Like most *7th Sea* adventures, The Golden Head of Korlak ur-Nagath consists of a few set points (scenes and elements necessary for the plot) and several changing elements (scenes that can be added or deleted in accordance with the Game Master's personal preference and relative strength of the party).

The organization of the changing elements for this this adventure differs from most, however. The Golden Head of Korlak ur-Nagath is a race for a treasure, and like all great treasure hunts, the prize itself matter less than the chase. In "The Competition," several different treasure hunters are presented, as well a scene featuring each of them. This way, the GM can decide which competitors to include; whether the heroes have to contend with one dogged rival turning up at every step of the way, or a dozen gold-hungry lunatics constantly getting underfoot and causing trouble.

In order to use this adventure, the GM should read through it entirely at least once and then choose which (if any) competitors he wishes to challenge the players. The Golden Head is intended as a light-hearted romp, a break from an otherwise serious campaign. If you prefer, however, you can easily leave the comedic elements out and play it as a down-and-dirty treasure hunt.

For a short adventure, leave all of the competition out and simply play the set points. This will make the story very focused and fast-paced, sacrificing a bit of dramatic depth.

For a "standard" length adventure, add in two or three competitors and have them all cross the Heroes' path (or alternately, have one competitor crossing their path several times, adjusting other hooks as necessary). This will make

the story equivalent to a typical Hollywood adventure movie in depth and tone.

For a longer adventure, toss in all of the competition and have them cross and double-cross the heroes and each other at least once each. This should have the effect of a grand Hollywood epic, with a lot of laughs and chills all around.

Finally, you could bring in all of the competitors and use every suggested encounter and perhaps even a few of your own creation. This would turn "The Golden Head" into a sort of mini-campaign, allowing you to occasionally insert another adventure, taking a break from the overall plot, before finally finishing this one. This would create something like an entire season of a light-hearted adventure television show.

Find the style that best fits your campaign, and make it your own.

Story Overview

The story begins with the Heroes receiving a letter from someone named Jacques Campion. Apparently, he has heard of their exploits and wishes to make a proposition. Arriving at the meeting place, they meet a wild-eyed drunken old man (Campion) who tells the Heroes of a fabulous nine foot tall golden head that he saw once on a remote island. He tells them of the fate the rest of his shipmates met on that island, and of his and Paul de Stwallaque's escape. He announces that he is ready to go after the treasure now that he has been released from prison, and he wants them to help. Then he promptly drops dead.

Educated Heroes recognize that the head may, indeed, be that of the fabled statue of Korlak ur-Nagath from the *Tanthusiad*. Uneducated Heroes will simply recognize a huge hunk of gold. Following up on the only lead they have, the Heroes track down Paul de Stwallaque, only to discover that he died a few months ago. Investigation reveals that de Stwallaque — a prominent author — hid the route to the island in a series of books he wrote. The Heroes must wade through eleven volumes of very bad writing to find the clues,

The Golden Head

and then track down the only copy of the final, unpublished book.

Once they have figured out the route and location, they can set sail. Unless they make other arrangements, the only ship available to them is a pirate vessel of dubious reputation; the *Grinning Pelican*.

The island is fairly easy to find using the clues, and the heroes can reach it fairly quickly if unopposed... but where's the fun in that? A few clashes with their fellow treasure hunters serves to delay and distract them, but they eventually reach the island.

At this point, the players must deal with the Kiri-Rapu, the savage and unfriendly natives of the island, who don't take kindly to strangers trying to steal their god. The Heroes can handle the Kiri-Rapu in a number of ways; through trickery, violence, or diplomacy.

Once the Heroes have the Head, they can then return with it to their ship – only to find themselves double-crossed. Guy de Stwallaque, the disinherited son of Paul de Stwallaque, has been on board the whole time, posing as a member of the crew. While the party secured the Head, he managed to convince (bribe) the crew to mutiny. The Heroes are left adrift in a long boat, hundreds miles from civilization and much too close to the Kiri-Rapu.

How they get out of this mess is largely up to the players. They can try to catch up to the Pelican in a borrowed outrigger canoe; or, if they are present, they can use one or more of their rival treasure hunters against each other. Porté sorcerers, of course have a built-in solution.

By this time, the story becomes a frantic game of “button, button, who's got the nine-foot golden head.” Much of the action takes place here, depending on the style you wish to



play (see The Structure, above). In the end, the Heroes will probably lose the Head in a cinematically appropriate manner (although successfully claiming it isn't out of the question either). Of course, it's not the having that's important; it's the getting.

Part One: Lunatics and Bad Fiction

As the curtain rises, the Heroes receive a letter from a man they've never heard of: Jacques Champion. He claims to have heard of their exploits (from a former cellmate, though he doesn't say so; possibly a character the Heroes have encountered before) and wishes to make them a proposition. He says he will await them at the White Horse Tavern in the port city of Buche in Montaigne; he also provides the dates he will be there, giving the Heroes plenty of time to get to Buche.

The White Horse is a fairly seedy bar located near the docks. Once the Heroes arrive allow them to take in the surroundings, flirt with the tavern wenches, meet some of the NPCs (anyone pursuing the treasure should be in the tavern), and so on. At some point in the evening, when one of the Heroes approaches the bar, he notices an old man giving him a strange look. A violent coughing fit breaks his stare, forcing him to lean over the bar as he struggles to control himself. While nearly any attention will be appreciated, the only thing that will give the old man any solace is a generous glass of brandy. Once the coughs subside, he introduces himself as Jacques Champion. He will speak to the Hero in a loud voice (he is partially deaf). Read or paraphrase the following:

"Merci, monsieur, merci. I knew you were the ones to help me. It has been so long since anyone has showed be any sort of kindness. Precisely twenty years in fact!" He grins weakly you, "I got out just last week, you see. I am certain they thought I would die in that place, like so many others did; but none of

them had as strong a reason to keep living as I did!" He looks around furtively; he doesn't seem to notice that everyone in the tavern can hear every word he is saying. "I saw it! It has been two decades, but the image is burned into my mind. It was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. The eyes alone as big as cannonballs! Gold! Solid gold! It stood at least nine feet tall, and nearly as wide. Those savages had no idea what they had, I am sure of it. I tried to steal a boat. I wanted to betray my good friend Paul, and I tried to steal a boat. But Theus punishes betrayal more harshly than any other sin, and I was caught." He begins to sink his shoulders and droop his head down, "My own greed was my undoing. But I..." he seems lost in thought.

He is obviously drunk and possibly confused. Let the players ask whatever questions they care to and he will shake himself out of his funk. After a few minutes to organize his thoughts, he tells his story, either all at once, or by answering questions.

"I was a sailor on the merchant ship Suzettes' Promise. We were trading among the islands of the Midnight Archipelago. The captain had heard rumors of an island to the south, past a maze of reefs, sandbars and shallows. He had some idea of how to navigate the maze, based on those same stories. It turned out he was right, because we found our way to a new group of islands, whose natives had never seen Théans before. He thought to establish new trade routes with the islanders, but he never had a chance to ask them about it. They fell on us as soon as we reached the jungle. We must have killed dozens of them, but they had a whole army against one ship's crew. Those of us who survived the attack were taken prisoner. They kept us in a pit like animals. They fed us through a grate, just enough to keep us alive; they wanted live sacrifices, you see.

"Every few days, they would take a handful of us out of the pit and we would never see them again. One day, after they took a group of my shipmates, I gathered the courage to stand on another man's shoulders and poke my head through the bars over the pit. I saw one of the savages – he must have been the chief or the witch doctor or something – standing on the head, yelling and pointing at my crewmates. They knelt in front of him, all in a row; men with spears were standing behind them. All of sudden, the chief shouted one word, and they plunged the spears down,



The Golden Head

into my crewmates' backs. At that moment, I knew that I had to escape.

"Young Jules, the cabin boy, was thin enough by then to squeeze through the bars in the darkest part of the night. He was able to lift the grate just a little, enough for another man to get through, and he lifted it the rest of the way off. We all climbed out and replaced the grate, and saw five natives standing in the open, staring at us.

"All that time in the pit, our fear had turned us into animals. We fell on those people like a pack of dogs. I still have nightmares about it – they were unarmed villagers. After we killed them, we stole a few weapons and some food and ran for the beach.

"They discovered the bodies very quickly and sent warriors after us through the jungle. I do not know just how many of us escaped that night, but only six made it to the shore. The others were recaptured or killed in the chase.

"We stole one of their outrigger canoes and paddled out to the ship still anchored in the island's bay. The islanders had left her alone, thank Theus, and we weighed anchor and set sail with the smallest skeleton crew I have ever seen.

"We soon found that the food we stole spoiled very quickly, and four of the men were badly wounded. They didn't last a week. In the end, it was just me and Paul de Stwallaque who limped into that harbor. We were so excited to see civilization that we lowered a boat and rowed in as fast as we could, without securing the ship, dropping anchor, or anything. While we found a doctor to tend to our wounds, someone else rowed out to the Suzette's Promise and claimed her as salvage. They were a bunch of thieves and rapsallions there, and the sailor's court ruled we had abandoned her.

"So, Paul and I were destitute when we finally reached home. We told no one else about the head. We made a vow that, together, we would one day return to claim the Golden Head. He went to his home to see his wife and son, whom he had been away from for over a year, and I returned to my home here, in this very town.

