

# DARK•HERITAGE

Campaign Brief -- February 1, 2012

## Campaign Themes:

Swashbuckling fantasy action meets investigation and horror. Sword & sorcery on the surface, but just below that, this is Call of Cthulhu. Glen Cook's The Black Company and The Godfather meet Sergio Leone and Pirates of the Caribbean. This game will take place around the Mezzovian Sea, which is a Mediterranean-like body of water notorious for piracy. Intrigue and investigation are more important than High Fantasy conventions. This is sword & sorcery noir, with a strong dose of horror and the occult.

## Character Creation:

Begin the game at first level. Local humans to the area come in a Mediterranean-type look and feel. Characters with names that sound Spanish or Italian sound like locals to the area. Characters who sound like northerners (Viking or Slavic names) are also not unheard of, and characters with an Arabic or Persian are immigrants, traders and pirates who come from the east. In addition to those three broad human culture types, there are a few non-human races that are known in the area, including:

- Hellspawn, or hamazin. From the far northern deserts and canyonlands, beyond the sea shores, come the daemon-touched hamazin. With soot-black or gray skin, dark hair, and a small "crown" of 3-4 inch horns around their heads, their physical appearance is unmistakable. While most hamazin are simple refugees, trying to make a better life for themselves after the collapse of their empire to the north, they are often mistrusted, and their legacy of oppressing the humans of their empire has not been forgotten. Many of them belong to the Cherskii mafia as well.
- Jann come from the eastern nation of Qizmir, which they founded recently after conquering the kingdoms and hamlets of simple fishermen and farmers who lived in the east. Claiming that their distant ancestors come from the fabled City of Brass in ancient times before blending with the mortals of this world, the jann have an exotic look to them—brick red skin, pale wispy hair that often resembles a dancing flame, and shining golden eyes like a lion or wolf. Most of the jann in this area will be exiles or adventurers not well integrated into Qizmiri society, but traders, merchants and diplomats are also not an uncommon sight.
- Wildmen are people touched with a watered-down and "acceptable" form of lycanthropy. As the potency of the moon faded in their blood over generations, the wildmen started incorporating more into society. Their heritage is still evident in their physical forms, however—browed hirsute skin, sharp teeth and small claws, sharp eyes and ears, often hunched posture, as if their loping walk is unnatural and they yearn to drop to all fours. Many wildmen remain close to nature, and are consummate trackers, scouts and trappers, but increasingly they also serve as muscle for the Cherskii mafia.

Don't worry about needing to come up with a "balanced party." It's my responsibility to serve up a game appropriate for the characters I have, not the other way around.

## System:

*d20 Modern* and *d20 Past* make up the bulk of the system, using the "Shadow Stalker" campaign model for rules. Equipment and wealth, on the other hand, are handled as in D&D, not *d20 Modern*, so there is no Wealth check or score. Firearms are listed on the wiki. In addition, the Madness mechanic represents simpler (and native to *d20*) alternative to Sanity, and the level progression table is customized (and slower). Further details are available on the [wiki](#).

## Languages:

Being a fantasy world, languages from the real world are not assumed. The most common language in the area, is certainly Terrasan, a kind of Spanish/Italian analog. Northerners speak Balshatoi, a Viking-like language, and easterners might speak Qizmiri, which is not unlike Arabic or Persian. The wildmen have their own native language, Sylvan, as well. Some few ancient occult texts might be found in Tarushan, an exotic "Gypsy" language that is known by very few outside the vampire-ruled country of Tarush Noptii. Many hamazin traditionally speak Infernal, the language of daemons, as a hereditary language. It is also important to those who research the arcane and the eldritch.

## Religion:

People in DARK•HERITAGE are more likely to be superstitious rather than overtly religious. There are a number of gods and divinities recognized, and it's important to propitiate them rather than worship them—they don't care for mortals except to ensure that they give them the proper respect. The important deities are the Four Horsemen, Ciernavo the Black Pharaoh (conquerer), Peronte the Thunderer (war), Culsans the Miser (famine) and Caronte, the King in Yellow

(death). Other divinities include Istaria, famous for her temple prostitutes, Cathulo, a god sleeping at the bottom of the sea, Susnacco, the ultimate traveler, Selvans, the god of the wilderness, and Moloch, a god of fire and the sun. A few other gods exist, although propitiation or worship of them is strictly forbidden by law: Demogorgon, a primal god of the earth, Huudrazai, the blind, idiot stargod, and Yaji Ash-Shuthath, known as The Gate, who's worship leads to nothing but insanity.

