



INFINIVERSE™

CAMPAIGN GAME UPDATE
VOLUME II





Roleplaying the Possibility Wars™

INFINIVERSE™

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VOLUME II

By Greg Farshtey

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Introduction

The Gaunt Man sat in his library, reflecting on the images his dark mirror, Wicked, had shown to him. They were different in many ways from what he would have expected after three full years of war. Despite the destruction and the presence of six other High Lords and the realm, the inhabitants of this pitiful world continued to struggle. Aided by citizens of other cosms, they persisted in resisting the fate that would inevitably be theirs.

Cursing, the High Lord of Orrorsh began to stalk back and forth. Had it not been for those damnable stormers and the eternity shard they had used against him, he would have destroyed this cosm long ago! Instead, he had emerged to find his "allies" squabbling among themselves while self-styled "Storm Knights" opposed them at every turn.

Still, it would do no good to brood. It was true that, based on the amount of possibility energy drained from the planet, a significant part of the war had passed while he was trapped in the maelstrom. But the time had not been wasted — despite the stormers' efforts, he could sense the nearness of the Nameless One.

Yes, this cosm *would* be conquered, and soon. Someone would become Torg, and even having lost precious time, the Gaunt Man still believed he was the best candidate to be the chosen of the Nameless One. All that was required was power, skill and a little ... imagination.

With more than a trace of madness in his laughter, the Gaunt Man turned and left the chamber, his mind already filling with images of horror ...

A Cosm In Peril

Welcome to *Infiniverse Update*, Volume II. The events related in these pages occurred during the third year of the Possibility Wars, and many of them came about as the result of responses received from *Infiniverse* subscribers.

Included in this volume are chapters on the six original *Torg* realms (Aysle, the Living Land, the Cyberpapacy, Orrorsh, the Nile Empire, and Nippon Tech), as well as the Land Below, the Space Gods' realm and Tharkold. In addition, details on the Aztec Empire are featured here (for those groups who played the *High Lord of Earth* adventure).

Also presented here are features on some of the pocket dimensions connected to Earth's cosm, new dispatches and rumors, character templates, the best of the letters received over the last year of *Infiniverse*, and a new one-act adventure set in Tharkold, *Hell on Earth*.

Finally, all realm chapters include updated maps of stela boundaries and Akashan reality trees. These maps were plotted from the Robinson projection map in the West End offices, so maps may look somewhat different when plotted on flat maps.

The *Infiniverse* Newsletter

Infiniverse is a 12-page, interactive newsletter published monthly by West End Games. An exciting new concept in gaming, *Infiniverse* allows *Torg* players throughout the world to affect the course of the official campaign through the results of their adventures.

Every issue of *Infiniverse* comes with a response form, much like the one found in the back of this book. This form allows subscribers to send us the results of the dispatches (short adventures) they have played, as well as to confirm or deny rumors we have published in the newsletter. These results are then tabulated at West End and used to plan the future of the Possibility Wars. Subscribers who reply to dispatches within two months of their publication receive a personalized response form detailing what happened as a result of their adventure.

Infiniverse results have prompted new realms to come to Earth, old ones to suffer serious setbacks, stela to be planted by High Lords or uprooted by Storm Knights. It is a part of what makes *Torg* an exciting, unique gaming experience.

How to Subscribe

If you would like to start receiving the *Infiniverse* newsletter and having a real impact upon the cosmverse of *Torg*, simply send a check or money order for \$25 (12 issues) to:

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This Volume

In this book, you will find updates on all of the *Torg* realms along with new source material to make your campaign richer and more exciting. This book is a companion volume to *Torg: Roleplaying the Possibility Wars* and you will need the boxed set to play the adventure contained herein.



CHAPTER ONE

*Aysle*TM



udlow moved quietly in the shadow of the ruined stone wall, pausing every now and then to ensure that no one was about. In the distance, he could hear the sounds of great armies clashing, and said a silent prayer to Dunad that the battle would not shift to this plain. If he and his small band did not reach Oxford in time ... no, he would not even think of that possibility.

He signalled for his dwarven brothers to follow and moved on. They would soon reach the southern border of House Vareth lands in the realm. Once away from this region, travel would be slightly easier, though still dangerous. But at least they would not have to feel their hearts break within them at the sight of so many of their people huddled in slave pens, waiting to be sold.

Cudlow glanced at the strange time-piece one of his human friends had given him. It warned that the sun would be rising soon. He would have

preferred to find a cave in which to hide until night returned, but they could not afford to waste the hours. Ardinay must be warned that longboats had sailed from Norway with the aim of blockading the ports that brought precious supplies to her capital.

To the east, the din of battle had ceased. Cudlow suppressed a shudder. He had taken some comfort in the martial noise, for it meant that at least some remnants of the Army of Light still fought. Silence meant only one thing these days: the Dark legions had triumphed again and were moving on to their next conquest.

Cudlow stopped by a pile of rock and waited for his fellows to join him. Before them lay a barren stretch of land, marked at the far end by a line of pickets. The wooden poles could barely be seen through the dawn mist, but all knew they marked the boundary of Vareth land. There were no guards anywhere in sight — all had been pressed into service to fend off the

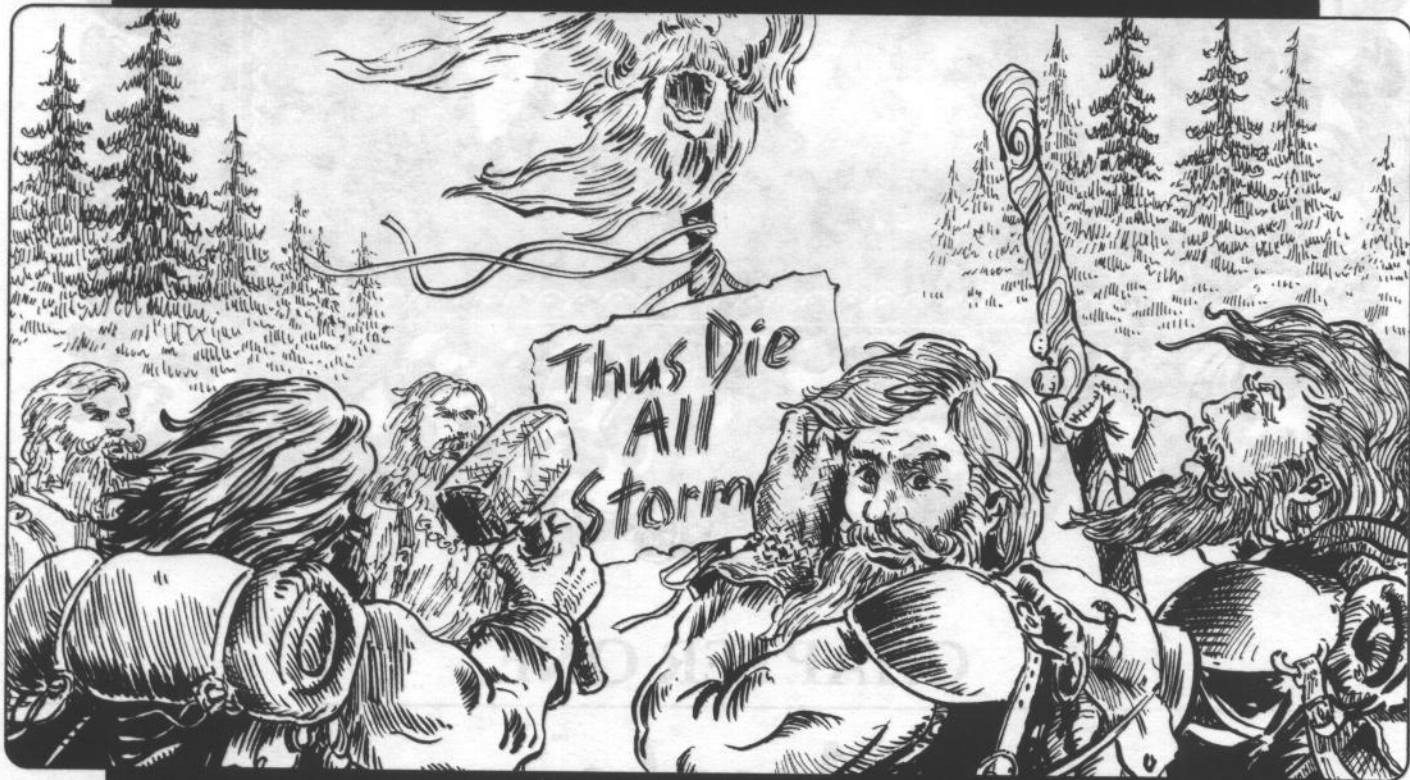
Light's desperate counterattack.

Taking a deep breath, the dwarf led a dash across the muddy field. He and his men were across the ten meters of ground in a matter of seconds, but something Cudlow saw brought him up short. There was a ... shape atop one of the poles. His men called for him in harsh whispers, but he shook them off, feeling somehow drawn to the picket.

The mist cleared long enough for him to see the shape resolve itself into a head, a dwarf's head. It took a moment for him to identify the features, and when he had, he felt his heart grow cold within him.

"It's Gutterby," he said softly. "They killed him. They mounted his head for all to see."

Stunned, his men crowded around the pole, staring at its ghastly decoration. The dead eyes of the dwarven freedom fighter stared back at them, unseeing. Tacked to the bloodstained picket was a sign, reading, "Thus die all stormers."



With a shout of rage and grief, Cudlow tore the sign free and hurled it into the mud. He wheeled on his men, tears streaming freely down his face.

"This is the fate that awaits us all, if we should fail," he said. "Let no dwarf forget this horrible sight. This moment, we rededicate ourselves to the destruction of the Dark."

Without another word, he turned and started toward the south, where lay the last hope of his people.

This Evil Triumphant

The realm of Aysle has been changed almost beyond all recognition over the last twelve months. The ascendancy of the Warrior of the Dark to the position of High Lord was only the beginning of a nightmare that has engulfed England, Ireland, Scotland, Scandinavia and portions of the Unified Commonwealth of Nations, and threatens to destroy the Light in both cosm and realm.

A revitalized army of the Dark has swept across the North Sea and smashed its foes throughout Great Britain, even as the new High Lord learns how to wield the power of Drakacanus. Ardinay's forces, disorganized and leaderless with Tolwyn in the cosm, are struggling to hold out in southern England, the last remaining refuge of the Light.

What makes all of this most amazing is that it has happened within but a few months. The Dark armies, apparently, were but waiting for someone who knew how to use them, and the Warrior is nothing if not a master tactician. In short order, she has seized control of massive areas of territory, begun an eastward expansion of her realm, and cut off her enemy from any hope of significant aid from other realms or nations. Needless to say, the Darkness Device has chosen its agent well.

It took Drakacanus some time to decide upon whom it would bestow its power. Uthorion had, after all, been largely chosen for it by the Gaunt Man and Heketon — and while he had

proven effective in the cosm, his simplistic strategies and twin obsessions with Ardinay and Tolwyn had proven his downfall here. Therefore, it was of exceeding importance that this choice be made wisely, lest the Light triumph and Aysle cease to be a factor in the Possibility Wars.

In the end, Drakacanus communicated its will to the Warrior of the Dark. She was to have a stela planted so as to encompass southeastern Finland. Once this was done, the Darkness Device would be able to transport itself to her side and make her a High Lord. In return, the Warrior need only vow to perform great acts of destruction, a promise she readily made.

Her first acts as High Lord were to dispose of any potential rivals. Wotan and his Wild Hunt immediately pledged loyalty to her and so were dispatched to the eastern borders of the realm to lead the attack on what was once the Soviet Union.

Malekere the elf also bowed before her and vowed that the Dark elves would continue to serve. Though suspicious of him, the Warrior gave him a position at court, the better to keep an eye on him.

The other claimants had merely to be eliminated. Simon Carr led a mage-killer on a merry chase before finally succumbing to its power. The Warrior ordered his body torn to pieces and given to various Dark mages to use in their *death* and *entity* spells.

A team sent to slay Uthorion found the former High Lord gone. It has since been learned that he remains in his dragon form and has fled to Orrorsh, hoping to gain favor from the Gaunt Man. (See Chapter Six, "Orrorsh.")

This has left the Warrior of the Dark in unquestioned control of Aysle. No longer needing to fear the stealthy tread of rivals for the power of Drakacanus, she could focus all her attention on the destruction of the Light.

The following are the updated statistics for the Warrior of the Dark. Note that skill and attribute increases were achieved by the Warrior before she became High Lord, and she can now increase her statistics only by conquering a cosm (see page 88 of the *Torg Rulebook*).

The Warrior of the Dark

DEXTERITY 14

Beast riding 16, dodge 20, fire combat 16, maneuver 23, melee weapons 25, unarmed combat 27

STRENGTH 15

TOUGHNESS 15 (30)

PERCEPTION 14

Alteration magic 17, evidence analysis 18, find 19, scholar (battle tactics) 20,

tracking 17, trick 21

MIND 13

Conjuration magic 15, science (logistics) 19, survival 17, test 20, willpower 24

CHARISMA 13

Charm 18, persuasion 21, taunt 20

SPIRIT 12

Corruption 30, faith (Kalim) 21, intimidation 30, reality (Aysle) 28

Possibilities: 50

Arcane Knowledges: fire 4, metal 4, darkness 4

Spells: altered fireball (improved), keen blade, create fear

Equipment: wheellock dag, damage value 13, ammo 1, range 3-5/10/25; two-handed sword (enchanted), damage value STR+7/22; plate mail, armor value TOU+15/30 (enchanted permanently by spell *armor of Draconis Metallica* — see page 80 of *Pixaud's Practical Grimoire*).

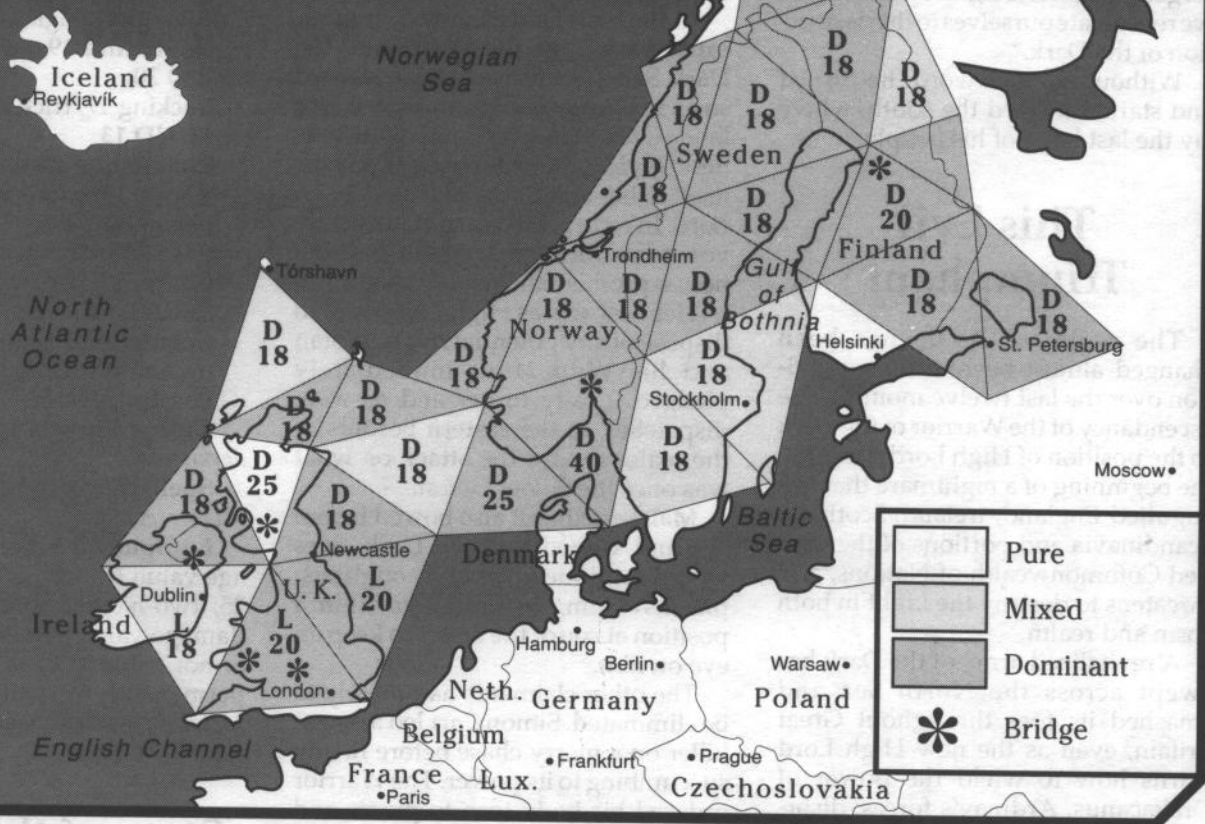
State of the Realm

The Aysle realm has enjoyed its first expansion in over two years, with two new stelae planted, extending the borders into the Unified Commonwealth of Nations. Despite the best efforts of Project: Omen and the Russian military machine, these stelae were unable to be uprooted before Dark troops arrived in force to protect them. Having established a foothold in that populous land, the Warrior of the Dark shows no signs of wishing to delay further conquest.

Strangely, the Warrior also ordered two stelae pulled up, one at 72°N, 22°E and one at 65°N, 8°E. Thus far, there have been no signs of axiom or world law shift, but she may have simply wished to have that option available should the tide of war shift.

