

# The Crow's Nest™

"A Beginning" ... 3

Redeem Yer  
Plunder ..... 8

Dueling Berekts ... 12



Issue #4

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A sneak preview of the upcoming  
Vendel/Vesten sourcebook .. 6





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# A Beginning

By Dana DeVries

Sean McCorley knocked on the door of the cabin. The only response was a grunt, so he opened the door and entered. *The Falcon's Roost's* cabins were more spacious and comfortable than the *Hanged Man's* had been, but the room was stacked to the rafters with cannonballs. There hadn't been time to stack the gear properly in the rush to get off the *Hanged Man*. Now that they were underway, everyone was too busy arguing to store the gear properly. *No matter*, Sean thought. *The cannonballs would keep.*

Jeremiah Berek sat alone at a small table rubbing a doubloon between his fingers. He seemed oblivious to McCorley's presence, focused on the gold coin.

"Ye asked to see me, sir?" The "sir" seemed odd coming from the grizzled old Inish marine.

"Sean." Berek didn't look up. "Were you at the Gull's Drop when I flipped coins against Mark Scars?"

"No sir. I think I'd left the Dogs by then."

"Hmmp. I'd gone out slumming with some of the men. We're drinking at some pit, and this mountain on two legs covered in tattoos was shouting that he's as lucky as Berek. So without telling him who I was, I challenged him. We flipped for it. Loser bought the winner a drink. We both flipped coins and I won.

"That wasn't good enough for Mark. He wanted to do it again. Double or nothing. Fine. We do it again. He lost. And again. He lost. We flipped coins almost a dozen times. And Scars was getting madder and madder. Finally, he pulled out a pistol, put it on the table and said that we're going to do it one more time. If I won, then I was cheating and he was going to shoot me. And if he won, he would know for certain that I had been cheating and let him win. In that case he would shoot me. Either way, I was dead, because not even Berek was as lucky as I had been.

"So I tossed the coin high and as his eye followed it, I reached back and grabbed a bottle of wine that was on the table behind me. Then coin landed. On end. It just sat there, perfectly balanced on its edge. Scars stared it with his mouth wide open until I smashed the bottle over his head. The coin fell over. Heads. The whole crowd was staring at us, so I told them that Scars was wrong. I was just as lucky as Berek because I was Berek. I grabbed his purse and bought the house a drink with it. Left him with the rest of the money and went back to my boat. I miss those days."

"Bein' with the Dogs ye mean?" Sean asked.

"I miss the Dogs like no one's business, but no. It's the confidence I miss. I used to live on luck like it was water. Call it Sidhe magic, call it the blessing of Theus, whatever it seas, I had it. I just *knew* that every time I flipped a coin



it would go my way. Now..." Berek flipped the coin that he'd been rubbing into the air. It spun lazily in midair and then landed flat on the table. "Tails. Alesio said that I'd used up my luck getting away from that bastard Reis. It was something that I knew, but it was the first time I actually heard the words. I've used up my luck." Berek brooded at the porthole into the darkness outside.

"Do you know how hard getting this boat was? Before I'd have just grabbed it and sailed. Trusted to my luck to get us out of there and it would have. Now I have to think of everything that could go wrong. Take every possibility into account. Second guess myself for hours before I was ready. Worrying every moment that I'd forgotten something and we'd all die grisly deaths because of it. Fear is a horrible thing, Sean."

Sean narrowed his eyes and snorted. "Ye bastard. Ye've 'ad it easy yer entire life. Every break has gone yer way. And now when yer havin' te make decision like everyone else, ye complain? Because yer *afraid*? *Everyone* is afraid. No one jumps from one boat to another knowin' that an entire crew worth of men are waiting to kill him without bein' crazy er afraid. An' I'm not crazy. All ye can do is the best ye can, an' trust yer mates te do the same."

"I know all that, Sean. I know. But that doesn't make it any easier." Berek shook his head wearily. "So have the men decided on a new captain? Will he throw me overboard or leave me marooned?"

