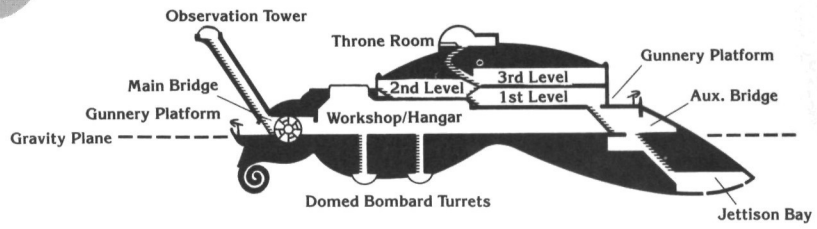


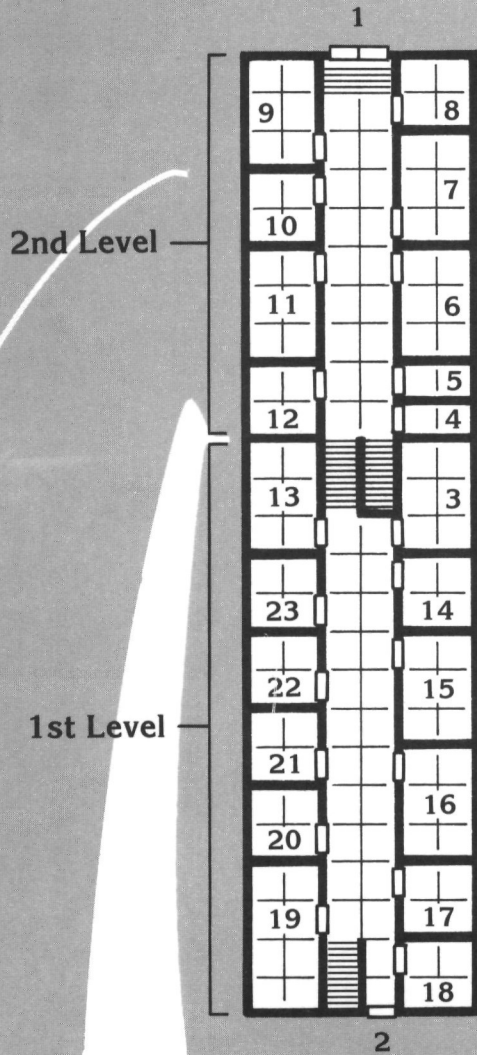
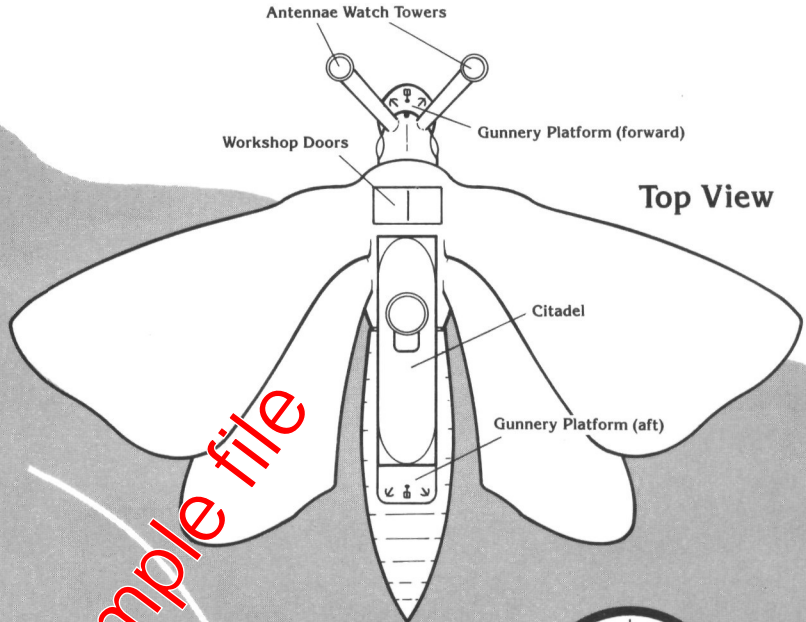
MONARCH ARMADA