Although she has made no formal

AYSLE REALM



declaration of war against the Cyberpapacy, it would appear that she hopes to cut off that realm's expansion to the east, as it is already blocked to the north and west. With Mobius advancing from the south, Malraux is rapidly being forced into a box.

The most telling effect of the Warrior's actions has been the vast increase in Dark areas within the realm. Only the stelae areas encompassing Dublin, Ireland and London, England remain in the Light. Many of the new Dark areas are still relatively weak, but so well-defended that attempts by Ardinay's armies to retake them have met with failure time after time.

While all of this has pleased the Darkness Device, it has created one area of vulnerability for the Warrior's forces: food. With the land growing

corrupt, crops will not grow and Dark warriors are forced to plunder the meager stores of villages through which they pass. To combat this, the Warrior has ordered her Viking navy to intercept and seize any vessels that might be carrying supplies to the Light. She has also negotiated a pact with 3327 to purchase food from Nippon Tech, in addition to weaponry, in return for North Sea drilling rights.

A factor in the Warrior's favor at present is that the Storm Knight population of Aysle is relatively low. With Uthorion apparently defeated and the situation stable in the realm, many Storm Knights left to pursue adventures in the Cyberpapacy or elsewhere. Now they are finding it extremely difficult to get back, due to Viking blockades around the Light areas and improved coastal defenses everywhere.

Only those Knights with great cunning have been able to slip into Aysle. Many of those who were in the realm when the Dark armies swept across the seas and down through Scotland now find themselves trapped behind enemy lines, forced to fight a guerilla war with little aid from Ardinay or the battered Home Guard. Storm Knight cells have sprung up throughout northern England, Scotland, Ireland and Sweden. In Norway and Finland, the Warrior has put her ravagons to work hunting down and exterminating Storm Knights.

In those areas now dominated by the Dark, the populations live in terror. Governance is strict and the slightest infraction is punishable by torture and death. The Warrior firmly believes that Uthorion put too much stock in grandiose plans, great death blows



that would send Ardinay to her knees. The new High Lord believes that the daily inflicting of pain on a subjugated people will break their spirit far faster than one massive atrocity ever could.

One Storm Knight who managed to escape from a Scottish port by stowing away on a Viking longship said that he had never seen a people so firmly held in the grip of fear outside of Orrorsh. The Warrior has gathered many of Aysle's creatures under her banner and unleashed them, with the result being entire towns being razed overnight, men massacred and women and children sold into slavery or worse. Unlike the Gaunt Man, the Warrior cares little for an "ecology of fear" — the Darkness Device demands blood and death, and that is what she intends to give it.

There are few spots in Dark Aysle in which the night skies are not lit by blazing buildings, or the silence not pierced by the screams of the maimed, the wounded, the desperate. Over

three-quarters of the Army of the Light has been destroyed, as wave after wave of Dark troops overwhelmed their defenses. No quarter has been given — while some officers have been taken prisoner by the Warrior's armies, most of the Light troops have simply been butchered where they lay. With precious little food for her own troops, the High Lord has no intention of filling the bellies of her enemies.

In many of these areas, only the Storm Knights remain to oppose her will. They have found it difficult to rally the people, making glorious deeds all the more important, if only to keep the spirit of resistance alive. As yet, their actions have amounted to little more than the sting of gnats against the hide of a dragon, but the Warrior fully expects this to change. It is for this reason that she is moving at full speed to conquer the entire realm, at which point she will be able to turn her full attention to slaying stormers.

The Siege of Oxford

Upon evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of her forces, one of the first realizations of the Warrior of the Dark was that the army assembled by Uthorion was basically flawed. Setting elves against elves, dwarves against dwarves raised conflicts in even the blackest of hearts. She decided that much of the Dark's failure in battle arose from the transformation of what should have been a campaign of conquest into a "civil war."

She therefore set her sorcerers to work on a solution to the problem, and find one, they did. Using an extremely powerful version of the *extradimensional gate* spell, the mages were able to pierce the veils surrounding Helgard, the home of corrupt shades and other beings in Norse mythos; Muspelheim, home of the Fire Giants; and Niffleheim, home of the Frost Giants. It was from here that the Warrior of the Dark would draw her new armies.

The Frost Giants and Fire Giants (see pages 44-45 of *Creatures of Aysle*) were quick to rally to her cause, having little love for humans. Many were already familiar with the Earth, having made forays into Scandinavia on their own since the advent of the Possibility Wars.

Another group eager for the sounds of battle were the rock trolls, a far more powerful version of the Lesser Folk of Aysle. Armed with swords and maces, the massive creatures have become the backbone of the Warrior's army. It is they who are credited with overcoming the defenders of Oslo and completing the conquest of Norway.

Although they tend to be undisciplined when not engaged in combat, the High Lord feels that she will have more than enough work for them to do in the coming months.

Note that rock trolls are technically creatures, not folk, therefore they need not worry overmuch about violating Aysle's cosm limits.

Standard Rock Troll

DEXTERITY 9

Beast riding 10, dodge 11, melee weapons 12, missile weapons 10, unarmed combat 11

STRENGTH 20

Climbing 22, lifting 21

TOUGHNESS 16

PERCEPTION 9

Tracking 11, trick 10

MIND 7

Survival 9, test 9

CHARISMA 7

SPIRIT 8

Intimidation 11

Additional Skills: two at +2 adds

Possibility Potential: some (45)

Equipment: sword, damage value STR+3/23; mace, damage value STR+2/22; hides, armor value TOU+1/17

Description: Rock trolls average 1.45 meters in height and are stocky and powerful creatures. Their flesh is bronze in color and the hair that rings their faces is dark brown. Their teeth are large and uneven, and they subsist on raw meat. They are crude and boisterous, often celebrating a victory by a drunk that lasts for days. It is only their awe of the magic wielded by the Warrior's sorcerers that keeps them in check.

They live in small kingdoms ruled by a monarch who has bested all rivals in combat. Loyalty to a king is absolute—all rock trolls are pledged to die on his behalf. Traitors and cowards are commonly consigned to pits of molten lava.

Troll warriors tend to be male, although females are allowed to take revenge if their mate should be slain. Female trolls are, if anything, more hideous and more dangerous than the males.

Another new addition to the ranks of the Dark are the Storm Giants, many of whom were driven out of Jotunheim by Asgardian warriors. With their ability to control the weather, they have made excellent advance scouts. By whipping up gales, they have been able to scatter opposing troops before the main body of their army arrives.

Their high status in the Warrior's eyes has sparked jealousy among the giants of Lower Aysle and clashes have been reported in the Dark camps. A few enterprising Storm Knights have used their own sorcery to create storms and drench Chamkatt giants, tricking them into thinking the Storm Giants were responsible.

Like other Ayslish giants, Storm Giants enjoy enhancement points and can suffer from the wasting disease. They possess more knowledge of magic than their Ayslish brothers, however.

As there are relatively few Storm Giants currently employed in the Army of the Dark, all have been able to be transformed to Ayslish reality.

Standard Storm Giant

DEXTERITY 10

Dodge 11, melee weapons 12, unarmed combat 11

STRENGTH 15 (10)

TOUGHNESS 14 (10)

PERCEPTION 7

Find 8, tracking 8, trick 8

MIND 9

Apportation magic 18, survival 10, test 10

CHARISMA 7

Taunt 8

SPIRIT 7

Intimidation 9

Additional Skills: two at +1 adds

Possibility Potential: some (20)

Arcane Knowledges: air 15

Spells: arm of air, fighting whirlwind, floater, weather control

Equipment: hammer, damage value STR+2/17

Description: Taller than most Ayslish giants, Storm Giants can grow as high as four meters. Male Storm Giants are bald, with only a fringe of steel-gray hair on their hands. Their weapons of choice are crude stone hammers.

Not much is known of their social structure. They seem to prefer to hunt and fight alone and do not join in the post-battle revels of other giants. Thus far, the dwarves and other Ayslish folk have given them a wide berth.

With these new troops, the Warrior of the Dark has overseen an invasion virtually unparalleled in the history of the Possibility Wars. Backed by Vareth and Daleron soldiers, the vast majority of the surviving Light armies have been forced into southern England and Ireland. Surrounded on both land and sea, it would seem to be only a matter of time before these areas, too, fall, if help is not forthcoming.

The Akashans have indicated some willingness to aid the Ayslish, and Monitors have been spotted in and around Oxford. But even for this, the Warrior was prepared: her agents act to isolate the Akashan emissaries and then destroy them through magic, a force with which they are still relatively unfamiliar. These acts may have backfired, as the Akashan High Council has voted to provide the Light Ayslish with all the supplies they may need. Piercing the reality storms that surround the area as well as an aerial blockade of dragons is no easy matter, so there is no telling just when Ardinay can expect to see this aid.

The Delphi Council has also made noises about helping Ardinay, but in truth, a decision has already been made on the highest levels to abandon England to her fate. Delphi branches in Oxford and London have already been ordered to begin shredding documents in preparation for flight.

The weak link in the Dark Ayslish chain may well be Nippon. Although there is a great deal of profit to be made in supplying the Warrior's armies, 3327 is also aware that an alli-



ance has been forged between the new Aysle High Lord and Jezrael, High Lord of the Tharkold, and Nippon's most bitter enemy. This may well lead "Kanawa" into betraying the Warrior as punishment for consorting with his foes.

Another possibility of succor would be a victory by Tolwyn in the cosm (see "War in the Cosm," below). This could force the Warrior to split her forces to aid Gareth Tancred, and open the Oxford bridge up for supply runs.

The Warrior has offered to call off the siege and spare the lives of the Army of the Light if Ardinay is delivered to her in chains. It is her most fond wish to break the will of the Lady of the Houses of Aysle, corrupt her completely and thus destroy the spirit of her forces. Ardinay has privately considered complying to save the lives of her people, but her advisers have refused to allow her to commit what would surely be suicide. They have even forbidden her from journeying among the common people in disguise, as she was wont to do before this escalation of the war.

War in the Cosm

Much of the troubles in the Aysle realm were precipitated by Tolwyn of Tancred's decision to return to the cosm and fight to regain her ancestral lands. It was the treasonous actions of her brother, Gareth, that first allowed Uthorion to seize control of the disk-world, and since then, he has resided in Castle Tancred. It is said that he is near insane, and his bizarre behavior has driven his bride, Marlena of Daleron, into the arms of a Gerrik. Tolwyn hopes to use Marlena's knowledge of the castle's current defenses as an aid in her planning.

Tolwyn found an army of supporters waiting for her upon her return and all had high hopes that the war would be swiftly won. But the forces of the Dark proved more formidable than expected, and the first major battle

resulted in a devastating defeat for Tolwyn. She has since learned that the hordes of dragonriders who aided her brother Gareth's troops were naught but illusions, and news of this has helped drive some of the elite elven troops into her camp. But with so many of the Houses of Aysle arrayed against her, it will take all her tactical skill to pull out a victory.

Meanwhile, she is not unaware of the situation in the realm. She is said to be torn by guilt over the fate of the Army of the Light, but knows that to leave the cosm now would be to doom her forces there to a similar end. Thus she is resolved to fight on until the cosm has been reclaimed from the Dark, at which point she will lead her armies down the bridges to expunge the Warrior's evil once and for all.

Beyond the Battles

A number of events have taken place in Aysle within the past year that are largely unconnected with the resurgence of the Dark, but still have some bearing on life within the realm:

- The mysterious death of the sorcerer Selbane, creator of the Warrior of the Dark. Selbane was found slain by a sword thrust through his heart. Many suspect that the new High Lord may have wished to sever old ties, but none will speak those thoughts aloud.
- A movement arose among half-folk in Aysle for full political and civil rights. Claiming that Ardinay's government treated them as slaves and worse, centaurs, minotaurs and harpies took their case to Parliament in London. Violence in the city soared during their stay. The MPs did listen with a sympathetic ear to the eloquent voicing of their plight, but were reportedly unwilling to show up Ardinay by doing what she would not. Bitter, many of the half-folk are now fighting with the Warrior of the Dark — they were, in fact, the first to rally around her, long before she became High Lord.

• Ayslish Corsairs have taken to the Mediterranean in surprisingly large numbers, looting ships and enjoying the lively port cities of Greece and Italy. They have also found themselves in the middle of a war zone, as Nile "weird science" submarines stalk and sink Cyberpapal freighters. Unwilling to take sides in the struggle, the Corsairs have attacked both groups with equal verve.

• Diplomatic relations were officially opened between the British government and Elveim in the Aysle cosm. Despite efforts to destroy the Corsair ship, *Daria Marie*, which carried the diplomatic party, the meeting went ahead as scheduled and the beginnings of a pact were drawn up. Plans for future meetings are currently up in the air due to the changing situation in the realm.

The Days Ahead

The situation in the Aysle realm has rapidly changed for the worse, and it will take the best efforts of Storm Knights to put things right again. Before then, there will be much blood shed and many dark hours for the people of the realm.

The Warrior of the Dark is a ruthless, skilled and ambitious warrior, and it is in that last that Aysle's hope may lie. She is already making plans against the Cyberpope and risking offending Nippon by allowing Tharkoldu to inscribe Aysle spells onto SpellChips. It may well be that she will make too many enemies too swiftly and find herself in a war she cannot win.

What is certain is that, unlike Uthorion, she will use Drakacanus to its fullest extent and act to expand her realm. Do not expect her to rest on the laurels of her early victories — she wants the realm under her heel and looks hungrily toward the remains of the Soviet Union. After two years of stagnation, the Dark has returned to Aysle with a vengeance.



CHAPTER TWO

*The Cyberpapacy*TM

Janet Mimieux sat at her desk, paying careful attention to the security monitors that lined the walls of her office. The day shift at God's Word Industries would be done in a matter of minutes, and she was determined to catch anyone trying to walk off with product.

When she was first hired by GWI in the wake of Operation: Central Fire, Janet found the corporation to be in chaos. Employee theft was accounting for massive losses each quarter, and much of that equipment was finding its way into the hands of the Paris Liberté Militia. Not that she cared particularly who ran France — but she relished the chance to make GWI more efficient by spying on its workers. It gave her a special thrill to slowly gather enough evidence to get someone's employment terminated.

That was why she had ordered all of these monitors installed, without bothering to tell Monsieur Fontaine. After all, she had the money in her budget and how she chose to go about improving procedures at GWI was her own affair.

Something on one of the screens caught her eye. Two of the newer men, punching out a few seconds early, and carrying ... yes, the metal detectors were working just fine. They were stealing parts of GodMeeters, along with boxes of ammunition!

Janet checked to make sure that the men had been filmed in the act, then took the damning evidence and marched upstairs to the executive offices. After a frustrating few minutes, she was allowed to see Fontaine, the new president of GWI.

The young executive was cordial to her and accepted the disc without comment. His brow darkened, however, as he watched its contents, over and over again.

He wasn't even aware this was going on, Janet thought triumphantly. I knew he was too trusting. I'll get a promotion out of this — perhaps even a raise!

Fontaine turned to look at her. "You realize what it is these men are carrying?"

"Yes, sir," she answered, trying not to sound too excited.

"Regrettable. Most regrettable,"



Fontaine muttered.

"Employee theft is a fact of life at many companies," Janet said. "The important thing is stopping it before too much damage is done."

"And you have been most efficient," the executive said, hitting a button his phone. "But you should have told me you were monitoring such things."

"You see," Fontaine continued, "GWI serves the Cyberpope. I am sure you are a good daughter of the Church, but you could not be aware to what extent this corporation does the Lord's

work. We have been shipping defective weapons through various channels to the Resistance — thus, we drain their treasury while ensuring that any battles will be won by those loyal to Avignon. That is what those men were carrying: defective parts for weaponry."

Janet cursed to herself. She had wasted her employer's time and now looked like a fool. He might even order her monitors removed! Then how would she be able to keep track of the employees?

"I must commend your dedication, but in this case, your fears were groundless," Fontaine said. "Unfortunately, I cannot allow such an incident to happen again. I am afraid that your employment with GWI is terminated as of now."

Janet sat back, stunned, feeling as if a lead weight had settled into the pit of her stomach. After a few moments, she managed to say, "Of course, sir. Will I be receiving a letter of recommendation?"

Fontaine smiled. Behind her, the office door opened, but she dared not insult her ... former employer by turning to see who had entered.

"We will see to it that your parting from us is as painless as possible," Fontaine said. "You have been an excellent employee. I will personally see to it that you have a fine stone and fresh flowers every week."

Now Janet knew who stood just behind her chair and why they were there. And she found herself hoping that they would take her somewhere far away from GWI to carry out their task, for she did not want her death captured on tape.

State of the Realm

Despite ominous clouds on the horizon, this has not been an altogether bad year for Cyberpope Malraux. He has consolidated his position in Quebec and managed some modest territorial gains, while watching with glee the collapse of the Eastern Land. Although uncertain of the strength of the Land Above, he believes that he has chanced upon a golden opportunity to rapidly expand his realm into the United States.

Malraux's major problems at present come not from Storm Knights so much as from other High Lords. Both Aysle and the Nile Empire are threatening the Cyberpapacy, and recent events in Germany are said to have Malraux deeply concerned. The return of the Gaunt Man, and that worthy's long delay in contacting Malraux, is also a cause for worry.