A thoughtful look crossed Sean's face. "Ye saved us from the fire, an' that counts fer a lot. Still, about a third of the men have...questions. Yer an outsider, meanin' they



Illustration © 2001 Lyn Hunter

don't know, ye an' they don't trust ye. They formed under Hoggins. They suggested droppin' ye in a rowboat an' lettin' ye scull back te Castille. When the rest of us refused, they decided te get off at La Bucca; they'll take up with a different ship."

"You need those men."

"I know. But we're the Brotherhood. We're free to make our own mistakes."

Genuine concern crossed Berek's face. "The rest?"

"The rest know a good captain when they see 'im. They know what ye did an' they saw ye get us outta that harbor slicker than a greased pig. Alesio put you in charge, an' we don't see any reason te disagree."

"Me? I don't even know all their names!" With an angry sweep of his arms, Berek knocked the coin onto the floor. "I didn't save them to become captain. It was just something I had to do."

"That's another reason. Like I said, they know what ye risked. Ye could've cut an' run after that business at the inn. Nobody woulda blamed ye. But ye stuck around. They know what that means. They're not loyal te ye yet, but they're willin' te give ye a try. An' the stories o' yer fabulous luck dinna hurt."

"I don't have that anymore, Sean."

"I know that. But they don't. An', they need someone te lead them."

"What about you? Or Reggie?"

"No. We'll help ye, but we ain't leaders. You are."

"I don't want to lead, Sean." Berek's voice was quiet in the room crowded with cannonballs.

Sean smiled crookedly. "None o' the best captains ever

do." He bent over and picked up the coin. "Heads. If you don't like what fortune hands you, change it. Any man can do that. Ye've done that already. We're a good crew, Jeremiah Berek. Give us a few weeks an' we'll follow ye into the mouth o' Legion."

Berek nodded slowly as the words sunk in. "You'd better. That's where we're going."

"Where?"

"For Allende. I saved his crew. Now it's time for him. I don't know where they're taking him or hew we'll save him. But I'm sure it'll be the next best thing to hell. Just my luck, I guess." Berek's familiar grin returned at that thought

"And Alesio?" Sean asked.

"Alesio's gone. Her last wish was to save your captain. Wherever she is, she's beyond our help, and I'm not going to abandon the task she gave me."

Sean nodded silently. "So our new captain's gonna help save our old."

"That seems to be the way things are going," The first signs of confidence could be heard in his voice.

"I may know someone who can help. An old friend of Allende's. I'll lay in a course. We can drop the men who want to leave off at La Bucca on the way."

"Thanks Sean for everything. Can you light the lantern on your way out? If your friend can't help us, I'm going to start planning our next move."





# Preview: Vendel/Vesten

By Kevin P. Boerwinkle and Les Simpson

The following material has been included in the upcoming *Vendel/Vesten* sourcebook. We're presenting it here as a brief preview of things to come. Here for your edification are a pair of terrible monsters which haunt the ice-swept wastes...and a new swordsman school with which to combat them.



## Tundra Beast

*Villain*

**TN:** 25

**Brawn:** 4

**Finesse:** 4

**Resolve:** 4

**Wits:** 2

**Panache:** 3

**Attack Roll:** 6k4 Bite, 4k4 Claws

**Damage:** 6k6 Bite, 5k4 Claws

**Skills:** Footwork 3, Grapple 4, Leaping 3

When Krieg the Inhuman began his attacks along the coasts with his army of worshippers, he quickly found that he enjoyed causing fear and suffering as much as death and destruction. He heard tales of a fierce creature that lived far to the north, a being so

horrible that it defied description. Intrigued, he and ten men set sail to find and capture it.

After weeks of searching, Krieg came upon a trail of carnage and gore. Something had shredded a herd of caribou, and did so with obvious enjoyment. Krieg was impressed and followed the bloody path to a frozen lair, where he was immediately besieged by a rabid force of nature, the embodiment of winter's howling fury.

The Tundra Beast killed Krieg's men one by one, ripping them apart and torturing out their lives' light. Then it went for their leader.