One Square = 5 Feet

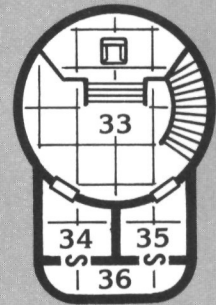
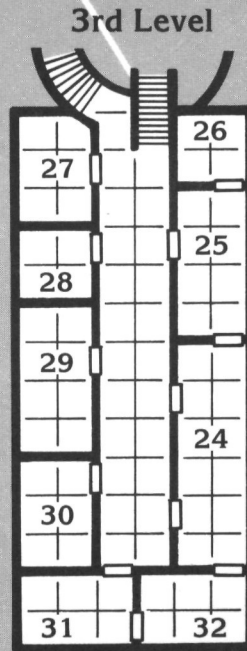
Side View



Top View

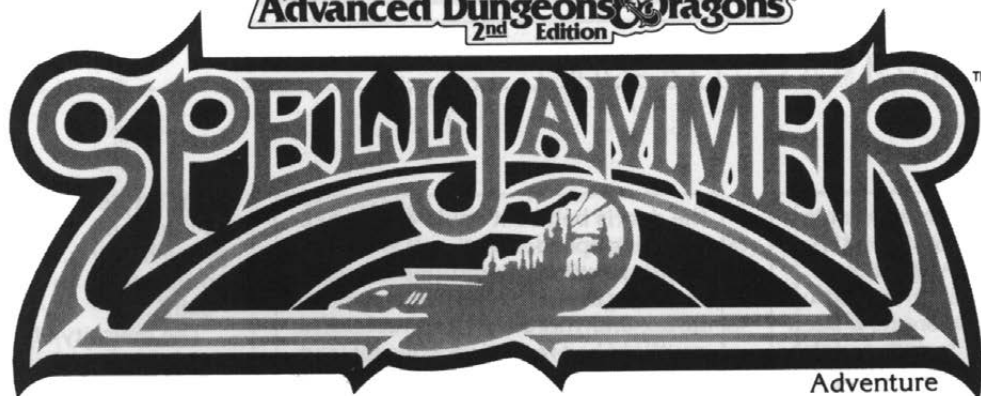


Sample file



Throne Room

Monarch Citadel



Adventure

Skull & Crossbows

by Nigel D. Findley

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INTRODUCTION

Eight bells. The chime sounded clearly in the cabin of Derek Angrislic. *Captain* Derek Angrislic.

The owner of the cabin looked up from the small desk where he'd been filling out the ship's log. A roguish grin spread across his handsome face and reached his twinkling eyes. Eight bells. His ship, *Silent Witness*, should be almost up with the fleeing illithid nautiloid by now.

Derek's smile now grew more predatory than roguish. His eyes still flashed, but no longer with humor. He shouldn't even be involved in this pursuit. The matter should have ended almost as soon as it began. That illusion that gave the illithids time to—almost—escape . . . he should have recognized it for what it was. That's what a captain was supposed to do: make correct decisions, all the time, every time.

At least the initial combat had gone well, and his crew had deported themselves well. As the nautiloid slowed to make its way through the inner debris ring of this oh-so-strange system, the *Silent Witness*—an elven Man-o'-war that Derek had, er, acquired through some rather intricate triple-dealing—slipped out from behind one of the larger planet-fragments, and the fight was on. Derek was operating under letters of marque from his government, so his crew was liberally sprinkled with battle-hardened, government Marines (the joys of working with the authorities for once). The first rounds from his medium catapults had torn holes in the enemy's rigging, and jettison fire had cut down the nautiloid's heavy weapons crews. As the ships drew nearer, Derek's mage, another government appointee, had sent necromantic death across the ether to seek out the illithids' helmsmen.

Just when victory was within reach, the other nautiloids had swung out from behind the planet-fragments: a picture-perfect reverse ambush! Under Derek's command, the *Silent Witness* maneuvered, fired, and moved to engage the new, undamaged attackers. By the time anyone realized that the new attackers were merely illusions, albeit illusions of a somewhat frightening scope, the true nautiloid was underway and attempting to clear

the debris belt so it could go to spelljamming speed.

The nautiloid would not escape—not if Derek could help it. His ship was faster and more maneuverable. The nautiloid had racked up a decent lead, and a stern chase was always slow, but the outcome was simply a matter of time.

Captain Derek Angrislic closed the log and laid his hand against the iridescent ceramic bulkhead. The *Silent Witness* felt charged with power and promise. Its anticipation seemed to match his own . . .