Indeed, even the GodNet has proven to be little comfort these days. It integrity has been threatened by

Tharkoldu Gridrunners, an Orrorshan Nightmare, and voices from the Deep that have many cyberpriests convinced that their virtual reality may soon come down around their ears.

The Cyberpapal Crusade

This past year saw the achievement of one of Malraux's long-held objectives, that of seizing territory on the African continent. Having used freighters to drop stelae in the Mediterranean, he was finally able to order the planting of an artifact on the border of Algeria and Morocco. While still well away from the borders of the Nile Empire, Malraux hopes that the presence of foreign stelae will divert Mobius from his activities in southern Europe.

Needless to say, the arrival of cyberpriests in a country where the majority of the people are Sunni Muslims has been a difficult situation, to say the least. Malraux has downplayed the idea of this being an actual invasion in talks with the Algerian government, emphasizing instead the historic relationship between France and their nation and the need for protection against Nile incursions.

But at home, Malraux is billing the Algerian affair as a worthy successor to the Crusades of old, with the Cyberpapal faith seeking to reclaim lands from the "infidel." Needless to say, such speeches are given by surrogates, not by the Cyberpope, so he can disavow any knowledge of these attitudes.

Unfortunately, the landing in Algeria may be too little, too late. Mobius has already conquered Crete and is embroiled in a war in Greece. Should Athens fall, the Nile High Lord may choose to go after Italy, but Malraux has vowed that the "Pharaoh's" juggernaut will be stopped before then. The Cyberpope will not allow any other Possibility Raider to seize Rome, and is banking on a diversion in Africa and the quagmire that is Yugoslavia (see Chapter Four, "The Nile Empire") as a means to slow Mobius down.

Meanwhile, a *very* uneasy peace exists between the cyberpriests and

the Sunni in Algiers. This is an area ripe for Storm Knight strikes — it will take very little to set off this tinderbox, and the resulting explosion could drive the Cyberpope's representatives back to Spain in a hurry.

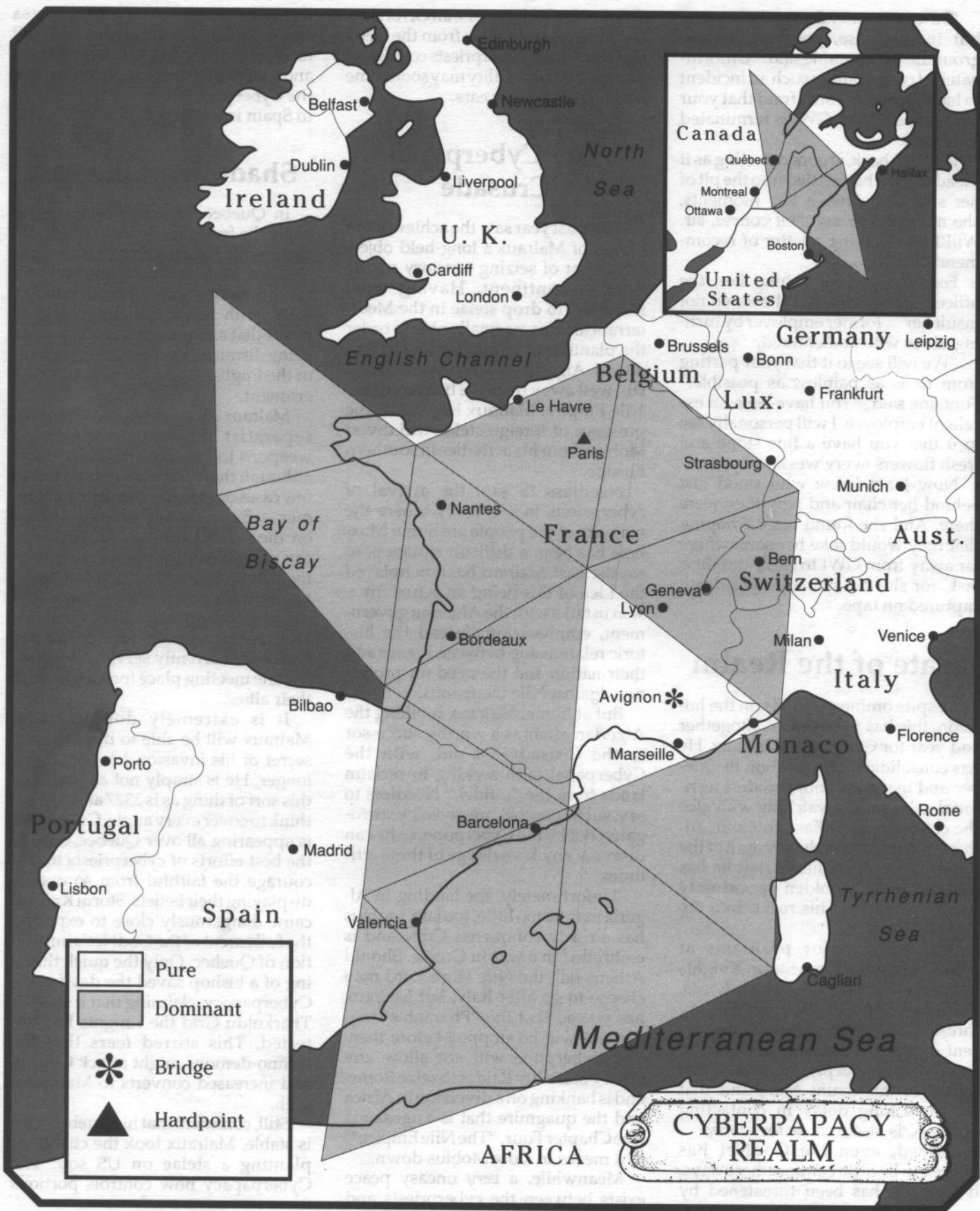
Shadows of the Past

In Quebec, Malraux continues to enjoy the fruits of success. His experiment with Kanawa's methods — the slow, subtle takeover rather than brutal conquest — has worked wonderfully, with Storm Knights trying to prove that an invasion has taken place being dismissed by the citizens as tools of the English-speaking national government.

Malraux continues to encourage the separatist movement, supplying weapons to the more radical groups, although there have been more than a few cases of Knights intercepting shipments. But incidents of terrorism are on the rise, and Storm Knights who can prove a solid connection between them and CyberFrance stand to be handsomely rewarded by the Canadian government. The Chateau Frontenac hotel in the Upper Town of Quebec is currently serving as a clandestine meeting place for Knights and their allies.

It is extremely doubtful that Malraux will be able to maintain the secret of his invasion for very much longer. He is simply not as skilled at this sort of thing as is 3327 and did not think to cover every angle. Cyberware is appearing all over Quebec, despite the best efforts of cyberpriests to discourage the faithful from so openly displaying their beliefs. Storm Knights came dangerously close to exposing the full extent of the GodNet's infiltration of Quebec. Only the quick thinking of a bishop saved the day for the Cyberpapacy, claiming that it was the Tharkoldu Grid the Knights had detected. This stirred fears that the techno-demons might attack Canada and increased converts to Malraux's faith.

Still, confident that his Quebec zone is stable, Malraux took the chance of planting a stela on US soil. The Cyberpapacy now controls portions



of Maine and Vermont, where calls by cyberpriests for a return to "traditional family values" are finding some sympathetic ears. Although the establishment of churches in cities like Portland is a pleasing development for Malraux, he has already turned covetous eyes on Boston.

Malraux is allowing his agents "off the leash," so to speak, in New England, encouraged by its strong Puritan traditions. The cyberpriests have put aside the political content of their speeches which worked so well in Quebec and are concentrating instead on fire and brimstone speeches about sin. At this point, conversions are few and far between, but hopes are running high that all of New England will eventually fall under Malraux's sway.

All of this has increased the chances that the Cyberpapal invasion of Quebec will soon be exposed. The Delphi Council had been suppressing rumors of Malraux's actions, but now that the Living Land is no longer a threat in the east, they may be less likely to keep quiet (certainly the Kanawa-controlled media is shouting "cover-up" at the top of its lungs). Also, the defeat of President Quartermain means that revelations that Delphi has been hushing up new invasions could destroy the Council once and for all.

Nippon's efforts to point a finger at the Cyberpope have put a severe strain on the truce that exists between the two realms in South America, where Malraux has backed 3327's puppet regime in Peru. Now that the Akashans seem to have chosen the Tharkoldu as their foe of choice, both Malraux and Kanawa are less concerned that they will be targeted by the aliens. Although both still long to get their hands on a substantial quantity of biotechnology, they are wise enough to know when not to push a situation. People who can take out techno-demons with things that look like they were just taken out of a windowbox are not the ideal choice for enemies.

Casting the GodNet

The GodNet has been a troublesome place for Malraux this past year. It began with the discovery of a sector

of the Net that was somehow not a part of the Cyberpapacy, but was rather someplace *other*. Efforts by Inquisitors to investigate this phenomenon resulted in no new information, nor any returning Inquisitors, either.

What had, in fact, taken place is that an Orroshan Nightmare named Talamous Scratch had taken up residence in CyberFrance and converted a portion of the Net into a little bit of home. Scratch planned to unleash a lethal computer virus on the Net, but was opposed in his plans by Storm Knights. The outcome of that battle is not yet known at this writing.

The Angel-Demon war (detailed in *Infiniverse Update, Volume I*) has spilled out of Purgatory and into the church exchanges proper. Data churches throughout southwestern France have been declared off-limits to all but Inquisitors and Church Police, as their datapaths are now battlefields. As it is, most of those who jack in never emerge again.

What has been learned about this situation would seem to indicate that the GodNet is not the creation of the Cyberpapal Darkness Device alone, nor is it simply a dimension filled with the output of various telecommunications networks. Just what it is remains a mystery, but Netrunners who have survived encounters with the warring parties claim that the Angels were invoking the name of Apeiros. It may well be that the Possibility Wars are being fought on a grand scale between Net entities, who are paying little heed to how badly they damage their surroundings.

Nor is this the only conflict taking place in the Net. Warned by Storm Knights, VX Kadandrans emerged to defend their portion of the Net from rampaging Tharkoldu. Although the Kadandrans were victorious, at least one techno-demon slipped past them and into the Kadandra construct. In the wake of the Apocularum sabotage in Los Angeles, the Tharkoldu may be attempting to prevent the Kadandrans from sending any further emissaries to Earth's reality in the future.

But perhaps the most disturbing event in the GodNet has been one that has affected Cyberpapal agents and Storm Knights alike. Explorers ven-

turing into the Deep have been halted by a voice said to be like the rustling of dead leaves, warning them to leave the Net or face the consequences. Those who refused to take this advice were consumed by flame and erased from virtual (and actual) existence. To whom this voice, and such power, belongs remains unknown, but it may well be that someone else besides Malraux is claiming dominion over the GodNet. If this should prove to be true, the Angel-Demon war may look like a minor skirmish compared to the conflagration that will soon break out within the Net.

Ebenuscrux

Watching over all of this has been the Cyberpapal Darkness Device, Ebenuscrux. This Device resembles a glowing, obsidian cross, and as it has been in use for only a little more than a century, it still retains a limited power to change form. Thus, it can be small enough to be hidden in a special chamber inside the Palace of the GodNet or grow massive enough to awe unbelievers with the power of the Cyberpapal faith.

A VX image of Ebenuscrux resides at the heart of the GodNet. The power to mold the GodNet is one of those possessed by this Darkness Device, but it is able to do this to a far more limited extent than it has let on to Malraux. The forces of the GodNet include some that are beyond even a Darkness Device's ability to manipulate.

Ebenuscrux

DEXTERITY 0

STRENGTH 0

TOUGHNESS 185

PERCEPTION 29

Cyberdeck operation 41, find 34, scholar (computer science) 40, tracking 35, trick 34

MIND 32

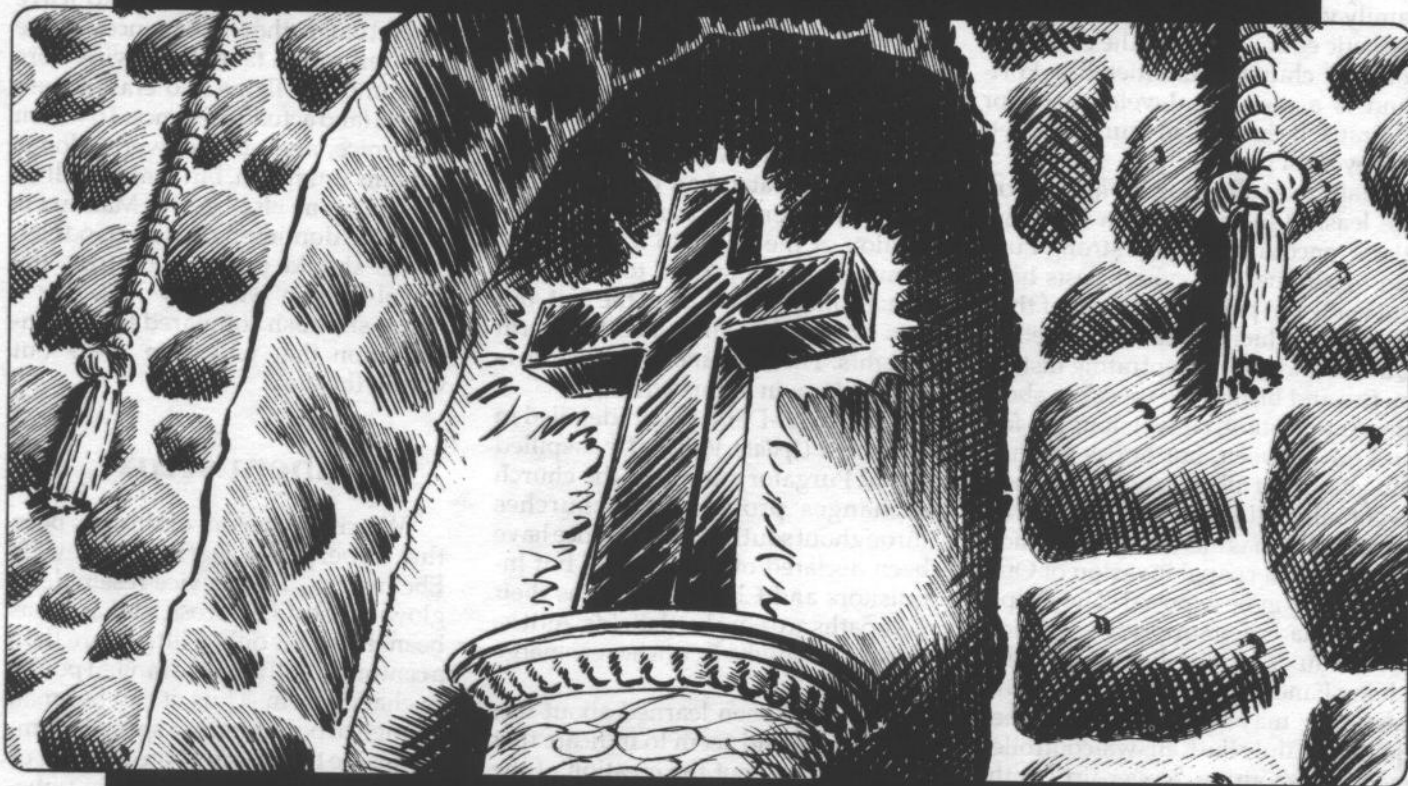
Cybertech 42, psychology 40, science (computers) 39, test 42, willpower 40

CHARISMA 50

Charm 54, persuasion 55, taunt 60

SPIRIT 50

Faith (Cyberpapacy) 61, faith (the Nameless One) 71, focus 65, intimidation 51, reality (Cyberpapacy) 65



Possibilities: Untold thousands

Powers: All powers listed on page 88 of the *Torg Rulebook*, plus the ability to maintain portions of the GodNet and imbue certain entities with possibility energy

Miracles: Ebenuscrux has access to all Cyberpapal miracles

DroneWolves

One of the newer menaces loosed upon the Cyberpapacy in the recent months have been the DroneWolves, cybernetically enhanced wolves. Their primary virtues are their ferocity and their lack of ambition — where human guards might be tempted to steal from a shipment of weapons, for example, Drone Wolves would have no interest in doing such a thing.

The creatures have most recently been used to guard arms shipments to Quebec.

DroneWolves

Reality: Cyberpapacy
DEXTERITY 10

Dodge 15, maneuver 14, running 12, swimming 12, unarmed combat 14

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 10 (15)

PERCEPTION 6

Find 12, tracking 13, trick (13)

MIND 5

Test (14), willpower 9

CHARISMA 5

Taunt (8)

SPIRIT 5

Intimidation 15

Possibility Potential: none

Equipment: HalloMesh, armor value TOU+5/15; Cyberware: NeuraCal, J-jack, BelleView 20-20 (+2 to visual *Perception* skills), DATAS transmitter (transmits wolves' visual images from Belleview 20-20 to any attuned video receiver within 200 meter range), FFO NightView (+3 to *find* and *tracking*), DATASsnooper (+2

to hearing-based *Perception*), CyberHam Receiver (for broadcast commands), TSE Bloodhound (+3 to *tracking* by scent), slashers in front paws, damage value STR+4/13, apotheduct, 5 doses MB Adrenal Booster (+3 to *Strength* and *Dexterity* for three minutes). Cyber value: 21

New Equipment

HeretiComp III

The HeretiComp III, produced by God's Word Industries, is a flip-top, hand-held computer with 120Mb of ROM. Its database contains files and holograms of all heretics, including what sort of action should be taken against them if encountered.

