

# The Pirates of



# LENG

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## THE PIRATES OF LENG: Swashbuckling in the Elder World

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### System Constraints

- **Must use non-traditional randomizers (no dice or poker/playing cards)**
- **Resolution system must involve a bidding mechanic with a risk of loss.**
- **Reverse dice pool resolution, where all dice in a pool have to succeed. Penalties add dice, bonuses remove dice.**
- **Genre Blender: Pirates plus Mythos, with a dash of Brave New World.**

### Image Hunt

The Map of Ia'Mogg'Cth, the Elder World, was my own cheap mangling of two public image pirate maps, both located here: <http://karenswhimsy.com/public-domain-images/pirate-treasure-map/images/pirate-treasure-map-4.jpg>

The Wheel of Fortune, The Tower, and the Fool card were all obtained, again, from Karenswhimsy.com: <http://karenswhimsy.com/tarot-cards.shtm>

The Jolly Nyarlothotep was also modified by me, again clumsily via Paint. Wikipedia's "Flag of Rack Rackam" was the source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pirate\\_Flag\\_of\\_Rack\\_Rackham.svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pirate_Flag_of_Rack_Rackham.svg)

The Elder Sign was grabbed from public domain: <http://www.clker.com/clipart-2772.html>

"The Wizard", by Edward Burne-Jones, 1891: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/eso/khw/img/wizard.jpg>

"The Burning of the Gaspee", artist unknown: <http://www.gaspee.org/GaspeeGraphics1.html>

I asked for some images from other artists, who did not get back to me in time for me to place them (and considering one of them will soon be selling his art, it's not surprising). However, while I didn't have the rights to use said art, I did want to give a shout out to some great art anyway that does fit the mythos side of what Pirates of Leng is about.

First, Tobias B White (King-Rastel on Deviantart) has done a spectacular job on his exploring of "The Dream Quest Project". I especially liked his Ghouls and his Gugg—finally, it looks scary! <http://king-rastel.deviantart.com/art/First-Coloring-Ghouls-116716077>

Secondly, [Raphael Garcin](#) did a really nice Deep one sketch that strongly influenced how I saw them for this game. It's sleek and mean looking, which is a very nice thing to see from time to time.



A Map of the Elder World, 1666 A.D.

In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue, looking for a quick route to the Indies. Poor guy must have been a bit fuddled when he landed on Bahamut instead and discovered the **Elder World**, what with all the Tchos and ghuls, and not one of them looking anything like a proper human, let alone Indian...

It's the year of our Lord, **1666**. After spending all their coffers on a crusade to wipe out the "abominations", the kings of Europe decided they could play along nicely with them after loosing—and promptly got themselves into a war with each other. Every day countless ships from all over Europe and Asia make their way across the Atlantic to the dark jungles of **Leng**, the dark cyclopean towers of **Y'ha-nthlei**, the islands of Bahamut and the Cthonic ocean. They come with men, and leave with gold, spices, mother weed, and all manner of treasure and terrible nightmare.

...all that gold, all that treasure, on one ship, alone in the haunted waters...it's like they're **ASKING** a man to come and take it!

To every man, woman, child, and abomination in the Bahamut seas, be they priest or sorcerer, governor or slave, noble or commoner or sacrifice, there is one word that draws terror from their hearts and makes their blood (red, blue, or otherwise) run cold...

## ***PIRATES!***

**Ia! Ia! A Pirate's Life for Me!**

The Pirates of Leng is a role-playing game set in an alternate world where, instead of the Americas, an Elder world of creatures based off of H.P. Lovecraft's works exists. Players will be taking the part of a pirate crew, sharing in action, adventure, bounty and backstabbing as they try to strike it rich on the high seas.

### **This is not your standard 1D6 investigators a turn**

A brief note—Lovecraft, being so popular, has had multiple interpretations, and hence it deserves a note as to what this game takes from the seminal horror writer's works. While there will be tentacles, bizarre sub-humanoids, and Precambrian gods, these terrible nightmares (at least the ones you'll deal with) are still at a fairly human level of power. We are dealing with Deep Ones and Tcho-Tcho, the creatures that worship the Big C and his Elder god ilk. This is a game based on adventure and exploration, not the nightmarish feeling of powerlessness. Your musket and saber should be effective against 90% of the creatures you run across.

The game is a focus on exploration, daring swashbuckling, and rapid high-stakes adventure. This is summer blockbuster fare, not bleak torture-porn horror. This is not the hopelessness of facing the alien—it's staring into the abyss and grinning, realizing that you're going to knick the abyss's pockets and make fun of its fat mother while doing so and spending all that you steal on ale, whores, and a big hat with a feather in it.

Yo ho ho.

### **WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY**

To play, you'll need the following. First, a Tarot deck, split into High Arcana (the Fate deck), and the four suits (the Action deck). You'll also need a number of markers—gold coins if you have them, otherwise poker chips or even those gold-wrapped candy coins would work. You'll need ten of these for each player plus the GM, and more can always come in handy.