"Legion himself must have whispered in my ear, because the next day I decided I would go back myself and steal the head, and I

would be richer than l'Empereur! I went to the docks and found a boat that I thought could carry me the whole way, and I tried to steal it.

"I was caught immediately, and they threw me in prison for twenty years. Paul refused to ever visit me or answer my letters, and rightfully so. But now I am out, and I want you to help me claim the golden head. When we have it, I will go to Paul with his share and beg his forgiveness. Split two ways – even split a hundred ways – it will make us as rich as lords!" At this point, at the height of his excitement and agitation, he stands up and nearly shouts these last words. Then his hand clutches his chest, his knees buckle, and his other hand grabs [point to nearest Hero] your shirt. "Paul knows! He knows the way!" He coughs once, and then falls over, dead.

Let the players role-play the conversation – and the period which follows – however they wish. Very shortly, however, it becomes clear that everyone else in the tavern heard Champion's story. The naked greed in the eyes around them is enough to frighten a Vendel. Several patrons suddenly remember pressing engagements and slip out. One or two of the greedier opposition may take this opportunity to thin out the competition by sandbagging the Heroes. Check the descriptions to see if such an act is appropriate for the foes you have chosen.

Once the party has dealt with any possible skull-duggery, they need to plan their next move which presumably includes mounting an expedition to find the golden head.

A successful History knack roll against a TN of 15 or a Wits roll against a TN of 20 allows a Hero to connect the head in Jacques' story to the legendary statue of Korlak ur-Nagath. Heroes with connections to the Explorers' Society will recall the site of the submerged city of Nagath. Of course, any Heroes who can read have been exposed to Gurlan's *Tanthusiad* and can identify the head from that.

Allow all the Heroes to make a Wits roll versus a TN of 15 (10 for Montaigne characters). Success allows the character to recognize the name of Paul de Stwallaque, the author of several novels called "The Remy Thoreau Adventures." This notorious series of books has been blasted by every reputable critic throughout Montaigne and abroad; the

plots are painfully transparent, the characters wholly unbelievable, the research non-existent, and the dialogue atrocious. The Vaticine Church has declared the books pornographic for their frequent and lurid depictions of love-making, anti-Vaticine for their depiction of the clergy, and immoral for the questionable activities of the so-called “hero.” They excommunicated Paul de Stwallaque several years ago when he refused to stop writing. Naturally, his books are the most popular novels to reach the Montaigne nobility in some time.

A simple trip to a bookstore or printshop reveals that there are eleven books in the series, all available for cheap purchase. What’s more, the publishers, Henried and Sons, is located right there in Buche.

What If They Don’t Want The Head?

If your Heroes are not typical treasure hungry types, there are still plenty of ways to lure them into the story.

Members of the Explorer’s Society would be very excited about retrieving such a famous artifact, and may contract the Heroes to recover it for them.

Agents of nearly any government will recognize the resource the head would represent, and show considerable interest in securing it. They might commission Musketeers, Knights of Elaine, or other “loyal” Heroes to recover it.

Heroes with a Nemesis or Rival could hear that their foe seeks the head, and the Hero may wish to either oppose them, either as a chance to confront his opponent, or simply out of spite.

The Investigation

Allow the party to take whatever path they think best, using the information presented here as a guide. If the action seems to slow down, feel free to toss one of the competitors at them to liven things up.

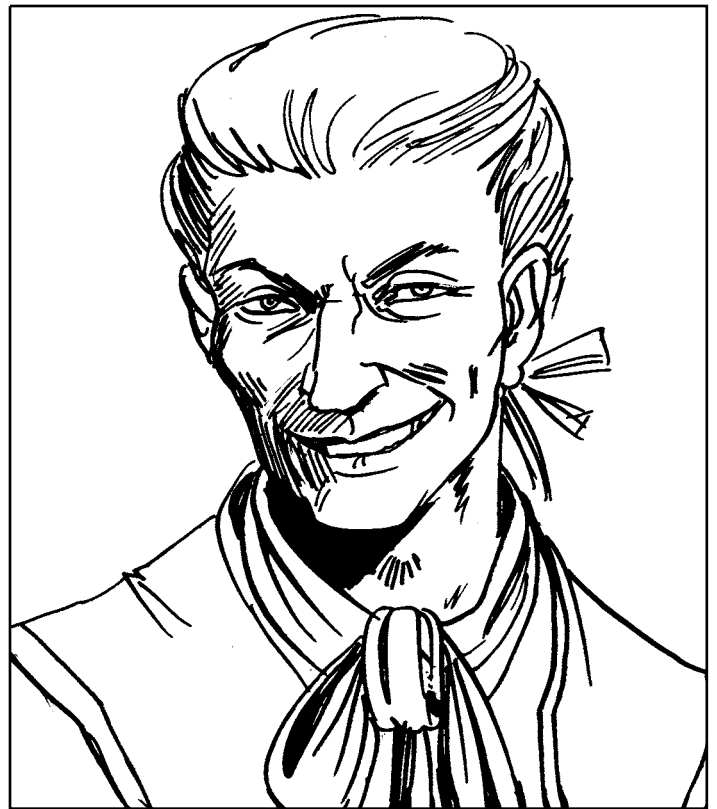
Henried and Sons Publishers

A trip to the publisher’s headquarters reveals a somewhat dingy building in the slaughterhouse district of the city. It’s

the only place where the smell of wood pulp is not considered offensive.

The building opens into a large central space, with a pair of small and cluttered desks near the front door, four printing presses working constantly, and a large open area serving as a warehouse with bundles of books stacked on wooden pallets. Four boys, ranging in age from ten to nineteen, work the presses, while a pretty girl of about sixteen sits hunched at one of the desks. She doesn’t bother to look up when the Heroes enter. A lean middle-aged man (Charles Henried) stomps from press to press, pulling sheets off at random and inspecting them. Sometimes he nods and places the page back where he got it; other times he reaches over and cuffs the boy at the press behind the ear and points to some apparent error. The din is incredible.

If anyone tries to get the man’s attention, they will fail. He is just too absorbed in his work. The moment any male



Guy de Stwallaque



The Golden Head

character attempts to speak to the girl, however, he springs from wherever he is (vaulting over piles of books if necessary) and makes a bee-line to interpose himself between them. Henried assumes that the Hero is just one of the many suitors after his daughter, Constance. Constance has reached a suitable age and the publishing house has enjoyed tremendous success of late, meaning that the gold-diggers have been coming out of the woodwork. He violently opposes any money hungry ne'er-do-well or bankrupt noble marrying Constance for his money, although welcomes the attentions of any clearly well-to-do gentleman of substance — as long as he is not too old or too young or Inish or Castillian or Vodacce or Vendel or Highlander or Avalon or Ussuran or Eisen or Tibesti or military or clergy or lawyer or sailor or farmer or teamster or sorcerer or actor or singer, and most importantly, not a writer.

The GM can make this scene as simple or complicated as he wishes, as long as it is amusing. After any ruffled feathers have been smoothed (or courtship arranged), Henried happily speaks to the Heroes about Paul de Stwallaque.

He tells them that de Stwallaque was a personal friend of his and had been pestering him for years to publish a book he had written, called *The Soldier's Indiscretion*. The book was utter tripe of the worst kind, and Charles knew that it would get him in trouble with the church, so he turned him down. Repeatedly. Then, one night seven years ago, the two friends were playing cards and the stakes got insanely high. Paul won the game, and Charles paid off his terms; he published the book. Despite universally bad reviews and threats of excommunication, it sold through the roof, and made both men a lot of money. De Stwallaque began writing more novels, each one worse than the last, and Henried gritted his teeth and began publishing them. The eleventh book came out last year, and the twelfth was forthcoming until de Stwallaque passed away two months ago. De Stwallaque always said that he intended to publish twelve and no more; "A pity" Henried muses, "that he never completed his final piece." Though sad to see his old friend gone, Henried secretly rejoices that he does not have to publish such awful pandering trash anymore.

If anyone asks him about the golden head, Henried tells them (truthfully) that Paul never mentioned it. He spoke occasionally of his ordeal, of course, but he always left out the head. Questions about de Stwallaque himself prove a bit more fruitful. He had a wife who passed away five years ago, and a son, Guy, who used to play with his oldest boy. Young Guy and Paul grew apart as the years went by, and Guy was constantly in trouble with the law. In fact, he went to prison a few years back for a confidence scam.

De Stwallaque lived in a fairly nice farm about five miles outside of town, bought with the earnings from his books. He left it to his housekeeper, who served as his constant companion in his later years.

De Stwallaque's Home

There are a couple ways the heroes can learn the location of de Stwallaque's home. They can get the address from Charles Henried (above), or they can ask around about the author himself. Many of the locals know where he lived, and his fame has spread throughout the town.

The house and farm around it are fairly well-kept, and run by Margaret Ergot, the elderly former housekeeper and now lady of the house. She decided not to let the rest of the staff (three people) go after de Stwallaque's death, and currently toys with the idea of turning the place into an inn or an artists' retreat. Margaret thought the world of "Master Paul," and apparently he shared some of that affection. Theirs was not a romantic relationship (though it had been, once, years ago), but merely a close friendship. She blushes to mention that the author based one of his heroines on her.

If asked about the golden head, Margaret says she knows nothing. But after a moment she remembers something de Stwallaque used to say. He said that he had hidden something of great value in his books, in the hope that his son, Guy, would someday be worthy of it.

