



Pirate Isles Regional Packet

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Tales of Valor
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So ye want tae join me crew lad? I'll fair warn ye, don't expect a free ride on my ship. I'll work ye long and hard and when yer done with yer service ye'll understand why Durgan's boys are the best crew around. Hmm? When will ye get the women and the loot? Ah matey yer not from the Isles are ye? I imagine ye ran away from home with an image of what everyone thinks we pirates be. Wastrels by day and rogues by evenin' with loot pouring in from nowhere. Well hate to disabuse ye of yer dreamin' lad but that's what we want people who aren't of the folk to see. Ay, piratin's hard work don't ye know...

Off the Western coast of the Taerus Empire there exists a confederacy of islands known simply as the Pirate Isles. A mostly inhospitable collection of rocky crags and sheer cliffs, the isles nonetheless boasts a robust community that hails from all parts of the known world.

The people of this land are not interested in government as most would know it and while crime by civilized standards is rampant, there exists a society of collective resourcefulness and camaraderie. Hard work and minding one's own business is prized among the common inhabitants of the land and even the most boisterous rabble rouser is aware of line between acceptable lawlessness and calling too much undue attention to ones self.

While it would seem an easy mark for the large Taerus Empire to conquer, numerous attempts have been rebuffed before any landfall was even accomplished. Proof that determination and ingenuity can overcome great odds and the desire to live free of government and law can at times form greater bonds and purpose than would otherwise be thought possible.



A vocabulary list from the Pirate Isles:

Aft - At, in, toward, or close to the stern of a ship.

Ahoy - An interjection used to hail a ship or a person or to attract attention.

Arr! - An exclamation.

Avast - A command meaning stop or desist.

Aye (or ay) - Yes; an affirmation.

Belay- To stop, most often used as a command.

Beauty- term used when trying to sweet-talk a woman.

Bilge- Nonsense, or foolish talk.

Bilge Rat - An insulting name given by a pirate.

Black Spot - A paper with a large black spot on it. Used as a death threat among pirates. More details as to the threat are sometimes written on the back.

Booty - Treasure.

Bosun - A warrant officer or petty officer on a merchant ship who is in charge of the ships rigging, anchors, cables, and deck crew.

Chanty - A song sung by sailors to the rhythm of their movements while working.

Code of Conduct - A set of rules which govern pirates behavior on a vessel.

Coxswain - A person who usually steers a ship's boat and has charge of its crew.

Fore- At, to, or toward the front end of the ship.

Hearties- Shipmates. Close companions.

Landlubber- A person unfamiliar with the sea or seamanship. A landlubber is one who

is awkward at sea for familiarity with the land. The term is used to insult the abilities of one at sea.

List - To lean or cause to lean to the side.

Maroon - To abandon a person on a deserted coast or island with little in the way of supplies.

Matey - A piratical way to address someone.

Mutiny - To rise against authority, especially the captain of a ship.

No prey, no pay - A common pirate law meaning a crew received no wages, but rather shared whatever loot was taken.

Pillage - To rob of goods by force, especially in time of war; plunder.

Provost - The person responsible for discipline on board a ship.

Quarter - Quarter is given when mercy is offered by pirates. To give no quarter is to indicate that none will be spared. Quarter is often the prize given to an honorable loser in a pirate fight.

Scallywag - A villainous or mischievous person.

Smartly - Quickly.

Splice the main brace - To have a drink or perhaps several drinks.

Sutler - A merchant in port, selling the various things that a ship needs for supplies and repairs.

Swab - A disrespectful term for a seaman.

Wench - A young woman or peasant girl, sometimes used to refer to women of ill repute.

Ye - You.

History

The origins of the Pirate Isles are as shrouded in mystery and fog as the shipping lanes during early spring and fall. The first civilized accounts of settlement come from the Dun Kingdoms, although which of these was first is open to debate with no country wanting to take the initial blame with beginning the habitation of these islands. Haventhal claims it is where they originally exiled criminals for punishment. In Melea, it is rumored that the isles were founded by the members of a noble house who fled a failed coup. In Dun Darmac it is said that those who left their home for want of their Wal eventually settled in this land. Certainly, if you were to walk the Isles in the current day and age it would be impossible to tell since you can easily find representatives of every race and region on its stony shores.

The major credo of the Isles' history is: "**He who has the strength makes the rules**". Unlike all of the other civilized lands that have begun in barbary, the Pirate Isles has never formed into a kingdom. The reason for this is varied and not without some debate but for the most part it can be said that the Pirate Isles have never become a kingdom because its people have never had the desire to do so. While there have been rulers who have attempted to impose the formalities of government upon the isles, each has in turn failed to form a government that lasted more than their lifetime.

