Vignette

You walk the midnight post onboard the flagship *Unrequited*. Tap, tap, tap, go your boots as they strike the lime-washed deck. You spin on your heel and walk back. Truth be told, there is little for you to do. The convicts carried by this prison ship, bound for Australia, are all below decks. Even if they wanted to escape, they have no place to go, save the unforgiving sea. And if a few of them accidentally slip overboard, it won't trouble you overmuch.

As you are completing another circuit around the top deck, the captain approaches you, a broad smile on his pudgy face. "All well, Warden Hanebuth," he says. "Not much to do but wait."

"Knock on wood, captain," you reply sourly. He seems confused by the request, but he complies. He then sucks his knuckles and complains mightily about a splinter.

Suddenly, a crash! A bang! A host of onomatopoeias, all of them ominous!

The doors clatter open, and out spill a gaggle of prisoners in their tattered rags. Some carry clubs and swords. You spot Behram, one of the meanest sots you've ever met. Behind him is Sophie, as cold and calculating as a snake. You draw your rapier and shout the alarm. One of the sailors tries to light the torches, but misses. The sail catches, instead.

It's prisoners against wardens and, in theory, sailors, though most of them clamber up to the nest and watch you all scrabbling below. Some take bets on who will win as they scale the mast. It quickly becomes a fight for your life--or, at least, a fight for your dignity. One prisoner manages to rip off your tear-away pants (in retrospect, a poor choice for sailing), and another makes off with your coat. You stand in your shirt sleeves and smallclothes, a pistol in one hand, a rapier in the other.

The burning sailcloth crashes to the deck, casting you all in a bronze glow as you battle for control of the *Unrequited*. A few of the lowliest sailors decide to shove it off of the deck and into the

cold sea. Their attempt is clumsy: they knock over several barrels of pitch. The fire chews away at the ship, and before long, the *Unrequited* is taking on water.

A viciously visaged prisoner with a stolen rapier leaps at you. Saltwater spills across the deck as the ship lists to the side. You bring up your blade, nearly too late, and catch your opponent's rapier on your crossguard. You shove him back and clamber to your feet, trying not to slip in the brine.

You don't know how this could have happened. This convict ship was built to keep vagabonds behind bars, locks, and chains. But no more. The vagrants have broken loose.

You whip around as a man shouts behind you. You bring up your pistol, prepared to fire. Just as your finger curls around the trigger, the man opens his mouth. And begins to sing.

"Heart o' the sea!
If such a battle be joined
'Tween folk abroad, one such as thee,
Then I must say
My dear I pray
That your heart beats for me!"

Your pistol points at his chest. Your eyes glisten at the loveliness of his tuneless song. Around you, the sea and ship roils as the convicts rise up.

What do you do?

Setting

"Oh, better far to live and die

Under the banner o'love I fly,

Than play a sanctimonious part,

With a lust-filled head and a swooning heart.

Away to the cheating world go you,

Where pirates all are well-to-do;

But I'll be true to the song I sing,

And live and die by my lover's ring!"

--Your crew, probably.

The waves roll beneath the holystoned hull. The ship creaks and groans as it barrels through the sapphire waters, bearing you ever westward. You are aboard one of the 9 ships of the Second Fleet, a collection of vessels bearing prisoners and crew from England to Australia. There, you will form a penal colony, as the First Fleet did before you.

The year is 1788. The Second Fleet, sailing six months after the infamous First Fleet reached Botany Bay, hosts 7 convict ships and 2 Naval escorts. Your ships carry 900 convicts, marines, seaman, civil officers, and free people across the Great Southern Ocean. Your fleet has just left Cape Town and is now bound for the Bay, where the naval officers--or wardens--will establish a penal colony of all the convicts onboard.

The lieutenant overseeing the Naval escort has famously declared, "Centuries from now, 'tis the First Fleet that shall be but a footnote in history! While the Second Fleet shall be the...note!"

Factions

The Navy

The Naval Officers aboard the Second Fleet are marines, petty officers, and wardens. They have been appointed by His Majesty King George to ferry these n'er-do-wells from the blessed British Isles to Australia, that good-for-nothing desert/swamp combo. Naval officers can be any gender and should be aged between 18 (for lower-ranking officers) and 50.

Naval types trust one another and may trust the hired seaman and sailors. They will certainly not trust the prisoners, though they may develop non-trust-based relationship with them (including romance).

Naval ranks, in order from highest (and rarest) to lowest are:

- Captain
- Lieutenant/Master
- Chaplain
- Gunner/Botswain
- Midshipman
- Mate

The Prisoners

Prisoners can come from all walks of life. They can be any gender or age. Their crimes are grave enough to have earned them a permanent exile to Australia. Considering the time period, this wouldn't take much: they could've been caught for anything from murder to stealing loaves of bread.