The best feature of the HeretiComp is that, on command, the computer will write specific information on a DataChip, which the user can then plug into his ChipHolder.

Since the machine is designed for use by cyberpriests who are frequently on the "front lines," the HeretiComp is fitted with a tough casing (TOU 20).

Updates of heretic status can be gained at any Cyberpapal Church Police major post, basilica, data cathedral or embassy.

Gauss Weapons

Tech 24

At this *Tech* level, gauss weapons are only effective as vehicle mounts, as they require large power plants to provide the necessary energy.

Kanawa Rail Gun II: This is typical of the gauss weapons at this *Tech* level. Its velocity is similar to that of the 120mm smoothbore cannon that is mounted on the M1 Abrams. However, where the rail gun has an advantage is in the rate of fire.

The capacitors have two settings.

For long range fire, the capacitors have a long recycling time, allowing for a stronger magnetic field and therefore enough force to accurately hit a target and do damage to it over a great distance. At close range, the rail gun can be set on a short recycling time, which allows for an effective rate of fire comparable to some machine guns. This allows for tremendous firepower at close range, but at the expense of accurate long range fire.

Ammunition is stored in a 100-round hopper and is automatically fed into the weapon.

Heavy weapons skill is required to use this weapon.

Stats: Tech 24, damage value (close range) 32, (long range) 30, ammo 100, range 100-1.5k/3k/6k, price 1 million (30)

Hachiman Ultra 2000: A military support weapon designed specifically for anti-personnel use. Range has been sacrificed for rate of fire, which, in the case of this weapon, is significant. The Ultra is designed for automatic fire

and as a result cannot fire single-shot.

Due to the presence of a coolant chamber and power packs, the Ultra is too heavy to be fired from anything but a tripod or vehicle mount.

Heavy weapons skill is required to use this weapon.

Stats: Tech 24, damage value 22, ammo 20, range 3-100/500/1k, price 500k (29)

Tech 25

At this *Tech* level, gauss weapons become man-portable. These smaller weapons do not have the variable capacitor settings that are available to the larger weapons. Therefore, the weapons are built to take advantage of long-range accuracy or short-range firepower. The rate of fire on these weapons is such that single shots are no longer possible on fully automatic weapons.

Hellfire Touche: About the same size as a Barret .50 caliber sniper rifle, the Touche is a long-ranged sniper weapon



designed to take out lightly armored targets quietly. The Touche has a very slow recharge time and therefore is capable of firing only one shot per round. It is also a heavy weapon, requiring a bipod to fire properly.

Heavy weapons skill is required to use this weapon.

Stats: Tech 25, damage value 25 (single shot only), ammo 10, range 20-50/2.5k/5k, price 10k (20)

FN-GAR: Outwardly, this weapon appears very similar to FN's S-90SMG, however it is full gauss. Capable of burst and fully automatic fire, this weapon is extremely deadly in enclosed areas, the sort in which it was meant to be used.

Designed with the French Resistance in mind, the battery packs can be recharged (albeit slowly) from normal household current. Also, the ammunition used by the weapon can be manufactured in a standard machine shop using 3mm steel wire.

The rate of fire, combined with the lack of recoils, also makes fully automatic fire from gauss weapons far more effective than from normal weapons. Therefore, when the GAR is fired at

full-auto, add +5 to the action and damage value, rather than +3.

Note, however, that the full-auto burst takes up to 10 rounds rather than the normal seven. Also, the weapon does not have a single-shot setting, being able to fire only bursts and fully automatic fire.

Stats: Tech 25, damage value 18 (burst and full-auto only), ammo 50, range 5-20/50/200, price 5000 (19)

Tech 26

At this *Tech* level, gauss weaponry becomes extremely effective. The problems of variable capacity have been overcome, and now hand weapons have both long and short range settings. All known advances beyond this *Tech* level have dealt with further reducing the size of weapons and improving ammunition.

Shin-5: The Shin-5 has become the standard gauss weapon for the Race and the Tharkoldu. Given only to elite units, the Shin-5 has a variable charge capacitor, which allows for both short and long charges.

On a short charge, the weapon receives the same bonuses to full-auto

fire that the FN-GAR enjoys. While on long charge, the weapon gains an effective range of over 1000 meters. Along the projectiles, each magazine gains one standard power cell.

Stats: Tech 26, damage value (short charge) 19 (burst and full-auto only), range 5-25/60/250, (long charge) 21, range 10-50/600/1.1k, ammo 100, price 7000 (20)

Shin-15: The Shin-15 is used almost exclusively by the Race. This weapon fires a single depleted uranium projectile. The rounds are individually located along the projectile.

What makes the Shin-15 so popular among Race warriors is its ability to destroy most armored vehicles currently in use on Tharkold at long range. But enterprising Race warriors have come up with another excellent use for this weapon — as a sniper weapon against major demons. With the philosophy of, "If you get only one shot at a Demon Lord, make it a good one," the Shin-15 has become the weapon of choice for many Race suicide snipers.

Stats: Tech 26, damage value 34, ammo 1, range 10-100/1k/2k, price 4000 (18)





CHAPTER THREE

The Living Land™/Core Earth™/Land Below™



aruk Kaah, Saar of all the edeinos, sat in the chill shade of Rec Pakken, his Darkness Device, and pondered.

Many had been the trials Lanala had visited upon her people. The defeat at the place the humans called "Silicon Valley"; the destruction of the Northern Land; the collapse of the bridges in Sacramento and Denver. All of this had forced him into an alliance with the wielders of dead things, the Tharkoldu, who he felt certain would turn upon him at the first opportunity.

Kaah closed his heavily-lidded eyes and attempted to commune with Rec Pakken, but received only silence in return. That was how it had been for months ... oh, it still fed the High Lord the possibility energy he needed and desired, but it provided no guidance or praise for his efforts at conquest.

Still, Kaah sensed that something new had been added. It was as if Rec Pakken's attention was elsewhere, as if a part of itself had slipped away and was in some other land. Kaah was not a fool — he knew the Darkness Device might be seeking another master/servant. But the Saar had seen the broken body of the only rival to his throne mere months ago. The eyes of Lanala were everywhere. If another sought his place, he would know.

So what was it? he wondered. What had so captured the mind of the Darkness Device that it could no longer spare a moment to speak to that with whom it was linked?

Kaah's musings were interrupted by the arrival of a runner from one of the tribes to east. The High Lord prodded Rec Pakken for the warrior's name, but it was not forthcoming. The edeinos prostrated himself before his Saar.

"Speak," Kaah commanded in the language of Lanala's children. "What news do you bring me? Do those whose dead things live still steal my people?"

Kaah had been increasingly disturbed by reports that strangers wielding technology that seemed to have life had been taking people from the their lands in the east. He wondered if they might somehow be responsible for the shakings of the earth and the darkening of the skies that had taken

place in that region.

"Lanala has claimed many, O Great Saar!" the edeinos said. "Truly, the goddess speaks in a voice of flame!"

"What are you babbling?" Kaah said. "Has there been a battle?"

"No, Saar. The winds rose, the waters boiled, and great mountains erupted from the earth. The peaks spewed smoke and ash, and soon many of the people were consumed by fire!"

Kaah bellowed a curse. Much the same thing had been related to him when the Nippon High Lord had removed a Takta Ker stelae and planted another one in its stead. Rec Pakken had explained it once: the shifting realities burned those not gifted with the ability to store possibilities.

"Speak on," he demanded. "What other strange sights have you seen?"

"Men who wore the hides of animals; men who rode upon great insects; great beasts that feared neither spear nor flame. All of this I have seen, and many sunsets have I traveled to reach you, Saar."

Baruk Kaah turned and stalked toward the black, twisted plant-thing that was his Darkness Device. "Yes," he hissed, enraged. "Now I understand, cursed thing. You have used your powers to aid that other world."

Now Rec Pakken's voice rumbled through the Saar's mind. *You have failed me for the final time, Kaah. My survival, my duty to the Nameless One who birthed me, outweighs my commitment to you. If your realm dies, I must be prepared to go on.*

"You speak madness!" Kaah replied. "I have tasted victory many times! Does my Living Land not dominate this continent?"

It does not, the Darkness Device answered. The Eastern Land is no more, Saar.

Kaah broke contact and staggered back a step. More than half his realm — gone! For a moment, he considered venting his rage at Rec Pakken, though he knew that would be futile. No, no, it was this place that was to blame — this world of dead things and lovers of dead things that resisted his every attempt to conquer it. It was that which had turned his Darkness Device against him.

"This war is not yet finished!" Baruk

Kaah screamed at the heavens. "Before it is done, I will make this cosm bleed!"

State of the Realm

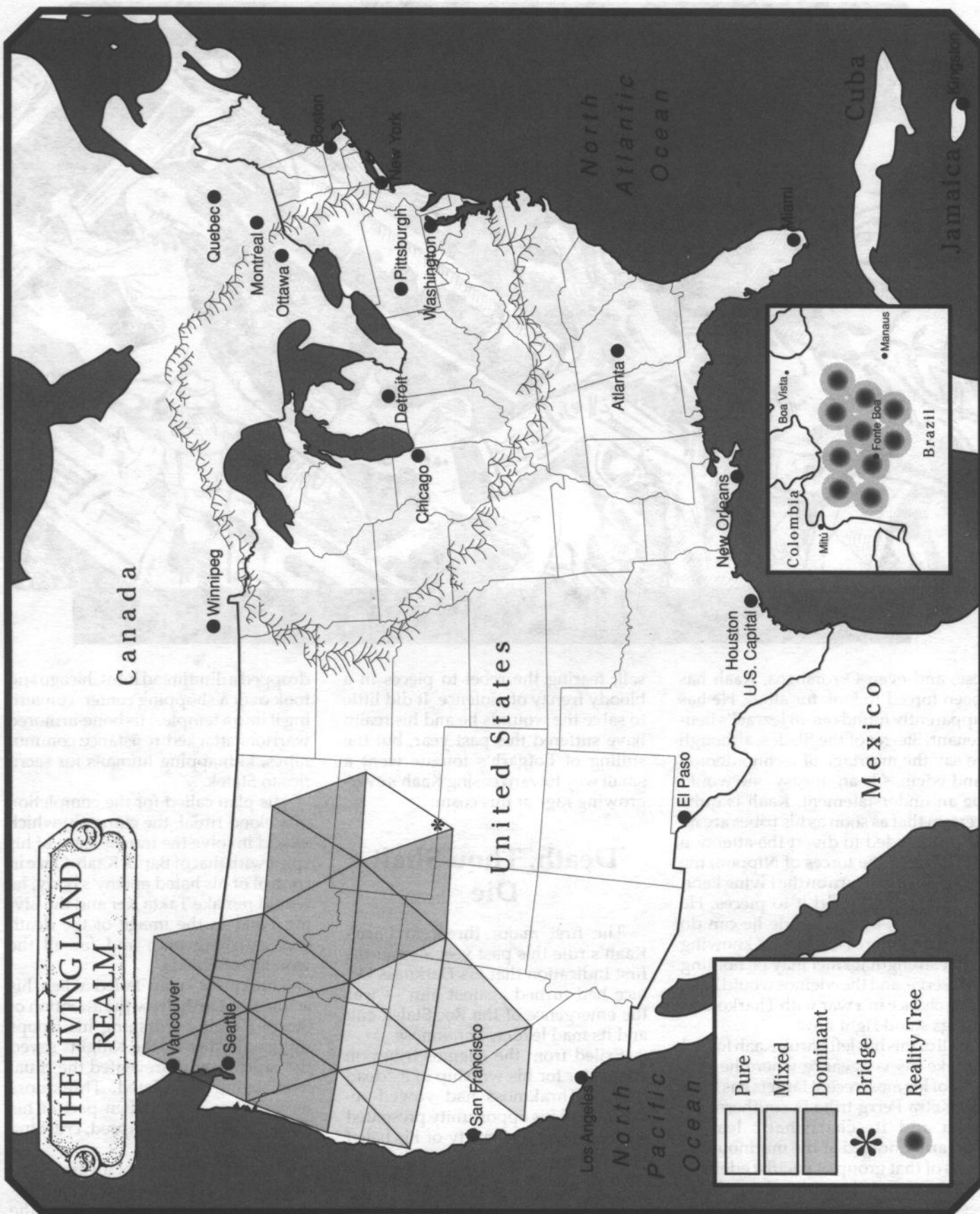
It has been a hellish year for Baruk Kaah and the Living Land. Even the Gaunt Man, with all his wickedness, could not have devised so exquisite a torture for the Saar as the sight of his realm collapsing, bit by bit.

Obviously, the most profound change over the last twelve months has been the complete and utter destruction of the Eastern Land, as a result of the incursion of the Land Below (see "Land Below, Land Above" for details). This has effectively wiped out Kaah's major power base, the one area where, save for some Cyberpapal activity, he need combat only Storm Knights and not the agents of other High Lords. Needless to say, Kaah is now grateful to Lanala that he had the wisdom not to forego the Western Land and concentrate all his efforts in the east.

This disaster, combined with the earlier destruction by Storm Knights of the stelae bounding Denver, has left Kaah without an intact maelstrom bridge. This has seriously impaired his ability to draw on reinforcements from Takta Ker as well as monitor events in that cosm. For a brief period, the Gaunt Man allowed Kaah to send his troops over the bridge from Takta Ker to Gaea and then down to Orrorsh. But the Saar soon discovered that many of his followers were being consumed by corruption during this process, and a few had even become horrors, so he called a halt to it.

As weakened as he is, though, it should still be possible for him to reconstruct at least one bridge. But this assumes he will have the aid of Rec Pakken, and at present there is an ever-growing rift between High Lord and Darkness Device, dating back to the aborted Stalek invasion. Combined with the Device's admitted hand in the ascension of the Land Below, Kaah now has no reason to trust the artifact that gave him power so long ago.

With his people being made victims by Storm Knights, the Nippon-





ese, and even Orrorshans, Kaah has been forced to look for allies. He has apparently found one in Jezrael's lieutenant, Sterret of the Blades, although to say the marriage of techno-demon and edeinos is an uneasy one would be an understatement. Kaah is quite certain that as soon as his tribes are no longer needed to divert the attention of 3327 and the forces of Nippon, the Tharkoldu will turn on the Living Land and attempt to rend it to pieces. He knows this, but sees little he can do about it — there is no way of knowing what strength Jezrael may be holding in reserve, and the edeinos would have little chance in a war with Tharkold as things stand right now.

All of this has left Baruk Kaah forced to take his vengeance where he can. One of his most recent targets has been the Ketra Perrg tribe in southern Oregon and its charismatic leader, Botgarh. Enraged at the mutinous actions of that group of pacifist edeinos, Kaah ordered them slaughtered. He reserved the right to kill Botgarh him-

self, tearing the rebel to pieces in a bloody frenzy of violence. It did little to salve the wounds he and his realm have suffered this past year, but the stilling of Botgarh's tongue went a small way toward easing Kaah's ever-growing rage at this cosm.

Death, Thou Shalt Die

The first major threat to Baruk Kaah's rule this past year — and the first indication that his Darkness Device had turned against him — was the emergence of the Rec Stalek cult and its mad leader, Thrakmoss.

Exiled from the edeinos tribes on Takta Ker for his worship of a "dead thing," Thrakmoss had vowed revenge, and his opportunity presented itself when the intensity of his belief resurrected Stalek, the legendary edeinos god of death. Backed by the power of this evil deity, Thrakmoss

dropped a dimthread into Chicago and took over a shopping center, converting it into a temple. His bone-armored warriors attacked resistance communities, kidnapping humans for sacrifice to Stalek.

His plan called for the completion of a blood ritual, the climax of which would involve the transference of his spirit with that of Baruk Kaah. Once in control of his hated enemy's body, he would remake Takta Ker and the Living Land in the image of the death god, crushing once and for all the worship of Lanala.

Thrakmoss' plan failed when his actions on Earth drew the attention of Storm Knights. Pursuing his troops up the dimthread, the Knights saved the captives and prevented the ritual from being completed. Thrakmoss himself was killed when part of his Takta Ker temple collapsed, crushing him to death.

Although he was not aware of the full extent of the plot as it was happening, loyal edeinos who discovered the

Earth temple later explained matters to Kaah. The High Lord knew full well that a dimthread could not have been dropped into his realm without Rec Pakken knowing of it. He guessed (correctly) that his Darkness Device was prepared to switch allegiances to Thrakmoss had the death-worshipper won out.

Kaah immediately ordered a holy war on Takta Ker to eliminate any survivors of the Rec Stalek cult. But this has succeeded a little too well — fearful for their lives, many of the cultists fled to Earth prior to the collapse of the bridges. Though they are relatively few in number, they have assembled in strength in Wisconsin, with their community believed to be just outside of Milwaukee. With the axioms of the Land Below now at work in that area, the Stalek warriors are finding their bone armor more of a help than a hindrance in battling the devotees of Lanala still in the area.

The Akashan Airlift

Months before the Land Below erupted where once the Eastern Land stood, the region was rocked by earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and severe storms. Many an edeinos became convinced that Lanala was angry with them and sought their destruction. But divisions of the US military prevented their fleeing the realm, and so they were forced to watch in horror as the very planet struck out at them.