Scholars have no date for an official settlement of the Isles. The current name for that region has been used in Taerrun records dating back even before the Shadow Wars. For all of recorded history there have been those who prey upon the shipping lanes and unarmed vessels in that area of the oceans and the Islands of that region have been haven to them.

There are no official historical records kept of Isle life and affairs. If there were I am sure they would be tales of turmoil, internal conflict and rife with the chaos of short regimes by charismatically bloodthirsty warlord types who were soon toppled. That at least is the impression garnered by the outside world.

In fact, the only real historical incident of note to be recorded was the sacking of the Isles in 8NE by Fflor reavers. An unscrupulous captain made the grave error of engaging and sinking a Fflor dragonship that had come to negotiate trade with the unknown island inhabitants. The Fflor trading flotilla, that had been waiting a day behind their scout ship, responded with a coordinated attack on all the major settlements in the Isles. The captain who made the blunder was found and strung up by his own mates in front of the angered Northmen. An unspoken truce was formed thereafter; that the Fflor could trade freely among the Isles, and even to this day no pirate captain will touch a Dragonship on the open waters.

Traditionally the Isles have had little to do with the mainland other than as prey or a place to unload stolen goods. Land wars failed to touch the island region and there were few natural disasters that the Island could not weather mostly unharmed. In recent times little has occurred of note among the Isles. Due to the Sealords' maneuvering and the nature of the islands they remained largely unaffected by the land based Realm War. Unwilling to join either side they preyed on any weak vessels found in the waters and were cursed by both sides, just the way they like it.

“Government”

Anarchy and lawlessness were part and parcel until Rilanan the Red conquered the Isles in 759NE. Since that time it has become tradition that influential captains slowly gathered small fleets under their command. If a smaller individual pirate ships, called corsairs, failed to pull in enough profit to survive, chances were the unlucky captain could find one of these top sea dogs to hire them on. He would be given an area to patrol and a percentage would go to the top. In time these top Captains grew wealthy and became known as the Sealords. Rilanan himself was a Sealord having worked his way painstakingly up from sailor. However, the Sealords as a group were not particularly organized.

In a brilliant move Rilanan approached the other Sealords and offered a deal. He would orchestrate a coup of the current 'overlord' of the Isles and in return for the other Sealords' help would create a new regime. The Sealords would rule by consensus with Rilanan overseeing the small day to day tasks. The Sealords agreed and the coup occurred smoothly. Rilanan continued to rule until 763NE when he quietly began to kill off the Sealords, confiscating their properties. He had taken down three of them before the others caught on. They quickly joined together and concentrated their might on killing him. One of the assassination attempts razed his manor on his island and most of the people in it died in the fire. As to what happened to Rilanan, nothing is known.

The Sealords continued and expanded upon their influence over the Isles. They carefully dealt with one another and kept the power delicately balanced between the entire group of them. Any Sealord who rose too high in power or ambition was quickly dealt with. Over time, the Sealords became secluded figureheads until the present day, where their hands can be felt anywhere in the isles, yet they remain largely unseen.

All Sealords keep at least one pirate ship in their employ, many have dozens, while also working the traditional areas of shipping but many have branched out into money laundering and general fencing, acquiring items, and gambling arenas (of which many can be found in backrooms throughout the islands), and each has some specialties in these areas.

It is rare to meet a Sealord in person (at least knowingly when you aren't in their good graces), but it is very clear who is within their employ. Each member of a Sealord's cadre is required to wear the Sealords' symbols as a tattoo on their arm or leg. Die hard members of a Sealords' retinue will have their master's symbols tattooed upon more permanent parts of their bodies as a sign of unending loyalty. As a result, Isle locals are very hesitant to trust anyone missing an arm or a leg that does not have a Sealords' symbol on another part of their body as it is a sign of being cast out from one of the Sealord's graces.

Here is a current list of the Sealords', their tattoo symbols, and areas of known involvement:

- Simone Aldonza** - Ship at full sail – controls many ships and hiring crew and many supplies
- Carmo Benoni** – Anchor – owns much of the properties on the island that includes Hermit's Port
- Edmund Declan** - Skull and crossbones - transport of goods across the various islands, ownership of much property on the smaller islands
- Gideon Hershel** - Partly open treasure chest – has an “interest” in many of the island's merchant businesses and markets
- Ephraim Hughes** – Helmwheel – known to control the dock area of Hermit's Port
- Macario Sarin** – Compass – specializes in rare and unusual items, main control of a few smaller islands
- Raelyn Sorley** - Heart pierced by a dagger – controls many inns and taverns, control of much of the food and drink on the islands
- Barnabus Thatcher** - Crossed scimitars – weapons and weapon training, controls a number of ships, supply, and potential crew

It is believed that there may be at least a few more Sealords who keep themselves and their work so tightly under wraps that only other Sealords and their own lackeys know of them.