Prisoners, in general, trust no one. They are especially wary of naval officers. They may find common ground with sailors and with one another, but "there are no heroes among thieves."

The Sailors

Sailors, like prisoners, can come from any walk of life, though they *should* have some sailing background (this could be their first voyage). The sailors were hired by the Royal Navy and are in

their employ for the duration of the voyage, though mutiny is always a (bad) option. They can be any gender and any age. They are the group most likely to include non-British characters.

Sailors may be trustful or suspicious of naval officers: they are in the officers' pay, but gold doesn't necessarily earn trust. Sailors would probably be wary of the prisoners, but may have sympathy for them or even have traits and hobbies in common with them. Raquetball, anyone?

Conflict

Disaster has stricken the Second Fleet. While sailing from Portsmouth to Rio de Janeiro, you sailed near a reef just below the dappled surface of the water. Beautiful creatures, half fish and half woman, draped themselves over the rocks and watched as you sailed past. They opened their mouths and sang a tune so hauntingly beautiful that every person aboard the Second Fleet lost their hearts.

But not to the sirens. Several of them were out of tune (likely from skipping Bewitching Song practice), and their notes fell flat...literally. Rather than driving you into their scaled arms, the sirens' song kindled your lust for your fellow crewmates. Every person aboard the Second Fleet is in love with someone else aboard, thanks to the musical spell.

The sirens, enraged by their failure, have followed your fleet from Rio de Janeiro, continuously singing. Every sailor, warden, and prisoner may fall in love with 20 people in a single day, thanks to the constant music.

Saving Grace

Thanks to the good Lord and patron saint of sailors, Davy Jones (source), your crew has come up with an ingenious, if unorthodox, plan to subvert the sirens' call. If your crew cannot hear the sirens, they cannot fall under their love spell. Therefore, anytime they are tempted, they must

raise their voices in song. The more skilled (and long) their vocalizations, the more successful they will be in ignoring the sirens' magic.

Some of the crew have taken to this solution, singing even when there is no real reason for it. Still others use the power of song to try to woo one another, once they have fallen under the sirens' song.

It is bedlam.

Object d'Desire

The Second Fleet still sails for Botany Bay, where you hope to establish a new Australian penal colony. But some of the prisoners--and even the wardens--have no desire to reach Australia. I mean, the spiders there are as big as dinner plates.

Every character has their own goals and motivations, along with their own personality. Whether you plan to help or hinder the voyage is your choice entirely.

A Final Note...

Good luck on your voyage, mates...and don't be afraid to fly the proud banner.

The banner of love.

Player Characters

Players may write their own characters. They may also choose from one of the characters below, or cobble together a new character using these traits. All written characters must be approved by the Gamemaster, to avoid over- or under-powering a character.

Convict 1: Thug Behram

High Concept: You were born in India. By day, you seem like a businessman; by night, you are the leader of Thuggee, an organized gang of professional robbers and murderers. You and your organization believe in Kali, a Hindu goddess, and think yourselves as her children. As Kali's child, you believe that you can save human lives by killing some people. Without your sacred service, Kali might destroy all humankind. Murder is how you show loyalty to Kali: you belive that when you kill up 1,000 people, Kali will appreciate your effort and give you immortality.

Trouble: You need to kill 1,000 people to show your loyalty to Kali, but you were arrested when you tried to kill the 931st sacrifice. You need to finish your murdering spree without being caught by the warden.

Because of your beliefs, you feel you must stay "pure" in order to gain immortality. If you fall in love with female characters, you will feel mental stress. Your physical attributes will weaken.

Phase One: You were arrested. Now, you must finish your 1,000-person killing spree.

Phase Two: You need to avoid falling in love with female characters.

Phase Three: To successfully murder 70 people, convince other convicts to help you. You cannot be caught by the naval officers.

Skills:

1) Great: Will

2) Good: Burglary, Sing

3) Fair: Rapport, Stealth, Contacts

4) Average: Athletics, Investigate, Fight, Physique

Stunts:

1) Indomitable: +2 to defend against Provoke attacks specifically related to intimidation and fear.

2) Demagogue: +2 to Rapport when you're delivering an inspiring speech in front of a crowd. (If there are named NPCs or PCs in the scene, you may target them all simultaneously with one roll rather than dividing up your shifts.)

3) Slippery Target: Provided you're in darkness or shadow, you can use Stealth to defend against Shoot attacks from enemies that are at least one zone away.

Convict 2: Giulia Tofana

High Concept: You're a woman with a broken heart. Your marriage was a failed one, and after more than a decade of misery, you poisoned your husband. You then began selling your poison to women trapped in difficult marriages. From then on, you became known as a friend to the troubled wife ,and received many referrals.

