

PRINCES IN THE TOWER



ISSUE 4

THE FRINGE PIRATES

While on a recent trip, I wrote up some stuff about the Fringe Pirates and their various companies.

The Fringe Pirates operate about two dozen major companies and a good 30–odd minor companies in a very loose confederation that meets at least once a decade in regional “Moots.” These meetings put forth various policies and plans for the upcoming years, dividing territories, recognizing new members and paying homage to those who have passed on, in addition to throwing one hell of a party at the same time.

The company leaders start the Moot with various traditions and present a short list of resolutions that they wish to get passed. In between the partying and the politics, it’s possible to get killed. Decisions are made by majority vote for all important resolutions and each FP gets one vote, but most companies are not above killing off just enough of the competition or stuffing the ballot box to get their way.

Open war between companies, however, is “against the rules,” allowing the rest of the confederation to eliminate both offending parties with malice. Since most of the Fringe Pirates companies hate each other as much as everyone else, to declare an enemy company outlaw is something that they can’t wait for. But most often the Moot lacks extreme amounts of bloodshed.

THE BLACK COMPANY

I’ve been a fan of the Black Company Books by Glen Cook for a long while, so it’s fitting that the first Fringe Pirate company I would think up would be the Black Company.

They are currently the oldest company in the confederation, with a history of about 600 years, give or take. Traditionally, they dress in black and gray, with the officers in more gray, and are one of the few human–centric companies, with very few aliens as full members. They specialize in high–tech equipment and weapons but also use swords, as befitting their history as a mercenary company from an unknown Fringepath.

According to the legends, the Black Company is the first of the Fringe Pirate companies, or the last. Will they be the final company to fall, when the FPs are wiped out, as foretold by one prophesy? Or will they be the first, as foretold by another?

THE LOBSTERMEN

Also known as the “Fishies,” the Lobstermen are mostly aquatic humans and aliens that use old fashioned diving gear filled with water to raid non-aquatic Fringepaths. Half the time, you can’t really tell what they want or are thinking, but they’re pretty dangerous, nonetheless. Like a shark, waiting to feed.

They specialize in near-tech: spearguns, underwater gear and “fruits of the sea,” including some very nasty poisons. Most other companies leave any sea Fringepath to them or sell them the info on how to get there.

THE TWINS

This FP company is composed totally of twins, triplets and so on. Whether they’ve figured out some way to make twins more Fringeworthy or have some sort of duplicating alien technology, they won’t say (and who’d blame them).

By tradition, any other company that has twins is forced to “give them to the Gemini” or face harsh punishments, up to and including outlawing (which would spell death for any of the companies). Strangely, many of the twins seem to be sharing the same brain by finishing each others sentences, but they could be just messing with us.

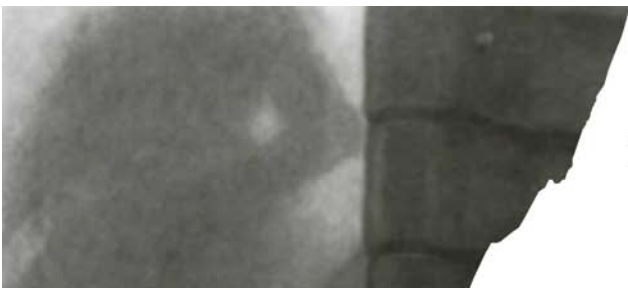
They specialize in alien tech, as well as medical techs.

THE DEAD

One of the more fearsome companies is the Dead, aka the “Zombies.” Lead by an undead lich and composed mostly of free-willed undead (with a number of mindless zombie troops in support), these are fellows not to cross. Most companies keep clear of them, for disease and sanity reasons. How the undead traverse the Fringepaths is an unknown in a universe of unknowns.

The Dead specialize in magical tech, as well as poisons, diseases and unwholesome creatures of all kinds. Keep your bargains with this crew and be sure to count your fingers afterward (and to make sure you don’t have zombie rot), or you’ll regret it, especially after you’re dead.

Next issue, I’ll continue with the various Fringe Pirate companies that I’ve thought up.



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