

Sons of the Sea

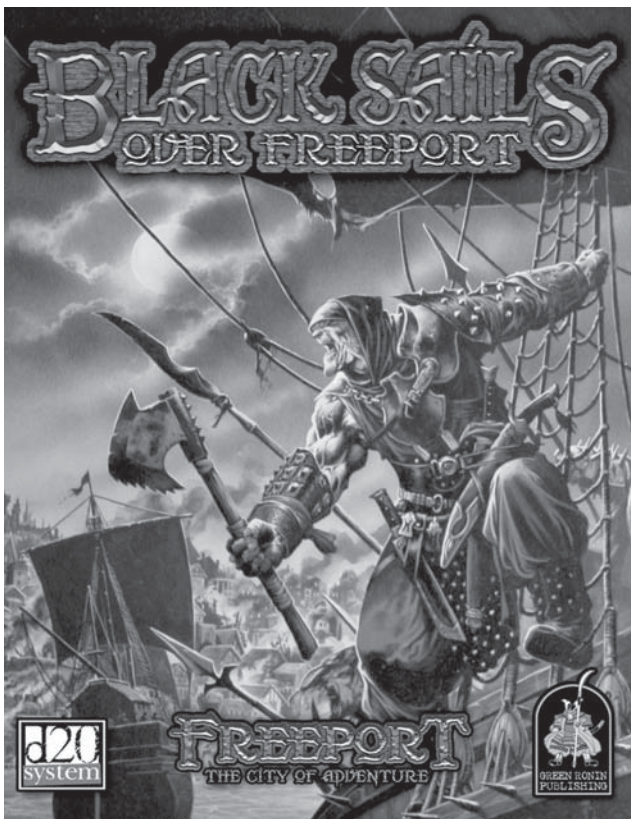
The Church of Harrimast and the Cult of Yarash

Warning: This article contains spoilers for *Black Sails over Freeport*, the first Freeport mega-adventure. Both the gods detailed herein and their followers play a significant role in the adventure, so if you are planning to play it do not read on! Copyright 2003, Green Ronin Publishing. 'Freeport' and 'Green Ronin' are trademarks of Green Ronin Publishing. The following text is open game content: each god's name, Alignment, Preferred Weapons, Cleric Domains, Cleric Alignments, and Spell Preparation Time.

Introduction

The island city of Freeport was designed to be a detailed setting that could be placed within any existing fantasy campaign world. In previous Freeport books, gods were referred to generically (God of Knowledge, for example). *Black Sails over Freeport* breaks with this tradition by naming two gods: Harrimast, the god of pirates and Yarash, his fearsome first mate. This article will provide a greater level of detail of the two churches that worship these gods for players considering throwing in their lot with the Sons of the Sea.

The two gods are presented in the format of the complete pantheon detailed in *The Book of the Righteous*. Players already using the god Darmon may want to adapt only the portions they find useful into their established rituals.



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Myth: Harrimast and the Pit

In the early days of the world, there was an island in the great engirdling ocean; and on that island, a pit, roughly dug. At the bottom of that pit lay a giant of a man who watched, helpless, as his comrades buried him alive.

"Guard well that swag, Harrimast!" they called, for they had piled sacks of coins onto his chest, gold he himself had helped to take. "No winking on watch! And not a whisper, neither!"

A grand joke. When they had finally bested him, they took a dagger to his eye and a poker to his tongue. He would not have fallen, for he had strength enough to clear any ship's deck single-handedly, but he tarried to barricade his wife in their cabin. The last thing he saw, before an axe cleaved his hand in twain and a cluster of bolts tore into his leg, were Beacon's grand, sad eyes through the window, her earrings flashing in the candlelight.

He watched them dig their shovels into the soft earth, listened to their blood-drunk laughter, and felt sorrow and hate roll hot across his heart. Soon enough he welcomed the dirt on his face.

For endless hours he lay entombed, his life leaching away and his breaths coming ever dearer, until he slipped into a reverie. His wounds ached, but with no nauseous ebb. He tasted sweet wine on his lips and felt a cool wind on his limbs.

Thieves' Paradise, he hoped. Then he heard a hissing and a scraping of feet. Beneath, he felt sand; above, he saw familiar stars. He was still alive but not in the pit — and no longer alone.