If asked about Guy, Margaret sadly shakes her head, lamenting that "some children are just bad seeds." She had hoped that father and son would patch things up eventually, but alas, time ran out. The last time the boy saw his father,



they got into an argument about something and Guy stormed out. Paul changed his will shortly thereafter.

If asked about the books, Margaret says she has read one or two of them, but prefers not to, since Master Paul – for all his virtues – wrote some pretty unseemly things (she has actually read and re-read all but the twelfth book). If the heroes are exceptionally nice and polite, or express an interest in Master Paul’s work, Margaret will show them his study, where he did most of his writing. A Wits roll of 20 or more will allow a character to notice a bundle of papers half hidden under a large map of Théah.

Right about now would be a good time to toss some of the opposition at the party. (If they fail to notice the bundle, have it dislodge and scatter across the study during the ruckus; they can have fun retrieving it later.)

After the ruckus has cleared, Margaret will gladly let the Heroes read the bundle of papers, which turns out to be a manuscript of de Stwallaque’s final novel, titled *Remy’s Reward*. Margaret insists that she keep the book, as she

intends to take it to Henried and Sons, but she will allow the Heroes to read it provided they remain in the house while doing so. If, during the struggle, the book is stolen, Margaret will be distraught, and will beg the party to get it back. The GM may spin this out into another branch of the adventure if he or she wishes.

The Books

Bright players should realize they are being hit over the head with these books. Unfortunately, that would be just about the only way to get any enjoyment out of them. De Stwallaque hid the route to the Kiri-Rapu’s island in the books (see below), so the only way to find it is to actually sit down and read them. Few Syrneth ruins hold such horrors as the prose of *The Remy Thoreau Adventures*.

There are twelve books in the series including *Remy’s Reward*. Each one takes about half a day to read if the Hero does nothing else. For each book begun, have the reader make a Wits roll. If the result is a 10 or more, they recognize the books as complete trash. If they roll under a 10, then the Hero actually enjoys the novel (lucky them). If the Wits roll comes up with three or more ones, then the Hero becomes convinced that the book is a work of genius!

All characters who made the Wits roll of 10 or more must then make a Resolve roll against a TN of 15. A failure means that the Hero just can’t take it anymore, and refuses to read that particular book any further. Slogging through the entire series is a heroic undertaking. De Stwallaque’s characters resemble wooden cut-outs, the action is implausible and hackneyed, and the plots are merely excuses for the female characters to remove their clothing. Any character with a military background will be enormously irritated by the fact that, although the hero of the series is a soldier, the descriptions of military activities and procedures seem to be written by someone who rode past an army camp once at high speed (a fairly accurate description). Any task this arduous should have a reward, right? Well here it is: for each book a Hero completes, allow them a Wits roll against a TN of 20. Each success and raise on this roll (no need to call for raises) allows the Hero to realize one of the following facts:

1. Certain phrases seem out of place. Throughout the series, de Stwallaque refers to the Ussuran city of Soudal, where the hero begins his journeys, as “The San Augustin of the East.” This makes absolutely no sense.

2. The hero, Remy Thoreau, travels quite a lot, never going to the same place twice.

3. None of the places Remy visits are fictional. All of the cities, towns and villages he visits actually exist. Some are so small as to only appear on the most detailed maps.

4. Some of the settlements Remy visits have been abandoned or deserted for years – centuries in one case – but the narrative cheerfully overlooks this and continues with the story (it doesn’t seem to matter much; every city in de Stwallaque’s novels resembles every other city).

5. De Stwallaque gives unusually precise directions for Remy’s travels: south south-west for three days, etc., yet he curiously omits landmarks.

6. If one were to take the first initial of every woman that Remy has romances with, they spell out the following message:

“WEAREAMAPTOTHEGOLDENHEADOFKORLAKUR NAGATH,”

There are a lot of women.

Let the Heroes take all of this information in and see if they can figure it out. If they have trouble, give them a few more hints. If the Heroes have access to Explorer’s Society maps or perhaps university maps, then they can chart Remy’s path through the novels with precision. If they then trace that route on a piece of thin paper, and replace the starting point with San Augustin instead of Soudal, the result is a route through the southern part of the Trade Sea, ending in an uncharted stretch of ocean somewhere south of the Midnight Archipelago.

With this last bit of information, the Heroes can set off on their own expedition. Don’t worry; they won’t be lonely.

Part Two: Off to the Island

Here the chase begins. The other treasure hunters will be following the party relentlessly; some will be stealthy, some will be blatant, and some may even be friendly. In fact, unless one of the Heroes has a ship, they may wish to join forces with one of them. Barring that, they will need to hire a ship.

Buche is a busy port, and there are plenty of ships in the harbor. Unfortunately, most of those are slated for trade or military missions. The only ship available is the *Grinning Pelican*, a fast cutter capable of carrying a lot of cargo – very important on this kind of trip. The Captain, an Avalon named Thomas Raine, does his best to stay out of politics. He will gladly put his ship at the Heroes’ service with one condition; he wants two equal shares of the treasure – one for him, and one for his crew. It’s no good trying to tell him there is no treasure: since Campion’s dying performance, the golden head has become the worst-kept secret in Buche. Raine allows the heroes one denial, and then he tells them he knows, and suggest they come clean. Each time they deny after that, he increases the number of shares he wants by one. Hopefully the party will get the message before they have to actually pay for passage.

Whether the party charters the *Grinning Pelican*, joins forces with another treasure hunter, or has their own ship, they will need to take on some new crew in Buche. This is nothing unusual – nearly every ship adds crewmen when a new voyage begins (to replace men who were lost, who retired or deserted, or perhaps fell ill). Plus, it becomes very important to the plot of Point Three.

Once they have a ship, they need a way to get the head on board. Luckily, Gerard Reale, a local inventor with ties to the Explorer’s Society, has heard about the head, and wants to test one of his new inventions on it – a heavy cargo crane that can be mounted on board a ship. The crane has two

massive arms, made of iron. A complicated system of gears and winches reduces the necessary strength to lift any object by a factor of ten. In other words, a 200 pound object would only require 20 pounds of effort applied to the crane's handles. Whether it can take the incredible weight of a nine-foot head made of solid gold has yet to be proven. Reale will gladly attach his crane to the *Grinning Pelican* (or another ship) provided that he has the opportunity to study the head for the Society.

Raine initially resists to the idea of attaching the incredibly bulky and bizarre-looking crane to the deck of his ship, but can be made to see reason, especially once someone asks him how he intends to load the head.

As they set out, the Heroes will notice several other ships leaving at the same time, seeming to follow them.

The route from the books starts in San Augustin, but some may not wish to use that port, given that it is in Castillian hands. It takes a Navigation roll against a TN of 15 to plot a course from Buche to the same spot as the one indicated by the route. However they begin, make sure they've got plenty of company for the trip.

The Straits of Blood

One of the first navigation points takes the Heroes' ship (and the veritable flotilla of ships following them) very close to the Straits of Blood (see *The Pirate Nations* sourcebook; an overview is provided below). Captain Raine happens to know the secret to reaching the island safely. He's not a pirate, but he has several friends who may be. He will suggest that they put in at the infamous pirate port to resupply and make repairs, especially if they have had any fights along the first leg of the trip. If the ship has taken damage, Raine will insist, and nothing the Heroes can say will change his mind.

Lying 600 miles to the southeast of Buché, the Straits of Blood are a small chain of islands surrounded by some of the deadliest waters around. The waters are swimming with sharks and far deadlier creatures, and the islands are almost completely encircled with a jagged reef. There's only one break large enough for a ship to enter, and it's only

navigable by night, thanks to the Bloody Lighthouse (see below).

Pirates of all nationalities and affiliations make port here to relax and spend their plunder. It also serves as a neutral meeting place for pirate Captains who wish to discuss treaties and alliances. Anyone who draws a weapon here is immediately set upon by everyone, put back on their ship, and banned from the Straits of Blood forever. As this is one of the few places a pirate can relax in safety, anyone who gets his crewmates banned from this port can expect an early retirement on a deserted island.

The Bloody Lighthouse

Standing three stories high, the lighthouse is made from wood chopped from the nearby jungles. It has two lamps atop it, one of which is tinted red. The normal lamp is visible in all directions, but the red lamp is shuttered so that only ships directly in line with the safe break in the reef can see it. Ships who see the white light circle the island until they see the red light, then sail directly towards it (Wits + Piloting at a TN of 15) until they reach port in Bilgewater. Two capable guards watch the lighthouse to make sure the lights don't go out or get moved.

Bilgewater

Bilgewater is the larger of the two towns in the Straits. It serves as the main port and place of entertainment. Residents and pirates who want a quiet rest have to go to Tumbledown. They certainly won't find any peace in this town, which is filled with drunken singing and yelling until well into the morning. The residents use the morning hours, when most of the pirates are passed out, to restock their food stores, relax, or get some sleep themselves.

The main part of town is mostly taverns, gambling dens, and houses of ill repute. There are a few communal storehouses behind them in addition to a shipwright and a large Meeting Hall. To the east of the town is a thick jungle known as Caruther's Last Home. Caruther was a well-liked pirate who frequented Bilgewater, and sported a shiny hook on his right arm. One night he had a bit too much to drink and wandered out into the jungle, unnoticed by his friends.