Trouble: Relationships with male characters will invoke your terrible memories of your last marriage. You will feel mental stress when you fall in love with male characters. Your poison will become more powerful when you are in such relationship.

Phase One: You were arrested because your client, Nancy, decided to go back to her married life and betrayed you to the authorities. After returning to her husband, Nancy died. Your desire to help unhappy wives has grown tenfold since her death.

Phase Two: If a female character is in love with a male character, any attempts to help her will be more powerful.

Phase Three: You build relationships with other characters onboard. Relationships with female characters make you more powerful.

Skills:

1) Great: Empathy

2) Good: Contacts, Provoke
3) Fair: Crafts, Resources, Rapport
4) Average: Athletics, Fight, Lore, Notice

Stunts:

1) Lie Whisperer: +2 to all Empathy rolls made to discern or discover lies, whether they're directed at you or someone else.
2) Money Talks: You can use Resources instead of Rapport in any situation where ostentatious displays of material wealth might aid your cause.
3) Danger Sense: You have an almost preternatural capacity for detecting danger. Your Notice skill works unimpeded by conditions like total concealment, darkness, or other sensory impairments in situations where someone or something intends to harm you.

Convict 3: Sophie Charlotte

High Concept: You are one of Giulia's clients. Unlike her, you are cold-blooded. You poisoned your husband, your lover, and your aunt only because you thought they were all obstacles to your happiness. You did not come to the Second Fleet quietly, and you are plotting your escape.

Trouble: Any relationship will weaken your abilities and emotional stamina. You trust no one.

Phase One: You have never met Giulia in-person. Meeting her on the Second Fleet will surprise and unnerve you, as she is very different than you expected. You may decide to overthrow her and take over her business.

Phase Two: You prefer to work alone. If you're in a relationship with Guilia, you will be willing to work for her.

Phase Three: You may convince other convicts to help you in your escape plans, though you will not trust them.

Skills:

1) Great: Fight
2) Good: Resources, Sing
3) Fair: Athletics, Physique, Will
4) Average: Empathy, Crafts, Notice, Lore

Stunts:

1) Killing Stroke: Once per scene, when you force an opponent to take a consequence, you can spend a fate point to increase the consequence's severity (so mild becomes moderate, moderate becomes severe). If your opponent was already going to take a severe consequence, he must either take a severe consequence and a second consequence or be taken out.
2) Savvy Investor: You get an additional free invoke when you create advantages with Resources, provided that they describe a monetary return on an investment you made in a previous session. (In other words, you can't retroactively declare that you did it, but if it happened in the course of play, you get higher returns.)
3) Lies upon Lies. +2 to create a Sing advantage against someone who has believed one of your lies already during this session.

Warden: Jasper Hanebuth

High Concept: You're a warden with "skeletons in your closet." You killed your illicit lover, and though it was an accident, you are running from your past. To hide your unbearable history, you applied to become a warden of the Second Fleet and were accepted. You have a stellar naval background.

Trouble: You're a lusty man. It is hard for you to avoid falling in love with both male and female characters, but when you do, your physical abilities weaken. Your seductive abilities grow stronger.

Phase One: Your wife nearly caught you cheating in your shared home. To hide your secret lover, you pushed her into an underground cellar. You didn't check on her for several hours, though, and she died of asphyxia. You are still married, but running from your past. The Second Fleet and Australian penal colony are your salvation.

Phase Two: You want to hide your history, but you cannot resist romantic temptation. When you fall in love with a female character, you pretend to work with her toward her goals, even if it goes against your naval training.

Phase Three: You have become stronger and more devoted to the navy. You try to make your romantic entanglements into flings, and focus on your career.

Skills:

1) Great: Sing
2) Good: Shoot, Contacts
3) Fair: Burglary, Drive, Investigate
4) Average: Athletics, Fight, Will, Resources

Stunts:

1) Mind Games: You can use Sing in place of Provoke to make mental attacks, as long as you can make up a clever lie as part of the attack.
2) Ramming Speed! : When ramming another vehicle, you ignore two shifts of damage. So if you ram and hit for four shifts, you only take two yourself.
3) Called Shot: During a Shoot attack, spend a fate point and declare a specific condition you want to inflict on a target, like Shot in the Hand. If you succeed, you place that as a situation aspect on them in addition to hitting them for stress.

Sample Adventure:

Notes On Love: This setting by its very nature will require the player characters to fall in love with NPCs or even each other. Some players may rankle at the idea of their character's emotions being decided for them. It is important for the GM to make clear that while the love is indeed a forced condition, how that love manifests itself in roleplay is entirely up to the player. Love can take many forms, after all.