With his one good eye, he made out a shadowy figure inching toward him. He struggled to speak, but all his ruined tongue could manage was Yarrrrrrr.

"Hush now, hush; I'll teach ye to speak again," the figure said, his voice all chatter and hiss. "They took more than a tongue from me, and I'm not finished, not by no man's measure."

At last Harrimast saw his benefactor. A skeleton, with bones black as pitch, pulling himself along on half a dozen creaking spindly limbs. His arms ended in claws, his feet in great cloven hooves; for a face he had a naked skull with rubies bobbing in the sockets.

"Aye, they piled me under, too, the same ones what buried ye," the skeleton said. "Long years ago they left me. I found a tunnel down there, I did, that took me up to the jungles. Often they return to this rock to bank more swag, and more flesh with it. Spades and pickaxes, I hear; but never did I hear breathing down below, not as strong as yours."

In one horrible instant, Harrimast remembered. Fear, cold as coins, poured through him, but he forced himself to look.

Curling from the flesh of his wrist was a hook of polished bone, black as sleep. His leg, below the knee, had been replaced with a sharpened shaft of the stuff.

The giant couldn't force out the question. The skeleton guessed it. "I gave ye what I could spare," he said. "One less snipper don't harm me none, and I get around quick enough on the legs what remains. But I could afford no eye for ye."

Harrimast wept. His beloved was lost, his crew had betrayed him. His body was ruined. But he was alive, and he was not alone.

"Thank you," he managed.

"Thank me in deeds," the skeleton said. "Ye are the only man to hold his ghost so long beneath these hills. Strength have ye, beyond all reckoning. Together we may pay them back in kind, them what done us foul."

Harrimast felt a hot sustaining hate grow in him, so strong it warmed the skeleton's bare bones.

"Make it yer meat," the skeleton hissed. "Feed ye, it will, when there is nothing else to nourish. Such did I learn when I lay in me tomb."

The giant ground his teeth till the tears stopped. "Before we do this," he gurgled, "yer name. I would know who fights at me side."

It was something with many syllables and subtleties. Harrimast's tongue trampled it into Yarash.

The Great Chase

After countless days of training, when Harrimast could spear a darting fish with his hook and outpace his friend over the cruelest ground, he awoke one morning to find a gaily colored bird perched on his belly.

"Harrimast," it croaked in a tinny singsong.

"I take it for a jape," Yarash said. "From them what hurt us. A snip on its neck, and no worries."

"Stay yerself!" Harrimast cried; but Yarash had already lunged for the bird, with pincers clicking. It shot off Harrimast's chest with a squawk and a burst of feathers. As the giant spat them from his mouth and cleared them from his eye, his fingers found something smooth and cool.

An earring. Her earring.

She lived.

"Harrimast!" the bird croaked, and darted over the treetops. The giant leaped to his feet and chased it, with thundering lungs and soaring heart, until he broke through the treeline to a beach of white sand.

Docked at a sandbar not a mile offshore was a schooner. Corsairs.

The bird swooped, and settled in the ship's crow's nest.

"Dangerous, aye, very dangerous," Yarash said. "Dozens of them, all with thirsty steel. Wait, says I, and snip them while they sleep."

Harrimast thought of the grand sad eyes he had left behind. His own good one gleamed. "Yarrrrrrrrrr," he growled.

In an hour they were at sea. The rigging was heavy with dead.

Beacon was not aboard; there was no trace of her. "Murdered," Yarash insisted. "Aye, cut and scuttled. Grieve if ye must, but turn yer purpose to vengeance."

"Nay," the giant retorted. "The bird were trying to fetch us off this rock. To bring us closer to her what sent it."

For hours they roared back and forth, but Harrimast would not be moved. Yarash swallowed his anger, and let the giant lead them.

Within weeks they had an armada. Whenever they spotted a ship, Harrimast leaped to its decks, whipping his hook and cutlass, stomping loose the planks with his pegleg. The sailors blanched at the sight of him — and the fearsome spidery devil who trailed in his wake, slicing open stomachs and snapping necks. They found holds bursting with wine and beasts and swag; they found desperate men willing to fight at their side. Once in a great while they even found one of the faithless sailors who had marooned them.