DM INFORMATION

Welcome back to the SPELLJAMMER™ universe! *Skull & Crossbows* is the second adventure in the SPELLJAMMER game system. It provides adventures and encounters for the SPELLJAMMER universe, highlighting pirates and corsairs, ghost ships, new monsters, and old monsters in a new light.

In general, these adventures are intended for an average party of four to six characters, levels 6-10. They are standalone adventures, not tied to any particular campaign universe (Krynn, the Forgotten Realms, or the World of Greyhawk). This ensures that all DMs can find this material equally useful and don't have to do any extra work to align it to the politics of their campaign world.

Skull & Crossbows can be used as a continuation of the campaign started in *Wildspace* (SJA1), with the PCs possibly in command of the good ship *Skyrunner*. It can also be played independently from *Wildspace*, but these adventures take place in the Flow, wildspace, and on worlds in as-yet undiscovered spheres, so the PCs must already own or be on board a spelljamming vessel. Pages 7-9 of *Lorebook of the Void* contain many alternate ways for PCs to enter the SPELLJAMMER campaign. For example, the tradition of the press gang has migrated into space, and a ship that has lost crew in a battle will probably be willing to "hire" veteran adventurers regardless of any seafaring experience.

Adventure Format

The first adventure in the book, "Letters of Marque," is an introduction to

some interesting NPCs, and a way for the DM to lead the PCs into a career of pirate-hunting. This adventure comes to completion in the final adventure, "Cain."

The majority of *Skull & Crossbows* is a "grab-bag" of adventures in which the PCs bring safety to the space lanes. Many relate directly to the PCs' pirate-hunting, but others are encounters that the DM can use at any time. This provides the DM with the a large amount of flexibility to choose which adventures to use and the order in which they appear. Each chapter contains multiple adventures related to a central topic (Pirates & Corsairs, for example, or Relics & Hulks), giving the DM a variety of encounter types to choose from.

Each adventure has a number of "set-ups:" possible entry points by which the PCs get involved in the action. Most set-ups assume that the PCs command their own vessel, and at least one setup will have plot ties to "Letters of Marque." Each adventure has suggested levels for the PCs involved and details on recommended ship types. After all, there's little sport in sending two PCs in a mosquito ship up against a neogi deathspider!

Terminology

Most adventures involve ship to ship encounters between spelljamming vessels. For ease in discussing these encounters, several standard terms should be defined:

Bearing

This refers to the position of another object with respect to the bow or axis of your vessel. It conveys no information about which way the other object is travelling.

Since space combat takes place in three dimensions, the bearing of an object has two components: angle to port or starboard (left or right) of your vessel's bow, and angle above or below your vessel's gravity plane. A complete bearing might be expressed as "Enemy vessel 30° to port and 15° high!" A lookout—usually in something of a hurry—might just call "Enemy vessel high on the port bow."

Figure 1 indicates an object at a bearing of 45° starboard and level with the ship's gravity plane.

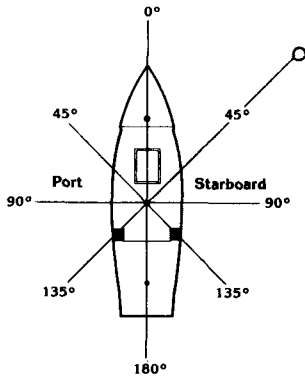


Figure 1:
Bearing

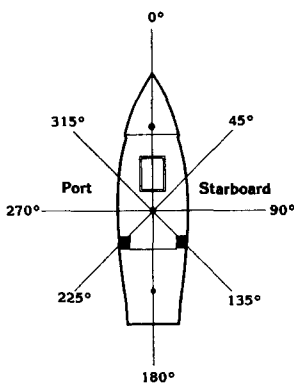


Figure 2:
Heading Scale

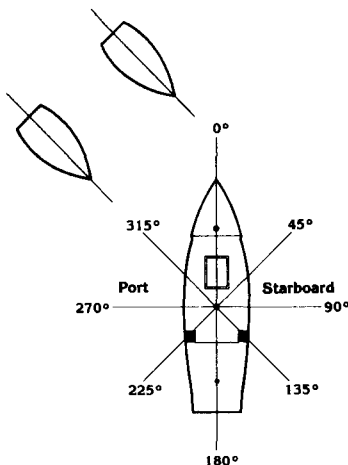


Figure 3:
Heading Example

Heading

This is the direction in which a vessel or an object is moving. The most precise way to express the heading of another vessel is in relation to the heading of your own vessel. The convention is to label the direction in which your vessel is travelling as 0°, and to count degrees in a clockwise direction.