Krieg was immune to the beast's power and laughed out loud when it attacked. He pulled his blade and carved his rune deep into the fiend's flesh, making it his helpless thrall. He returned to Vestenmannavnjar and the Tundra Beast became a central part of his raiding strategy.

When Villskap finally killed Krieg, the Tundra Beast fled back into the wilds. It was not in its capacity to miss its former master, but it did feel an incompleteness that was not there before. Occasionally it would sense something of Krieg and investigate, only to find a Skjæren calling upon Krieg's rune. Without its master to control it, it would slaughter the luckless sorcerer and anyone else in the vicinity.

The Tundra Beast is still searching for Krieg, massacring any Skjæren who attracts its attention. These days, only repeated use of Krieg's rune come to its notice, but what constitutes repeated use to the Tundra Beast is anyone's guess.

In combat, the beast is a blurry vision of primal nightmares brought to life. It is so unsettling that all attacks against it are made with 2 fewer unkept dice, in addition to any lost to a failed fear check. Only a Master Skjæren can see its true form (a dire wolf with empty eyes) and is immune to this effect. Its favorite tactic is to isolate one victim and kill it slowly. When fighting multiple opponents, it tries to kill the majority and then let the last few linger in agony as long as possible.

Unless the Tundra Beast is injured with a rune enchanted weapon or by a Skjæren of Adept rank or higher, it takes 2 fewer kept dice of damage. Any additional use of Krieg's rune will actually cause the beast to retreat. It will also disengage if it has taken more than three wounds.



## Revenant

### *Villain*

**TN:** (As in life)

**Brawn:** (As in life)

**Finesse:** (As in life -1)

**Resolve:** (As in life +3)

**Wits:** (As in life -1)

**Panache:** (As in life -1)

**Attack Roll:** By weapon

**Damage:** By weapon

Foreign scholars assume that a revenant is a unique kind of zombie, native to Vendel because of some hidden link to Lærdom. If they would take the time to listen to the stories of the Vestenmannavnjar, they would know better. They explain Revnants as so:

“In the early times, before the coming of the Great Wurm, there lived a young carl woman named Gulldiet. She was quite lovely, but had one flaw: she loved gold. But this did not dissuade her suitors, and she received many marriage propositions. Finally she decided upon a rich husband named Bolverk, who promised to lavish gold and jewels on her for the rest of her days. It was an easy promise to keep.

On their wedding night, Gulldiet refused to come to bed, preferring to enjoy her newly acquired wealth. She danced around the longhouse, draping her body with gold necklaces. Her husband called for her again and again. When she refused to come, Bolverk finally became so outraged that he hurled her into a raging river. The heavy necklaces sank her to the bottom and she screamed her life away under the icy flow.

Gulldiet's spirit could not rest or go on to its final reward in Valhalla. So great was the need for vengeance that it returned to her watery grave and re-entered her body.