Spats between Sealords do break out from time to time. Don't be in the way when it happens.

Geography

The Pirate Isles are a collection of islands that span from the tip of Dun Melea down the coast of the Taerus nation as far South as Burocum. Ships from the Isles themselves can be encountered by unlucky seamen in all of the waters of the known world but tend to ply the majority of their trade near the coasts of the Dun Kingdoms, Taerus and the Itan Nation. Some ships flying Pirate Isles colors have been spotted as far away as Khif Jhar and Caer Baratha. They leave Fflor territory and ships alone though whether that is by compact or out of respect for the carnage the Fflor can cause is unknown. In fact the ships of the Fflor are the only ships that can safely travel in and among the Isles that do not fly the pirate flag.

Very few accurate maps exist of this strange land, mostly because cartography is forbidden upon pains of death. What few maps that have been smuggled out of this land tell of dozens of small villages and communities and even some larger towns and cities. Navigation in and among the isles is handled by a guild of navigators who are sworn to secrecy and who memorize all of the waters many features and dangers. Some believe that there are even islands that have been made difficult or impossible to find without proper maps or charts. Whatever the reason for this rumor it lends credence to the prohibition against cartography.

The Isles themselves range from inhospitable rocky spits of land jutting out of the ocean to fertile harbors and small tropical islands teeming with forests and strange animals. Some livestock is kept and some food is grown- usually just enough to support the small settlements that thrive amongst the islands. The only major industry of the Isles is shipbuilding but it is beyond any doubt that the finest ships to sail the world's oceans have hailed from Isles shipyards. What the inhabitants lack in supplies and commodities are supplemented by the robust pirate trade and also with the hefty commerce that takes place between the Isles and Fflor.

The only official town in the Pirate Isles is the natural harborage of Hermit's Port. Considered to be one of if not the best harbor in Jhoril, Hermit's Port boasts a booming trade market. People from all walks of life can be found there and any good can be had for a price. Bars line the streets leading from the docks and every night a new bar and a new fight can be found. During the day the streets of Hermit's Port are a riot of color, noise, and scents as ships dock, trades (of all sorts) are concluded, and a myriad of small market areas do a lively business. At night, trade of a different kind occurs, and any pleasure or vice can be found inside and out among the various bars and brothels.

Unwary visitors can be in for an unpleasant surprise, as the streets of Hermit's Port are considered the most dangerous places to be at night outside of the Wastelands. Few laws are enforced, and those that do can often be averted by a timely bribe to a Sealord's lackey or local harbor master. Get on the wrong side of one of the Sealords knowingly, or unknowingly, and life is guaranteed to quickly become short and unpleasant.

Culture

It is hard for some scholars to believe but the Isles do in fact have a very well developed culture. In particular its people are known for their fierce independence and personal strength. Yet despite that independence loyalty is not unknown among pirates. Regardless of the public perception in more civilized nations, pirates tend to be fiercely loyal to their crewmates and ship. It takes a lot of faith in fellow crew not to back down when facing a well armed merchant ship or to ride out an oncoming storm. It takes a lot

more work to actually hunt down merchant ships, take their goods and then successfully make off with them. Pirates have an iron discipline when at sea, a fact virtually unknown to the outside world.

Port however is a place to celebrate your victories and enjoy the thrill of having survived the voyage. It is in such places that pirates earn their image of lawless carousers and troublemakers. A crew just come off of a long sail is eager to spend its hard earned loot on booze food and the other luxuries that they have missed while out to sea. They are eager to unwind after being confined to a ship for weeks or even months at a time. This is a major contributor to the numerous bar brawls and fights found at nighttime in the Isles. Brawling is another way of celebrating being alive and having survived another run out on the cruel ocean.

The celebration of life and enjoying all that it has to offer while possible is a factor that underlies much of the flavor of the Isles and its people. Their often irreverent and cheeky attitudes which annoy so many of the civilized races stems from this belief as does their nonchalant way of facing danger. Where others may become grim and despondent, pirates merely grin and crack jokes in the face of death. Far from suicidal, this temperament is well balanced by their common sense and a desire to live and fight another day if the odds go against them.

Once a year upon the 10th day of Harvest, those who consider themselves inhabitants of the Isle celebrate a holiday known as Marletto's Day of Tests, or Marletto's Day for short. Oddly, no one has any idea who Marletto was or what he did, what his tests were, or why he has a day named after him; which they believe to be just one sign of his great success as a pirate.

