

Focus on Freeport #5: Holiday in the Sun

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A d20 System Freeport Adventure for Characters Level 2-4

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Two hundred years ago, the first Sea Lords of Freeport (Drac and Francisco) took the combined fleet of the city on a three month long journey of pillage and plunder. Known as the Great Raid, this action netted the city more booty than it had ever seen, and established the reputation of the Sea Lords. Although Drac and Francisco were later to struggle bitterly for rulership of the city, the Great Raid is remembered proudly by the people of Freeport.

This pride manifests itself in a yearly holiday, marking the day that the fleet returned to harbor. Known as Swagfest, this celebration shuts the city down for the better part of two days (one day to party, one day to recover and clean up). Many special events are held during Swagfest, and local luminaries never miss the opportunity to butter up the public.

Adventure Synopsis

Through planning or happenstance, the PCs are in Freeport for Swagfest. Since it's a maritime city, many of the holiday's events are held down by the docks. The PCs are in the thick of the action as Captain Lydon kicks off the day's festivities. Everyone knows that Lydon is stumping to join the Captain's Council, and he's sponsoring some of the fun as a prelude to his bid. As Captain Lydon begins a speech, the PCs notice a furtive assassin and foil an attempt on the good captain's life.

The captain is grateful but downplays the seriousness of the incident. He goes on to host several other events, which the PCs can join in. In the late afternoon, it's time for the Rat's Run. Hundreds of people chase a dire rat through the streets. The rat leads everyone on a merry chase, and eventually disappears into a dilapidated building. Inside the PCs find something they didn't expect: an Aranea's lair filled with cocooned festival-goers.

Part One: A Knife in the Back

It's a bright and sunny day in the city of Freeport. The city is abuzz with activity because today is Swagfest, one of the city's most important holidays. Celebrating the Great Raid of Sea Lords Drac and Francisco, in which the fleet of Freeport terrorized the maritime nations for three months and brought back loads of booty, Swagfest is a day long party that shuts the city down with revelry.

Like most of the city's inhabitants, you find yourselves making your way down to the harbor. Captain Lydon, a well-known sea dog, is set to launch the festivities at 9 am sharp. You muscle your way through the crowd until you find a good spot to watch the Captain. He and his cronies are standing on a temporary stage near a long pier. The sun says it's nearly nine o'clock.

Give the PCs a few minutes to ask questions and get situated. They'll likely be curious about Captain Lydon. PCs can make Gather Info checks. Depending on their rolls, they can find out the following info:

Dirt on Captain Lydon

DC	Information
10	Captain Lydon's been on the seas for years. They say he once scared away an ogre by showing off his rotten teeth!
15	Word on the street is that Captain Lydon is pushing for a seat on the Captain's Council. He's sponsoring many Swagfest events to gain public support.
20	Some say Lydon's interest in politics is linked to his waning fortunes as a merchant. Maybe he wants some of Drac's dirty money.
25	Lydon owes a big gambling debt to Finn, a notorious crimelord.

After a short wait, a young lad on stage blows a trumpet and the crowd quiets down. Captain Lydon, a big fellow with long scraggly hair, steps forward. Raising his hands, he addresses the crowds.
"Arrrrggghhhh, mateys, and welcome to Swagfest! It be my honor to begin the festivities this year. As ye well know, Sea Lord Drac be busy with his lighthouse, so it falls on your humble cap'n to take this duty. Are ye ready for plunder and pillage?"

The crowd roars its approval. Captain Lydon continues his speech, but it's hard to hear him over the shouts of the crowd. Have the PCs make Spot checks (DC 20) at this juncture. Anyone that succeeds catches a glimpse of a hooded figure slipping through the crowd towards the rear of the stage. The figure is

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only visible for a second, and then melts back into the crowd.

The PCs have spotted Jesswin, a hitwoman hired by Finn to take care of Captain Lydon. It seems the Crimelord was not excited that Lydon chose to spend his money on Swagfest, rather than paying off his debt.

“Two hundred years ago,” shouts Captain Lydon, “the fleet of Freeport first took to the waves. Two mighty captains had we, and the landlubbers shuddered as the captains gave ‘em fire and Freeport steel!”

Jesswin inches closer to the stage and draws a dagger. Unless interrupted, she plunges her own Freeport steel into Captain Lydon’s back. Let the PCs make a second Spot check, this time opposed by Jesswin’s Hide check (her Hide skill is +11). Characters that succeed can take a partial action before Jesswin strikes.

When the fight breaks out, the crowd goes crazy. Anyone not on stage has their movement cut in half and takes a -4 penalty on all attacks and skill checks to the jostling of the crowd.

Combatants:

Captain Lydon, male human Exp6: 20 hp, AC 12.

Jesswin, female human Ass1/Rog5: CR 6; Medium-size humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 6d6; hp 26; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+3 Dex, +3 leather armor); Atk melee +8 (1d4+4/19-20/x2, +2 dagger), ranged +6 (1d4+2/19-20/x2, dagger); AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +9, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12.