But no sign of Beacon. Never even a whisper.

Yarash indulged the giant's fancy until they captured a sailor who had news of their betrayers. East, he said. The bird said west.

"Our business is blood," Yarash hissed. "Men such as them never would have let her slip past. Add her to their measure of debts."

"We follow the bird," Harrimast said.

"Your heart will ruin ye," the skeleton said. "Do ye hear what the fleet says of ye? Never have they seen a pirate so fierce. Some of them have built shrines to ye; they pester me for a scrap of your cloak, or a strand from your beard. The heavens will hear of this, Harrimast, mark me; the gods will draw ye up to be one of their own. If ye turn aside from vengeance now, and chase hopes of ghosts, what will ye be then?"

"We follow the bird," the giant said, in a voice that did not invite reply.

For weeks Yarash watched, with rising bile, the empty waves from the crow's nest. To think he had saved that fool's life, rebuilt him with his own bones, taught him to speak and walk and see, as one teaches a child — and now he would waste it all on a dance with phantoms. Such a betrayal the world had never known.

He had just begun to consider murdering the bird when he sighted an island.

A few handfuls of sand. A wreck of a rowboat. A figure in rags. Her.

Harrimast the God

She had been shrunk to a broomstick by hunger and thirst, and toughened to leather by the salt spray and pitiless wind. Day and night she sat on a promontory of weathered stone, waiting for a hint of rigging on the horizon. Then, one evening, she drowsed; and when she woke she was not alone.

"Harry," she called. "Harry, is it you?"

No. It was thin and nimble and seemed to have endless arms.

"I were marooned too," it said. "Buried, no less. I found a tunnel out of me crypt; but it only went part of the way. Long days it took me to dig, till me hands were worn to naught. To keep alive I fed on them what was buried alongside. I cleaned their bones and cracked them for marrow; then I cleaned me own till I had no guts to feed. More men were buried after, and I fed upon them as well. Until they laid one in the grave who would not die. Such a man could become a god, and me an angel by his side."

She looked to the water and saw masts, a fleet of them, a world's worth. She looked back to the figure in the shadows and knew she would not survive the night. She grabbed a driftwood log and swung it at him. He knocked it free and wrapped his bony arms around her till she could struggle no more.

For a moment, he felt the gravity of what he was about to do to his friend; his captain, but if he let the woman live, Harrimast would return to her and forget his fight. And then he would forget Yarash.

"Harry," she cried.

"Hush now, hush," the skeleton said. "No use in it. He's mine now."

So he cut her to pieces.

When Harrimast saw the body, he roared and wept and believed everything the skeleton whispered. "Ravished her, they did, long and loutish," Yarash said. "And when they could take no more sport in her they left her to be plucked apart by the gulls."

Harrimast steadied himself on the skeleton's bony shoulder. "All what I loved are laid waste," he said.

"Now, now, me captain," Yarash said, and curled his arms around the giant's back. "I will never desert ye."

Once again, Harrimast wept. "Thankee, friend. Thankee."
The skeleton's eyes gleamed. Behind those hateful rubies were
visions of reddened seas and the halls of heaven.
"In deeds, my captain," Yarash said. "Thank me in deeds."

God of Pirates

The Dreadnaughts of Harrimast

Harrimast [HARR-eh-mast]
(The Buccaneer, Scalawag, Swashbuckler)

Associations

Harrimast is the god of pirates, and the patron god of Freeport itself. He is usually associated with birds that wander the seas such as seagulls and albatrosses, for they can glide above the waters with the ease and speed of a corsair under full sail. He is also connected to parrots and monkeys, for these animals serve as steadfast companions to the men and women whose hearts are filled with longing for open waters and the plunder they can gain there.

Although the majority of Harrimast's followers are pirates, there are more than a few captains who will whisper a hasty prayer in his name before weighing anchor, and many a superstitious sailor who will toss a gold piece into the sea as a plea for mercy whenever an approaching vessel raises the skull 'n' bones. He became Freeport's patron god practically by default, for without pirates there would have been no pirate city. And while his worship bordered on the fanatical when the city was first founded, recent years have seen the members of his parish dwindle as the city's merchant and working class population chose to kneel at the altars of more traditional gods.