Don't forget snacks, drinks (dare I say rum?), and adventurous music for background music. Parrots, Pirate Hats, and hooks aren't required, but if you've got them, flaunt them.

## CHARACTER CREATION

The first thing you'll have to do is make your pirate. Make a copy of the Character Sheet for each player.

### ATTRIBUTES

There are four attributes, each named after one of the suits in the tarot deck—Swords, Staffs, Coins (Pentacles), and Cups. Each starts at 0, which represents a normal everyday person. You will get four points to divide between the attributes, but you can only increase an attribute to 3. If you need more points, you may decide to make one attribute a -1, giving you an extra point to spend.

Experienced role players may need to throw some assumptions out the window for the attributes. These are based on tarot cards and symbolism, not one broad physical trait. Be sure to read below and make sure you understand, or at least write things down in pencil.

Below each Attribute are the Skills. Skills represent specific piratical masteries. Having a skill means you're very competent in the field, and would be deemed professional. For every point in an attribute, you may put a check next to one of the relevant skills.

**WORDS** is the attribute of air, thought, and speed. It is used any time you need to think fast, swash a buckle, or swing from one lanyard to another in the middle of a hurricane. Thieves, fencers, and acrobats would all want a good Swords attribute.

**Melee.** Melee is the skill of using sabers, knives, wooden clubs, and broken bottles.

**Sailing.** The skill of piloting a boat, be it a dingy or a ship of the line.

**Wit.** If you need to think fast, make something up faster, or just bluster until the explosives go off, than Wit is the skill for you.

#### What the Number Means.

Attributes are ranked +1 to 5.

This is what they (roughly) mean.

+1: Invalid

0: Average

1: Good

2: Solidly impressive

3: The best anyone's seen!

4: Superhuman

5: This shy of godhood

Legs: The art and skill of moving around a moving ship in the middle of a storm, climbing ropes and ladders a hundred feet above the deck, and in short just being an agile little pirate. This is also handy for running, jumping, and swinging across a gorge on a rope.

**STAFFS** are the attribute of energy, strength, and physical power. It is the fire attribute, and is the most energetic of the attributes. Pit fighters, captains, and giant men who win drinking contests would all have a strong Staff attribute.

Labor: The overall act of working and getting a good day's work in. This includes lifting, towing, and basically flexing your muscles.

Command: Making people do what you want by yelling at them until they're cowed in terror at you impressive screaming abilities. Very important for captains.

Firearms: The skill of using any gunpowder weapons, from pistols to rifles to black powder bombs and cannons. If you want to shoot something and not have your gun blow up in your face, this is the skill for you.

Courage: Being able to stare an elder god, a fleet of warships, or even the girl you fancy in the eyes and NOT run screaming is covered by this skill.

**CUPS** are the attribute of emotions, charisma, and subconscious health. The water attribute is tied to healing, understanding, and the subconscious or "hidden" lore. It is not the most vital attribute for many pirates, but a good Cup attribute is always welcome when things stop making sense or there are needs for less physical prowess.

Carouse: Being social, drinking, making polite chit chat, drinking, understanding how to dance a proper waltz, and drinking are all covered by

Carouse. This is the art of being social and understanding the laws of higher etiquette.

Sawbones: The skill of trying to get a knife or bullet out of your friend with a dull knife and NOT cause more damage. Most folks don't have this, but those that do are well respected and feared by their fellow sailors.



Superstitions: Knowledge of things that aren't book learning, and are a threat to your soul are all superstitions—especially if they're real. This includes occult lore, knowledge of the Elder gods, as well as things to not do on a ship.

Perform: Carouse is being polite, Command is making people do things, and Wits is making up things that aren't true...which leaves Perform, which is doing anything in front of a large and angry crowd of people ready to throw things at you, and instead they end up giving you money and favors.

**COIN** is the attribute of solid gold and steady earth. The Earth element is about being solid and secure—which is a rarity in the Elder World to be certain. It is understanding what's really going on, what to do about it, and how much money's to be made while doing so. Again, this attribute is normally not the main one used by a pirate, but its skills and knowledge can come in most valuable many times.

Politics: While not always vital for a pirate, being able to understand who's on a throne, who's married to who, and why Germany is attacking Austria for something that Britain did when Poland made fun of France can be a vital skill at times.

Book learning: The catch-all skill for arithmetic, natural philosophies, and history. Few pirates have had a classical education, but the school of hard knocks still lets you get a diploma now and then.

Assess: The art of determining something's value, be it a statue of some tentacle-laden god, a sailing vessel, or the big chest of gold (okay, that one's pretty obvious).

Survival: The knowledge of how to survive when outside of town or boat, including what not to eat, how to not get rained on, and what predators you should run away from and which you should stand still for.

Congratulations! You're almost done. Next, pick three **Items** below—being a pirate means you really don't have a lot of personal accoutrement, just a few knick knacks.

Below are just a few examples—feel free to knock yourself out and come up with something unique!