Feats and Class Abilities: Death Attack, Dodge, Evasion, Mobility, Point Blank Shot, Poison Use, Sneak Attack +4d6, Uncanny Dodge, Weapon Focus (dagger).

Skills: Balance +6, Bluff +7, Climb +6, Disable Device +9, Disguise +9, Escape Artist +7, Gather Info +7, Hide +11, Jump +6, Listen +4, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +7, Read Lips +4, Search +4, Spot +6, Swim +5, Tumble +7

Spells Prepared (1): 1st—*obscuring mist*

Magic Items: +2 dagger, gloves of arrow snaring

Tactics: Jesswin is there to kill Captain Lydon, and this she’ll try to do unless the PCs get in her way. She has studied her target for the required three rounds, so she’ll be able to make a Death Attack if she has the chance. She fights with a dagger in her right hand and her left hand free. This allows her to use her *gloves of arrow of arrow snaring*, or toss throwing daggers when needed.

Once the fighting starts, the Captain’s cronies try to spirit him away if possible. If Jesswin realizes that she’s surrounded and outnumbered, she makes a break for the dock. Rather than fight the crown into town, she’ll try to sprint down the dock and dive into the harbor, making use of her Mobility feat to get by pesky PCs. If she makes it into the water, she gets away clean.

Development: If Jesswin is captured, she admits nothing. The city watch shows up soon after, and takes her away “for questioning.” At the DM’s option, Jesswin could escape (or be sprung) and come back to haunt the PCs at a later date. They did, after all, ruin her rep.

Part Two: Fun for Everyone

With the attack (hopefully) beaten off by the PCs, the festivities can continue. Captain Lydon quickly thanks the PCs and then harangues the crowd into coming back. “There are ten kegs of ale heading this way, if only ye’ll stay!” With that, everyone calms down and the holiday is back on.

Lydon turns to the PCs. “Thank ye, for saving an old salt,” he says. “Stay by me and we’ll have a fine day yet.” If asked about the nature of the attack or warned to get off the streets, Captain Lydon waves the PCs off. “Nothing to worry about,” he asserts, “and there be a festival to run!”

“Francisco be not the only cap’n with a knife in his back,” jokes Captain Lydon. “Now, while we wait for the ale, let Swagfest commence!”

“As ye all know, the Great Raid did Freeport proud. And no pirate did more than One-eyed Jack. Lashed to the mast of Cap’n Drac’s flagship during a storm, he fought off over a dozen fishmen of the deep with only a belaying pin. Truly a salt to be reckoned with. Now, are ye ready for One-eyed Jack’s Stand?”

The crowd once again roars its approval. Captain Lydon makes his way to the scene of the first event, and he motions the PCs to follow him. A short distance away is a circle of packed earth with a large wooden pole driven into its center. A rope dangles from the top of the pole.

The rules of the game are simple. Contestants take the role of One-eyed Jack. They are tethered to the pole with the rope and given a padded club. A dozen sailors play the fishmen (AKA sahuagin) and they are armed with "harpoons" (actually padded staves). The fishmen attack One-eyed Jack until they are all defeated or Jack is unconscious. The contestant that defeats the most fishmen wins. Anyone that defeats all twelve fishmen wins automatically. Anyone that takes off the tether automatically loses.

Combatants:

12 human "fishmen" War1: 5 hp, Init. +1, AC 14, Atk +2 melee (1d6+1 subdual, padded staff).

Tactics: The sailors begin by attacking in ones and twos to test the opposition. All damage dealt is subdual damage, so one is in any real danger. If an opponent is worthy, the sailors begin to use teamwork. They'll try to flank "Jack" at first. If that doesn't work, they may try to overbear him or use special attacks like trip.

Treasure: The prize is "Jack's Eye," a jewel worth 25 gp. To determine the best NPC candidate, roll d8+3. One of the PCs must at least beat that number to gain the prize.

Development: Of course, gambling is rampant during the bouts. Rogues can have quite a field day playing the odds. Spellcasters may be tempted to cheat on behalf of their friends. Woe to them if the crowd catches them cheating though!

Part Three: Chasing the Rat

While One-eyed Jack's Stand is in progress, the ale carts arrive. The crowd's mood gets even jollier as the ale flows. Out in the harbor, several ships perform reenactments of famous engagements of the Great Raid. Throughout the day, inns and taverns do a brisk business with those more interested in hard drinking than fun and games. The PCs can do a bit of exploring if they like, but bring them back to Captain Lydon in mid-afternoon.

The action returns to the stage after lunch.

Captain Lydon mounts the stage again, and the crowd cheers for the old captain. He hoists a tankard and toasts the rowdy citizens of Freeport. The crowd responds with many shouts of "long live the Cap'n!" He smiles, exposing his terrible teeth, and clears his throat. "Alright, lads and lassies, time for some more fun. Ye all know that Captains Drac and Francisco chased the fat rats up and down the sealanes. Well, now it's yer turn!"