Salvation came in the form of the Akashans, the alien race that landed on Earth in response to the Signal Fire some time ago. Since their arrival, the Akashans have felt a strange kinship to the edeinos, who share their scorn for pure technology and maintain a strong relationship with nature. Upon learning that thousands of edeinos were facing almost certain destruction, the Akashan High Council decided to offer them a means of escape.

And so began the Akashan airlift. Scores of biotech ships flew (or swam) to the Eastern United States and began ferrying edeinos and other Living Land denizens to South America. There reality trees were planted in the Amazon basin, each one containing an

edeinos. Soon, a Core Earth-Living Land mixed zone was formed where the edeinos could thrive without aiding in the drawing of possibility energy from Earth. Now in an area and climate that is similar to their home on Takta Ker, the edeinos have rapidly settled in (much to the consternation of the Brazilian government). Many of these edeinos remain loyal to Baruk Kaah, but for now are more concerned with survival than conquest.

The Akashan airlift had a number of unintended effects. It angered the Delphi Council who, though they never publicly condemned it, were disturbed at so wanton a violation of US airspace. It also drove Brazil even farther into the Cyberpapal camp than the Akashans' initial arrival had done.

And, most telling of all, it did a great deal to pave the way for the arrival of the Land Below on Earth's surface. By removing so many of the believers in the Living Land's reality from the Eastern land, the Akashans weakened many of the stelae areas, flipping them from dominant to mixed. This made it that much easier for the pocket dimension to merge with the cosm's reality, as well as lessening any interest Rec Pakken might have had in fighting this occurrence.

Core Earth

Europe is in disarray in the wake of recent events, as countries that had formerly been immune to the effects of the Possibility Wars now find themselves under attack.

The United Commonwealth of Nations, which had successfully resisted the initial Tharkold invasion, is now proving a tempting target for Aysle. Yugoslavia has become a battleground for Dr. Mobius and Cyberpope Malraux. Germany, formerly the leader in combatting CyberFrance, now finds itself dealing with a combined invasion of Tharkoldu and Nile pulp villains. And Italy is looking with fearful eyes at events in Greece and Crete, where the inexorable march of conquering Nile forces continues.

Nor has confidence been bolstered by events in the US, where, in a shocking upset, President Dennis

Quartermain was defeated in the November election by a dark-horse candidate. Former Senator Leland Nicklaus (D-NE), running as an independent, took full advantage of a law rammed through Congress that allowed resistance community members to cast absentee ballots. Angered by the government-sanctioned acts of violence against their homes and families, many of these "expatriates in their own nation" voted for Nicklaus, giving him a large margin in the popular vote and a narrow margin in the Electoral College.

What makes things most interesting is that no one knows quite what Nicklaus stands for. Death threats (believed, in some quarters, to have come from the Delphi Council) forced Nicklaus to limit public appearances. But he is on record as criticizing the amount of power handed over to Delphi, and for calling Ellen Connors "an Orwellian nightmare come to life."

Needless to say, Delphi Council leaders have been closeted in Houston ever since the election, plotting ways to handle this maverick in the White House. Nicklaus has, so far, kept them off balance by, among other things, inviting *Five Realms* designer Jeff Mills to join in meetings with the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"This boy seems to know more about what's going out there than most of the brass," Nicklaus was quoted as saying in a press release. "I don't know why or how, but I'm as willing to listen to his opinions as anyone else's."

Mills had no comment.

Land Below, Land Above

It began with a darkening of the skies and tremors in the earth. This was followed by violent weather with effects similar to reality storms, all over the Eastern Land. Frightened edeinos who had lived through the Nippon takeover of the Sacramento stelae area watched the skies, fully expecting to see a maelstrom bridge land.

But the threat to Baruk Kaah's realm came, not from above, but from below.



For months, the Land Below had been racked by similar seismic disturbances, as the reality of that pocket dimension began to slowly, painfully merge with that of Earth.

It was shortly after the quakes began in the Eastern Land that the Kefertiri Idol, the Nile Empire Darkness Device, contacted Rec Pakken. Together, the two of them had been responsible for dropping dimthreads into the Earth and creative the extensive cavern network that now exists. They had provided the means of entry to the Land Below, and now it seemed that place wished to return the favor. The Kefertiri Idol warned Rec Pakken that something must be done, lest the Eastern Land be destroyed as a result of these upheavals.

But Rec Pakken did not share this view. Rather, it had begun to see the Living Land as a lost cause and the possibility that the Land Below might ascend to Earth as a golden opportunity. For some time, it had been hoping for a High Lord candidate to emerge from that pocket dimension, but so far none had done so. Perhaps, it reasoned, if the denizens of that place were to see all that awaited conquest in this cosm, a true servant of destruction would emerge.

So Rec Pakken reestablished contact with Mobius' Darkness Device and suggested that the two of them divert a miniscule amount of their energies to aid in the "birth" of a "Land Above." Their efforts bore fruit almost immediately, as the reality of the Land Below met and overloaded the weakened Living Land stelae in the eastern United States and Canada. One by one, the stelae burnt out, with Rec Pakken making no effort to save them.

Earth tremors became more violent, and even as the Akashans rescued the last of the edeinos who wished to flee, great mountains erupted from the earth. These new mountain ranges would act as the borders for the Land Above, as well as the gateways to that pocket dimension which now coexists with Earth's reality.

Merretika Ascendant

It should be made clear at the outset that the Land Above is not a realm in the accepted sense of the term. It does not have a Darkness Device connected with it, nor does it have stelae, and thus it does not drain possibility energy from Earth's cosm. Rather, it is somewhat similar to the Orrorshan Waiting Village — a pocket dimension which has been merged with a cosm (in that case, Gaea) so that it occupies the same space but is the dominant reality.

The Land Above now stretches from the mouth of Hudson Bay in the north, to New York in the east, Iowa in the west, and Tennessee in the south. The entire area is a single, massive dominant zone of Land Below reality (see *The Land Below* for information on that dimension's axioms and world laws). Although much of the Land Below is a pure zone, the act of merging with Earth's cosm weakened it sufficiently that it was able to manage no more than a dominant relationship with local reality.

Thus, Storm Knights who scale the mountain ranges that border the Land Above or fly through the raging storms and land within its confines have effectively entered a pocket dimension that has absorbed a part of Earth. Inside that area, Land Below/Land Above reality is the rule.

In addition, the arrival of the Land Above has so weakened the fabric of Earth's reality that it has become a great deal easier to access pocket dimensions. Storm Knights have reported journeys to Atlantis and Avalon, as well as numerous other places. It is believed that a Nile survey expedition is preparing a map of "gates" to various dimensions.

Meanwhile, the peoples of Merretika, along with some never before seen races, have staked out their territories in their new domain. The Pyrian Fire Tamers now dominate an area stretching from Minnesota south to Iowa and part of Illinois. For those looking to enter the Land Above, this is perhaps the most dangerous point

of entry. The new volcanic peaks here are erupting almost constantly, raining molten lava (damage value 22 per round when in contact) on the slopes. In addition, the Fire Tamers make their homes in the mountains, and many of those who have attempted to scale them have found themselves prisoners of the Pyrians ... or worse.

The northern reaches of the Land Above are home to the Leopard Men. From their villages around the Great Lakes, they go on extended raids into New York and Pennsylvania, site of many Darooni Wasp Rider nests. Indeed, Manhattan Protectorate members who had rejoiced at the deaths of so many edeinos have now found that the Darooni are, if possible, worse. The speed and maneuverability of the wasps allows the Darooni to strike from atop skyscrapers in the large cities, skimming low through the concrete canyons to slay the unwary.

Much of the interior is inhabited by Ohibi and Keefee Haroo, although Michigan and Ohion also play host to creatures from the tunnels immediately below the Earth's surface. Ustanah communities have sprung up, their troops savagely eliminating any edeinos they come across. Even human resistance communities who have members worshipping Lanala have felt the sting of these insectoids. In addition, Orrorshan nightmare worms and Ayslish monoliths have also been sighted throughout the Land Above.

The southern region is now the domain of a previously unknown race, the Serpentors. These humans worship a snake totem and wear the shed skins of a breed of monstrous serpents dubbed "emperor cobras" by those who have seen them (and lived). Their weapons of choice are knives, spears and arrows dipped in the venom of these snakes. But what is most horrifying is that many of the tribe's warriors have ingested so much concentrated venom (in an effort to build up immunity) that they have begun to take on snake-like qualities. Their skin has become scaly, their canine teeth fangs, the whites of their turned a sickly yellow in color and their pupils ebony slits.



The fact that none of the other Merretikan species have any knowledge of the Serpentors suggests that the Land Above may be populated by races from other domed worlds as well.

Standard Serpentor Warrior

Reality: Land Below
DEXTERITY 10
 Acrobatics 11, dodge 14, maneuver 16, melee weapons 12, missile weapons 12, stealth 15, unarmed combat 13
STRENGTH 11
TOUGHNESS 11 (14)
PERCEPTION 8
 Camouflage 9, find 9, tracking 9, trick 10
MIND 7
 Survival 9
CHARISMA 7
SPIRIT 7
 Faith (Cobra Cult) 8, intimidation 10
Additional Skills: four at +2 adds
Possibility Potential: some (25)

Natural Tools: scales, armor value TOU+3/17; fangs, damage value STR+2/16

Equipment: knife, damage value STR+3/17; spear, damage value STR+4/19; short bow, damage value STR+4/18.*

*Note that all of these weapons are traditionally coated with emperor cobra venom before use. If the weapon causes a wound, the poison is introduced into the bloodstream, doing damage value 18 per round. A first aid total of 10 is required to drain the venom from the wound.

Cobra Cult Priest

DEXTERITY 8
 Dodge 11, maneuver 10, melee weapons 12, stealth 10, unarmed combat 11
STRENGTH 8
TOUGHNESS 8
PERCEPTION 11
 Find 14, scholar (Serpentor lore) 17, trick 16

MIND 10
 Survival 16, test 14, willpower 14
CHARISMA 10
 Persuasion 15, taunt 13
SPIRIT 14
 Faith (Cobra Cult) 18, focus 19, intimidation 16, reality (Land Below) 18
Possibility Potential: all
Miracles: blood of the cobra, serpent staff
Powers: animal companion, value 15; regeneration, value 8.
Adventure cost: 8
Equipment: serpent staff (see below)
Emperor Cobra
DEXTERITY 10
 Dodge 16, maneuver 15, stealth 18, unarmed combat 16
STRENGTH 16
TOUGHNESS 15/18
PERCEPTION 9
 Tracking 13, trick (16)
MIND 6
 Survival 15, test (25), willpower (28)

CHARISMA 5

Charm (30), persuasion (30), taunt (15)

SPIRIT 5

Intimidation 20

Possibility Potential: some (70)

Natural Tools: scales, armor value

TOU+3/18; fangs, damage value STR+2/18; venom, must cause at least a *wound* in an *unarmed combat* attack to introduce into foe's bloodstream. Does damage value 18 per round until death. *First aid* total of 12 is required to drain venom from wound.

Description: Emperor cobras look like monstrous versions of common Earth cobras. They average three meters in length.

Blood of the Cobra

Spiritual Rating: 15

Community Rating: 12

Difficulty: 20

Range: touch

Duration: 25 (one day)

Effect: introduces venom into target's bloodstream

The priest must invoke the miracle while making a successful *unarmed combat* attack on his target as a multi-action. If the attack meets with any level of success (even a *shock point*) and the miracle's difficulty number is exceeded, emperor cobra venom is introduced into the target's bloodstream. It does damage value 18 per round. As there is no actual wound, draining the venom will involve causing a *wound* in the afflicted character and then making a *first aid* total of 16 to remove the poison.

Serpent Staff

Spiritual Rating: 14

Community Rating: 10

Difficulty: 16

Range: touch

Duration: 25 (one day)

Effect: transforms a stick into a living weapon

While invoking the miracle, the cleric touches a stick. If the miracle is successful, the weapon transforms into a serpent staff, with a damage value of STR+5/19. There is no visible change in the appearance of the weapon. However, if a *wound* or better is caused with a *melee weapons* attack while wielding a serpent staff, the stick transforms into a cobra and sinks its fangs (damage value 15) into the target. If a *wound* or better is caused by *this* attack (the staff damage is assessed separately), cobra venom is introduced (damage value 18 per round, *first aid* total of 12 to remove).

A *Strength* total of 12 is required to tear the serpent staff free from the target, but it will let go after one round regardless.



CHAPTER FOUR

The Nile Empire TM



u Han stared at the package in his hands and frowned.

The box was wrapped in brown paper and the address scrawled with a thick black marker. It was addressed to "Walter U. Hanson," the alias the Delphi Council had provided the former Nile Empire Overgovernor when he defected. Now, sitting in his pleasant home in the suburbs of Houston, basset hound curled up at his feet, the once insidious Oriental mastermind wondered just what it all meant.

This was the fourth package in as many days, and when he tore it open, he found the contents were much the same as well. The carton was filled with pieces of a "weird science" device he had once constructed, long before he turned his back on evil and dedicated his life to virtue. He recognized the components as coming from a brain-stirring ray he had built for use on the Guardian (not that the musclebound oaf had much brain to

stir, he reminded himself). Included was a news clipping from the *Cairo Clarion* detailing his use of the weapon on some bootleggers who weren't paying the proper percentage.

But all that's past now, he thought, tossing the box with the others. It joined disassembled versions of his heat ray, matter mixer, and special explosive dart gun for use on hydrogen-filled zeppelins, along with a pile of yellowed newspaper articles.

He looked at the monument to his fiendish past and shook his head. *What could I have been thinking about when I made all these?*

It had been almost a year since his inclination had shifted and he and Heather — the beautiful American actress who had brought him to the side of justice — traveled to Texas. There, Wu Han had found work as an informant for the Delphi Council, passing on data on Mobius and his plans. He and Heather had married, adopted a dog he christened "Clemeta," and

made a happy home life.

But someone doesn't want me to forget, he thought grimly. The Council had told him to ignore the packages as the work of cranks, but he was still glad Heather was out of town at her mother's. It had given him the chance to do his chores around the house without worrying that some old foe — or friend — might kidnap her, strap her to an operating table, transplant her brain into a gorilla, wed human intellect with the awesome power of the simian!

With some effort, he calmed himself. There was no point in dwelling on such things. No doubt his employers were right — it was probably just some puerile Storm Knight whose family had been transformed into rodents, or reduced to protoplasm, or some such thing during one of his more malevolent turns. He had more practical matters to concern him now: the dishes needed to be washed, the bathroom retiled, and he would have to decide



what to do with all the junk mail.

He reached out and fingered one of the possibility capacitors, remembering the old days. Being a minion of the maniacal Dr. Mobius had been a great deal of work, but there was also a sense of satisfaction in knowing that your efforts would bring terror and death to millions. Sometimes, late at night, he would awaken with a marvelous plan and be tempted to run off to his lab and slap together a device that would turn Mystery Men pale with fear! Then he would remember that he had no lab anymore, and even if he did, he was only supposed to use his great intellect for good now.

Sighing, he rose and wandered into the kitchen, stopping only long enough to put his golf clubs into the closet. His next door neighbor, Jenkins, had invited him to play a round on Sunday, laughing that he wouldn't beat him by more than a hundred strokes. Wu Han had smiled and shrugged — golf wasn't a big sport in a land that was one big sand trap, but he couldn't tell Jenkins that.

An hour later, the dishes were done and Han was ready to relax, put his feet up, and watch some bowling on TV. He was halfway to his easy chair when Clemeta began to growl.

"What is it, girl?" he asked, scanning the room. There seemed to be nothing amiss, and yet ... yes, there was definitely another presence here. Slowly, he began to move toward his mantle, where he stored the one memento of his old life he had kept, a stun gun.

Before he could reach its case, a figure stepped out of the shadows. Han caught a glimpse of a black suit and tie, the light glinting off a silver lapel pin. He didn't need to see the man's face to know it was his old enemy, the Eagle. But what was the ex-CIA man doing in Houston, and why was he pointing a gun? *Doesn't he know I'm on his side now?* Han wondered.

"So we meet again, Wu Han," the Eagle said, in the arrogant Western tone he always used when addressing foreign masterminds.

"Eagle? But you were trapped in my dungeon. You could not have es-

caped!" Han sputtered, before remembering that this wasn't the Nile Empire and there were rules of etiquette to be followed. "Won't you ... um, sit down? I could make some coffee."

The Eagle grimaced. "Do you think for a moment I'd drink your horrible brew?"

"It's decaf," Wu Han offered weakly. "Anyway, what are you doing here? Why aren't you off battling shocktroopers or something?"

"I've come for you. I've come to bring you back to Cairo and your old life. Remember, I warned you what would happen if you immersed yourself in the bland, colorless writings of Core Earth. Now look at you!"

A vision came unbidden to Wu Han's mind: the Eagle stretched out on a rack, hypnotized wife and loved ones about to vivisect him with dull scalpels. Han brushed the pleasant fantasy away and forced himself to focus on Heather, the mortgage on the house, the rough idle in the car and all the other things he had gained by being Good.

"I don't want to go back," he said finally. "You are wasting your time, Eagle."

The Eagle nodded. "Fine. By the way, did you hear that Storm Knights sacked your palace outside of Cairo? Found all sorts of interesting things — new torture devices, plans for global conquest, Sax Rohmer Fan Club membership kit, postcards of Natatiri ..."