- **Melee Weapon.** swords, sailing hooks, a rapier & main gauche, or giant sledgehammers—there's no variable damage codes, so go for whatever is most stylish and fitting to your character.
- **Firearms.** Having firearms means that your character will always have a constant access to guns, more so than others. You may draw two cards in the shot and pistol phase, and choose which one you'd like.
- **A pet.** small exotic animals are part and parcel with being a pirate. A parrot, a monkey, or even a vicious little Lengian spider could be yours. We can't guarantee that they'll be the most helpful tool you have, but at least you'll never be lonely.
- **Gold.** the rarest of equipment for a pirate, you actually have lucre to spend.
- **A treasure map.** does it hold the secret location of a pirate stash? The city of gold? Certain death? The only way to find out is to follow the map.
- **Fancy clothes.** Because no one will respect you unless you have a giant feather in your cap.
- **Elder Trinket.** a compass that points to the nearest Elder god, a mirror that shows your soul, a bag of dust that makes the invisible visible, a key that awakens your dreams...all these and more are part and parcel of living in the Elder World, and many have such small trinkets. They may be a danger to your soul, but they're a boon in certain circumstances.
- **Ancient tome of horrors.** While book learning may be low on your lists of things to do, having a book in a dead language is not only handy in some situations; it's also a way to help give the boat a bit of atmosphere...
- **Relic.** little statues made of alien greenish rock showing a terrible squid-headed dragon god can open a lot of doors for you in the Elder World—or open up an iron maiden just for you if the church inquisitor finds its...

Again, have fun and decide what items are things that you'll always have. These items are dramatically special, so you'll almost always have access to them.

Finally, choose a **Burden**. Burdens are things that your character has to deal with, in one way or another.

- **One Eye.** Yay, an eye patch! Now you really look piratical! The difficulty of any action that would involve depth perception—normally firearms—increases by +1.
- **Peg Leg.** Working the ropes can cost you an arm or a leg...literally. Getting a peg leg means at least you can move around by yourself, but not that fast. The difficulty increases by +1 for running or jumping.
- **Elder-Touched.** You drew the attention of the Elder gods, and you've been marked with alien features—strange eyes, a tentacle hand, scaled skin...you know, fun things like that. This can increase social difficulties by +1, or at least really cause some serious issues with puritans, inquisitors, and bigoted governors of all stripes.
- **Insane.** Many people can't deal with the horrible miracles of the Elder World, and go crazy because of it. Others were just born nuts. Being insane means...well, you're crazy. Role play it, and don't be surprised if you get a difficulty modifier now and again.
- **Known Criminal.** A popular one, this. You're known and marked as being a pirated—branded with a "P", this means that if you're caught by the authorities, you can kiss a fair trial goodbye...like you were going to get a fair trial.
- **Dead.** The Elder world can cause all manner of issues—like dying and coming back to life. You look a bit paleish and undead, you don't have a heart beat, and you scare animals and small children naturally. This gives you an extra "Health" box, but also means that you'll likely lose it from an angry mob.

### **Final Touches**

The final things you need to do. Note that many of these will be done each game session.

**Story.** Your character is more than four numbers and a few words. Figure out who they are, why they're a pirate, and what they want. The more you get into your character, the more fun you'll have.

**Health.** Health is how many mortal wounds you can take before they really ARE mortal. Take your Coins attribute and double it—this is how many Health points you start each game session with.

**Soul.** Soul points aren't used as much as Health, but are even more valuable. Your character starts with their Cups rank in Soul.

**Speed.** Speed is a trait that's used to determine when you move in a conflict scene. Your character starts with your Swords attribute x2, and then add your Staff rank to it.

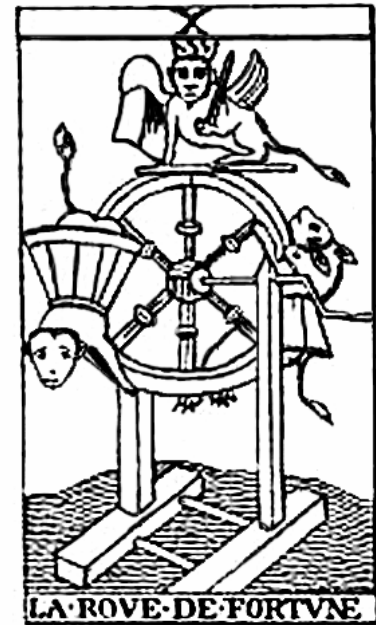
**Shot.** All guns are flint-lock, single shot weapons. Normally, this means carrying a lot of them. At the start of each game, draw one card from the action deck, and look at the actual rank of the card--that's how many shots you have this game. If you drew a staff card, than add 2 to the number. Aces count as 1 and noble cards (page, knight, queen, king) count as their rank above 10 (page is 11, knight is 12, etc). Mark this number down in the "Shot" bar on the character sheet.

**Doubloons.** Each character will start with 5 out of 10 Doubloons total. While you can use the "Doublloon" counters (those little gold circles) on the character sheet, we recommend using coins or other markers. These represent luck, spirit, and determination. Also, put one Doublloon in a pot in the middle for every player, and two for the GM.