The Non-Euclidean Love Polygon of Doom

It has been one week since the disastrous encounter between the Second Fleet and the out-of-tune sirens, yet they still doggedly pursue their quarry in a jealous rage. Through a combination of willpower, stupid luck, and serendipitous blossomings of love, the fleet has managed to stick together and maintain course. How long this state of affairs will persist is unknown. Cape Town is the next stop on the journey to Australia, and there is still a long, long way to go.

The player characters begin play on the convict ship Darlington II. Whether they began the voyage on this particular boat or arrived here through some love-drunk misadventure is up to the individual players. Irregardless, the PCs wake to find themselves in the ship's passageway. They are huddled in a disarrayed pile of some twenty odd warm, sweaty, snoring bodies, many of them are also naked. They are a mix of convicts and sailors, with a warden or two sprinkled in for color.

Provide the PCs with the opportunity to act as they wish, perhaps to roleplay out this somewhat awkward situation. Then tell the players they notice the ever present sound of the sirens

is conspicuously absent, the sounds of the sea now the loudest thing they can hear. Loudest, that is, until a gunshot rings out above decks. Muffled shouting ensues, and the pile of seafarers begins to stir.

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The sirens have retreated deep below the waves to observe one of their religious holidays. They'll be spending the day with their families, taking a load off, and performing dark rituals of sacrifice to their forsaken gods. The sirens will return later, but their absence should remain generally mysterious. However, if the players ask around they may get some hints about this from the ship's crazed old cook, Pickles, whom everyone loves irrespective of magical infatuation.

The absence of the sirens has created a very dangerous situation. Their constant presence created a chaotic but somewhat stable equilibrium of amorous flings, with no affairs lasting more than a few hours at most. With them gone, everyone has remained locked in love with the same person overnight, giving the love time to grow deeper and stronger. This has resulted in the love spell overwhelming some of the more unhinged NPCs of the Second Fleet.

Tack "The Tack" Reynald, an infamous serial killer and one of the most dangerous criminals being transported by the First Fleet, is one of the individuals most affected by this persistent love. He has fallen for Captain Abernethy of the HMS Edamame, one of the fleets two naval escorts. Rumors had spread weeks earlier of an illicit relationship between Abernathy and Captain Bloeviant of the Darlington II that took place *before* the siren incident. Reynald has taken Bloeviant hostage in hopes of capturing the attentions of his beloved Abernathy, whom he plans to abduct, marry, and start a family with back in Rio de Janeiro.

Through a combination of loyalty, respect, fear, and love, Reynald has assembled a considerable group of convicts and sailors to aid in his mutiny. Against them will stand the wardens and loyal sailors lead by Lieutenant Prescott, who is deeply in love with Bloeviant. Unbeknownst to
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all, the bound and gagged Bloeviant is now enamored with Reynald. He was certainly excited when the criminal roused him from slumber with rough hands and heavy rope!

Reynald took Bloeviant hostage as the PCs began to wake, and it was he who fired the shot they heard. As the crew becomes aware of the situation and begins forming together to resist, Reynald saw fit to frighten them with his new toy blunderbuss, stolen from the captain's quarters.

The situation is headed for a stand off. How the PCs choose to engage is largely up to them. They may wish to join Reynald's mutiny, seeing it as an opportunity to further their own goals. In this case, they will have to contend with the remaining loyal crew and the assured reprisal from Captain Abernethy. The PCs may instead see the mutiny as a futile endeavor, seeing as the convict ship has limited arms and little chance of reaching land on its own. They may choose to stop Reynald through guile, force, or perhaps even love. Or they may have some other approach, as players are bound to do the last thing the GM expects.

Whatever approach they choose there will be challenge. Reynald is both a skilled combatant and too insane to listen to reason. The same cannot be said of his followers, however. Abernethy has the full might of the HMS Edamame behind him, and will be quick to investigate the disturbance aboard the Darlington II. If the situation is not defused before he arrives, Abernethy will fire warning shots before attempting a boarding action.

If dramatically appropriate, the GM may have the sirens return early to stop their prey from destroying each other. This might happen at the height of the action, or as the situation begins to resolve. Note that this twist should not be used as a means for the GM to resolve the conflict on their own, but rather to provide a new wrinkle to the problem the PCs must deal with.

Extras

Love: The siren song causes both PCs and NPCs to fall in love with each other. Player's are able to use either their Will or Sing skills to resist this effect each time the GM wishes to apply it. Whom each individual is falling in love with is up to the GM, who may periodically have the effect reset on a person-to-person basis. To offset some of the difficulty of keeping track of these relationships, this sample adventure leaves the sirens largely absent and the love interests set. For adventures in which the sirens are omnipresent, the GM may wish to adopt a particular rule for generating new love interests. For example, falling in love with the last person you touched, or looked at, or who is physically closest.

Rule Mod: SING skill is treated as DECEIVE.