5 Torches Campaign World—First Pitch

**THE BIG STAGE:**

The world is a parallel Earth. Everything in Europe, Asia and Africa is just like our world (except some of the more mythical stuff is real), up to the year 1000 AD.

However, Atlantis was real, as was the Pacific Continent of Lemuria. Both of these continents sunk beneath the waves in 7000 BC or so.

Refugees from Atlantis settled in North America, and refugees from Lemuria settled in South America.

Angry with the gods for the destruction of their homelands, the Atlanteans and Lemurians turned to dark sorcery, necromancy and demonology and created nightmare civilizations in the Americas.

These civilizations however, predicated on evil and chaos, degenerated and fell into ruin over the millennia. They left behind ruined cities and other sites crammed with the demonic products of their wizardry, the undead remnants of their peoples, the monstrous products of their experiments and strange artifacts of power and danger.

**THE WORLD CHANGING SEQUENCE**

In the year 1000 AD, Leif Erikson sailed from Greenland to North America and established a camp in a place called Vinland (Newfoundland in our world today). But, in this world Leif found a much different continent than he did in our world. Fantastic ruins, tribes of goblins, gold, magic and unknown wonders.

Soon the Icelanders and Norwegians established the Earldom of Vinland on Newfoundland and came in some numbers to explore the ruins and carry off gold and other treasures.

In the year 1066, when William of Normandy defeated Harold Godwinson, King of England, at the battle of Hastings, Harold, unlike in our reality, didn’t die, but was carried off the field to be nursed back to health. As William executed his sometimes genocidal suppression of English rebels, Harold led a refugee fleet westward. Having heard of the Vinland settlement, they tried to head for it, but were blown farther south and entered what we call the Chesapeake Bay, founding a settlement called Kingstown at the site of our world’s Baltimore.

The English settlement, over the next 60 years or so, grew into a kingdom, due to the influx of English unhappy with Norman rule and various fortune-hunters, exiles and younger sons from various lands in Europe.

An Earldom of Danish pagans, Thorsland, was founded around our Philadelphia and western New Jersey, and several smaller Irish, Scottish and Welsh settlements were founded along the coasts what we would call New York and New England. Maybe some Moorish pirates on South Coast

**THE CAMPAIGN AREA**

The campaign begins in 1130 AD. King Harold V is on the throne in Kingstown. Numerous Earls rule territory in his name in what we would call central Maryland and southern Pennsylvania.

Modern York County, PA is called Jorvikshire, and Jorvikburg is a fortified settlement at the site of York City. The Earl of Jorvikshire rules from Jorviksburg. Jorvikshire is the northern border of the English Kingdom (called Nessex—New-Saxons).

To the North and West of Jorvikshire are the wilderness lands, filled with monsters and the haunted remains of the Atlantean civilization (including the haunted city of Deadman’s Town, on the site of modern Harriburg, and a rumored undead kingdom to the west, centered on a terrible city on the site where 3 rivers meet).

To the East is another English Earldom (Lancashire) and further east lies the Danish Thorsland.

**CAMPAIGNING:**

The “cash crop” of the English Kingdom is gold and artifacts taken from the remains of the Atlantean civilization. Adventuring is therefore a series business. Local Lords, Earls and the King grant licenses to adventuring companies, with privileges and strings attached.

The characters will start as charter holders on the northern border of Jorviksburg, with their own base and connections to notables to the south. One sort of adventure is finding treasure in the wilds, another sort is arranging to sell the treasure for cash, and another sort is dealing with rivals, thieves and personal enemies in the kingdom.

Characters must always have an heir to take over their share of the business. New players entering campaign after the start will bring something to “buy in” to the business (by DM gift).

Setting up one’s own lordship outside the business won’t be hard. All PC’s will be human.

**ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES:**

Advantages:

* use real world language, nationality, history, religions---simple
* use real world geography—simple

Disadvantages:

* use real world language, nationality, history, religions---constricting, less fantastic
* some players might not like all-human characters?

**SOCIOLOGY/ECONOMICS OF THE KINGDOM**

**Key Principal 1:** Land is cheap, people are not. Since there are very limited number of people to work the land, and there is almost endless vacant arable land, land-holding won’t be like medieval serfdom, more like early American landholding with relative ease to get hold of some land for oneself. Therefore, no serfs, mostly either freemen farmers or young hired labor, all free to move on at will.

**Key Principal 2:** society must be organized for defense. Monster attacks are frequent, especially at border, threats everywhere.

**Key Principal 3:** every man must have a lord. A lord is the king’s representative and is responsible for law, order, tax collection and raising and leading troops. Every man of the kingdom must currently be oath-bound to some lord.

**The Organization**: the kingdom’s base unit is a “Hundred” which is roughly 5 miles by 5 miles. Within the Hundred are 100 family plots, each called a Hide (roughly 125 acres each, total of 20 square miles). Each hide is required to have one member as part of the Hundred’s militia, which can be called out by its lord for law enforcement or defense of the Hundred. The Hundred must have a Lord, who typically owns an estate of 5-10 hides (1-2 square miles) and must build a hall or manor house, a tower and a church. The priest of the church is supported by a 5-hide piece of endowed property. The Lord’s estate and church land are worked by a combination of hired men and/or men of the hundred who work a fixed time in place of cash taxes. When the King or Earl summons the Army of the Shire, each hundred is responsible for sending 20 armed men to serve for up to 2 months. The lord of the hundred must send one armed and horsed knight (himself or a son or retainer).

Each person in the Hundred must swear an oath of fealty to the Lord of the Hundred, usually on New Year’s Day, which has a one year duration. Each person then is subject to the lord as commander, judge and arbitrator for that year. The Lord also swears to be just, fair and even-handed in his pronouncements. The oath of the Lord has some bite, because if a lord is unjust, it is relatively easy to leave the Hundred and find land in another one.

Some Hundreds have a single village or fortified burg in the center where all the inhabitants live, but others see the folk spread among several villages of 5-20 houses. In the city of Kingston, each 100 houses in the town are organized as a Hundred.

Sometimes the Lord of a Hundred might be the abbot of a monastery located there, or even the bishop of a Shire Church.

A Shire is an area whose territory spreads no more than 1 day’s march from the center of the Shire. A shire is also called and Earldom, since it is ruled by an Earl. Each Shire has a bishop in charge of the clergy of the Shire. His church is called the Cathedral or Shire Church.

When the King levies a tax, the Lords collect it, keep 1/3, and pass the rest to the Earl, who keeps 1/3 and passes the rest to the King.

Either the King or the Earl can raise the army of the Shire. He sends a summons, and each Hundred must send 20 militia and 1 knight to the meeting place, who must bring their own arms and supplies, and serve for 2 months.

**Campaigning:** members of an adventuring party are required to swear the oath of fealty to the Lord, Earl or King who granted them the charter (all men must have a lord). Someone without a Lord is technically an outlaw, with no legal protections to their lives or property.