## THE ACTION DRAW

When a character needs to do something that will have a strong effect on the action if you win or loose, you use an action draw. This determines if you succeed or fail, and how badly it takes.

1. **Declare action & determine test type and Attribute/Skill.** The character declares what they're trying to do, and the GM decides which attribute and which skill in that attribute will come into play.
2. **Determine difficulty and Draw.** The GM decides how difficult the action is and sets the base difficulty number. Note that an Attribute of +1 will automatically increase the difficulty by (you guessed it) +1.
  - **Simple. 2.** Anybody should be able to do this.
  - **Dynamic. 3.** The standard draw number. This is used for most draws.
  - **Tricksy. 4.** Even by the standards of Summer block busters, this is a pretty trying act.



- **Difficult: 5:** Doing this could be really tough, and if you succeed you can brag about it later.
  - **Impressive: 6:** This is almost impossible. Good luck.
  - **“On second thought...”: 7+:** You could try to punch Cthulhu, but it’s not recommended.
- 3. Draw!** Once the difficulty is set, draw that number of cards from the Action deck. Cards that are the same suit as the attribute in play (for example, swords for a melee action) are successes, as are any card with a rank above 10 (10 and any noble card). If all the cards ARE NOT successes, the action failed...but wait!
- 4. Discard Attributes, Add Skills & Determine Results:** You character may discard any cards up to their relevant attribute rank. If you succeeded, that’s great! Finally, add any skill points to the total of successful cards. The total number of successful cards plus skill points is called your threshold (which isn’t all that important now, but will be in a minute). Determine the results and costs of success/failure based on test type.

### THE THREE TEST TYPES

There are three different types of tests that you can draw for, depending on how many people are involved. **Tests** are used when there is only one character trying to do something. In these instances, the character doesn’t have to bid a doubloon into the pot, and only if they fail will they have to spend one doubloon. If the end Threshold is greater than the difficulty number, they can take one doubloon out for doing so well!

**Contests** are when multiple characters are trying to beat the others in any specific fashion—from getting the last word in, to being the first to cross the finish line. In these instances, all characters wanting to take part in the contest have to bid one doubloon into the pot. The character with the highest threshold wins, and gets to take their doubloon back. Everybody else only gets to be real surly to the guy who just took their money.

Finally, there are **Conflicts**, when a character is trying to actually hurt the other guy, either spiritually or physically. These use the Conflict rules, below.

## CONFLICT

Being a game about pirates, thieves, and mad cultists, you can expect combat to be a pretty regular event in PoL. All actions—be they a fist fight, a broadside, or a military invasion, use the Conflict Round rules below.

### The Combat Round

1. **Bid in:** All players and major NPC's (the named guys) have to put in 1 doubloon if they want to be in the action scene and not run away or surrender.
2. **Determine Initiative.** Each character has their speed rating—this is when they act. A player may bid 1 doubloon in the pot to add +5 to this number if they'd like to beat somebody else.
3. **Draw Cards:** Determine the number of cards each character will need. The GM passes out cards, one to each player, until everyone has all the cards they need.
4. **Determine Results.** The characters compare end results to their competition. Whoever wins the competition will be able to get one doubloon from the pot as in all contests. Determine damage based on weapon type

## DAMAGE & LOSS

The difference between “I hit him!” and “I shot a cannon at him!” can be pretty different from one another, so the end result of a conflict depends on what kind of weapons you're using.

- **Fisticuffs.** If you're just using your bare hands or improvised weapons, the character who lost the conflict will have to throw another doubloon in the pot.
- **Melee.** Using weapons designed to kill means that the loser can either throw another doubloon in the pot, OR take the difference in thresholds in Health points. *EX: Bill gets stabbed by Jack. Jack's threshold was 4, Bill's was 3. Bill could either throw another doubloon in the pot, or take (4-3=1) 1 Health point in damage.*
- **Firearms.** Pistols and rifles work like Melee, except the winning character gets to decide which cost the loser has to spend!
- **Cannons.** Cannons, black powder bombs, or other “too much club for humans” attack works like firearms, but double the threshold. Note this only works for

when using them on humans—cannons work as normal melee attacks when dealing with ships, forts, or elder gods.

### Firearms & Explosives

If a character has a gun, he's likely to use it—especially before the third act. The character simply has to use a shot from their Shot Bar for every attack they make. There is also range to deal with, Melee (the guy is close enough to stab you), Close (The target is close enough to run at you and stab you), and Far (the guy is all the way over there, but you can see him and he's running at you like he's going to stab you).



There are two kinds of firearms in PoL. Pistols can be used with one hand, and can shoot at Melee and Close. Rifles are larger two-handed affairs, and can shoot at Close and Far ranges.