They found his pistols, his hook, and his skeleton, but the rest of him had been eaten. Since then, the pirates have avoided the jungle, especially at night.

Tumbledown

Less rowdy and dangerous than Bilgewater, Tumbledown mostly consists of the homes of pirate Captains who frequent the Straits. There is one quiet tavern, but crewmen are not allowed inside.

As for the jungle surrounding the town, it seems perfectly safe. There are no large predators on the island, and no one has ever disappeared while walking along its picturesque paths.

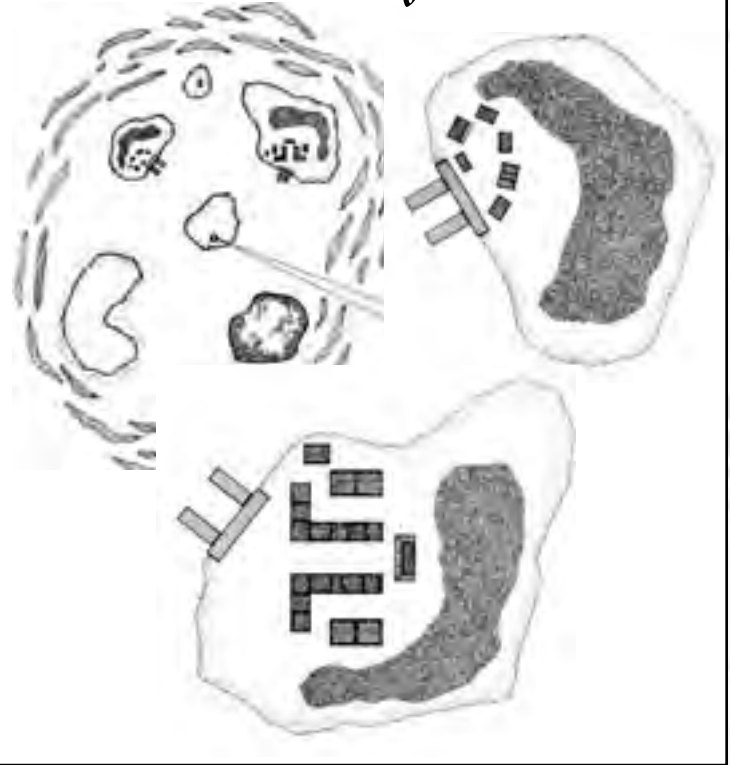
This will be a very dangerous time for the party. Thugs from the opposition will be prowling the alleys, hoping to get the route out of them by force or trickery. More stealthy threats can appear in the form of thieves sneaking onboard the ship trying to find the route, or even sabotaging the Grinning Pelican. And, of course, with all the different ships coming into the port, and the crews walking the streets, the golden head will remain a secret for exactly ten minutes. Even more treasure hunters can join the chase here.

After the Heroes have gotten into as much trouble as you want, they can begin the next leg of the trip.

South of the Straits, the *Grinning Pelican* spends the next few weeks sailing past the Midnight Archipelago, then through the maze of reefs and shoals that guard the island of the Kiri-Rapu. The maze is the most dangerous portion of the trip, and requiring three Sailing Through Reefs checks as seen on page 104 of *The Pirate Nations* sourcebook.

For those who do not have *The Pirate Nations*, the rules are as follows: for each check, the ship's Lookout makes a Perception check (TN 20) to see if he or she spots the reef. If not, the pilot makes a Perception check (TN 30) to spot it at the last minute. If both rolls fail, the ship runs aground, suffering a number of Critical Hits equal to the ship's Draft minus 3 (minimum 1).

The Straits of Blood



Any ship attempting to sail through the maze without the proper route must make ten checks, unless they are close enough to follow directly, which will require Pilot checks.

The Island of the Kiri-Rapu

As the *Grinning Pelican* reaches the final point of the route, the lookout gives the shout "Land Ho!" At first glance, it appears to be a tropical paradise. Wise characters will remember Campion's tale, however, and be on the lookout for the savages he spoke of.

Allow the party to make whatever plans they wish, whether they wish to storm the island, sneak ashore, or approach with signs of friendship. Captain Raine will go along with nearly any plan, and accompany the Heroes ashore. If they want greater numbers, he will order twenty of his men

ashore as well. If the Heroes have come on their own ship, they may disperse their crew as they wish.

When they set foot on the island, the Heroes soon find an obvious trail through the jungle that leads almost directly to the native village. Whether they use the trail or not, they will be watched the moment they step into the jungle.

The Kiri-Rapu wait until the invaders reach a good ambush position, and strike there. The attack comes without warning and in three waves. First, six blowgunners, hidden expertly in the trees, shoot sleep darts (the equivalent of Knock-out Drops; see page 185 of the *GMs' Guide*) at any obvious leaders (though NPCs in the party should fall first). Then, spearmen, two for each member of the landing party, will step out of cover and make menacing gestures, attempting to intimidate those still standing into surrendering. Finally, six archers, remaining in cover, will shoot anyone who still resists. If this does not convince the landing party to cooperate, the Kiri-Rapu will simply attack.

If the party defeats the ambush, the survivors will run back to the village with the news. If they fail, go to Captured! below.

A victorious party marching through the jungle will have no more contact with the Kiri-Rapu until they reach the village, about five miles inland, at the source of a river that runs out to the sea. The village itself is a tightly packed affair, with grass huts of varying sizes situated in a series of interlocking circles. As soon as they pass the outer perimeter, the Heroes will see the object of their search. The Golden Head of Korlak ur-Nagath sits on a stone pedestal in the center of the village, gleaming brightly. A stone altar lies in front of it, and it appears to be piled high with offerings of food.

The inhabitants of the village scatter as the Heroes approach. Women and children are swept out of sight, while warriors set up defensive positions at the biggest hut in each circle, and around the head. If the party ignore the huts, the warriors will not molest them. The moment they approach one of the huts, the warriors begin making threatening gestures. If they persist, the warriors attack.

When they reach they reach the center of the village, a man clad in a loincloth, feathers, and beads climbs up on top of the head. He begins speaking in a self-important tone. Unfortunately, no one in the party speaks Kiri-Rapu, so his words will be just so much gibberish. During his speech, he makes repeated pointing gestures toward the Heroes and the horizon.

After he has spoken in this manner for a while, the Heroes suddenly hear a voice in their heads, speaking in their native languages.

“Heed the words of Traggulna, chief of the Kiri-Rapu, and my servant. You are commanded to return from whence you came and never to set foot on our land again. You will each leave a tribute for me in recognition of my generosity. You fought bravely, and only to defend yourselves, so you will not be held responsible for the warriors you have harmed. Do not test the bounds of my mercy by daring to question me; I will speak no more to you.”

See how your players wish to handle the situation. If they decide to follow the voice's advice and leave, that makes for a pretty boring end. Don't worry though; if the Heroes don't get the head, there are plenty of others who don't want to follow the advice of a disembodied voice; so the adventure can continue with a few adjustments.

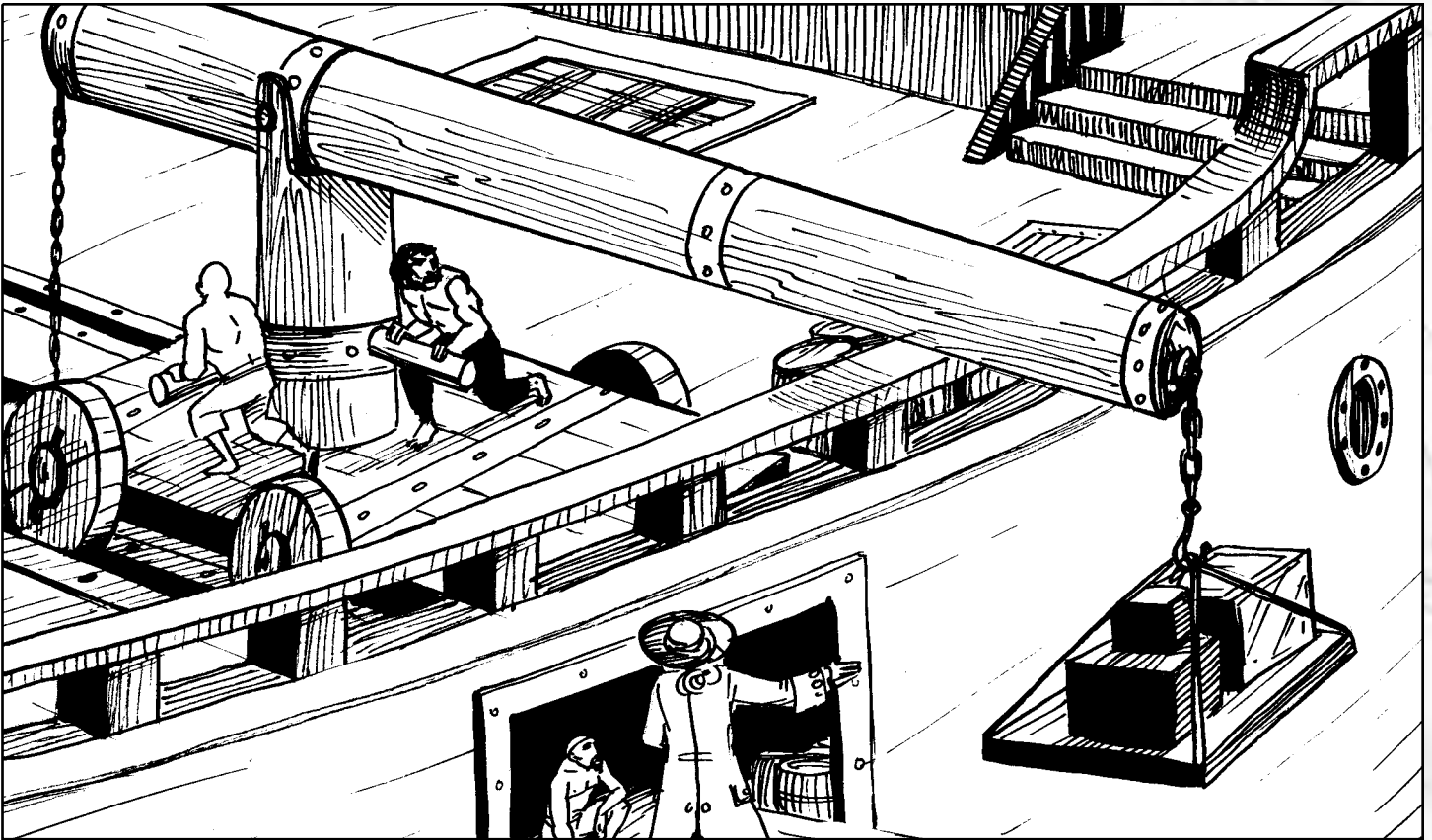
Figuring out how to get the head and how to transport it to their ship is part of the challenge here, as well as keeping it out of the hands of the opposition.