Alignment

Harrimast is Chaotic Neutral.

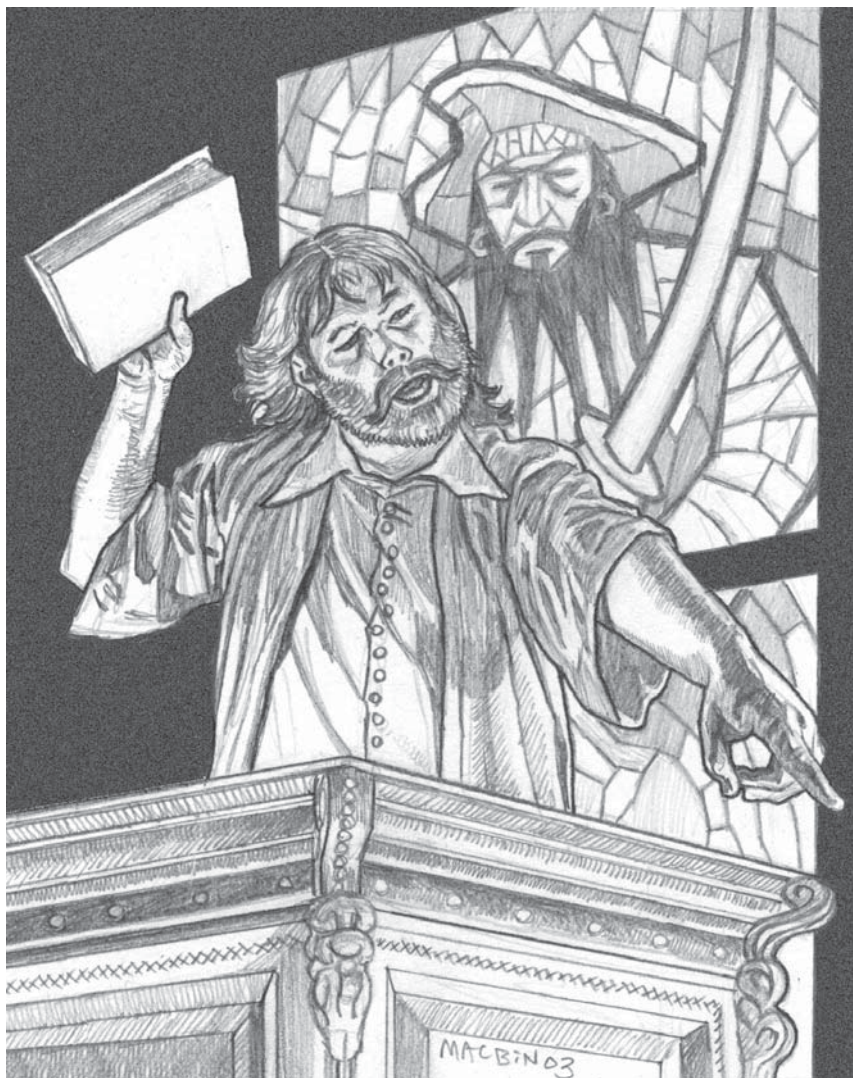
Representations

The God of Pirates is usually depicted as the ultimate rogue of the sea: an imposing figure facing into an unseen wind, his unkempt locks and shaggy beard flowing behind him. He wears a long coat that doesn't quite hide his peg leg, a loose shirt unbuttoned practically to his navel and a worn tri-cornered hat. There is a hook of bone where his left hand was; the remaining hand lies casually on the hilt of his cutlass. The butt of a pistol can be seen poking out of his waistband. Although the details of his face tend to vary depending on the race of the artist, he always sports an eye patch (sometimes over the right eye, sometimes the left) and there is always a hint of a smile on his lips, as if he could already taste the gold he is about to plunder. In his left ear is the gold earring of his lost love, Beacon.

The symbol of Harrimast is, of course, the skull and bones. Members of the faithful tend not to bother melting down their gold to craft the sign, preferring instead to fly their allegiance from the masts. This has done more to spread his name than the trinkets worn by other faiths; ships' passengers that witness the skull and bones bearing down on their vessels are unlikely to forget the experience.