Finally, there are bombs. Bombs cost three Shots for a character to use, and can only be used at Close range (you *could* use them in melee, but *you're* in melee range, too...). Bombs cause the threshold rating of the draw in damage to everything in range unless a character spends a doubloon to be lucky—in which case they only take half the damage. Hey, any explosion you can walk away from, right? Of course, if

the draw fails the bomb sputters out as a dud.

### Running Out of Stuff

If a character runs out of doubloons, they are *rattled*—they can't do anything that round, and must instead bow out for that turn (this is also a great time for them to shuffle the discard pile and put it at the bottom of the action deck, or go get drinks!). At the end of the round, they may draw back two doubloons, assuming they have not been captured or slain.

If a character runs out of Health, they are in bad shape. This doesn't automatically mean dead—this could simply be knocked unconscious, bleeding slowly, or a “dead man walking” until a Saw bones can heal you up. However, do remember that this is

a game inspired by Lovecraft, and that there is a whole mess of other potential PC's on the boat.

Soul attacks are rare, but if a character runs out of soul they die, mutate into a horrible beast, or fall into another dimension full of horrors beyond Euclidian time. No, I'm not giving rules for getting Soul back.

Finally, running out of Shot means they have to beg, borrow, or steal to get more shots back. If a character does this, the GM can either give them an arbitrary number, or simply have them draw another card like they did at the beginning of the game session.



## SHIPS AND SAILING

When dealing with ships and other boats, use the following attributes and traits. Each attribute has a suit attached to it, and works as written above for draws:

**Sails (swords).** How fast the ship can move. The number is also used for maneuvering the boat through weather or obstacles.

**Cannon (Staffs).** How large of a broadside she has.

**Hull (Coins).** How durable and sturdy she's been built.

**Spirit (Cups).** How lucky the old girl is.

Each point adds to any relevant threshold. A ship starts with her Hull rating times 2 in Health, and being so large ignores all human-sized melee and firearm attacks—they might sting, but only a cannon or a mighty god can hurt a ship normally. If a ship runs out of Health, further threshold damage is taken away from her attributes. A ship with 0 Sails can't move, 0 Cannons can't fire, 0 Hull sinks, and 0 Spirit becomes unlucky, adding +2 to the difficulty of any draws on the ship until repaired.



## MAGIC & SORCERY

So, you might have noticed by this point that there's an entire deck of cards we're NOT using—the major arcana. This is used for sorcery, which is the black science and twisted art of the Elder World. It calls on the dark powers of the Old Ones, gods from before the dawn of time, and its use is a great way to either get eaten by something outside of time or burned at the stake. However, desperate times call for desperate measures...

Characters start with a sorcery score of 0, meaning they can't do magic at all. A player may choose to spend their attribute points on their sorcery skill, bringing it up to 1, and be able to cast spells. Two points will bring you up to 2, (ooh, tricky!) making your character a true magician in the eyes of his fellow damned souls trafficking with powers they do not understand. Note, however—getting your Sorcery attribute to 1 means you have to take an “Elder-touched” disfigurement, ALONG with your regular weakness. This touched does not grant additional points, it's simply the cost of being good at magic.



Casting magic is an action, and requires an action like any other draw. However, instead of using the Action deck, a character will instead draw from the Fate Deck for their action. They will draw their Sorcery rank in cards, and choose which one they want (see? Already magic is bending the laws of nature).

Magic must be aimed at a specific character—anyone but the caster. However, what happens after that isn't up to the magician—it's up to the power they've called on.

Whichever card is chosen is what happens to the character.

**Fool.** The character becomes immune to firearms, explosives, or cannon-shot. The GM draws another card from the sorcery deck. The numerical rank of the card is how many rounds this spell is in effect. The character and player do not get to know how long that is.

**Magician.** The target permanently gains +1 to their Sorcery.

**High Priestess.** Character gains one Soul point permanently.

**Empress.** The spell caster falls in love/becomes completely loyal to the character for one hour.

**Emperor.** The next attack threshold the character does is multiplied by two.

**Hierophant.** Character loses one Soul point permanently.

**Lovers.** Character falls in love/becomes completely loyal to the caster for one hour.

**Chariot.** The character disappears for one round. They will reappear in the same place they are now next round.

**Justice.** The character loses 1 point from their Sorcery permanently.

**Hermit.** The character becomes invisible to all humans and Elder races for one hour. Animals, sorcerers, and gods will still see the character.

**Wheel of Fortune.** Move all attributes on the character to the right clockwise one direction.

**Strength.** Character gains +1 to their Labor skill permanently.

**The Hanged Man.** The Character loses one Health point. All of the character's party (say, the other PC's, or minions nearby) gains one health point.

**Death.** If the character is "dead", they character is immediately destroyed. If not, the character gains +1 health.

**Temperance.** The character may move any points between soul or health between the two as they see fit.

**Devil.** The character subtracts one from their soul rank permanently.

**Tower.** The character ages a decade, and loses one Health permanently.

**Star.** Character automatically succeeds next action

**Moon.** Target swaps their sorcery attribute with the caster for 24 hours.

**Sun.** Target gains sorcery: +2 until sunrise or sunset, whichever happens first.

**Judgment.** Draw another card from the Sorcery deck—this card affects the *spell caster*, not the target.

**World.** The character's health, shot, and doubloon ratings go to full.

## THE GM SECTION (BUT PLAYERS CAN READ THIS TOO)

We're not going to get into being a Game Master here—I'm still on a deadline. However, it is this section where we're going to talk a bit more about the game, what to do, and how to handle some specific issues.