Since space is three-dimensional, you again need two components to precisely describe the heading of a ship: one where 90° is directly to starboard (see Figure 2) and one where 90° is directly overhead. Determining and expressing heading is often complex, and, in the heat of battle, shorthand methods are used: "She's heading directly away from us, Captain," or "She's on a collision course!"

Figure 3 illustrates two enemy vessels which both have headings of 135°.

Letters of Marque

Setting: Rock of Bral
Party: 4-6 characters, levels 4-10
Ship: Any

Setups

- The PCs are spending some time on the Rock of Bral, perhaps recovering from the hardships of the *Wildspace* adventure or simply looking for a little R&R. They are currently enjoying the diversions of a rough tavern near the landing docks called "The Rockrat." (Perhaps the PCs' tastes already run in this direction, or perhaps they have other reasons for slumming.)

- The PCs are on the Rock of Bral. A messenger delivers an invitation to a business meeting, in which they will learn about a potentially lucrative business opportunity. The meeting is that evening in a tavern called "The Rockrat." Neither the message nor the messenger can give the PCs any hint as to who they'll be meeting or what the opportunity may be, but the messenger is prepared to give the party 1-6 platinum pieces as token of the correspondent's earnest.

The Rockrat. You've never been to this filthy, decaying bar before, but you know it well. You've seen it many times before. It's a portside tavern, plain and simple, and the fact that this

port fronts the depths of wildspace rather than the depths of an ocean makes little difference. It's a place for crews to lose some money, drink yourself blind, and maybe, just maybe, get into a nice, diverting brawl.

You hesitate in the doorway a moment, looking around for any old acquaintances among the patrons. Not a friendly soul to be found. As you enter, a mountain of flesh blocks your way. "Weapons," the obstacle growls. "Check'em or lose'em."

Grinder

The obstacle is the bouncer, an ogre named Grinder. The Rockrat has a policy: no weapons inside. Everything even remotely offensive must be checked at the door and stored in a small room under the guard of Grinder. It is more than the ogre's job is worth to let anyone get by armed . . . and he values his job.

Grinder (Ogre): AC 2; MV 9; F9; hp 80; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon (club (1-6), shortsword (1-6)) +6 Str bonus; Str 18(00), Dex 13, Con 18, Int 9, Wis 7, Cha 13; AL N; THAC0 12. Grinder is eight feet tall with gray skin, and the bulges of his muscles have bulges on them. He wears a nicely-tailored uniform that looks totally out of place at The Rockrat. The sleeves of the uniform conceal a pair of ogre-sized *bracers of defense* AC2. He is totally loyal to his employer, and will respond violently to any attempted bribes.

Grinder won't physically search the PCs; he knows that most of the tavern's usual patrons wouldn't put up with that affront. Obviously, he won't let anyone enter with weapons such as swords, but he is unlikely to catch every concealed throwing knife or boot dirk. If the PCs want to smuggle weapons inside, they probably can do it. The idea of this search is to eliminate such major weapons as two-handed swords and wheel lock pistols.

PCs armed with magic or otherwise valuable weapons are unlikely to agree to leaving them in the care of Grinder. That's not the ogre's problem. If they don't want to live by the tavern's rules, which are for their own protection, he will point out that they are free to drink elsewhere.

Note: The intention here is not to get the PCs into a confrontation with

INTRODUCTION

Grinder, but to prevent the PCs from chopping down any of the NPCs they'll meet hereafter. Grinder's charisma is high for an ogre, and this makes it possible for him to help the PCs see reason. If the PCs protest, read them the following:

As you begin to protest the removal of your weapons, a robed figure quietly moves between you and Grinder. "Evening, Grinder," the mage says in a cracking voice. "Take care of Storm-fire for me, will you?"

"Be glad to. Your table's waiting," Grinder says to the mage, taking his staff and letting him pass. "Now, what's your problem with our policy?"

Grinder takes his job very seriously. Just as he won't let anyone in without checking their weapons, he won't let any "friends" make off with weapons that don't belong to them. As an employee of the establishment, he's entitled to be armed: he carries a club and has a short sword sheathed on his belt.