Purpose

Detractors of Harrimast are quick to point out that he has a limitless hunger for plunder, but his motives are actually



more complex. For while the faithful are willing to weather the elements for months on end in search of gold, once they have ripped it from the hands of its rightful owners they promptly bury their booty on a remote island, where it is soon forgotten.

In truth, the acquisition of wealth is merely an ancillary benefit to Harrimast's true purpose: the thrill of the chase. Nothing is more satisfying to the buccaneer than the first glimpse of sails over the horizon; the rush of wind as a pirate swings over to a disabled vessel, a naked blade clenched between his teeth; the look of panic on a woman's face as a scurvy sea dog breaks down the door to the passenger cabin to steal their virtue along with their wealth.

Harrimast cares little for strategy; he prefers his followers to throw caution to the wind and rely on their wits and strength in order to win the day. Woe to the pirate captain who is unable to hold his own in battle, for Harrimast can be notoriously fickle: a rogue who isn't the master of his blade is likely to find one embedded in his chest.

Finally, the pirate god expects those who worship him to uphold the *spirit* of his laws (detailed in the Doctrine section below) if not necessarily the letter. Harrimast is more than willing to turn a blind eye should a follower break the code, as long as they do it with reckless panache.

Church Description

The churches of Harrimast, referred to as dreadnaughts, are always found in cities and villages near the open sea, as being land-locked is a fate more claustrophobic than being tossed in a brig. The structures are generally small, humble affairs — the god is not impressed by ostentatious displays. The interiors are decorated with the trappings of ships: harpoons, ropes, tattered sails, shark jaws and the odd figurehead. Instead of a pulpit, the priests of the faith generally give their sermons from behind a pilot's wheel.

Those who wish to accept Harrimast's teachings cannot simply petition for the privilege; they need to have committed a deed worthy of piracy, and supply a witness who can vouch for the deed. Once accepted, the convert must donate 50 gold pieces. For this he is provided with a single gold earring, which he must wear until death. Anyone who brings a pirate's body back to the church will get the earring as a gift; if they were strong or wily enough to slay a pirate, they are worthy of a reward.

Pirates who preside over Harrimast's dreadnaughts are just as likely to be called "Captain" as "Father." This is appropriate, for almost without exception these old salts are drawn from the ranks of ship captains who have had long, reckless lives but are no longer able to handle long stretches on the sea. These men and women are chosen by Harrimast himself, who informs them in dreams that the pulpit will be their final earthly reward before they join him on a never-ending voyage across the heavens.

Although the people who worship in the dreadnaughts are not usually deemed to be productive members of society (an understandable view, given their avocation), the churches do actively take part in safeguarding the communities in which they reside — for a price. Church clerics will request a modest "bounty" for their services, which typically consist of providing protection from forces more fearsome than the pirates themselves. The amount of the bounty varies according to the danger involved and the number of buccaneers required to overcome it, but this is rarely more than the community can bear; Harrimast understands that even the derring-do of his followers would not be enough to prevent the landlubbers from destroying his dreadnaughts should they so choose.

Despite his involvement with his churches, in the end Harrimast views them more as safe havens for his faithful than anything else. The clerics who serve on dry land do not undertake any serious efforts to convert new followers, and the god of pirates doesn't want his roving flock to proselytize with long-winded sermons. Instead, he wins the hearts and minds of others by having them witness the sheer audacity of his adherents: the young boy who watches wide-eyed as a grinning

scoundrel defends against three attackers at once and wishes to have his skill; the diplomat's daughter who views a pirate's blatant sexuality and finds herself inexorably drawn to it; the ship captain who sees a score of sea dogs making away with his cargo and wants to, just once, know what that's like — these are the people Harrimast wants.

Doctrine

As might be expected, Harrimast does not want to overburden his followers with laws that might require them to think before acting, so his rules are simple and to the point:

☠ *There is no Law on the Open Sea but Pirate Law*

On land, followers of Harrimast are expected to bow to local custom. This is generally easier than it sounds, as most port cities are more than happy to cede a section of their docks to the buccaneers so the visiting louts can drink what they want and sleep with who they want and leave the rest of the town alone. Once at sea; however, anything goes. If a pirate sees something she wants, she takes it — and damn the consequences.