### NPC's

Everyone who isn't a PC, which means the rest of the in-game planet, is an NPC. Normal folks who aren't dramatically important or named are **Minor** NPC's. Minor NPC's just get a standard result for most actions—say, a threshold of 1 or 2 on most actions, maybe a 3 in their profession, and they don't get access to doubloons (yes, they can be in contests/conflict if need be, but if they lose a conflict they're no longer in play).

Above Minor are **Important** NPC's. These are people/creatures that are expected to be of importance to the story, and may need a bit more mechanical flesh on their narrative bones. These characters will get ranks in all four attributes, but don't get sorcery. They will have health, but only a few points.

**Major** NPC's will get their own character sheet, and start with somewhere between 3–7 doubloons, depending on how major they are. These are characters that are named, and expected to be seen quite a bit in play, like the head villain or other constant thorns in the sides of characters.

### The GM Conflict draw

If it's just two lead characters in a duel, feel free to use Conflict above as written. However, if you're in the middle of a huge fight with multiple characters, you'll want to make things a bit easier for the poor GM. In combat situations with groups, the GM may draw a single card for an entire group. This number rank is how many increases to thresholds that team has access to. Only Important or Major NPC's can use these successes, and only the total number of characters in play on that team is how many successes can be used (so one lone deep one can't use 8 free successes—only one).

### Using the Sorcery Deck as a GM aide

The Sorcery deck has one more trick to it—you can use it as a story guide by using the tarot deck to get some motivation. The spread is a simple affair. Simply draw four cards from the Sorcery deck.

The first card drawn is the **Booty**. This is what the players are going to get, or who they're going to get it from. This doesn't always mean gold—the Magician could mean a magical treasure or rare book, the Emperor could mean a favor from someone high up, or the Fool could mean that there IS no treasure at all!

The second card (if you're feeling symbolic, put this card across the Booty) is **the Adversary**. This is what's actively stopping the players from getting the Booty, and represents a person or group. Some are obvious, but again the adversary doesn't have to be a mere guy with some guards. The Hierophant may mean a church inquisitor, or the Magician could be an evil sorcerer, and the Devil could easily mean an Elder god has had enough of their shenanigans!

The third card is **the Complication**. Things never go easy for pirates. This is another problem they'll have to deal with to get what they want—similar to the Adversary, but it doesn't care if they succeed or not. The World might mean a hurricane or the jungles of Leng interfering, and the Sun might mean that booty is protected by the heat of the deserts of Skull island (or maybe just a giant fire monster..whatever you feel like).

The final card is **the Hidden**. This is a back story, something the characters won't know about that's going on. Maybe the High Priestess means that the church is taking an interest in them, or the Tower means that a revolution will happen while the characters are trying to win. These are here to add some more depth and hopefully more story ideas for you to play with, and may hurt or help the characters, but it should always give them an opportunity.

Again, you don't HAVE to use this, but the tarot deck was designed to be adaptive and symbolic for a reason. It's a great way to spark some ideas for your next great adventure, and if the cards don't work out, it's easy to swap them around or draw new ones until you're happy with it.

## WHAT TO DO IN PIRATES OF LENG

**Be Piratical!** First and foremost, this is a game about pirates—being daring and criminal with a heart of gold, sailing the high seas and plundering from rich and greedy men in faraway lands. Looking for lost treasure, getting tricked by your former ally, racing for that “X” on the map before that other captain gets there first...I’m kind of assuming that if you picked up a book called “Pirates of Leng” than you have some piratical notions in mind already. Obviously, *Treasure Island* and *The Pirates of the Caribbean* trilogy are obvious sources of interest, as is actual history. This is the core of the game, and so I hope you’re familiar with it.

**Fight Terrible Lovecraftian beasts!** If you haven’t read any of H.P. Lovecraft, put this down RIGHT NOW and go do it. While there are a lot of options for this one, I’d recommend “Shadows over Innsmouth”, “The Dunwich Horror”, “The Strange Case of Charles Dexter Ward” and yes, even “The Call of Cthulhu” to get a good grasp of what level of horror we’re dealing with. There are better dissertations of Lovecraft out there than I can give you in this short time, but needless to say the horror of these creatures should be included in the game. The Elder World is full of terrible nasty creatures doing terrible nasty things to wake up even worse gods, and it is right and proper that the characters, being heroes, should be able to try to stop them for the good of mankind and their own purses.

