

CRIES FROM THE ATTIC™



AN UNEXPECTED LESSON ON HIRELINGS...

Okay, I know a lot of you loathe anything that even smacks of reality TV. And, for good reason. With the exception of a few shows (like *Survivor*, *Amazing Race*) I usually avoid them myself.

But when CBS started running promos for their new series, *Pirate Master* — the gamer in me was curious.

To me, the idea of a group of adults sailing a ship around the South Seas playing pirate and searching for treasure seemed like the ultimate LARP (Live Action RPG). Ten minutes into the first episode, however, it was clear *Pirate Master* had run aground and would fail to deliver. Too bad.

Even so, I haven't been able to stop myself from watching it week to week. I mean, there are aspects of it that remind me of *True Dungeon* at Gencon.

Despite the fact the show thus far has largely fallen flat there have been a few good moments.

I like the part where the crew drew marbles from a bucket to see which team they'll be on. And, I like it when the Captain gives out a 'black spot' before voting. The crew impaling a card on the upturned blade of a saber when deciding if they're going to mutiny or not? That's kind of cool too.

The reason I mention *Pirate Master*, however, is because I'll never handle hirelings in an RPG quite the same. And that's because the show reminded me of a few simple truths when it comes to human nature.

Familiarity breeds contempt. And, the fact that nothing will make a person hate someone MORE than the perception (real or imagined) that someone else is getting MORE than them.

Under the pirate charter on the show, the Captain receives 50% of all booty that crew recovers. His officers split 50% of what's left. And, only then does the crew get their shares.

Of course, the Captain is supposed to leverage his shares to better wield power over the crew. Paying off enemies. Buying loyalty. Bribing dissenters. At least that's how the gamer in me thinks.

But, so far — that's not how it's been playing out on the show. The current captain (as of this writing) is so tight fisted with his shares that his crew immediately began to resent him.

At one point it appears to dawn on him that the

crew may turn. So, he gives them a \$200 bonus (out of the \$20,000 share he just collected).

Predictably, the crew resent him even more for throwing them 'scraps'.

This got me thinking about the typical hireling in a fantasy RPG.

Bearing torches. Hauling equipment. Wrestling bags of swag and treasure back to the surface. Being attacked by all manner of terrifying beasts. Mama never said there'd be days like THIS!

And what do they get in return? A silver piece a day? Three square meals? (if they're lucky).

Pirate Master made me realize just how despised the typical adventuring party would be in the eyes of the typical hireling. Especially if they fail to pay out bonuses or say a kind word every now and then.

I'll likely be missing a few episodes of *Pirate Master* in the coming weeks (no loss there). Origins is approaching. And then GenCon. Exciting times.

Oh, one comment about the strips before I leave you. Last issue the *Knights* were on the brink of reaching the "Temple" — a journey that's taken them many issues. With so much happening this issue (as you will see) we decided to push the Temple story to next month's issue so we'd be able to devote more pages to it.

Just in case you were left wondering.

Hope you enjoy the issue in hand. Till next time — Game on!

Jolly R. Blackburn

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