Wu Han stiffened. *Stormers in my private fortress? I'll have them boiled alive!* I'll — no, I don't do that sort of thing anymore. "I trust the proper authorities were notified?"

"They're recalling you a coward, Wu," he snarled. "They say you lost your taste for inflicting pain. They say the Mystery Men came a little too close to nabbing you that last time. They say you ran before Mobius could have you kicked out. Hell, they say you walk around wearing an apron now and picking up after your dog."

Clemeta began to bark. Wu Han planted a sharp kick in the beast's ribs and sent it flying across the room. "Bah! I am master of this household, just as I will one day be master of the world! Who dares to say such things

about the mighty Wu Han?"

The Eagle, sensing victory in his grasp, shouted, "Everyone! You can't swing a dead shocktrooper without hitting someone who's laughing about Wu Han, the wimp! What are you going to do about it?"

"I will go back! I will grind those fools into dust beneath my heel!" A small voice inside Han's head started whispering to him that he couldn't leave tonight, for he was supposed to play golf in the morning, and it wouldn't do to back out of a commitment to a neighbor.

With a scream of unbridled rage, Wu Han stormed to the closet, tore the door off its hinges, seized his bag of clubs and hurled them through a window. "Let the world tremble in fear! WU HAN HAS RETURNED!"

"Wonderful!" the Eagle said. "At last, I'll have a foe worthy of my steel again! Come on, my car is outside. We can be at the airport and on a plane to Cairo in half an hour."

Wu Han smiled, as he had not for many months. "Indeed? That is most interesting. But you will not be going anywhere, Eagle." Han's hand darted like a striking cobra, snatching up the stun gun and firing. The Eagle crumpled to the floor.

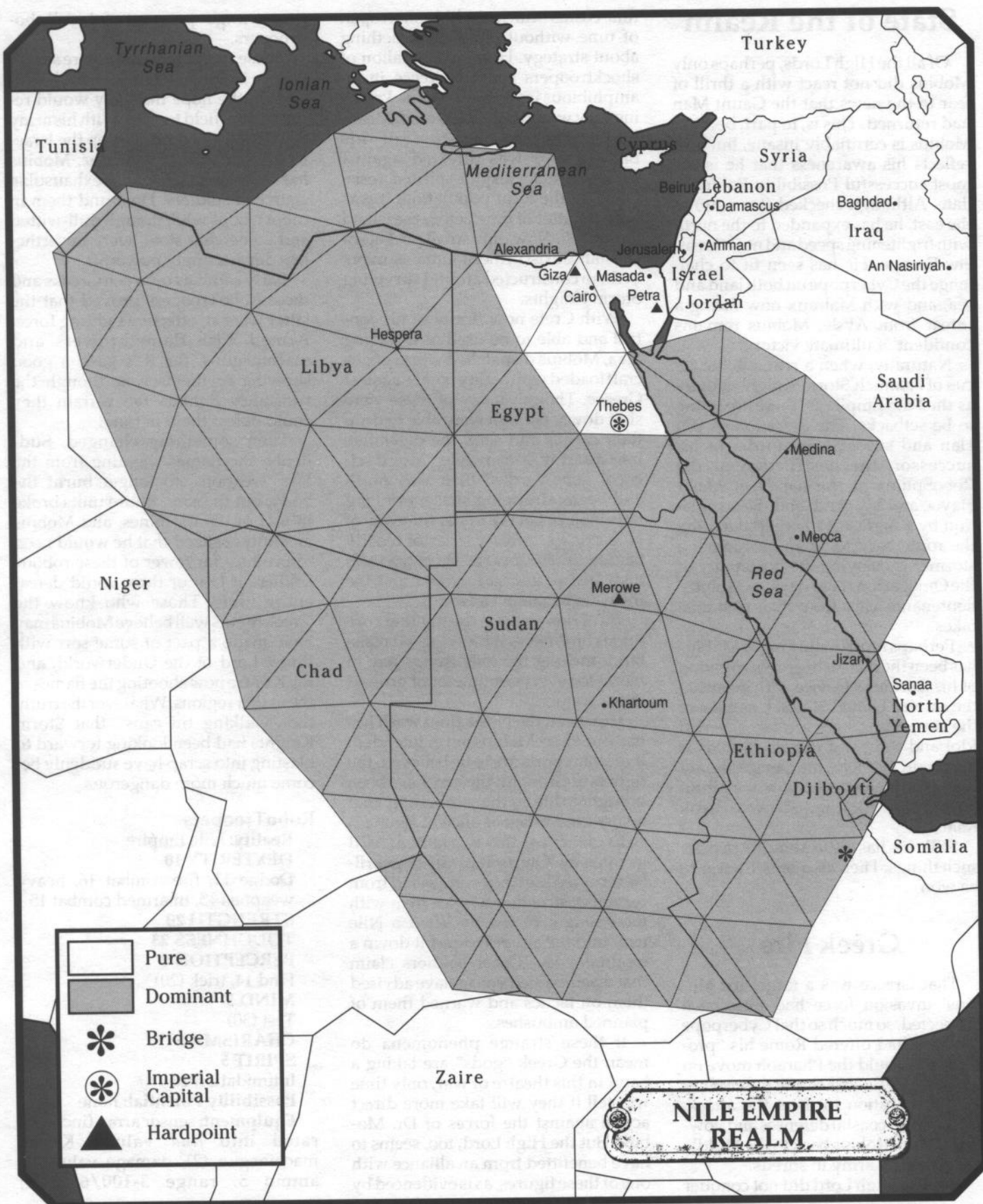
The master villain beamed, moving to stand over his fallen foe. "I owe you a great deal, Eagle. And Wu Han is a many who pays his debts," he whispered, firing the weapon again and again into the unconscious pulp hero.

An hour later, all was in readiness. His bags were packed; Clemeta had ceased to yelp after thirty seconds in the microwave; and the neighbors would wake up to find the plastic flamingos on their lawns had come to life and sought human blood.

Wu Han had contemplated leaving Heather a note, but changed his mind and decided to pay her a final visit ... her, and particularly her mother.

I wonder how the old hag would be with a gorilla's body? he wondered happily, before conceding that there probably wouldn't be much difference.

With a wicked song on his lips, Wu Han walked out into the night ...



State of the Realm

Of all the High Lords, perhaps only Mobius did not react with a thrill of fear to the news that the Gaunt Man had returned. This is, in part, because Mobius is certifiably insane, but also reflects his awareness that he is the most successful Possibility Raider to date. Although checked (for now) in the east, he has expanded to the north with frightening speed and now threatens Europe. He has seen fit to challenge the Cyberpope on both land and sea, and with Malraux now facing a threat from Aysle, Mobius remains confident of ultimate victory.

Naturally, when a realm is the focus of as much Storm Knight activity as the Nile Empire is, there are going to be setbacks. The defection of Wu Han and subsequent murder of his successor; the destruction of the RoboSphinx at the hands of Major Havoc and his band; and the acquisition by Knights of the map detailing the route back to Terra. But many a stormer is enjoying the hospitality of the Omegatron these days, as Mobius' lieutenants learn from their past mistakes.

Perhaps most disturbing to Mobius has been the increasing preoccupation of his Darkness Device with events in the eastern United States. Unaware of the connection between the Kefertiri Idol and the Land Below, Mobius is uncertain just why his Device should care about the intersection of a pitiful pocket dimension and a blow to Baruk Kaah.

Still, he has little time to ponder such things. There is, after all, a war to be won ...

Greek Fire

That Greece was a target for Mobius' invasion force had long been suspected, so much so that Cyberpope Malraux had offered Rome his "protection" should the Pharaoh move on to Italy. The Greeks threw themselves into preparation to meet the attack, building up coastal defenses and vowing to send Mobius back to the Middle East with his army in shreds.

But this High Lord did not conquer

nine cosms in an incredibly short span of time without learning something about strategy. He sent a battalion of shocktroopers against Greece in an amphibious invasion as a feint, knowing they would be slaughtered. Meanwhile, the main thrust of his Battlegroups was directed against nearby Crete. Despite spirited resistance by the local population, it was only a matter of time before the island nation fell. Now only small pockets of resistance exist in the mountains, many of them constructed around surviving Storm Knights.

With Crete now firmly in his control and able to be used as a staging area, Mobius dispatched wings of aircraft loaded with reality bombs against Greece. Though many of these were shot down, enough were able to drop their cargos and send the defenders into disarray. Meanwhile, "weird science" subs worked their way north and began dropping stelae, bringing the whole of Greece under the sway of Nile axioms. After a series of bloody battles on the beach, shocktroopers managed to gain a foothold and the invasion began in earnest.

As of this writing, the fighting continues on Greece, with a dogged resistance making the Nile troops pay in blood for every centimeter of ground they conquer.

However, the Nile axiom wash has had one effect Mobius never intended: if recent reports are to be believed, the figures of Greek mythology have been brought to life by the same reality that resurrected much of ancient Egypt.

Evidence for this is, granted, hard to come by. One unit of Greek guerillas reported that they were saved from certain destruction when a man with the strength of twenty lifted a Nile tank into the air and tossed it down a mountainside. Other soldiers claim that disembodied voices have advised them on tactics and warned them of planned ambushes.

If these strange phenomena do mean the Greek "gods" are taking a hand in this theatre of war, only time will tell if they will take more direct action against the forces of Dr. Mobius. But the High Lord, too, seems to have benefitted from an alliance with one of these figures, as is evidenced by

the strange powers of his RoboTroopers.

These mechanical men were sent to Greece in the wake of the initial invasion, in the hope that they would receive some field testing. With his army divided by the need to keep the Israelis on their side of the Suez, Mobius has been looking for an inexhaustible source of soldiers. He found them in robot troops who, though dull-witted and somewhat slow, were nevertheless devastatingly powerful.

Early combats between Greeks and these RoboTroopers proved that the latter were an effective fighting force. Armed with flamethrowers and machineguns, the RTs gave a good showing of themselves, though the resistance fighters felt certain they could defeat them in time.

Then something changed. Suddenly, the flames shooting from the RTs' weapons no longer burnt the body, but the soul. Entire units broke in fear of the machines, and Mobius gleefully realized that he would need to produce far fewer of these robotic soldiers if two or three could defeat entire units. Those who know the Greek myths well believe Mobius may have made a pact of some sort with Pluto, Lord of the Underworld, and the RTs are now shooting the flames of the nether regions. Whatever the truth, the "walking tin cans" that Storm Knights had been looking forward to blasting into scrap have suddenly become much more dangerous.

RoboTroopers

Reality: Nile Empire
DEXTERITY 10

Dodge 11, fire combat 16, heavy weapons 15, unarmed combat 15

STRENGTH 20

TOUGHNESS 23

PERCEPTION 8

Find 14, trick (20)

MIND 5

Test (30)

CHARISMA 5

SPIRIT 5

Intimidation 18

Possibility Potential: none

Equipment: sensor array (incorporated into *find* value); Kocha machinegun (2), damage value 22, ammo 5, range 3-100/600/1k;

flamethrower, damage value 25 (stun damage with spiritual consequences, see pages 124-125 of the *Torg Rulebook*)

The Shadow of the Pharaoh

Naturally, Greece has not been the only site of the machinations of Mobius. Bosnia, Berlin and Ethiopia have all felt the hand of the High Lord upon them.

One of the major battlegrounds for the forces of Dr. Mobius has been the area which was once Yugoslavia. Shortly after that country's dissolution, Cyberpope Malraux began supplying arms and support personnel to the Serbians, under the guise of "humanitarian aid." Malraux's reasoning was that civil war in Eastern Europe might distract the Germans from his other activities.

Mobius saw the situation in a different light. By aiding the besieged Moslems, he seized an opportunity to frustrate Malraux while at the same time defusing some of the holy war against the Nile Empire sparked by his conquest of Mecca. Although the Moslem nation remains officially committed to Mobius' destruction, many privately point to the fact that he is providing weapons to fight the Serbs, which no other Core Earth nation has been willing to do.

While Mobius knows this confusion will not last long, he hopes it will be long enough for him to significantly weaken Malraux's power and prestige. He knows it is only a matter of time before the Gaunt Man calls for an end to hostilities between the Nile and the Cyberpapacy, and he wishes to eliminate Malraux as a threat before this happens.

At the same time, Mobius has taken the risk of alienating Jezrael, High Lord of Tharkold. When word was received that the Tharkoldu planned to drop a bridge into the city of Berlin, Mobius' agents saw to it that one of the technodemons' stelae was replaced by a Nile Empire artifact. The result was a Nile-Tharkold mixed zone, allowing Mobius greater access to occulttech devices while frustrating Jezrael's plans

for a major beachhead in Europe. (See Chapter Eight, "Tharkold," for more information on this.)

Finally, Mobius yielded to his latest paramour's request that he take action against Ethiopia, which has been growing restless of late. The High Lord complied by positioning mobile death rays in the northern regions of the country and decimating scores of villages, slaying upwards of 100,000 people. The gesture was enough to cow the rest of the population into obeying his edicts, but it also had another result of which the High Lord remains unaware: the blood sacrifice unleashed the power of Wadjet, the Serpent Goddess. The Sisters of the Serpent are now prepared to emerge from their seclusion and attempt to seize control of the Nile Empire. Though their numbers are small, their newfound power is great, and this may prove to be an internal threat too great to ignore.

Conflict in Cairo

Wu Han's defection and the murder of his successor, Muggsy, by the woman called Shahrazad, left a dangerous power vacuum in the city of Cairo. The Yakuza, servants of Nippon Tech High Lord 3327, immediately moved in, attempting to take control of the Icarus Club. This would have

effectively given them control of a large portion of the Cairo underworld, which had come to depend on Icarus' "crime exchange" for skilled personnel to commit jobs. Their efforts were frustrated by Icarus Club owner Paul Bennington, and though there is still sporadic combat between Yakuza and local gangsters, they seem unwilling to try to take the city by force.

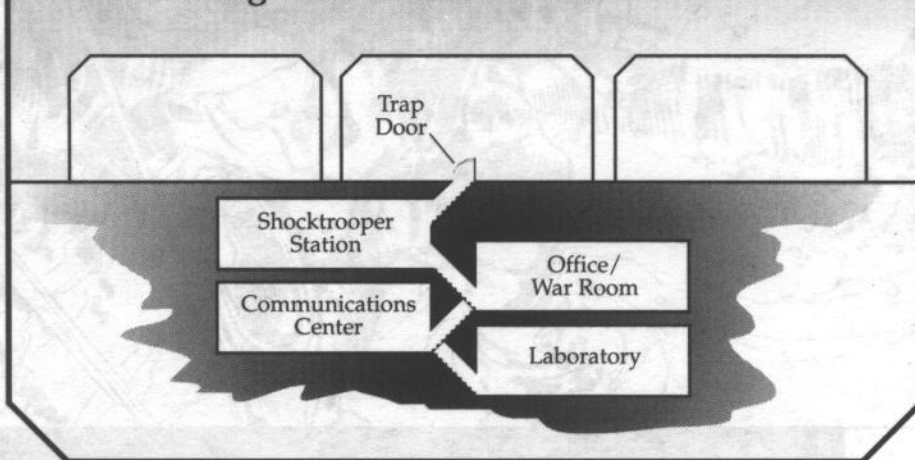
Into this unsettled situation stepped the mysterious figure known as The Hood. From his fortified base beneath the teeming streets of the city, he has been manipulating events in Cairo as its least conspicuous Overgovernor. Little is known about The Hood — his mask muffles his voice, so "he" might be either male or female. Rumors have been flying about his true identity, but thus far none have dared imagine the truth: The Hood is a paid agent of 3327, sent to further destabilize the city and weaken Mobius there. While Nippon is not seeking outright war with the Nile Empire, Mobius' control of so much of the world's oil supply means conflict is inevitable.

Now that Wu Han, returned to Evil, is coming back to the city he once controlled, look for a bloody battle to break out over the future of Cairo. Storm Knights may find themselves caught in the middle of this conflict, either fighting both sides or trying to choose between the devil they know and the devil they don't.



Infiniverse Update Volume II: Map 1

Underground Base of the Hood



The Hood

Reality: Nile Empire (transformed)

True Identity: Unknown

DEXTERITY 14

Beast riding 15, dodge 16, fire combat 18, maneuver 17, melee weapons 16, stealth 18, unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 11

TOUGHNESS 11

PERCEPTION 12

Air vehicles 14, camouflage 13, disguise 17, Egyptian religion 15, evidence analysis 14, find 16, land vehicles 14, mathematics 15, scholar (Master Criminal) 19, trick 18

MIND 11

Hypnotism 15, psychology 13, test 16, weird science 16

CHARISMA 10

Persuasion 14, taunt 16

SPIRIT 13

Faith (Sebek) 22, focus 18, intimidation 17, reality (Nile Empire) 23

Possibilities: 20

Inclination: Evil

Equipment: dark costume, cloak

and hood; various weird science devices; bullwhip, damage value STR+2/13; .455 Webbley, damage value 17, ammo 6, range 3-10/15/40

Pulp Powers: *mind control* (value 16); *chameleon*, (value 15), adventure cost: 10

Heroes and Villains

A number of new heroes and villains have appeared on the scene in the Nile Empire. A sampling of these are listed below:

The Crimson Cloak

Stunningly attractive and scantily clad, the Crimson Cloak has been striking without warning all over Cairo and has thus become the talk of the town (at least, the shadier parts of it). Although she is evidently on the side of truth and justice, she seems to have nothing but contempt for the Mystery Men, Storm Knights, and virtually everyone save

her sidekick, the Red Mist.