Marletto's Day is one of celebration and competition, beginning in serious earnest in the morning, and turning into drunken revelry by night. In the morning, the island children participate in a hunt for small golden anchor figurines hidden on the island. Cheating among the children not discouraged, though violence, if caught, is frowned upon. For the adults, sword fighting, rigging contests, inventive swearing, telling of tall tales (bragging), and "treasure hunts" are among the competitions each year run in every port, inns and overseen by the Sealords in part as a way to identify up and comers among the Isles population.

Cheating is encouraged in many contests; in fact some of the tests are based largely on ones ability to cheat without being caught. Scars that come with a good story are coveted, and limbs and even lives have been lost in the name of the competitions. As the day continues and the drunkenness increases, competitions move to things like fist fighting, singing and gambling. By night... well, you can imagine.

Superstition

Pirates take very seriously the telling and recording of folklore and the art of cursing. Of all the people of Jhoril, pirates are some of the most fervently superstitious. Many pirates have "lucky" charms or habits that they cling to in order to keep bad luck away, especially when they are about to head out to sea. Some habits include refusing to look back at land until it is fully out of sight, never stepping on the third board when leaving the ship, always having a certain small charm when setting sail, always giving a drop of ale to the sea upon arriving safely at shore, always tossing one mark or item to the sea when taking in a successful haul, and warding against the evil eye when crossing paths with a black cat. The variety and reasons are endless and while some pirates do not believe in such things, the majority of them have at least one superstition they tend to follow regularly. And they merely nod and tap their nose wisely when one of the few unfortunates who were not smart enough to believe happens upon bad fortune.

Legends

The Red Queen

Ye want to hear of the Red Queen do ye laddie? Aye she's a saucy wench. Some say she's a sea siren exiled from the water. Other's that she is the wife of Rilanan the Red himself come to get vengeance on those who betrayed him. Rumor has it that her hair is as red as flame, and her sails the same hue. She prays on all, merchant and pirate and woe to ye who looks upon her for none e'er return from the watery grave when the Red Queen finds ye. She only strikes with the setting sun so beware the red sun in evenin' matey- for it foretells that the Red Queen is about to strike...

Isola di Anime Dannata

The Island of Lost Spirits ye say? Now why would ye want to know about that matey? Ha! Did ye hear that boys? He heard of the treasure there he says. Ha! I see they didn't tell ye about the spirits of those who put that treasure there did ye lad? Ye see the crew what buried that treasure betrayed their captain and got struck with a terrible curse. What is the curse? Well matey you'll find out when you get there providin' ye survive yer meeting with the inhabitants of the Island...

The Sunken Island

Ye say islands can't sink? Well, then don't come wit' me to search for it. I'll be the one who scours the shallow lands between the islands, looking for the bones and buildings and lost gold and treasures that sunk beneath the waves. They say a great watery spirit was angered by a passing pirate ship, followed it home, then created a fiercer storm that even ye can imagine that surrounded the island where the ship landed. No one could even see the island for days through the clouds and rain. When it ended, the island was just...gone. Maybe all that was on it is still sitting there, preserved, waiting to be plucked.

The Treasure of Bald Captain Billy

Bald Billy was one of the most successful pirates ever, they say. He had more gold and gems than any crew could possibly spend in 20 lifetimes. However, in a plan to rob a wealthy Itan noble, he fell in love with the noble's daughter. He still robbed him blind, mind you, but also robbed him of his daughter, Mai. Mai's father was a powerful necromancer in his spare time, it turned out, and he created an army of sea liches to hunt down Bald Billy. Billy's ship fled from place to place, but could never defeat the sea liches or avoid them for long. Seeing his end coming, he hid his treasures, left the then pregnant Mai at Hermit's Port so she would not die with him, and gave her a set of secret coded passages that act as clues to locate the treasure. He was never seen again. They say Mai died in childbirth but the child lived. Are those coded passages still around on the Isles? Did their child live and pass on the codes? Can the treasure be found even without the codes? Are the ghosts of Billy and his crew or the sea liches now guarding it? No one knows for sure, not a generation goes by that many do not spend years and small fortunes searching.

Parley

So as I was sayin' before I was so rudely interrupted, the landlubbers tried to par-lay. Aye can ye believe it? They said that we pirates was supposed to abide by the laws of the par-lay and that they wanted tae bargain for their lives. Well we just nodded and grinned and when we had them all aboard we slit their throats and tossed them out tae sea laughin' all the while. Can ye believe that ol' gag is still going round? There's always a few every year...

The Pirate Isles for non-humans

All the races are represented on the Isles equally. It does not matter skin color or whether you have spots, stripes or pointed ears. The Isles is the one place where what you do is more important then who or what you are. Well unless you are wanted for a bounty for a high enough reward...