#### **Local Detail:**

The campaign will start out in the small fishing village of Bara Gairo. Bara Gairo is politically and culturally attached to the much larger city Porto Liure, but it's a good day's sail away. While traffic is somewhat steady, Bara Gairo is mostly independent and self-sufficient. It is on an island that is mostly rocky and forested, with sudden sharp cliffs and rock formations jutting out of the thick trees. The land around the village itself is cultivated with several small farms. While Porto Liure is a very large and cosmopolitan city, Bara Gairo is only a few hundred people at most.

Porto Liure is an independent city-state infamous for its piratical heritage and famous still today for its privateers who sail with Letters of Marque across the Mezzovian Sea. It's also infamous as a "wretched hive of scum and villainy" where there are few laws, and those that exist are frequently ignored by the corrupt Watch. Life in Bara Gairo occasionally has overflow from this lifestyle—mobsters or pirates who are hiding quietly in the small villages, cultists who are staging drives into the city, spies and smugglers who need a place to hide their ill-gotten gains, or amoral sorcerers looking for a remote place to perfect their heretical craft.

#### **NPCs of Note:**

**Alfonso Galland** -- A middle-aged, sturdy fisherman. He owns a boat that he operates with his son, Étienne. He's widowed and also lives with his daughter, Vittoria, who is an accomplished tracker and hunter, preferring to avoid the company of the village-folk for the solitude of the woods. Despite his rather taciturn children, Alfonso himself is friendly and kind, and amongst the villagers, is the most likely to be convinced to help in a tough spot. Bring danger or trouble to his children, though, and you'll see a dark, ugly side of Alfonso.

**Braz Vargas** -- Owner of the Lima's Spirits, the inn, tavern, and general store for Bara Gairo. Braz is a large man, who displays a degree of wealth unusual for this small village. His common room is nearly always full, while his rooms rarely are. In addition to running the inn, he also is the local brewer, and most of the folks in the island drink small beer brewed by Vargas as their day to day drink. Friendly on the surface, Vargas is also notoriously untrustworthy and cowardly. The locals like to hang out in his common room and drink his spirits, but otherwise don't trust him with much.

**Inés Peixoto** -- Although she purports to be a simple assistant and serving woman at the Lima's Spirits; a distant relative of Vargas' taken in by his charity, it's a fairly open secret that Inés is actually an agent of the Castiada crime family. Rumors are thick in town about how Vargas got saddled with her, the most popular being that he was deep into debt with the mafiosos.

**Cesar Gonzalez** -- An extremely skilled craftsman, Cesar claims to be able to fix anything that comes through town, and make most of what else is needed. His skill with his tools makes him a popular person in town. Idle talk around town occasionally refers to rumors that he honed his skills working with the Castiadas, and has "retired" to the country--with a head full of secrets.

**Camilla Marcupez** -- The "mayor" and semi-official town leader, Camilla is a sturdy farmwife and highly religious person. She is greatly respected, but has little patience for fools.

**Evike von Rajecz** -- As a Tarushan "Gypsy" Evike is one of the most exotic townfolk. She lives simply, long having given up her roaming days, but is famous for her fortune-telling--which is only taken half-seriously by the townfolk.

**Kemal Hajdari** -- This brusque wildman is the town's primary source of non-seafood meat, furs and leathers. In addition to hunting and slaughtering, his house doubles as a small tannery and leatherworking facility. He's taken a liking to the similarly taciturn Vittoria Galland, calling her his "little niece." He knows more about the islands nearby--once you're beyond the beach, anyway--than anyone else around.

**Gisati Tahhi** -- A middle-aged hamazin woman, who lives in a large house with a bunch of children, none of them her own. Most of them are orphans--or presumed to be--who shipwrecked with her eleven years ago just north of the harbor. They were brought into the town, the house made for them with the wreckage from their ship (mostly by Alfonso Galland and Cesar Gonzalez), and her services as a small orphanage were seen as good for the town. A few more children were moved in after a bout of plague swept through the town. Curiously, she claims no knowledge of who her charges were or what the mission of the ship was that brought them. The captain was killed in the wreck.