The Crimson Cloak wears a dark red outfit and a long cape, but no mask (fortunately, crooks in the Nile Empire have notoriously bad memories and apparently never associate her features with those of her secret identity — whatever that may be).

The Crimson Cloak

Reality: Nile Empire

True Identity: Unknown

DEXTERITY 12 (15)

Acrobatics 14 (17), dodge 16 (19), flight 16 (19), fire combat 13 (16), missile weapons 17 (20), stealth 16 (19), unarmed combat 14 (17)

STRENGTH 10

Climbing 12

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 10

Evidence analysis 11, find 12, trick 13

MIND 9

Survival 12, test 15, weird science 11, willpower 14

CHARISMA 8



Taunt 15

SPIRIT 10

Intimidation 15, reality (Nile Empire) 17

Possibilities: 18**Inclination:** Good**Powers:** *super attribute* (DEX)

Equipment: crimson cloak, *boosted* armor value TOU+6/15 with *flight* power (value 9) built in; throwing blades, damage value *boosted* to STR+6/16; bow, damage value *boosted* to 18; Crimson Cloak costume

Description: The Crimson Cloak apparently disdains all male heroes, thinking them egotistical and chauvinistic. For this reason, she has a *stymie* flaw which comes into play whenever a male successfully *taunts* her. She *must* attempt to *taunt/trick* or *test/intimidate* male opponents when the conflict line calls for it. If she is unsuccessful, she is *stymied* for the next round.

The Red Mist

Bizarre and mysterious, the Mist is the sidekick of the Crimson Cloak, obeying her instructions implicitly. Not only is the Mist's identity unknown, no one is certain what sex the crimesmasher is, as his baggy costume covers his entire body and he wears a mask. (We'll refer to him as "he" in this entry in the interests of clarity.)

The Red Mist is able to shoot an inky mist from his hands at will and able to disperse into a fine red mist. The Mist has never been known to speak, communicating by writing on whatever is convenient with his ink jets.

The Red Mist

Reality: Nile Empire**True Identity:** Unknown**DEXTERITY 9**

Dodge 14, fire combat 16, stealth 14, unarmed combat 12

STRENGTH 9**TOUGHNESS 12****PERCEPTION 12**

Evidence analysis 16, find 17, first aid 14

MIND 13

Survival 14, test 16, weird science 16, willpower 14

CHARISMA 8**SPIRIT 11**

Intimidation 14, reality (Nile Empire) 16

Possibilities: 17**Inclination:** Good**Powers:** *dispersal*, value 22, adventure cost 5

Equipment: Red Mist costume, armor value TOU+7/19, equipped with "mist blasters." When fired, the weapons cover the target in an inky mess, obscuring vision. Targets are automatically *stymied* for the next round and suffer a +10 to the difficulty of any skill requiring vision.

If the Red Mist is hit with water while dispersed, he will be unable to regain solid form for five rounds thereafter. He receives three Possibilities for this power flaw.

The Red Mist cannot *break* as long as the Crimson Cloak is present.

(For pictures of the Crimson Cloak and the Red Mist, see page 90 of *The Delphi Council Worldbook, Volume I*.)

Major Havoc

Having seen his wife killed in a bungled bank robbery, the man who would become Major Havoc traveled to Tibet to find peace. Instead, he learned how to channel his grief and use it to help him wield the power of darkness.

Havoc was part of the Mystery Man contingent sent by Dr. Alexis Frest to Earth to help in the fight against Mobius. He soon broke away from the group, however, and is now working with Storm Knights from a number of other realms.

Dedicated to his grim crusade, Havoc has no time for romance. Naturally, women persist in throwing themselves at him, including a slave girl in Mobius' palace, the heroine known as EM-Girl, and even the villainous Scarlet Asp.

Havoc is noted for his unorthodox approach to problems, his strength of resolve, and his utter disbelief in the existence of magic.

Major Havoc

Reality: Nile Empire**True Identity:** John Smith**DEXTERITY 10**

Dodge 11, fire combat 15, long jumping 11, melee weapons 11, running 11, unarmed combat 13

STRENGTH 9**TOUGHNESS 9**

PERCEPTION 9

First aid 10

MIND 9

Hypnosis 12, test 10

CHARISMA 9**SPIRIT 12**

Intimidation 16, reality (Nile Empire) 14

Possibilities: 26

Powers: *darkness*, five meter radius, value 14. Power setback comes into play whenever he hears a woman screaming in distress. Havoc receives six Possibilities when this flaw is invoked.

Equipment: Dark suit, black; wide-brimmed hat, black; leather gloves, black; shocktrooper field kit; grapple gun, 15 meters of rope, damage value STR+1/10; wheellock dags (2), damage value 13, ammo 1, range 3-5/10/25; Colt .45 (2), damage value 16, ammo 7, range 3-10/15/40

(Major Havok is featured in the short story collection *Mysterious Cairo* in a story entitled "Cry Havok!")

Baron Insidia

The result of a horrifying experiment by Dr. Mobius, Baron Insidia is a Nile villain altered to simulate the powers and abilities of an Orrorshan vampyre. He has been used by Mobius against the agents of 3327, providing the Nile High Lord with a chance to strike back at Nippon while pinning the blame on the horror realm.

In all respects, Insidia resembles a vampyre, but the sort seen in bad pulp novels: magnetic appearance, pale skin, slightest trace of a foreign accent. It is not known whether he truly believes he is a vampyre.

Baron Insidia

Reality: Nile Empire**DEXTERITY 13**

Acrobatics 18, dodge 19, long jumping 16, maneuver 17, melee weapons 16, stealth 20, unarmed combat 19

STRENGTH 12 (15)

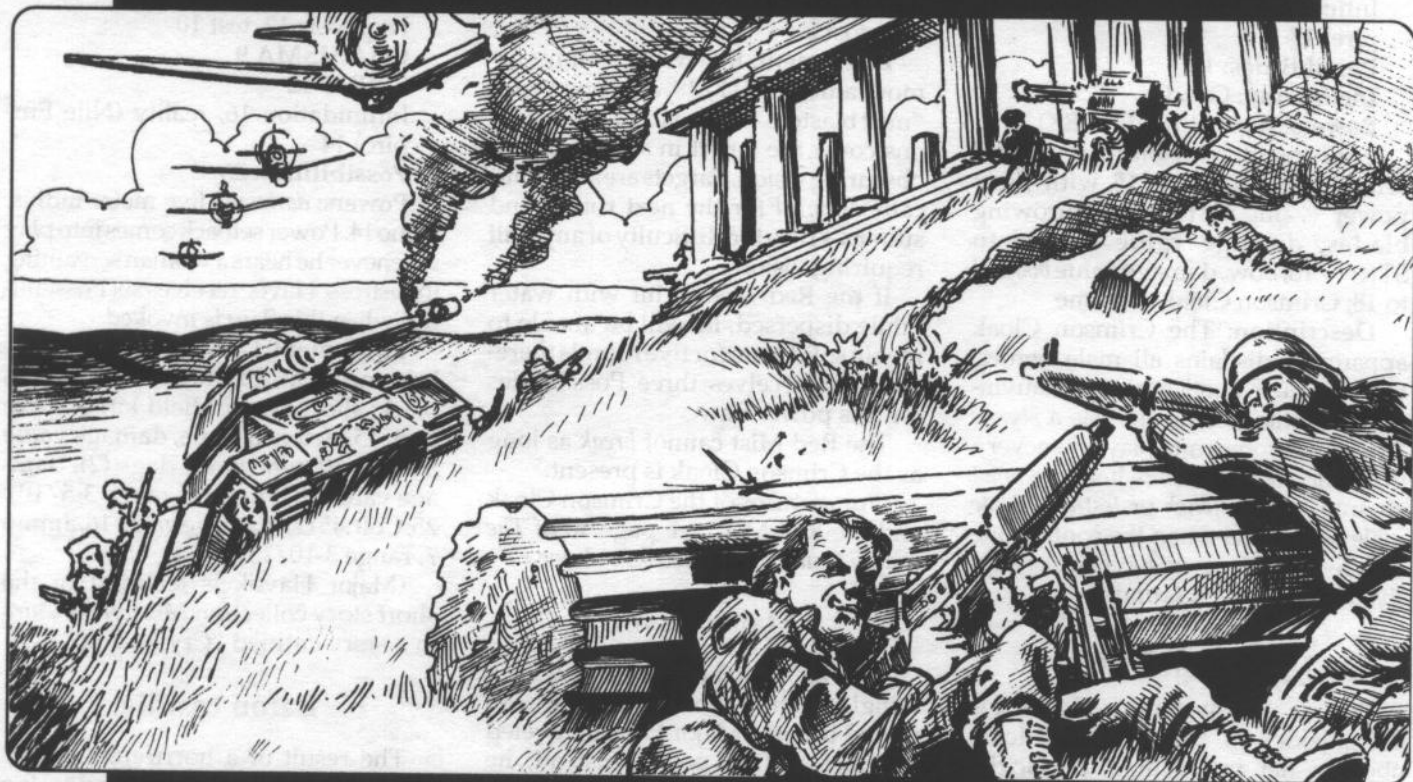
Climbing 13 (16)

TOUGHNESS 13 (16)**PERCEPTION 11**

Find 16, scholar (master criminal) 15, tracking 13, trick 18

MIND 11

Hypnotism 21, test 18



CHARISMA 13

Charm 20, persuasion 21, taunt 20

SPIRIT 9

Intimidation 19, reality (Nile Empire) 18

Possibilities: 35

Powers: two *super-attributes*, applied to STR and TOU, setback flaw when exposed to religious symbols, worth six Possibilities when invoked; *dispersal*, stymie flaw in the presence of sunlight, worth three Possibilities when invoked; *fear*, fatal flaw when touched with wood, worth nine Possibilities when invoked; *illusion*; adventure cost 21

Equipment: fangs, damage value STR+3/15 (18)

RoboSphinx (Mark II)

One of Dr. Mobius' most fiendish inventions, the original model of the RoboSphinx was destroyed by Major Havoc and his band of Storm Knights a year ago. Since that time, Mobius has redesigned the war machine and made it more powerful, "the better to grind stormers into the sand," as the High Lord put it.

RoboSphinx Mark II

DEXTERITY 12

Dodge 13, running 14, unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 20

Lifting 22

TOUGHNESS 32

Equipment: *electro-ray* beams in eyes, damage value 30, range 3-10/25/70; reality missile launcher, ammo

6, range 50-2k/15k/-; flight jets in head, speed value 11

Description: The control center for the RoboSphinx is in its head, which can detach from the body and fly for up to thirty minutes before needing refueling. Landing the head back on the body requires an *air vehicles* total of 12.

The head seats four and is equipped with a loudspeaker system which enables the crew to keep in contact with those in the body or people outside the craft. The main body can hold up to 20 men.

The RoboSphinx is powered by an eternium-drive power plant. Initial activation of the Mark II model required a massive ceremony attended by 10 apiece of mathematicians, engineers and priests.



CHAPTER FIVE

Nippon Tech TM



sei Yamato," alias 7710, sat in his richly appointed office overlooking San Francisco Bay, waiting for the signal that would mean 3327 was ready for his report.

He stole a last glance at the financial data on his laptop screen. There would be no time to recheck the figures once communications were established, for 3327 brooked no delay.

A light began to flash on his console. 7710 hit a button and one section of the opposite wall slide away, to reveal a large television screen. An instant later, it was filled with the image of 3327, his features expressionless and cold. It would have been a handsome face were it not for the angry scar that ran down one side, and not for the first time 7710 wondered why his employer did not get that defect repaired. All the man known on Earth as "Ryuchi Kanawa" had ever been willing to say on the subject was that the wound was "a reminder."

"Report, 7710," 3327 said brusquely. The High Lord dispensed with the traditional Japanese methods of greeting when engaged in private communications, seeing no need to maintain the illusion that he was a native of this backward cosm.

"We are expecting a 17 percent increase in net profit this quarter, sir," 7710 began. "Our San Francisco operations are proceeding as planned. We are awaiting word to expand our California holdings."

Smiling inwardly, 7710 hoped his caution would impress his employer. After all, it would not do to discuss such things as stelae, even over a supposedly secure channel.

"Understood," 3327 said. "Los Angeles?"

"Recovering. The Compton incident has been successfully covered up. We were able to minimize media attention given the conflict and feel it will not have a detrimental effect on the fiscal year."

The High Lord nodded. "See that it does not. Your overall expectations?"

"Favorable, sir," 7710 said confidently.

The CEO of the Kanawa Corpora-

tion allowed himself a frown. "You are not concerned, then, about the election of Leland Nicklaus? You are not concerned about the prospect of Tharkoldu incursion into other significant areas of the West Coast? You have no worries about increased Storm Guild activity in San Francisco?"

The High Lord's top lieutenant fought to remain calm. That last had been something he had not been aware of, a state of affairs he could not afford to let 3327 note. Men had been terminated for far less.

"The election results were ... inconvenient," he said. "It seems these Americans are unpredictable in political matters. We are working with the Delphi Council to help preserve the integrity of that body."

"I do not need to remind you how important the goodwill of Delphi is to our American operations," 3327 said. "As for the Storm Guild, 7710, I fail to understand your reluctance to act."

"It was not reluctance, sir, merely prudence. They are a powerful, well-connected organization, and it was my understanding that they have proven useful to us in the past. I did not wish to act precipitously."

"Listen well. Where once our enemies lurked in every shadow, they have now been drawn into the light and its rays destroy them. Kaah is weakened; Malraux and Mobius are locked in conflict; Jezrael, no match for my manipulations. Our caution these past months has had the expected result, for our foes destroy each other. Now, 7710, it is time to settle ... old scores."

"You will dispatch your best men to Honolulu. A plane is fueled and waiting at the airport. They will terminate the Guildmaster with extreme prejudice. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir," 7710 said. The High Lord ended the communication at that point, and the screen faded to black.

The president of Kanawa Enterprises reclined in his armchair and watched dock workers scurry about like insects far below. Mentally, he ran down the list of operatives currently assigned to San Francisco, choosing those best suited to the job at hand.

Surely, the other High Lords shall tremble when they learn that the Guildmaster is dead, he thought contentedly. Then this war will be ours to win.

State of the Realm

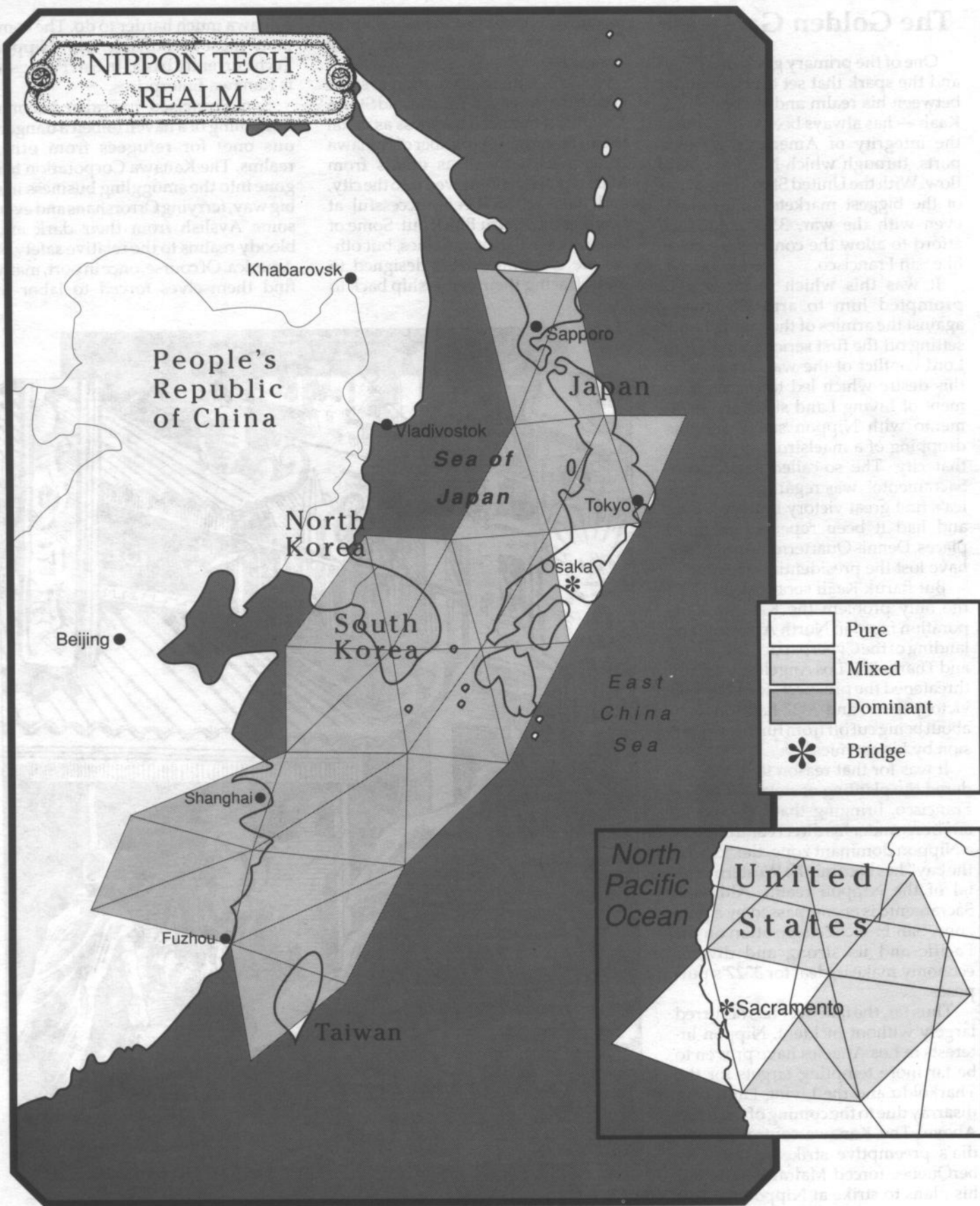
Nippon Tech entered this past year a realm under siege, battered by the forces of Tharkold, the Living Land, the Cyberpapacy and Orrorsh. The High Lord 3327 had made few allies and countless enemies in his bid to win the war in the first year and now was forced to contend with the consequences of a failed strategy.