Once the PCs have passed Grinder, read the following:

The Rockrat's ceilings are low, and probably were white once; the kindori-oil lamps and the interesting selection of pipe blends burning around the room have certainly changed that. The floor is covered with a light coating of sawdust to sop up spilled drinks and other fluids. The tables are heavy, the rough wood extensively embellished with initials, names and generally tasteless graffiti.

The patrons match their environment: seedy, rather the worse for wear, and almost humming with an undercurrent of violence, barely repressed. Of the twenty or so pairs of eyes you can see, only two or three aren't dulled with alcohol.

Most customers are run-of-the-mill deck hands, many of them drinking away the bounty money they received for signing on with a new ship. In twelve hours, most will be a-sail and sweating green, with pounding heads. Only the occupants of two tables are different. One table, near the door, is taken by two middle-aged men, dressed in simple, dark, knee-length blue tunics. There are marks on the waists of their tunics where sword belts used to be buckled.

The other table, in a back corner, is much less austere. There are five figures around it, four of whom are approaching the final stages of intoxication. The four are a tough-looking lot: all humans, but big enough to rival Grinder pound for pound. Their outfits are as mismatched as anyone's around the tavern, save the black leather vest that each wears. The fifth occupant of the table is of a different cut entirely. Stone cold sober, he seems, and his eyes are as hard and cold as an arctic icecap. He wears tight fitting black leathers, the only flash of color being a red bandanna at his throat. As you enter, the occupants of the table look you over, most with varying degrees of drunken hostility, but one with cold appraisal.

You make your way to a table toward the center of the bar. A barwench who looks tough enough to offer Grinder a few problems clears her throat noisily. "Well, what'll it be to-night?"

Gort

As soon as the PCs have entered the bar, and before they can get involved in anything elsewhere, one of the occupants of the far table struggles to his feet and staggers over toward the PCs.

Pig-like eyes—so bloodshot as to resemble red-veined marble—regard you unsteadily. "Well," the figure grunts, alcohol heavy on his breath, "I guess your mothers let you stay out late tonight."

This man is named Gort, and he is drunk enough to want to goad any PC into a fight with him. He will continue his verbal abuse until someone in the PCs' party takes a poke at him. If he can't do that, he'll pick the largest and toughest-looking PC and take a swing at him.

Gort: AC 10; MV 12; F7; hp 41; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon (knife) +1 Str bonus; Str 17, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 6, Cha 7; AL NE; THACO 14.

Gort is a big, ugly, bald-headed brute, covered with enough scars to hint at a less than temperate past.

However the fight starts, neither combatant should be armed (at first), so the only option is non-lethal combat; use the

"Punching and Wrestling" table on page 59 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for this encounter. Once Gort suffers some minor damage at the hands of the PC, read the following:

The big man roars and pulls away from you. Suddenly, something is in his hand, catching the light: a sharp, wicked-looking blade. He roars again and lunges.

Gort has drawn a knife which was concealed in his boot. The crowd reacts to this breach of rules in the usual manner: they draw back to a safe distance and start placing bets. Before the other PCs can interfere, and before either combatant can kill the other, read the following:

"Gort!" The word sounds like the crack of a whip. The black-clad man at the far table is on his feet, and his flinty eyes are hard and cold. "Gort!" he snaps again.

The big man with the knife hesitates, and is promptly disarmed by Grinder. The drunken men slowly shamle out, coaxed along by Grinder's short sword. The man in black, their captain, you presume, appraises you coldly, and also leaves.

"Animals." The voice comes from behind you. You turn to see the two austere, dark-clad gentlemen standing behind you. "Do you know who they are? Who he is?"

"Cain," his younger partner repeats, and spits on the already much spit-upon floor. "Pirate."

"May I?" the older man asks as he slips into a seat at your table. "I have a proposition that might be of interest to individuals courageous enough to take it up. And I think I might have found some . . ."

The "Pots"

The two men are members of the Pragmatic Order of Thought (called the "Pots" by its detractors). The older is Jasson, the younger his protege Wallis. If the PCs show even the slightest interest in hearing Jasson's proposition, read the following:

"If you know anything about the Pragmatic Order of Thought," the older man says, "you will know that

one of our central precepts is that travel and trade should be unrestricted. Only through this freedom will we see the universe develop in the unfettered, unbounded way in which we think it must. Unfortunately, this freedom which we see as so essential is being infringed."

The younger man interrupts abruptly, "By them," he snarls, gesturing over his shoulder with a thumb toward where Cain and his crew were sitting. "The pirates."