There are far too many possible courses of action the Heroes can take to handle them all here; the most likely options are covered below.

Combat

If the heroes decide to simply wage war on the Kiri-Rapu, make them aware that there are hundreds of the natives, and only a few of them. Enterprising Heroes may suggest that they contact the other treasure hunters and join forces for a massed assault. By all means, allow them to do so; with the proper role-playing, of course. Allow the Heroes to negotiate however they see fit. The likelihood that any of the competition will agree to this plan is actually pretty high;

The Golden Head



after all, how can they steal the head from the Heroes if the Heroes don't have it? A pitched battle between the natives and a coalition of several competitors will provide excellent opportunities for action and betrayal.

In order to give the Heroes a chance to actually win the battle, the forces of the Kiri-Rapu should be scaled, based on the forces the Heroes can bring to bear. If they can muster the crews of up to three ships (including themselves) there will be 10 Warriors and 1 Hunter for each member of the makeshift army. If there are between 4 and 5 crews involved, the Kiri-Rapu should have 10 Warriors and 1 Hunter for every 2 members. If there are 6 or more crews, use the mass combat rules on pg. 176 of the *Game Masters' Guide*.

Traggulna, acting as both the quartermaster and the general of the natives, receives four free raises to use during the battle in addition to any he might gain as a result of his Wits + Logistics and Wits + Incitation rolls before the start of the

battle. The Heroes and the leaders of each faction of treasure hunters need to determine who will be the acting "general" of this ragtag army. Because no one really trusts each other, only characters from the general's own faction can act as subcommanders and add their Rank in Leadership to the general's Strategy roll.

Because they are fighting for their home, and to protect their god, the Kiri-Rapu will not back down until the Heroes' forces have won four Tide of Battle rolls in a row, instead of three.

If the Heroes lose, they must come up with another plan. After everyone retreats back to their ships to lick their wounds, no one will even consider joining forces again without a battalion of Eisen marines to back them up.

If they win, then their problems have just begun. Even if the treasure hunters all agree in public to divide up the head (whether literally or after it is sold), some of them will not



be satisfied with this arrangement. Count on all of the Villains and Buffoons to try to “enlarge their shares” using some dastardly means of betrayal when the time is right.

Diplomacy

This approach has one or two big obstacles. For one thing, none of the Kiri-Rapu knows how to speak any Théan language, and unless they have a seriously unusual background, none of the Heroes can speak Kiri-Rapu. For another, the Kiri-Rapu are extremely xenophobic, and difficult to negotiate with, even if the language barrier is overcome. Negotiations carried out entirely in pantomime have great potential for comedy. Play up any potential misunderstandings for maximum effect.

Kiri-Rapu tradition forbids the head (the representation of their god) to be removed from its pedestal, except by the chief or his kin. However, the chief, Traggulna, has a daughter, Rissa, who has recently come of age. If a hero

takes Rissa as a bride, Traggulna is willing to consider turning the head over to his son-in-law, provided certain other conditions are met. Firstly, Rissa must actually like her suitor (she prefers quiet, intelligent men; without knowing what a book is, she prefers “bookish” types). Of course, any hero with the Star Crossed background will simply fall madly in love with the beautiful exotic princess. This can become wonderfully complicated if one of the competitors gets the same idea.

Once Rissa has chosen her groom-to-be, Traggulna will demand a bride-price. In the currency of the island, gold has no value. A reasonable approximation of Rissa’s bride-price is twenty pigs. Very few ships have that kind of livestock to spare, so the Heroes must somehow round up some of the wild pigs that roam the island. If any Heroes have brought their horses along, Traggulna will be completely taken with these strange and noble beasts. A mated pair would buy Rissa’s hand and greatly impress the



The Golden Head

chief. Finally, any obviously magical artifact can be considered a reasonable token of the Hero's intent, no matter what the object does.

With an army of rival treasure hunters anchored off shore or wandering in the jungle, any courtship will have to be brief. Read through the character descriptions for Rissa and Traggulna and role-play the situation until it is resolved or ceases to be fun.

This would be an ideal time for one of the competitors to make a move.

If all goes well (or if any messes are cleared up quickly enough), the wedding takes place the next day, with a sumptuous feast held the night before.

During the ceremony, every unmarried woman in attendance (including Heroes) must line up in front of the groom and kiss him passionately, in order to test his resolve and show him what he is giving up. This would be a perfect time to play up any unresolved romantic subplots with other members of the party. After this, an emaciated priest stands in front of the bride and groom, gesticulating wildly and speaking a lot in his native tongue. He points to the groom a few times, and then to the horizon, and then to a roaring bonfire.

If the wedding goes off smoothly, the Kiri-Rapu will load the golden head onto the bridal canoe, on the bank of the river near the village. Both bride and groom are expected to paddle this enormous outrigger down the river and out to sea. Normally the newlyweds would be expected to travel just over the horizon, and to then return, symbolizing the journey they must take together. This time, however, have another ship waiting for them.

Trickery

The method of choice for many adventurers is, of course, trickery. Just how they go about it is entirely up to them, of course, but a couple of suggestions and hints are provided here to help figure the outcome of such attempts.

Sneaking the head out in the middle of the night is just unlikely: no matter how talented a thief you are, you can't

put a nine-foot tall golden head in your pocket and just stroll away. Heroes determined to try this will need to make sure they can move the immense weight as well as provide a distraction to get the attention of the entire tribe elsewhere.

Getting the Kiri-Rapu to simply hand the head over to them, on the other hand, is unexpectedly easy.

If the party places guards, in order to gather information, one of them sees something very unusual. The chief, Traggulna, stands in front of the head for a little while, then bows and walks away. After a few minutes, when no one else seems to be around, a skinny old man emerges from a nearby bush, walks up to the head, and tweaks something in its nose (see *The Secrets of the Golden Head*, below). This is Dujga, the priest. He has been using the head's power to secretly guide the tribe for decades, just as his father before him and his father before him, for time out of mind. Dujga steps casually over to the offering table and takes the choicest pieces of fruit; it wouldn't do to have an unappreciative god, after all. He then slinks off to his hut on the outskirts of the village.

If the heroes follow him, they will see that he lives alone, and has no nearby neighbors. They will probably realize at this point that the voice they heard in their heads was Dujga's. Unfortunately, he has no knowledge of any Théan language, the heroes may be baffled again. Dujga responds very well to threats of violence, and even better to bribes of technological artifacts. He will show the secret of the head in return for anything and everything the heroes are carrying that is "high-tech." This includes gunpowder weapons, telescopes, compasses, anything clockwork, musical instruments, and any Syrneith artifacts.

So what does one do with the ability to speak telepathically to anyone you can see? That's up to the players. The obvious choice is to tell the Kiri-Rapu to give the head to the strangers and let them take you away. This has lots of opportunity for laughs and abuse, so try to balance the reactions and consequences to best fit the tone you wish to present.

If ordered by the head itself to give it to the strangers, the Kiri-Rapu will load the head onto a dangerously

overburdened cart (there is one on board the *Grimning Pelican*, or industrious characters may try to build one on the island) or onto log rollers. The logs can easily take the weight, but they are very slow, and will be difficult to defend in the event of an attack by one of the rival hunters.

Captain Raine will ferry the rest of his men back to the ship before trying to take the head, since its incredible weight will reduce the number of people who can be carried. This way, there is just him, the Heroes, and the head in the longboat at the beginning of Point Three.

Captured!

If the Heroes find themselves at the Kiri-Rapu's mercy, they will be tossed unceremoniously into a twelve-foot deep pit with a grate of hard wooden bars over the top. If any treasure hunters beat them to the island, the party will discover their survivors in the pit.