☠ *A Quick Blade, a Quick Mind*

When it comes to getting what they want, Harrimast prefers his followers to act immediately and rely on their wits and the strength of their steel to back them up. The one exception to this rule are overly intricate plans that have no realistic chance of success; if a pirate came up with an idea of overrunning Freeport with a single ship and a dozen men, Harrimast would want him to try it. Win or lose, it would be a hell of a thing to watch.

☠ *Give Quarter, Expect None*

Harrimast realizes that his followers are a marked breed; any who are taken alive are not likely to remain that way for long. Still, he requires mercy for those his faithful have defeated in combat. Pirates must always give quarter when asked, respect the flag of truce and treat their prisoners fairly. Of course, "fairly" is a word that can be interpreted in a variety of ways — which is just the way Harrimast likes it.

Preferred Weapon

Followers of Harrimast prefer the cutlass.

Cleric Domains

Harrimast's clerics can choose two from any of the following domains: Air, War, Travel, and Water.

Cleric Alignments

Any chaotic.

Spell Preparation Time

Clerics of Harrimast are expected to be near open water at dawn, when the light of a new day presents fresh opportunities for plunder. They tell Harrimast that they do not need his assistance to help them find adventure — they will recklessly chase after it themselves. They then toss a coin into the water to regain their spells for another day. Only the very foolish dare take these offerings; no one steals from the god of pirates unless they want to become acquainted with his followers.

God of Blood, Barbarism, & Booty

The Hidden Harbors of Yarash

Yarash [Yuh-RAHSH] (Master of the Seas, Bloody One)

Associations

Although Harrimast's rules are few, he expects them to be obeyed; those who flaunt his laws are soon shown the error of their ways. Originally, the task of steering those who strayed from the true path was delegated to Yarash, Harrimast's first mate.

But Yarash tired of his subservient role. He thought the ideals of the pirate god were foolish and weak; to his mind, pirates should be feared, not romanticized. Increasingly he felt more in league with those he was being sent to punish, but when he finally tried to overthrow his master he learned the true limits of his own power.

Yarash was banished for 150 years, and his name was stricken from Harrimast's myth. But while the memory of Yarash faded from the world, the god did not, and the time he was banished did nothing to slake his thirst for power. Eventually, he attempted to regain his former strength, but a group of brave adventurers thwarted his plans. This time, Harrimast consigned his wayward charge to a prison from which he might never escape.

There are still people in the world who heed the voice (or what they think is the voice) of Yarash, all of them killers of the most vile sort, who would rather let a sloop laden with gems and gold sink to the bottom so they could hunt down its survivors and slaughter them to a man. Although most of those that throw in their bloodthirsty lot with Yarash are pirates, there are also a fair number of land-bound killers who sound his name before committing their foul deeds.

Yarash is only associated with a single animal — the kraken. The Bloody One sees much of himself in their destructive power and their insatiable appetites. His followers call these beasts the Sons of Yarash.

Alignment

Yarash is Chaotic Evil.

Representations

Yarash is illustrated as a towering skeletal figure that appears fresh from a watery grave, dressed in seaweed and the rotting remnants of a full-length coat. He is depicted as having anywhere from a half dozen to a score of arms, each of which end in sharp pincers, and two cloven hooves. In each of his eye sockets is a glowing red gem.

Those who worship The Bloody One care little for casting symbols of their god from the few metals they steal; they prefer to permanently declare their allegiance in their own flesh. Usually this is a tattoo of a dripping claw, but some cultists prefer to draw a skull 'n' bones and either modify it or give it a noticeable flaw. There are numerous variations on this theme, but popular ones include giving the skull only one eye socket, placing the bones atop the skull, or simply mutilating the skin

over the original tattoo to create obscene (and occasionally creative) scars. One powerful group of cultists placed five stars around the crown of the skull in reference to Yarash's anointed lieutenants. The location of the tattoo varies, but the most common spot is on the left palm ... the better for the cultists to display it to their victims.

Purpose

Yarash has one primary goal for his followers — to make people fear pirates again. As he sees it, Harrimast's centuries of weakness have made the only thing a ship captain fear for is his cargo. Yarash wants them to fear for their very souls, and he wants to levy a fee of blood for every vessel that attempts to cross the ocean. He drives his followers to attack any ship they spy on the water, regardless of its size or strength.