"My protege is correct," Jasson agrees calmly. "We believe that the pirates who hunt wildspace are the greatest single obstacle to free and efficient trade between the shells. We believe it is our responsibility and our privilege to do our small part to solve this problem. Thus we come to our proposition."

Jasson places a leather dispatch case on the table before you. "In here I have letters of marque," he tells you, "officially notarized by my superior in the Order and by Prince Andru of Bral himself. Do you know what letters of marque are?"

Again the younger man jumps in. "They are official permission to make war on all pirates," he tells you. "Your right to engage them and to deal with them as you will is unchallenged."

"Also," Jasson adds, "these letters also entitle you to quite a substantial bounty whenever you bring in one of these wolves of wildspace . . . either dead or alive. You may also, of course, keep whatever you can take from these reavers. I would ask you to accept these letters . . ."

Jasson holds up a hand to still your response. "But before you do, there is more to our offer. If you currently command a ship, the Order will pay for a complete refit and repair at the Rock's construction docks. If you currently are, shall we say, between ships, I am authorized to tell you that the Order will supply a ship. Will you, now, accept our proposition?"

Jasson: AC 5; MV 9; F9; hp 46; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon; AL NG; THAC0 12.

Wallis: AC 5; MV 9; F6; hp 40; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL CG; THAC0 15.

Both "Pots" wear chain mail under their tunics. Although unarmed while in-

side the bar, they normally carry long swords.

Jasson and Wallis will answer any questions the PCs care to ask them. They are truly members of the Pots, and can supply complete verification that the letters are authentic. They also supply the PCs with a list of notorious pirates and the bounties on each one, but they can give the PCs no information about where these pirates can be found. The pirates on the Pots' hit list are:

Pirate	Ship	Bounty
Tal	<i>Barracuda</i>	8,000
Gilgalad	(Hammership)	gp
Erik ?	<i>Raven</i>	5,000
	(Groundling ship)	gp
?	<i>Frostfire</i>	7,000
	(Squidship)	gp
Manara	<i>Nex</i>	10,000
	(Galleon)	gp
Cain	<i>Rampage</i>	10,000
	(Hammership)	gp

True to their word, Jasson and Wallis will arrange to pay for repair and refits to the PCs' vessel (if they have one). They will pay for repairs and maintenance, plus resupply. They won't pay for a complete re-arm or for serious modifications such as a new major helm, plating, etc. If the PCs have no vessel, the Order will turn over to them a simple, unmodified Tradesman armed with a light catapult and a light ballista. In neither case will the Order pay for the hiring of additional crew; that is entirely up to the PCs (Note that a Tradesman requires a minimum crew of 10 to run properly, so PCs may need to hire a crew).

Bon Voyage

When the refit is complete, or when the PCs are about to take possession of their new ship, Jasson meets them for the last time. He has in his possession the letters of marque. Read the following:

Jasson looks considerably more imposing than he did when you first saw him in the port-side bar. He wears a mail coif over his silver hair and a jewelled long sword at his side. He hands you four sheets of parchment, each covered with fine calligraphy and bearing two elaborate seals: one of the Order and one of Prince Andru himself.

"These are your letters," he tells you. "Four copies, in case you wish to commission other ships to assist you. It is important to stress one thing. These letters entitle you to war on vessels in wildspace or in the Flow. They do not authorize attacks or assassination attempts against anyone when they are not on a vessel underway. Thus, you could not have killed the pirate Cain in the tavern and expected to be covered under letters of marque.

"Er . . ." Jasson clears his throat, and for the first time you see the man hesitate. "There is one small addition to the letters," he says almost apologetically. "Just a trifle, but Prince Andru insisted upon it. These letters also give you full authority and, in fact, urge you to make war on any vessels that you know to belong to the mercenary company the *Tenth Pit*. But," he goes on, suddenly firm again, "be that as it may, may what gods there are look kindly upon your brave mission. Fare you well."

Concluding the Adventure

In fact, the conclusion of this adventure is the beginning of others. The deal with the Order will remain in force until one side or the other cancels it for good cause. If the PCs wish to claim bounty on a pirate, they must literally bring the person (or persons) in, either dead or alive.

For more information on the Pragmatic Order of Thought and the Tenth Pit mercenary company, consult the *Lorebook of the Void*, pages 51 and 52.