The pit consists of hard-packed earth, and contains a few scattered remains of previous captives. Allow the party to make any escape attempts they wish, keeping in mind that the Kiri-Rapu learned from Campion's escape twenty years ago; large stone blocks, each weighing four hundred pounds hold the grating down on the corners. In addition, a brute squad of four Warriors guards it day and night.

The Secrets of the Golden Head

For anyone in doubt, the Head is, indeed, part of the legendary statue of Korlak ur-Nagath. It is made of gold, but it is not solid. The statue was a gift to the people of Nagath from mysterious allies, possibly the Syrneath, whom they had aided against some foe. The builders inserted a Syrneath devices into the nose, to be used as a public speaking system. When used in conjunction with a second device — currently serving as Dujga's staff — a speaker can communicate with any being seen through the statue's eyes. The second device is touched, and the controller hears, "To whom shall you speak?" He can speak directly into the minds of any being seen through the statue's eyes. This speech manifests in the target's native language. The

controller can choose to use this effect selectively, only speaking to those he wishes.

For some reason, the Head only seems to work when it is on a base made of stone. So it will not work on board a ship.

Part Three: Home Again, Home Again...

As the Heroes row or paddle their way to the *Grimning Pelican*, a couple of things may be happening. If they won the Head by combat or trickery, the Kiri-Rapu decide they want it back (Dujga rats them out if they bribed or threatened him). If this is the case, Three huge war-canoes, loaded down with warriors, begin trailing the Heroes longboat. They keep a safe distance, but it is clear they are trying to work up the courage to attack.

When the party reaches the ship, Captain Raines calls up to Gerard Reale, the Explorers' Society Inventor, to lower the net for the crane. A massive net, made of chains, lowers to the longboat. (The Heroes have been shown how to fasten it, so they have no problem doing so).

The Head is then slowly winched upwards, with the two crane arms groaning and bending dangerously, and the sound of many men on deck straining to work the wheels of the machine. After it is halfway up, it stops.

The boarding ladders and ropes are suddenly pulled up and out of sight. Over the railing of the ship appear the barrels of muskets, followed by the arms and faces of a mutinous crew. Another face joins the rest; a weaselly looking face with a very pleased with himself smirk on his face. Astute characters recognize him as one of the new crewmembers they took on in Buche. In fact, this one seems to have spent an awful lot of time hanging over the rail and malingering. Otherwise, he left no impression whatsoever.



The Golden Head

“Greetings, my friends,” he calls down to them. “I very much appreciate returning to me what is rightfully mine. My father was supposed to have given me the secret, but instead he saw fit to entrust it to strangers; any fool who read his disgusting books.” This is, indeed, Guy de Stwallaque, son of Paul. “He did not know that I would be sent to the same prison as his old shipmate, that I would befriend *Campion* while there, and learn of the Head from him. *Campion* never knew who I was, which suited me fine. My father disowned me, but I know that Head is mine by right. And your crew here has seen my side of things as well. We’ll be taking the Head and this ship, if you don’t mind.” With that, the winch begins working again, and the Head is slowly pulled up and onto deck.

As soon as the Head is secure, the *Grimming Pelican* begins to set sail, and will quickly outdistance the longboat. If one of the Heroes married *Rissa*, the bridal canoe has a sail that can be used. The canoe is almost as fast and more maneuverable than the ship.

We seriously doubt that the party will allow Guy to get that far.

The Heroes may decide to storm the ship while they are still next to her. If that is the case, there are three Brutes for each member of the party, including NPCs. The Brutes are all armed with muskets and belaying pins or cudgels. Guy de Stwallaque is detailed in the NPC section.

Alternately, they may decide to let them go for now and try to catch up in an outrigger canoe if they have one or decide to take one. This will be quite possible once the *Grimming Pelican* reaches the reefs, since the canoe can simply sail right over most of them. When they catch up, the mutineers will be ready, though, and will have one additional pistol for half the men.

Finally, they may decide to use one of the competitors’ ships. This can be done through combat, diplomacy, or trickery as well. Any ship captain who doesn’t try to kill them outright will demand an equal share of the head (for now). Stats for the *Grimming Pelican* and the competitors’ vessels can be found below. If you need any added

excitement, have one of the competitors attack just as the Heroes are in a pitched battle to retake the ship.

Waging a sea battle without sending the Head to the bottom of the ocean is the goal here. Unfortunately, that won’t be easy. The Head is precariously balanced and any damage to the crane (GM’s discretion) will cause it to topple. Generous GMs will allow it to fall over the side, damaging the railing and deck, but still leaving the ship seaworthy. Otherwise, it falls right through the deck, holing the bottom and causing the ship to sink (it takes a number of actions equal to 20 – Hull for the ship to sink). In any case, unless the GM truly wants his players to reap unfathomable riches, the head goes straight to the bottom, beyond the reach of any salvage operations.

If and when the Heroes do take back the ship, they find that the mutiny was only part of the crew; the rest (including *Raines*, *Reale*, or any loyal NPCs) are locked in the hold. GMs should allow the Heroes a chance to rescue them if the ship is sinking.

Conclusion

Presumably, the Head goes straight to the bottom, the Heroes should have an easy time returning to port; the competitors will no longer bother them, and the despondent Guy (assuming he survives) will give them no further trouble. If they’ve lost their ship, a kind-hearted competitor (probably *Molly Makepeace*) can be persuaded to give them a lift. (Alternately, they could bargain or fight their way onto a less-friendly competitor’s ship, providing an sharp coda to the proceedings.) The despondent Heroes arrive back in *Buche* with nothing to show for their troubles but a wild story.

Luckily for them, wild stories can sometimes translate into money. Once he hears the tale (from a competitor if the Heroes don’t think to tell him), *Charles Henried* contacts the Heroes and asks them to write it up as a book. He’ll pay them a generous stipend (GM’s discretion, but somewhere between 500 and 1,000 Guilders is recommended) and even hires a ghost writer for them if they aren’t creatively

inclined. The book ends up selling quite well (although not as well as Guy de Stwallaque's), and the GM may want to allow the Heroes to collect royalty fees (50–100 G a year) in exchange for all their hard work. In addition to the money and any experience they receive, the book allows them to gain 10 points in Reputation apiece. Their names become fairly renowned in the right circles.

In the unlikely event that they manage to secure the head, they'll have to fight off their competitors all the way back to Montaigne. You can make the running battle as simple or drawn out as you wish, but any competitors who haven't made an appearance should definitely do so now. Once the Heroes finally arrive back home, they find their troubles have just begun. The local government (probably Montaigne, but any port will have the same reaction) wants to charge an exorbitant tax for "unloading fees" – far more than the Heroes can afford. Heroes who go ashore will find the prices for normal goods raised to ridiculous rates – since they're rich now, they can clearly afford it. Tax collectors emerge out of the woodwork, claiming that the Heroes are responsible for numerous levies and fees. Things grow even more complicated when the Explorer's Society demand possession of the head "for scientific purposes." As a final blow, a group of Vodacce nobles claiming to be the descendants of the Head's original owners arrive and lay claim to it. The harbormaster seizes the ship and the Head "for safe keeping," while the various sides sort out to whom the artifacts belongs.

It's a good bet that it will take some time to sort out who actually owns the Head. Years. *Decades*. The Heroes can avoid the problem by simply relinquishing their claim to the head. If they don't – if they want to fight for control in the courts – gouge them for all they're worth. Any attempts to run off with the head will prove fruitless. They'll find a similar reaction in nearly every civilized port they visit.



The Competition

Here is a pool of characters and groups for you to use to oppose the player's efforts in this adventure. The competitors come in three basic types: Rivals, Buffoons, and Villains. Each type has a list of NPC competitors (with generic stats and a brief overview of their respective vessel), plus a trio of encounter seeds to toss into the adventure. The encounters are intended to match their respective type, but they can be shifted around quite easily if you wish to give one competitor more prominence or limit the number chasing the Heroes. As we've said before, use the ones you want, disregard the ones you don't.

Stats for the ships can be found on pages 198–199 of the *7th Sea Players' Guide*. GMs should feel free to modify them further if they wish.

The Rivals

These are people who are, for the most part, all right. They are friendly and engaging, they never resort to dirty tricks, and they lend a hand to those who need one. If the Heroes must loose out to someone, they probably don't mind so much if it is one of these.