When given a choice between lives and wealth, Yarash prefers to harvest the souls and leave the trinkets to Harrimast. Although the god is bloodthirsty, he is not foolish. Constant combat thins the ranks of his followers, which will ultimately rob him of the remnants of his power. So he occasionally directs his cultists to spare a potential victim — especially if that person seems particularly good or innocent. Then, he instructs them to "convert" the captive, which they do by torture. These conversions usually take days, but can sometimes go on for months. The only two results from this treatment are death or insanity — and Yarash finds the insane to be much more receptive.

The ultimate goal of the self-styled master of the seas, the one thought that has him continually longing to escape from his prison, is the utter destruction of Freeport. Although the city was built on the blood of Francisco's navy, it has since become, in Yarash's estimation, the epitome of Harrimast's weakness. Not only does the city trade with the people it should be preying upon, but also its "privateers" are naught but paid mercenaries, a far cry from the pirates of old. The sight of pirates and merchants living together in relative harmony disgusts Yarash, and he longs for the day when his followers will put the city to the torch.

Church Description

Followers of Yarash tend to be a solitary lot, so a formal church structure is simply not practical. Therefore, the god requires no intermediaries between himself and those who worship him; each of his faithful is a "hidden harbor" who carries the entirety of Yarash's church within his twisted heart.

This is not to say that houses of worship for Yarash do not exist, but neither are they built. Instead, when Yarash's followers are feeling particularly reverent, they will find a church to another god and systematically defile it. They tear down statues, smash windows, set fire to pews, and smash pulpits to pieces. This indulgence in pure, unadulterated violence drives the faithful into a fit of religious ecstasy during which they believe they are touched by the spirit of Yarash himself. During this time they engage in "automatic writing," scrawling and carving symbols in praise of their master in languages they would never be able to speak. If the bodies of the former priests are at hand, their blood will be used to craft the messages; otherwise, the pirate's own blood (or other bodily fluids) will suffice.

As might be expected, this practice has done little to endear the followers of Yarash with other churches, who universally view Yarashites as a threat in need of elimination.

Church Doctrine

That Yarash's faithful even have a doctrine to follow might come as a bit of surprise, but the god has slanted his rules so that they fit quite nicely with their natural tendencies:

☠ *Every Man for Himself*

Yarash may have a direct conduit to the minds of his insane masses, but he certainly isn't going to lift a finger to help them, even if he were capable of doing so. There is only one person that a follower of Yarash is beholden to: herself. A young pup who wants to pilot her own vessel doesn't earn the privilege by learning the ropes; she does it by being stronger than her mates and killing anyone who gets in her way. This obviously adds quite a bit of instability to the ranks of those pirates who worship The Bloody One, but this troubles Yarash not a whit, since he is assured that only the strongest, most frightening, or most cunning of his followers will be in charge.

☠ *Force First, Second, Always*

Certainly there are other methods of resolving problems other than physical violence — but Yarash cares nothing for them. No matter what the situation, the best way to get to the bottom of it is with a sharp blade and an arm strong enough to plunge it into someone's back. This particular dictate also works well to inure his subjects to murder; the more they do it, the more they become used to it and the more likely that they will resort to it without thinking about it the next time.

☠ *No Quarter*

It was not terribly likely that his loyal subjects were about to start indulging in the quality of mercy, but Yarash conceived this particular tenet as a purposeful antithesis of Harrimast's law. How would a pirate ever strike fear into the hearts of his prey if the vanquished knew from the onset that their lives would be safe, even in defeat? Those who prostrate themselves to a follower of Yarash — no matter their age, sex, race, or belief — will count themselves lucky that they usually won't live long enough to regret their mistake.

Preferred Weapons

Followers of Yarash favor the crossbow or the cutlass, preferably dripping with poison.

Cleric Domains

Clerics of Yarash may choose any two of these domains: Destruction, Chaos, Death, and Water.

Cleric Alignments

Always Chaotic Evil.

Spell Preparation Time

Yarash's clerics prey to their god for spells at dusk, for most of their fell deeds are committed when the sun's watchful eye is turned elsewhere.