**Explore terrifying new worlds!** The Elder World is full of magic and mystery, not JUST tentacles and mad gods. A game could easily be trying to explore and map this terrible new world, finding new vistas, new treasures, and new perils. For this, you might want to try a bit more Lovecraft’s Dream Cycle, including “The Silver Key” and “The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath”, to get some of the more...well, “positive” isn’t exactly the right term, but “fantastic” elements of inspiration. Seeing amazing ruins and fantastic vistas is just as important as swinging across yardarms and swinging a cutlass. The Elder World should be alien, but also amazing.

## THINGS THAT WANT YOU DEAD: ANTAGONISTS & MONSTERS

**Deep Ones.** These are a constant threat and peril to any one on the high seas—but especially women folk. These dreaded fish men come from the depths, using some devilish great kraken as we use a ship of the line, coming out of the briny deep and climbing up the hull o’ your ship, attacking and plundering. They steal away anyone they can, but especially love to take any fair maidens on board, and make sure that they never return to tell what sordid tales happened to ‘em.

If you have the salt and a statue of their god to open them to conversation (assuming you’ve somehow learned Deep One tongue or they something humanish), the Deep Ones can be a useful if treacherous ally. They know the seas better than anyone, and they have no use for gold—they hand it to their allies like hard tack. But never turn your back on them—they are part shark, and they strike when they sense weakness...

The main advantage against them is that they don’t use any missiles—after all, powder don’t work when it’s wet! If you can, blast ‘em off your hull like barnacles before they get in close, or all is lost.

**Deep One. Swords: 3 Staff: 1 Cups: 3 Coins: 2 Health: 3 Soul: 1**

- Deep Ones can breathe water, and cannot be drowned.
- Deep Ones have claws and vicious maws, meaning they always use Melee damage.
- Deep Ones don’t use guns or firearms.
- Deep Ones are normally led by a sorcerer. This Major NPC will have Sorcery of 1.
- Deep Ones are far too alien to be played as characters. A player choosing a Deep One character will start with Cups at 1 and Coin at +1.

**Ghuls.** Strange creatures, full of gallows humor and sick appetites Ghuls are. They are shorter than a man, with skin the color of dead flesh and eyes the color of blood. Their mouths are large lantern-jaws with rows of thick dull teeth that can crack bone, and they walk on crooked legs like a dog. Ghuls can talk like a man, but they cannot eat nor drink like one—the only thing that sates their stomachs is the flesh of the dead. They laugh and cackle madly, making fun of your disgust and fear of dying, and take the names of the last poor soul they ate. However, they are handy with knowledge of all manner of dark secret, and out of most of the Elder races they are the most

trustworthy...just don't be looking too sickly, or they might decide to have you over for dinner...

**Ghul: Swords: 2 Staff: 3 Cups: 1 Coin: 3, Health: 4 Soul: 2**

- Ghuls can use any tools or item a man can, including firearms and ships.
- Ghuls can only eat long-dead raw flesh—anything else is unpalatable to them.
- There are rumors that anyone who is forced to cannibalism in the Elder world will turn into one of these creatures...
- Ghuls are too terrifying and disgusting to be player characters. A player choosing a Ghul as a character starts with Coins: 1, and Sword: +1.

**Tcho:** The Tcho are the closest to humans that we've found in the Elder World so far. They speak normal words, eat (more or less) normal things, build buildings and live something like normal lives for the most part.

The fact that they are sacrificing people to call up evil gods to destroy the world notwithstanding, of course...

The Tcho can be dealt with—even the kings of Europe have treaties with them, granting them money and slaves from Africa or prisoners in return for mother-weed and other valuables. No one asks many questions in these treaties, but exportation to Leng has become an all too popular reward for a life of crime.

Tchos don't look like normal people—they have skin the color of bone, they bleed blue, and their eyes are pure black like a doll's. They sharpen their teeth to razors and they cover their skin in black tattoos that hurt your eyes to look at. Yet, so long as you don't piss them off, they can live and work with you. They are a common sight in many small towns and forts in the Elder World, which either says something about the Tchos or something about us, I'm not sure which...

**Tcho: Swords: 1 Staff: 1 Cups: 1 Coins: 1 Sorcery: 1 Health: 2 Soul: 2**

- All Tcho can perform magic, and start with Sorcery: 1.
- Tcho can ignore one point of damage from any magical effect, or burn one soul point to cancel a spell cast on them.
- Tcho are far too evil to be a player character. Players choosing a Tcho character start with Sorcery of 1.

**Navy Men.** Sure, you may see all these terrible monsters and things with tentacles, but most pirates will note that seeing a ship flying a naval flag is more terrifying. The kings of Europe like their shiny toys from the Elder World, and want to make sure they keep it—hence their very big, very nice boats full of well-trained men with guns and swords.