Molly Makepeace: Hero

Molly is a member of Avalon's Sea Dogs. While not as famous as some of her compatriots, she is ambitious. When she sets her mind on something, she fights like a terrier until she wins (usually by tiring out the opposition). She sees the Heroes as worthy competitors to test her skills against and treats the contest as a race in the purest sense of the word. Ship: *The Queen's Rascal* (10 Point Pirate Sloop)

Raul Cabroni: Scoundrel

Raul is in charge of the Explorer's Society's official expedition to find the Golden Head of Korlak ur-Nagath. He is an amiable Vodacce scholar, much more at home traipsing about in a deserted ruin than trying to keep his balance on the deck of a sailing ship. He jumped at the chance when he



heard the story about the head, however; no amount of seasickness could deter him from a find like that! Ship: *The Courtesan's Smile* (15 Point Merchant Pinnace)

Captain Morgan Feder: Hero

Astute readers will recognize Captain Feder from *The Pirate Nations* (page 19). He has been retired for some time now, and has started to feel restless. When he heard about the Golden Head, he decided that it would be the ideal treasure hunt to get it out of his system. Plus, if he can succeed, well that would be a wonderful story to be able to tell over at the Captain's Hat. So he has pulled together a crew of men he trusts and hastily manned a small sloop christened *Veronica's Glare*, after the look his wife gave him when he announced his intention. Morgan treats this treasure hunt as a lark. He's even brought his dog, Red, along with him. He will laugh, joke, and trade stories with the heroes when they run into each other. Ship: *The Veronica's Glare* (15 Point Pirate Schooner)

Generic Rival Stats

Brawn 2, *Finesse* 3, *Wits* 3, *Resolve* 2, *Panache* 3

Reputation: 23

Advantages: Native Language (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Keen Senses, Scoundrel

Captain: Strategy 2, Tactics 3, Cartography 3, Diplomacy 1, Gunnery 2, Incitation 2, Leadership 3

Courtier: Dancing 2, Diplomacy 2, Gaming 3, Fashion 1, Oratory 3, Scheming 3, Sincerity 3

Sailor: Balance 3, Climbing 3, Knotwork 3, Navigation 4, Piloting 3, Rigging 2

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 4, Parry (Fencing) 3

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 2, Reload (Firearms) 1

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 1, Throw (Knife) 1

Swordsman School matching *Rival's* home country. Rank 3 in all appropriate Knacks (including Skills not listed above).

Encounters

1. This encounter takes place as the *Grinning Pelican* is leaving the Straits of Blood. The repair work and re-supply finished, the captain orders the crew to weigh anchor. No matter how hard they try, they cannot budge the chain. As

they are trying to force it, the competitor's ship slides past. The competitor jovially calls, "I guess a horse that big would have to have a really big stone in its shoe."

The only two ways to free the ship are to abandon the anchor (which the captain does not want to do), or send someone down into the water to investigate. If none of the Heroes volunteer, a crewman will. What he sees while down there is that the anchor has been wedged into a rock crevice, rendering it immobile until a character makes a successful Strength roll against a TN of 25.

A day or two later, while the *Grinning Pelican* and several others are anchored for the night just off the shore of a small island, the competitor rows a boat over to the party's ship and hails them, "Ahoy, the *Grinning Pelican*! I bring a peace offering and some pleasant company." He waves a bottle of wine at anyone looking down.

If the party accepts the peace offering, he or she applauds them for being a good sport and whiles away the wee hours with them, drinking and laughing. He or she will spend the rest of the treasure hunt hurling good-natured jibes at them, and doing his best to beat them, fair and square. If, on the other hand, the Heroes execute a clever retaliatory prank, the competitor gains a new respect for them, and will go out of his or her way to help them if it doesn't look like he or she has a chance himself (but he won't tell them that).

If they are bad sports and start making threats, then the competitor will do his best to stay on the opposite side of any lagoon, island, etc., they go to. He doesn't want to waste what should be a good time with sourpusses.

2) If the party runs into more trouble with the Kiri Rapu than it appears they can handle, a competitor shows up with a bit of assistance. This aid will be either a salvo of cannon fire from his ship aimed at natives on the beach, himself and a brute squad with muskets to assist in the jungle fight, or the competitor's ship will impose itself between the heroes and a pursuing canoe.

3) If, after the head has been retrieved, the Heroes lose control of their ship and do not gain it back immediately, the competitor will attack the *Grinning Pelican* and board it

while the characters are gone. If successful, he sees himself as the new master of the ship. When the Heroes return to reclaim their ship, he offers to sell it back to them and hire them to ferry "his cargo" (the head) to the mainland. The fee he will pay is ownership of the *Grinning Pelican* and a nice bonus on top of that. It is entirely up to the players to decide how they wish to handle this (and keep in mind that the competitor will have quite a headache waiting for him or her when they attempt to unload it).

The Buffoons

No race-for-the-treasure adventure would be complete without someone to get underfoot and gum up the works for both Heroes and Villains. The Buffoons may be good; they may be evil. Unfortunately, they are so incompetent or unlucky that few will ever know or care which side they come down on. These people are the comic relief.

Deiter and Franz Grubner: Scoundrels

This pair of Eisen brothers have one very clear goal. To find the head, claim it, and melt it down into gold bars for transport. They have no interest in the artifact's history or its artistic merit. They just want to convert it into easily portable cash. They're not quite bright enough to realize that "easily portable" has no business appearing in the same sentence as the golden head. Ship: *Der Blunderbuss* (10 Point Merchant Snow)

Claude de Martise: Scoundrel

To call Claude de Martise a pirate is a little unfair. He could possibly be called an attempted pirate. He has never actually taken part in a successful raid of any kind. But he's trying... he really is. And he's going to prove how dangerous he can be. Really. Ship: *The Rake of Charouse* (10 Point Naval Frigate)

Generic Buffoon Stats

Brawn 3, *Finesse* 2, *Wits* 2, *Resolve* 4, *Panache* 2

Reputation: -15

Arcana: Misfortunate

Advantages: Native Language (R/W), Montaigne



The Golden Head

Captain: Strategy 2, Tactics 2, Cartography 3, Gunnery 3, Incitation 2

Criminal: Ambush 1, Cheating 1, Gambling 1, Shadowing 3, Stealth 4

Sailor: Balance 3, Climbing 3, Knotwork 3, Navigation 1, Piloting 3, Rigging 2

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 2, Parry (Fencing) 2

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 2, Reload (Firearms) 1

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 1, Throw (Knife) 1

Swordsman School matching Buffoon's home country. Rank 2 in all appropriate Knacks (including Skills not listed above).

Encounters

1) The Heroes awaken one evening to a terrible keening that experienced sailors recognize as the sound of sirens. Stumbling on deck, they find the competitor(s) and one or more compatriots sitting in a rowboat with several chum buckets. Apparently, they had been lacing the waters around the *Grinning Pelican* with chum in an effort to attract sirens. Unfortunately, they did the job a little too well: a small school of the grinning monstrosities have surrounded the rowboat and are attempting to drag the competitors into the water (the hapless men are fighting them off with the oars). Merciful Heroes will help disperse the sirens (they will flee after one is killed). Otherwise, they can leave the competitors there to fight it out alone (they eventually beat back the sirens, and their future encounters with the Heroes will be decidedly nasty). Heroes who ignore the competitors' plight will suffer a loss of 10 Reputation points apiece (Thomas Raine doesn't approve of such barbaric behavior).

2) As the Heroes are negotiating with the island natives, a colossal figure, engulfed in flames, emerges out of the woods. It states in a loud and imposing voice that it is the God of the Golden Head, and that everyone should flee before its terrible wrath. The natives all look concerned and a few even edge slowly away until the booming words suddenly change into cries of pain.

The figure is one of the competitors, who has fashioned a crude costume out of local flora, and is attempting to masquerade as a vengeful god. In order to disguise the

costume's flimsy nature, he has decided to ignite it – the plant matter is dead and burns quite well with a little oil. The plan works just fine... until the flames eat through the costume and reach the man beneath. He immediately suffers a Dramatic Wound and must be put out by the Heroes, or else he is soon completely immolated. (The Heroes should be encouraged to assist; if not, he survives the mishap, but is dreadfully burned and will require medical attention.) The chief will want to sacrifice the competitor as punishment for his sacrilege, but (assuming the Heroes don't help) he whines and pleads so much that the tribesmen ultimately let him go. The gods don't want crybaby sacrifices.

3) The Heroes stop to replenish their supplies on a tropical island; luscious exotic fruit, purple in color, hangs from the many trees along the shoreline. The Heroes gather them and load them onto their ship, only to be surprised by the competitor and his men, who emerge from the woods with loaded muskets. They should completely get the drop on the Heroes, who they thank for "restocking our galley." They then set out in the Heroes' boat, leaving them (temporarily) marooned. Canny players will realize, however, that the competitors must have arrived on the island somewhere, and a short search soon turns up a second longboat, cut free and adrift in the surf. It requires a Brawn + Swimming check (TN 15) to reach the boat and return it to shore.

The next day, the *Grinning Pelican* spots the competitors ship in the distance. As they approach, they can see that something is wrong; the sails droop unevenly and the ship lists to port slightly. As they draw near, they see the crew of the vessel spread out all over the deck. They seem dangerously intoxicated – they laugh uproariously, lurch from side to side, and one poor gentleman with a drawn cutlass claims to have cornered a pink leviathan in the ship's hold. When the ship passes, one of the competitors leans over the railing and vomits a purple liquid over the side: it should be clear that the fruit they stole has had a debilitating effect on the competitors; they obviously did the Heroes a favor.

If the GM wishes to add an element of danger to the scenario, have the drunken crew start firing off cannons as the Heroes approach. They probably won't cause much damage, but it may take deft sailing to escape unscathed.

The Villains

These are the dastardliest foes the party will face. They are ruthless, relentless, and just plain evil. Not satisfied with simply winning the prize, they will want to kill all the witnesses as well.

Venji Tookman

Tookman embodies all of the worst of the Vendel: greedy, cruel, ruthless, and calculatedly evil. And he lists those as his virtues. He has mastered the art of the pleasant facade and can talk a priest out of his vows before anyone realizes what an awful man he truly is. Ship: The *Gleaming Coin* (15 Point Smuggler's Fluent).