*Continued on page 10*





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*Continued from page 7*

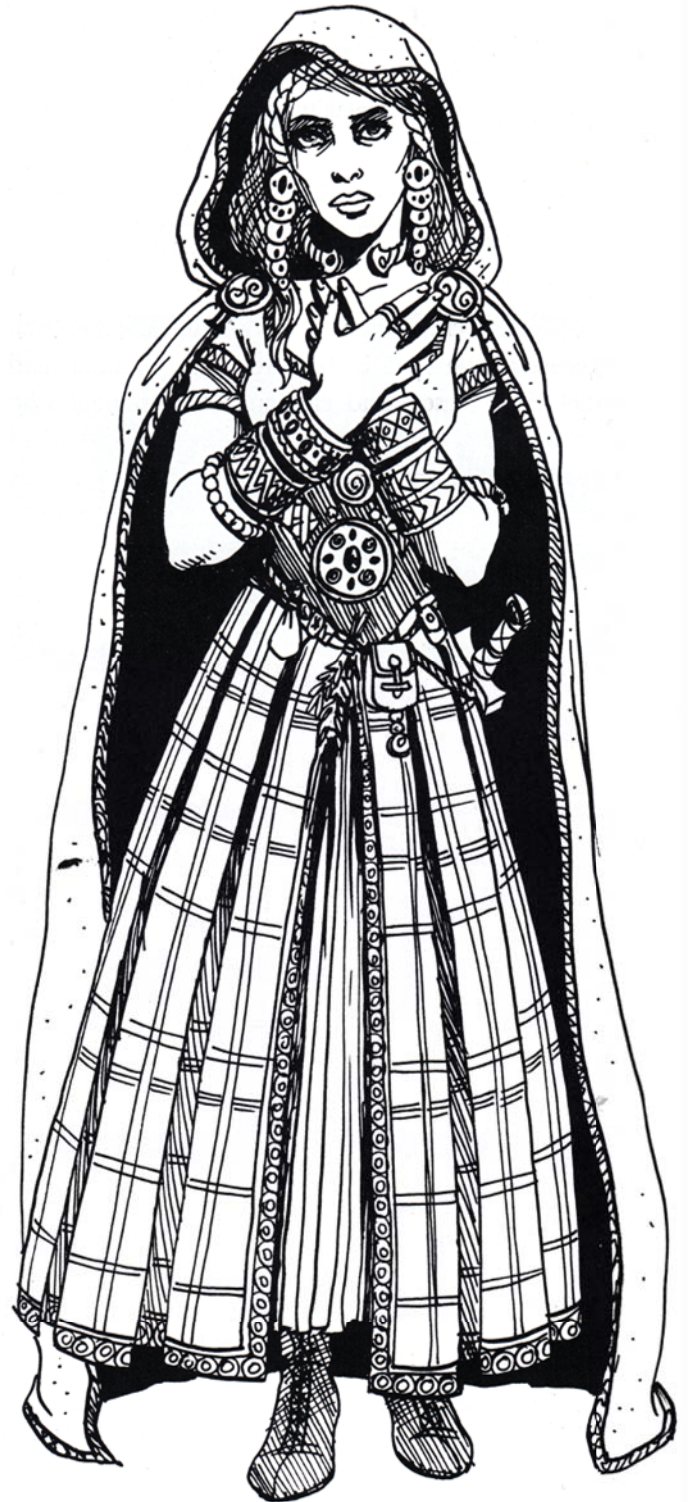
Through force of will, it moved the corpse like a puppet. It rose from the river and staggered into the night, looking for its murderer.

“Bolverk was sitting at the table with his grieving family when the water-bloated body tore through the door. The golden necklaces clinked and dripped as what remained of Guldiet slopped after her killer. He tried to hide, and his family tried to defend him, but it was no use. The corpse shrugged off every blow and blade that struck it. Bolverk’s father even managed to slice off a leg, but the assault continued. At last, soggy hands found Bolverk’s throat and squeezed like a vice. Vengeance was served, and Guldiet’s spirit was freed.”

Since that ancient time, there have been many stories of murder victims returning from shallow graves to seek revenge. The tales always speak of the unbelievable determination and unstoppable might of the animated creatures and, in the end, vengeance is always served.

**Special Abilities:** The revenants’ detachment from its body makes it impervious to pain and damage modifiers. It’s not that damage isn’t done, it’s just that the creature doesn’t notice.

Even if the body is hacked apart, it will re-assemble over the course of three nights. On the fourth night, it will renew its assault. Only one story exists where the killer managed to escape the monster’s rampage. He caught the body on fire, but died when he could not escape the burning building as well.





### Siggursdottir School

**Country of Origin:** Vestenmannavnjar

**Description:** The Siggursdottir School is a lightning-quick paired axe style. The first move of one of its students is to throw an axe; the next is to draw a spare. When combat comes in close, the student launches a deadly volley of attacks, yelling and screaming battle cries all the while. The main weakness of the style is its devotion to emotion and speed rather than reason and caution. An opponent who keeps his head may be able to exploit the student's blind fury to devastating advantage.