**Sailor: Swords: 1 Staff: 1 Cups: 1 Coins: 1 Health: 3 Soul: 3**

**Pirate: Swords: 2, Staff: 2, Cups: 1, Coins: 1, Health: 2, Soul: 2**

**Marine: Swords: 2 Staff: 2 Cups: 1 Coins: 1 Health: 4 Soul 2**

- Marines get a +1 to melee and firearms

**Captain: Swords: 1 Staff: 2 Cups: 1 Coins: 2 Health: 2 Soul: 4**

- Captains get +1 to Command, Sailing, and Firearms OR melee

**Star Spawn.** These buggers are rare, which is good because they're bloody nasty things. Ten foot tall monstrosities, full of muscle and hate, with a head like a squid and wings like the devil himself. No one knows what these buggers want—they just show up, kill a bunch of people, and leave. Sometimes they're taking a statue or a trinket, sometimes they're drawing a sigil in the sand, and sometimes they're just eating people's faces. If you see one—run.

**Star Spawn: Swords: 3 Staffs: 4 Cups: 6 Coins: 3, Sorcery: 1, Health: 8 Soul: 10**

- Star Spawn can fly as fast as a ship. Use their Swords attribute as a comparison for sailing ships if they're flying.
- Star Spawn count all damage caused as Firearms, allowing them to decide how a target takes their damage.
- Star Spawn count as ships for purposes of damage—halving all human-sized attacks.
- Star Spawn are far too evil to be PC's. No, really—you can't play a Star Spawn.

### SHIP-SIZED THREATS

**KRAKEN.** These vicious Squids of the deep are as big as a ship of the line or bigger, and as mean as your old ma'am. Thankfully rare, they will occasionally take a ship out for whatever reason their little squid brains decides for. Even worse, half the time they're fitted out with a mess of Deep Ones on 'em, raring for a fight...

**Kraken (Ship): Sails: 3 Cannon: 0 Hull: 3 Spirit: 1, Health: 5**

- Krakens attack with their Hull rating as an attack, but must be right next to the ship to do so. They have no ranged attacks.
- Deep Ones use Krakens as ships.

**Merchant Ship.** A pretty standard merchant vessel, normally full of gold and treasure—or just surly sailors who won't just give up their ship.

**Merchant Ship. Sails. 1, Cannon. 1, Hull. 2, Spirit. 1, Health. 3**

**Pirate Ship.** A standard Pirate vessel is a normal Merchant ship rigged out with cannons, guns, and mean vicious men ready to do terrible things to win a life of easy living.

**Pirate Ship. Sails. 3, Cannon. 2, Hull. 3, Spirit. 2, Health. 5**

- Due to lack of constant upkeep, Pirate ships are normally slightly lower in health than they should be.

**War Ship.** A naval vessel ready for war, this is normally what the Empires send at you when they decide you've been enough of a hassle for them.

**War Ship. Sails. 3, Cannon. 3, Hull. 3, Spirit. 3, Health. 7**

- Due to the aide of an entire country and fine discipline, war ships are normally greater in health that they normally should be.

**Ghost Ship.** All manner of mad vessels ply these waters, many times with lost souls at the helm. These ghost ships are a true terror, and the few men that survive seeing one never forget about them...although they try to forget with all the rotgut they can find.

**Ghost Ship. Sails. 2, Cannon. 5, Hull. 6, Spirit. 6, Health. 10**

**Shuggoth.** These things are nightmares, pure and simple, from Hell itself. A mass of black liquid, able to shift and change, a bubbling mass of tentacles, eyes, and gaping maws...if you see one, turn the ship about and leave as fast as you can, praying for your soul...

**Shuggoth. Sails. 5 Cannon. 2 Hull. 10 Spirit. 10, Health. 20**

- Shuggoths can move two points a round from any attribute to any other attribute.
- Shuggoths regenerate one health every round.
- Shuggoths ignore all human-sized damage, and half ship-sized damage.

**Elder God.** There are all manner of nightmarish eldritch terrors out there, and thankfully most of them are asleep. Sadly, they tend to be light sleepers, and if they wake up they can cause a great deal of damage before someone runs a ship through their eye or says the right magic words as a lullaby. They're all different from each other, but they're all big, ugly, and normally full of tentacles or skulls or slime. Pray to a god—even the one you just woke up—that you never see one.

**A Random Elder God. Swords: 10 Staffs: 10, Cups: 10, Coin: 10 Health: 40, Soul: 40**

- Elder gods are great for finales.
- Elder gods are immune to all human attacks, and only take half damage from ship-sized attacks.
- Elder gods can cast one spell a round, and choose which spell result they want when they cast.
- All elder gods must have a way for them to be unsummoned or put back to sleep written about them in a musty old book somewhere. That book might be in Austria right now.

# PIRATES OF LENG

Character:

Player:

Description:

**GEAR**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**SWORDS (Air)**

Melee  
Wits  
Sailing  
Legs

**Burdens**

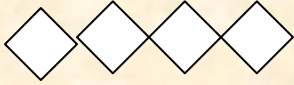
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**CUPS (Water)**

Carouse  
Sawbones  
Superstition  
Perform

**SORCERY:**

Ye SOUL



**STAFF (FIRE)**

Command  
Firearms  
Courage  
Labor

**COINS (EARTH)**

Assess  
Politics  
Book-learnin'  
Survival

Health  
Shots