Bishop Stiletto

No one knows who the mysterious Castillian pirate called Bishop Stiletto is. Some say he is a disgraced clergyman, reveling in every sin he can encounter. Others say he is an agent of a dark and shadowy organization, carrying out horrifying missions in the name of diabolic cause. Ship: The *Bloodsport* (20 Point Pirate Barkentine)

Generic Villain Stats

Brawn 2, *Finesse* 4, *Wits* 4, *Resolve* 3, *Panache* 2

Reputation: -35

Arcana: Ruthless

Advantages: Native Language (R/W), Montaigne

Captain: Strategy 3, Tactics 3, Cartography 2, Diplomacy 2, Gunnery 1, Incitation 3, Leadership 3

Criminal: Ambush 3, Cheating 4, Gambling 3, Pickpocket 2, Shadowing 3, Stealth 3

Sailor: Balance 3, Climbing 3, Knotwork 1, Navigation 3, Piloting 3, Rigging 2

Spy: Bribery 3, Conceal 2, Shadowing 3, Sincerity 4, Stealth 3

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 3

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3, Reload (Firearms) 1

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 1

Swordsman School matching *Buffoon's* home country. Rank 3 in all appropriate *Knacks* (including *Skills* not listed above), with one *Knack* at Rank 4.

Encounters

1) As the Heroes lay anchor for the evening, the competitor and a small band of crewmen scull over to their ship and attempt to sabotage it. They cut ropes, slash sailcloth, and bore holes in the hull below the waterline. They manage to make it on board without being spotted. If one of the Heroes is on watch, he can detect them with a *Wits* check at TN 15. Otherwise, an NPC on watch spots them, but not until they manage to inflict one Critical Hit on the vessel. When spotted, the competitor and his men will try to make it to the boat (the Villain can swing cinematically from a rope or make some other suitably flashy exit) and scull away.

2) While staying at the Straits of Blood, the competitor approaches them and offers a friendly game of chance — cards, darts, mumblety-peg, or whatever's appropriate. The Villain cheats (quite well) and as the game continues, it draws more and more attention from the scum surrounding them. The stakes grow larger and larger until the competitor wagers his ship against the Heroes. If they back down, he accuses them of cowardice and orders his men to attack — which starts a colossal brawl. If they accept his terms, he wins handily (though they may detect his cheating with *Wits* + *Gambling*, TN 20) and insists that they pay up. Failure to do so also starts a brawl (the residents of the Straits don't need much of an excuse). The Heroes will have to fight their way free, and perhaps engage the competitor in a bit of swordplay before bolting for their ship.

3) The Heroes arrive on the island, only to find that the competitor has arrived before them — and has already bargained for the head! He has convinced them that the head is going to bring a terrible curse upon them, and offers to “take it off their hands.” The Heroes will not only have to convince the tribesmen that the competitor doesn't have their best interests at heart, but persuade them to turn the head over to them instead! Alternately, the Heroes can



The Golden Head

just wait for the competitor to get the head out to sea, then steal it from him before he reaches his ship.

Other NPCs

Captain Thomas Raine: Hero

Raine is a simple, straightforward captain who believes in honesty and hard work. He's been around a bit, however, and knows better than to trust charlatans. He maintains a courteous demeanor at all times, but grows curt when he believes he's being duped. He signed on for the mission because he believes the golden head will make him rich, but also because he hopes the Sidhe will take notice of his exploits and perhaps improve his middling Glamour abilities.

Brawn 2, Finesse 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Panache 4

Reputation: 23

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne (R/W)

Captain: Strategy 3, Tactics 3, Cartography 3, Diplomacy 3, Gunnery 2, Incitation 2, Leadership 3, Logistics 2

Sailor: Balance 3, Climbing 3, Knotwork 4, Navigation 3, Piloting 4, Rigging 2

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 3

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3, Reload (Firearms) 1

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 1, Throw (Knife) 2

Glamour (Apprentice): Robin Goodfellow 1, Jack 1, St. Rogers 2

The *Grinning Pelican* (schooner)

Brawn 3, Finesse 4, Resolve 3, Wits 3, Panache 3

Modifications: Wide Rudder

Flaws: Undergunned

Draft 3, Crew 4, Cargo 3, Reputation 10

Guy de Stwallaque: Villain

Guy is a cad, a self-interested ne'r-do-well who steals money because it's easier than making it. He heard about the golden head, and feels that it's his rightful property – especially since his father denied him an inheritance! He is skilled in numerous confidence games and can lie as well as

any man alive: which allows him to slip onboard the Heroes' ship easy as pie.

Brawn 3, Finesse 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Panache 4

Reputation: -29

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Combat Reflexes, Left-Handed

Criminal: Gambling 2, Lockpicking 2, Quack 4, Scrounging 3, Shadowing 2, Stealth 3

Sailor: Balance 2, Climbing 3, Knotwork 2, Navigation 3, Piloting 2, Rigging 2

Spy: Bribery 2, Conceal 3, Shadowing 2, Sincerity 4, Stealth 3

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 4, Parry (Fencing) 3

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 2, Reload (Firearms) 2

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 1, Throw (Knife) 2

Valroux (Apprentice): Double Parry (Fencing/Knife) 3, Feint (Fencing) 2, Tagging (Fencing) 3, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 3

Geard Reale: Hero

Geard spends most of his time designing and perfecting equipment for use by the Explorer's Society. He's been out on a few missions, but nothing too dangerous; he prefers low-risk activities to test out his inventions on. The golden head provides a perfect opportunity to test out his new winch, as well as the potential to secure his reputation in the Society.

Brawn 2, Finesse 4, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Panache 2

Reputation: 13

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Eisen (R/W) Montaigne (R/W),

Membership: Explorer's Society, University

Courtier: Dancing 1, Etiquette 2, Fashion 1, Mooch 2, Oratory 2

Professor: Oratory 2, Research 3, Writing 1, Tinker 4

Scholar: Astronomy 2, History 3, Law 2, Math 3, Natural Philosophy 4, Philosophy 3, Research 3

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 2

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 1

Chief Traggulna: Villain

Like most men in power, Chief Traggulna devotes a great deal of his time to maintaining his position. He feels he has instilled the proper amount of awe and respect into his tribe,

but since his daughter came of age, he worries that his authority may be slipping. Whoever marries her will become the heir to his throne, and may siphon much of his power away from him. He consults the head quite often, but never receives the replies he wants. When the Heroes arrive, he concerns himself mostly with impressing them with his power, and bargaining from a position of strength.

Brawn 4, Finesse 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Panache 2

Reputation: -34

Advantages: Noble (Special), Servants (Several)

Arcana: Overconfident

Hunter: Ambush 3, Fishing 3, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Tracking 4

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 2, Leaping 2, Rolling 1, Sprinting 2, Swimming 4, Throwing 3

Commander: Ambush 3, Incitation 2, Leadership 2, Strategy 3, Tactics 2

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 1

Polearm: Attack (Polearm) 2, Parry (Polearm) 2

Dujga: Villain

The power behind the throne, Dujga has been the village priest for nearly fifty years. He learned the secret of the head from his predecessor, who learned it from his predecessor, and so on. He managed to dupe Traggulna's father through use of the head, and hasn't had any trouble pulling the same trick on Traggulna. He doesn't have a successor; frankly, he can't be bothered to worry what happens after he dies. He realizes that the Heroes represent a potential threat to his position, and will take whatever steps are necessary to get them out of the picture – either by bribing them or eliminating them.

Brawn 1, Finesse 2, Wits 4, Resolve 2, Panache 3

Reputation: -7

Advantages: Ordained (Special), Scoundrel, Synchron Artifact.

Arcana: Deceitful

Hunter: Ambush 4, Fishing 2, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Tracking 2

Priest: Diplomacy 2, Mooch 4, Oratory 3, Philosophy 2, Writing 1

Spy: Shadowing 1, Sincerity 4, Stealth 2

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 1

Rissa: Hero

Like all young women, Rissa is entranced by new things, and the Heroes represent a wonderful opportunity for her. None of the boys in the village take her fancy (she's known them since they were all infants), and while she has little desire to leave her home, the prospect of a dashing stranger sweeping her off her feet may be too much to resist. She has a regal bearing befitting a chieftain's daughter, and expects to receive proper deference from those she meets.

Brawn 2, Finesse 3, Wits 4, Resolve 2, Panache 3

Reputation: 17

Advantages: Appearance (Above Average), Noble (special)

Arcana: Star-Crossed

Hunter: Ambush 2, Fishing 3, Stealth 4, Survival 3, Tracking 2

Athlete: Climbing 4, Footwork 2, Sprinting 4, Swimming 4, Throwing 1

Commander: Ambush 2, Leadership 2, Strategy 1, Tactics 1

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 1

Generic Sailors: Brutes

Threat Rating: 2

Usual Weapons: Cutlasses, Pistols

TN to be Hit: 15 (20 on ship)

Skills: Attack (Fencing) 2, Attack (Firearms) 2, Balance 2

Kiri-Rapu Warriors: Brutes

Threat Rating: 2

Usual Weapons: Spears or Blowguns

TN to be Hit: 15

Skills: Attack (Polearm or Blowgun) 2, Stealth 2

Kiri Rapu Hunters: Henchmen

TN 20

Brawn 3, Finesse 1, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Panache 2

Attack Roll: 5k2

Damage: 3k2 or 2k1 plus poison

Skills: Attack (Polearm or Blowgun) 2, Stealth 3