**Basic Curriculum:** Athlete, Hand Axe

**Swordsman Knacks:** Double Attack (Hand Axes), Exploit Weakness (Siggursdottir), Throw (Hand Axe), Whirl (Hand Axe)

#### New Knacks

*Double Attack (Hand Axes):* When you use this Knack, you are making two quick axe attacks against your opponent, one right after the other. You must declare that you are Double Attacking before you attack, and then roll the two attacks using this Knack. The TN to hit your opponent is raised by 10 when you are using Double Attack.

*Throw (Hand Axe):* When you throw this weapon as an attack, you must use this Knack instead of your Attack Knack. This is considered to be a Basic Knack for students of the Siggursdottir School.

*Whirl (Hand Axe):* Whirl is a spinning attack designed to take out multiple unskilled enemies at once. For each Rank you have in this Knack, you may add 2 to your Attack Roll when attacking Brutes. Thus, a Hero with a Rank 3 in Whirl would increase a roll of 19 to a 25 when attacking Brutes.

**Apprentice:** The Apprentice is trained to carry at least three axes. The first one will be thrown, and then the third is drawn to allow him to wield death in each hand. You have no penalty for using a hand axe with your off-hand. You get a Free Raise when throwing an axe.

The Siggursdottir School does not give its students free membership in the Swordsman's Guild. Instead, its Apprentices get a free Rank in one of their Swordsman Knacks.

**Journeyman:** Journeyman of the Siggursdottir School learn to make a lethal double strike, in which both of their axes strike an opponent simultaneously. To make a double strike, use double-attack knack, but both axes strike as one. Roll to hit and do 3k3 damage instead of 2k2. The TN to use an Active Defense against a double strike is increased by 10. You gain a free Rank of Throw (Hand Axe). If your Rank is already 5, it becomes a 6. If it is not, then you may later increase your Rank to 6 from 5 by spending 25 experience points.

**Master:** Masters of the Siggursdottir School are savage warriors who launch brutal flurries of blows with their axes. Whenever you successfully hit your target with a normal Attack (Hand Axe) roll, your next Action Die is considered to be equal to the current phase.



# Dueling Berek

By Paul Norman

The following is a pair of deck designs featuring Avalon's favored son, Jeremiah Berek — in both his early and later incarnations.

## The Need for Speed

**Captain:** Berek

**Ship:** The Black Dawn

**Crew:**

1 Bloody Bonnie McGee

1 Roger Gaffrin exp.

1 Dorf Klinderhof \*

3 William Toss \*

3 Kurt Weinburg

3 Lyin' John Fox

3 Jack Tars

3 Needle Nose Nye

1 Billy "Bilge Rat" Bones

2 Riggers

2 Marketeers \*

(a "\*" indicates starting crew)

**Attachments:**

1 Letter of Marque

1 Hammocks

1 Responsive Helm

1 The Guiding Gem of Hierro

**Adventures:**

2 Gold Coins

2 Eisen Cannons

**Actions:**

3 Gold Only Buys Obedience

3 Tools of the Trade

3 Carousing

3 Drop a Boarding Net

2 Desperate Move

2 Riposte

3 Speed Isn't Everything

3 Handsome Scar

3 Into the Fray

2 I Fights Better Drunk

In just about every collectible card game that there has ever been, there is almost always one universal truth - decks that hit hard and fast from the start always find their place. In fact, the statement becomes even more universal than that, because the need for some speed (whether it be offensive or defensive) figure into practically every competitive deck design that you will ever see. But while some decks seek merely to fortify themselves in order to sustain a longer build-up, other deck designs go for the jugular right from the start, in an attempt to force home that quick and decisive strike that wins the game.



Quick attack decks have, from the very beginning, favored the captains with greater starting Wealth and easy to move ships. The original Berek and The General tend to be the best choices for these, with the former perhaps slightly favoring a speed boarding approach, and the latter leaning more towards cannon. The advantage to boarding is that it is usually more devastating, and with cards that can pump up a whole host of attacks and also tack out crew (such as Drop a Boarding Net) it can be incredibly difficult to get out of danger once you have been boarded.