Lydon drags a small chest on stage and opens it carefully. He reaches inside with both hands, and pulls out something large and furry. The crowd recoils as he hoists aloft...a dire rat! At least three feet long and full of fight, the rat squirms in the captain's hands.

"The first salt to bring me back the fat rat gets the treasure. And remember he's worth more alive than dead!"

With that, Captain Lydon throws the huge rat in the midst of the crowd and pandemonium ensues!

In the press of the crowd, it's not possible to catch the dire rat at first. The best that can be hoped for the first few minutes is to keep it in sight. Have the PCs make Spot checks (DC 15) to keep track of the rat's general direction. Check results of 20 or better put the PCs right on track.

Due to circumstances, this is more a test of endurance than speed. With folks running in all directions (many, especially children, trying to desperately get AWAY from the rat), it's hard to build up speed. Have the PCs make Con checks (DC 15). Those with the Endurance feat gain a +4 bonus. Those that make it keep up with the rat. Those that fall behind can make Spot Checks (DC 12) to keep their friends in sight.

Play up the chaos of the crowd scene. Bullies may try to pick fights with some of the PCs ("that rat is mine!"). Children in

Further Adventures

Here are a few ideas for followup adventures stemming from *Holiday in the Sun*.

The Aranea's Origin

The PCs did not find out much about the Aranea or why it was in Freeport. Perhaps its presence was no coincidence. Was the Aranea put in Freeport by a higher power? If so, who, and will they be put out that their agent is dead?

Lydon's Debt

Captain Lydon still owes a big chunk of change to Finn, the crimelord. He may ask the PCs for assistance in this matter. They have proven themselves tough and capable after all. Similarly, he may ask them to be his bodyguards, or undertake a dangerous (yet potentially profitable) mission for him.

Finn's Vengeance

Speaking of Finn, he may want a piece of the PCs after the events of Swagfest. They foiled his assassin and helped Captain Lydon pull off his PR coup. When crimelords are unhappy, their followers are unhappy, and when their followers are unhappy, people wind up floating face down in Freeport harbor.



them. His jaws work futilely as he tries to gnaw his way free. Around the room are several large cocoons, some as large men.

Deep in the shadows you suddenly see a pair of eyes. An arachnid form is just visible in the webs. As mandibles click, a raspy voice emerges from this abomination. "If you leave now, I'll let you live," it whispers.

The characters have caught the Aranea in its spider form. Normally, the creature walks among the people of Freeport as a dwarf (using its Alternate Form ability). Swagfest was too good of a feeding opportunity to pass up, and several citizens have already been bound up for consumption.

Creature:

Aranea (see MM, page 19): 25 hp, Spells: 6 0-level^{3/4} *dancing lights, daze, flare, ghost sound, open/close*; 6 1st-level^{3/4} *cause fear, hypnotism, shield*

Tactics: The Aranea uses spells first, while the PCs make their way through the webs. Only when cornered does it resort to melee combat, and then it tries to use its poison to best effect (attacking the strongest looking party member, for instance).

Treasure: Hidden in the back corner, under several strands of webs, are a number of sacks. They contain: 5,000 sp, 300 gp, and one vial of *oil of slipperiness*. There is also a sheathed +1 rapier.

Development: Some of the cocooned victims may still be alive. This is an ideal time to introduce NPCs to your campaign. Today's rescued victim is tomorrow's adventure seed.

danger of being crushed may need rescuing. Finally though, most of the crowd will be left behind. The rat runs into Scurvytown, the poor part of Freeport. Have the PCs make one last Spot check (DC 10) to see the rat disappear through a basement window.

Part Four: A Bigger Problem

You see the rat dive through an open window and into the dark basement of a dilapidated building. You've left most other pursuers behind, many because they wouldn't be caught dead in Scurvytown.

The PCs find the house deserted. They can crawl through the window after the rat, or go into the house and down a set of stairs. Either way they end up in a short hall that ends with a door that's slightly ajar.

PCs that make a Listen check (DC 15) hear a faint clicking. When they open the door, they are confronted with the following scene.

The door swings open to reveal the rat all right, but he's in no condition to fight back. The room is filled with arcing webs, and the rat is firmly caught amongst

Part Five: Bedlam Hour

If the PCs return to Captain Lydon with the rat in tow, the crowd cheers them. The cap'n says he knew they'd win out all along. It is up to the PCs to decide if they want to tell the story of the Aranea or not. If they do, and especially if they bring graphic proof, they are treated like heroes.

After the Aranea's horde though, the "treasure" for the capture of the rat may seem small (a case of exotic spices worth 75 gp). Sometimes being a hero is its own reward.

The PCs return while there's plenty of Swagfest left. That means they can party until dawn if they want to. Having just received handsome gifts in public, they should watch their backs though. This is Freeport after all!

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