With the reasonably priced Dorf Klinderhof in its starting crew, a Berek deck can give themselves an extra effective crew slot right from the start, and with Berek's Influence of 4 he can hire almost all of the crew that you will need in this type of deck. A couple of possible exceptions are Bloody Bonnie and the experienced Roger Gaffrin, although both should still be quite reachable in terms of cost. They also both give you a further 3 Influence to use once you've got them into play. Some speed decks tend to try and fill their ship with just the captain's starting Wealth, so that they can devote more card slots to helpful Action cards and the like. This tends to result in a deck which lacks punch, however and can be defended against quite well with the appropriate choice of starting crew from the opponent. For this reason I have always preferred a deck which both builds quickly and closes on the opponent in the first turn, before typically striking early in the second. Cards like Gold Coins, Responsive Helm, The Guiding Gem of Hierro, and (in the slightly longer term) Letter of Marque all help you with resources without having to use your crew. Action cards like Gold Only Buys Obedience, Carousing and Tools of the Trade help further with this.

Once on board the opposing ship, the idea is to hack the opponent to pieces, but to do so methodically. A good initial play is to use Drop a Boarding Net to take out one of the more dangerous opposing crew. The preferred method of paying for the card is with a Carousing or possibly Tools of the Trade, but crew

like Riggers or Needle Nose Nye can also be used for this effect. Even the slightly more heavyweight crew like William Toss or Kurt Weinburg have the Sailing to Drop a Boarding Net onto an opposing captain, or to sail the ship with the aid of Carousing. They also become boarding beasts with the aid of Into the Fray, which means that you'll be doing some serious damage once your crew hits through. Even normally passive crew like Billy Bones or Needle can become whirlwinds of death once you've played I Fights Better Drunk on them to get the Into the Fray bonus to kick in. If you can tack your opponent out with Boarding Nets before sending crew forward then this almost guarantees them a whole batch of hurt. If there are any special boardings attacks that you want to win, then you can be greatly aided in that by Riposte and Desperate Move. This type of deck itself can take a few hits with some of the more effective damage absorbers, and also the skilled use of Carousing and Tools of the Trade at the most opportune times.

Typically this type of deck will win (or lose) in the first few turns of the game. As with all decks, there are a few opposing deck styles which can give it more problems than others, but with plenty of Wealth, a speedy ship and the appropriate choice of crew and other cards it can be quite easy to chase a lot of opponents down from the start. Once on board, few opponents will be prepared for the brutal combination of Action cards and hard hitting boarding attacks that this type of deck has to offer. As Berek himself would say, speed may not be everything, but it sure helps.





## Brotherhod Control

**Captain:** Jeremiah Berek

**Ship:** The Falcon's Roost

**Crew:**

- 1 Reggie Wilcox exp.
- 1 Velik exp.
- 1 Donna exp.
- 3 Geno
- 3 Lt. Juan Rodriguez de Soldano
- 2 Musette Falisci
- 3 Denny La Bree
- 1 Gillian the Razor \*
- 1 Jillison Brown \*
- 1 Scott Preston
- 3 Hauptmann von Lichen
- 1 Sabine Montjoy \*
- 1 Marketeers \*

(a "\*" indicates starting crew)

**Attachments:**

- 1 Hammocks
- 2 The Gallows
- 3 Safe Path
- 1 Northern Allies
- 1 Coastal Patrols
- 1 San Cristobal
- 1 Crescent Treasures
- 1 Secret of the Winds

**Adventures:**

- 1 Bjornsson's Horn
- 2 Gold Coins
- 3 Passionate Duel
- 2 Sinking of the Swan
- 2 We Needs us an Ussuran Gunner
- 3 Wind at Your Back

**Actions:**

- 3 Gold Only Buys Obedience

- 1 A Thousand Fires Alight
- 2 Experience is the Best Teacher
- 2 To Fight Another Day
- 2 Lemons
- 2 Betrayal

From the *No Quarter* set, through *Strange Vistas* to *Broadsides*, there was only one way to win a game of the *7th Sea CCG*: to send your opponent's captain to the bottom. In the *Shifting Tides* set, however, we saw the introduction of the first alternate means of winning the game: a means which in some ways surprisingly favors the much maligned Brotherhood of the Coast. This new victory condition is called "control," and will win you the game at the end of any turn if you have a Control card placed in each of the five seas.

The Brotherhood has a number of useful things going for them in the control department. One of the most useful is their Figurehead, combined with an ability to adventure and improve all of their skills. While this worked reasonably well with Allende and the *Hanged Man*, the new captain and ship offer useful new abilities to aid with control. Both assist you heavily in rolling with the punches, particularly as far as incoming cannon attacks go (although Berek's ability is one of the most generally useful and powerful in the game.) With the appropriate choice of cards, it's also quite possible to fortify yourself against boarding as well, with the likes of Safe Path, Scott Preston, Sabine Montjoy, Secret of the Winds and plenty of sailors allowing you to prevent a huge number of boarding attempts (and both Sabine and Secret of the Winds are card effects, meaning they'll cancel even an Ambush Boarding).

Once you've fortified yourself enough, you should be able to tack some of your crew to play a Control card, whilst at the same time not leaving yourself vulnerable to attack. Various cards (such as Experience is the Best Teacher and the various skill boosting Adventure cards) can help with this. In the currently released expansions there are 3 different Control cards released for each sea, giving a small amount of flexibility as to which type



to chose from. With each type comes slightly different abilities and marginally different costs to play and discard, but overall the essential thing is just to have one for each sea. Including more than this can be dangerous, because devoting too much of your deck towards the control side of things can weaken it considerably. It's also important to have at least a couple of cards to prevent your Control cards from being discarded (such as *To Fight Another Day* or *It's a Trap*). Again, though, don't go over the top in including extra cards related to control, because you'll need plenty of card slots for other things like crew and Adventures as well.

The whole strategy of playing control is a very reactive one based on holding out until you can achieve your alternate victory method. In these ways it is reminiscent of a Crane Honor deck in *L5R*, a Moto Raiding deck in *LBS*, or one of the old Blue and White control decks in *Magic* (which used permission-based counterspells to hold off threats while Millstones eventually ran the opponent out of cards.) Playing a Control deck in *7th Sea* has similar elements to these various deck styles from other games. You must be patient, look to understand your opponent's deck style and what he or she is trying to do. You must have an answer for every question your opponent poses and still find time to gradually extend your grip on the game. Of course, most opponents will look to cannon you, board you, or both, so it's always good to be prepared and to play a steady but calculated game.

If a boarding can't ultimately be avoided in some way, you can still hold out with the aid of cards like Bjornsson's Horn. You should also be able to take a few hits with some of your medium Swashbuckling crew (who work well against cannon hits too) and, obviously, by tacking the various Adventures that you've completed. This approach, combined with a few big cannon shots of your own can also be used offensively if your opponent manages to successfully discard a control card. It's important to seize on any weak moment from your opponent, and striking in such a manner can form your alternate route to victory on a number of

occasions. To minimize possible problems in this regard, play your Control cards with care and caution, and look long and hard at the best order of playing them. For example, your opponent may find certain cards difficult to discard (such as *Crescent Treasures* if they are low on Influence) and so you should drop those cards first because they will be safe while you gather the other cards and prepare to play them. When playing your last few Control cards, it's always an advantage to either heavily tack your opponent out (eg. with a big cannon shot,) or else have one or two cards available that can prevent Control cards from being discarded. This is typically the final key moment before achieving the control victory. The *Fate's Debt* expansion marked a big improvement in the standard of Brotherhood crew and set them on the path to becoming a good faction. With the route to control stacked in their favor, they may yet reach even greater heights with the release of upcoming sets.

## AEG Fan Club

### Issue #4

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