His answer to this was to play the third year of the war conservatively, consolidate his gains and expand only after careful consideration. This approach has paid off, as Malraux and Mobius have turned from him and begun combatting each other, Jezrael has apparently abandoned plans to expand further in California at present, and Kaah has lost over half his realm. The stage is now set for a Nippon resurgence.

Only one potential problem remains: the Gaunt Man. "Ryuchi Kanawa" is well aware that the High Lord of Orrorsh will almost certainly seek revenge for the actions taken against his realm by Nippon agents. Though battling horrors would not be a new experience for 3327's lieutenants, Thratchen's efforts at retaliation were half-hearted at best.

The Gaunt Man has thus far shown no sign that he plans to destroy 3327, but it is likely he simply wishes to give his rival High Lord time to sweat. The Nippon High Lord has ordered his agents to gather eternity shards, unaware that the Gaunt Man now wears a talisman that protects him from shards within the bounds of Illmound Keep (see *The Gaunt Man Returns*).

This aside, 3327 is looking forward to a year in which he will prepare for ultimate conquest. Even as resistance grows in Japan against the machinations of the Kanawa Corporation, Nippon's High Lord intends to begin maneuvers in earnest on a global level.



The Golden Gateway

One of the primary goals of 3327 — and the spark that set off the conflict between his realm and that of Baruk Kaah — has always been maintaining the integrity of America's western ports, through which Nippon goods flow. With the United States being one of the biggest markets for product, even with the war, 3327 could not afford to allow the conquest of cities like San Francisco.

It was this which in large part prompted him to arm US troops against the armies of the Living Land, setting off the first serious inter-High Lord conflict of the war. It was also this desire which led to the replacement of Living Land stelae in Sacramento with Nippon stelae and the dropping of a maelstrom bridge into that city. The so-called "Miracle of Sacramento" was regarded as America's first great victory in the conflict, and had it been repeated in more places, Dennis Quartermain might not have lost the presidential election.

But Baruk Kaah soon ceased to be the only problem the Kanawa Corporation faced in North America. The landing of the Cyberpapacy in Canada and Tharkold is Los Angeles suddenly threatened the prospects for a Nippon victory there, and 3327 had to worry about being cut off from further expansion by his enemies.

It was for that reason that 3327 ordered the planting of stelae off of San Francisco, bringing that city and its environs under his direct control. Now a Nippon dominant zone, the "city by the bay" has become the Western capital of the Nippon realm. Although Sacramento is encompassed by a pure zone, San Francisco's position on the Pacific and its strong and diverse economy make it ideal for 3327's purposes.

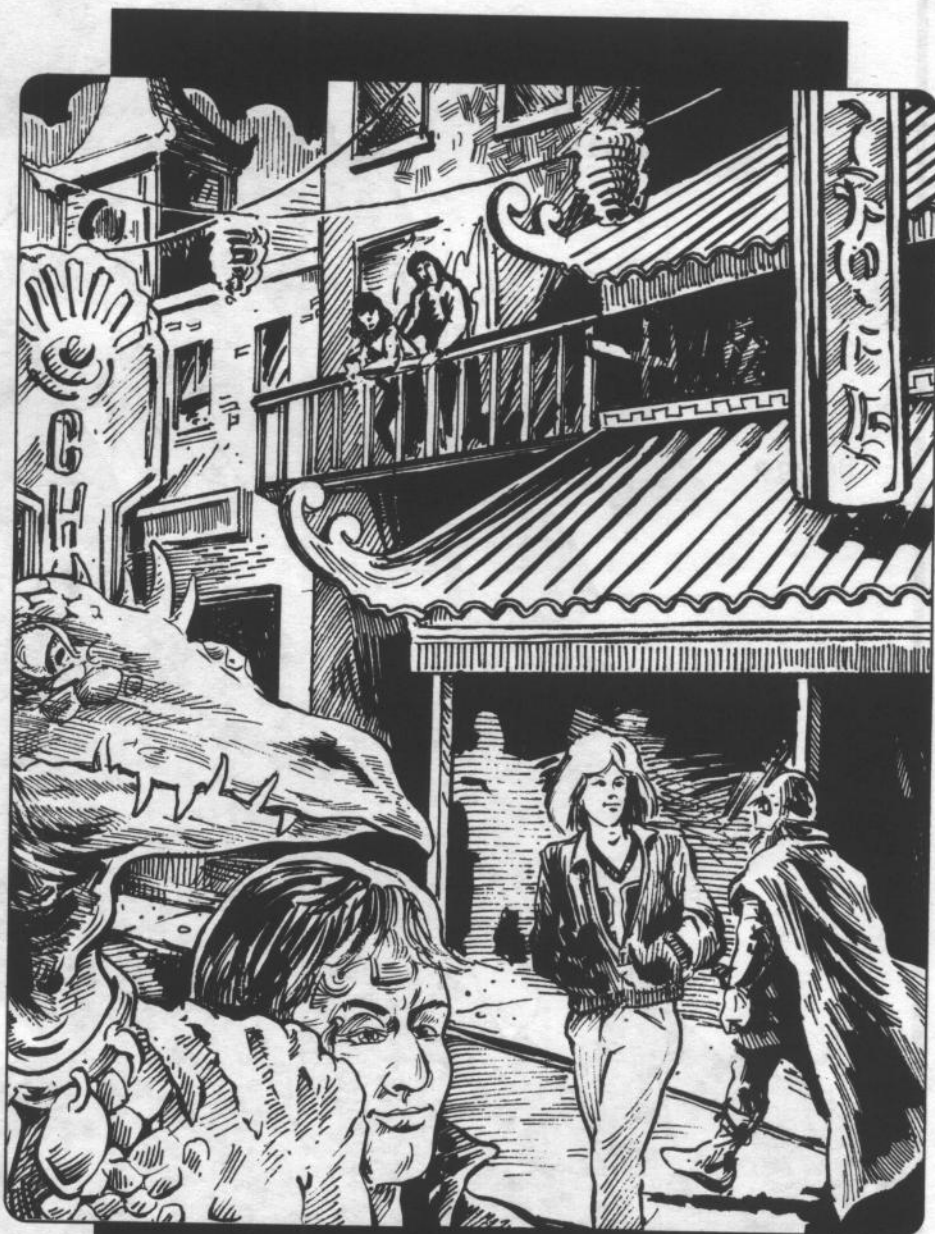
Thus far, the takeover has occurred largely without incident. Nippon interests in Los Angeles have proven to be far more tempting targets for the Tharkoldu and the Living Land is in disarray due to the coming of the Land Above. The Kanawa-controlled media's preemptive strike against CyberQuebec forced Malraux to curtail his plans to strike at Nippon in Cali-

fornia, lest he expose the fact that the Cyberpapacy truly had invaded North America.

And so, with the exception of some clashes between the Yakuza and Storm Knights, it has been business as usual in San Francisco. A number of Kanawa companies, as well as others from Marketplace, have moved into the city, and have so far been successful at keeping the Rauru Block out. Some of these are well-known names, but others are corporate shells designed to make tracing their ownership back to

Kanawa much harder to do. The company most identifiable with Nippon Tech currently based in San Francisco is Kanawa Enterprises.

San Francisco has also become something of a haven (albeit a dangerous one) for refugees from other realms. The Kanawa Corporation has gone into the smuggling business in a big way, ferrying Orrorshans and even some Ayslish from their dark and bloody realms to the relative safety of America. Of course, once in port, many find themselves forced to labor in



Kanawan factories for barely subsistence wages and severely punished for any attempts to contact others of their reality. There is now a dark underside to San Francisco business that did not exist before, and it is said that a wanderer along the docks at night may see sights stranger than any he ever imagined, as Victorian veterans and Ayslish trolls scurry from ships' holds to waiting Kanawa vans. Those foolish enough to talk about what they have seen often wind up floating in the bay.

Other aspects of 3327's Western operations have not been proceeding as smoothly. His arms factory in Redside was severely damaged by a conflict between edeinosaurs, bikers, Tharkoldu, an Orrorshan horror and Storm Knights. The wholly unnecessary battle between Kanawa security personnel and a pride of techno-demons in Compton (see Chapter Eight, "Tharkold") caused tremendous amounts of property damage and might have resulted in unflattering publicity had 7710 not been so efficient at getting the bodies of Nippon agents removed before the police arrived. Yakuza efforts to set American mobsters against each other and thus seize control of Las Vegas were thwarted by Storm Knights. And the damage done to the reputation of the Delphi Council by recent allegations of complicity with invaders, as made by President Nicklaus, may make it more difficult in the future for that body to shield Kanawa actions from inquisitive eyes.

Still, 3327 has managed to retain his foothold in America, which is more than he might have hoped for in the wake of the Tharkoldu invasion last year. With Baruk Kaah shaken by the loss of the Eastern Land, 3327 is currently thinking in terms of seizing some of the Saar's territory in California. This would certainly bring him into conflict with the Tharkoldu, and so before takes action he will have to devise a means to keep the techno-demons out of his way.

Overexposed

Ironically, the year in which 3327 played it close to the vest is the year that has seen the most damage done to his facade of normality. The Rauru Block has determined beyond the shadow of a doubt that he is a High Lord, and published their findings in a recent guide to the city of Tokyo (see the *Tokyo Citybook*).

In addition, the new American president seems convinced as well that the Kanawa Corporation is more than it appears to be. He has reportedly called Delphi Council Director Ellen Connors on the carpet, demanding to know why more investigation was not done of the situation in Japan before American got into bed with the megacorporations. Should the Delphi cover-up crack, 3327's true nature could be splashed all over the American media.

The growing belief in Japan that their nation has been invaded has prompted a nationalist movement to spring up, led by groups like the Scarlet Dragons. Although some of these new organizations are little more than thinly-disguised hate groups, many are made up of patriotic Japanese who see the things they have worked since World War II to create being perverted by aliens from another cosm.

But with vast success seemingly just out of reach, 3327 is no longer willing to divert the resources necessary to maintain his disguise. With the proliferation of Storm Knights, he knew it was only a matter of time before he was exposed. He now believes that his realm is rooted so deep in this cosm that public awareness of him as a High Lord would not be the devastating blow to his ambitions that once it might have been.

Operation: Meltdown

One of 3327's most successful operations in the last few months has been his use of the radiation-proof creatures known collectively as "Project

V" to sabotage nuclear power plants throughout Europe. Power stations in Germany, Italy, and much of Eastern Europe have been severely damaged in these attacks, with no one suspecting that genetically-engineered monstrosities were responsible. Instead, the blame is being placed on poor workmanship and bad engineering, much the same things that caused the accident at Chernobyl. While there have been relatively few deaths thus far, no one is certain how many may eventually die as a result of radiation leaks.

All of this has led to a rethinking of the use of nuclear energy by many European governments. Anticipating this, 3327 had the Kanawa Corporation prepared to announce a "breakthrough" in fusion technology (actually nothing more than the export of extant technology from Marketplace). Fusion power has been introduced into Japan over the past three months and hefty fees are being charged to nations who wish to possess prototype plants. Naturally, Nippon support staff come with all the plants, and all of the computers have automatic shutdown programming that can be triggered from afar by 3327. Very quietly, Nippon Tech has taken control of key power supplies in a number of Western nations, with no one being the wiser.

Of course, given time and the models to study from, Core Earth scientists might well develop fusion on their own and eventually increase this cosm's *Tech* axiom. But for now, the Kanawa Corporation is severely restricting studies of the plants, claiming that some scientists might be working for the Cyberpope and planning to sabotage the equipment. So convinced are the local governments that their plants might be targeted by agents of other High Lords that a number of Storm Knights have been shot at by guards simply for being in the general area.



The Storm Guild

One of the new players in the Possibility Wars has been the Hawaii-based Storm Guild, an organization devoted to recruiting and training stormers and Storm Knights and hiring them out for various missions. Under the leadership of the mysterious Guildmaster, the Guild has indirectly had a hand in thwarting any number of High Lord plots, while advancing others.

Thus far, it is unclear just where the Guildmasters' loyalties lie, if anywhere other than herself. She does not seem interested in actively opposing High Lord activities, more in providing combatants to both sides and letting them fight it out. Her identity and origins remain a closely-guarded secret, with only her most trusted aides allowed into her presence. There are indications that she has had encounters with both Mobius and 3327, and in the latter case, it would seem that the High Lord's memories are bitter ones.

Almost since the establishment of the Guild, hostilities have existed between it and Nippon Tech. The Guildmaster has refused in most cases to provide the Kanawa Corporation with stormers, nor has she been willing to "sign over" the names and locations of various Storm Knights. So, 3327 has responded by having any stormers hired through the Guild executed, ordering attacks on the Guild's office building in Honolulu, and most recently, instructing his men to assassinate the Guildmaster herself.

Sources within the Guild say the Guildmaster seems unconcerned about the threat of Nippon, despite their urgings that she take steps to protect herself. Whereas she seems almost amused by the actions of Mobius, Malraux and their ilk, it seems as if there is something about 3327 that cuts deeper. She grows strangely silent when he is brought up and those close to her do not know if it is anger or fear that rules her heart where he is concerned.

There are some, like 7710, who strongly support 3327's war with the Guild. But others within the Kanawa Corporation believe that this is a case where a personal vendetta is eclipsing 3327's normally sound business judgment, and no good will come of it.

Future Plans

For now, 3327 has sole possession of the field, in many instances. The Gaunt Man has not yet seen fit to challenge Nippon, and events brewing in Orrorsh may see fit to delay that conflict indefinitely. The Cyberpapacy is occupied with events in Canada and Yugoslavia, giving Nippon an opening to strike—which it fully intends to do. Yakuza operatives are already in place in Paris Liberte, planning a take-over of that city's underworld.

The major area of uncertainty remains Tharkold. Nippon investments in Berlin have come under attack, as have those in Los Angeles. Sterret of

the Blades is well aware of Baruk Kaah's weakness, but seems unwilling to abandon his edeinos "ally," meaning that there is still a potential danger to all of Kanawa's properties in California. Now 3327 is impatiently waiting for Jezrael herself to enter the fray, so that he can match wits with her. It is his belief that, as a relatively new High Lord in charge of a band of barbaric fools, she is ripe of manipulation. 3327 hopes to set her against the Gaunt Man and thus watch his two

most dangerous enemies eliminate each other.

The High Lord remains confident about the situation in Aysle, as the growing dependence of the Dark army on outside food supplies gives him a firm grasp on the situation there. Mobius, of course, remains a wild card, but thus far their interests have collided only on rare occasions. Although he would never admit, 3327 has a grudging appreciation for Mobius — the mad High Lord keeps the pot

stirred up and the other High Lords distracted from Kanawa's more subtle activities.

All in all, look for a far more aggressive Nippon Tech realm over the next twelve months. Should anything occur to seriously damage Orrorsh (as a result of Storm Knight action or some other realm), 3327 is prepared to capitalize upon it with a wave of sabotage within the horror realm the like of which has never been seen in High Lord warfare.

CHAPTER SIX

Orrorsh



CHAPTER SIX

*Orrorsh*TM



he Gaunt Man stood at the window of his Illmound Keep library, staring out at the gospog growing in the field below. It had been an exceedingly busy few months since news of his return had reached the world at large — that business with Wellington, arranging the Carredon's return to this cosm, overhauling the Hellion Court and seeing some of the more zealous horrors made to suffer for threatening the Ecology of Fear. It felt good to be free of that damnable maelstrom, once again taking a hand in the destruction of a world.

He turned to see Parok, warlord of the ravagons, approaching. "My lord, Uthorion requests an audience," the warrior said, making no attempt to disguise the contempt he felt for the fallen High Lord. "Would you have him executed?"

The Gaunt Man smiled. "No, no. I believe this will be most entertaining. Where is the miserable fool?"

In answer, Parok gestured toward the window. Yes, there was a dark shape approaching Illmound, much to the consternation of the gospog. The High Lord of Orrorsh found it amusing that his lieutenant, the master of dark sorcery, had been unable to find a more suitable vessel to possess than a dragon.

The Gaunt Man passed a hand before the window and watched it fly open, even as the great serpent came to earth among the gospog. Yes, despite the monstrous appearance, it was indeed Uthorion looking up at his master with pleading in his eyes.

"I crave a boon, Gaunt Lord," Uthorion said, in the guttural voice of the dragon. "Restore me to my human form and allow me to serve you once again."

The Gaunt Man's eyes gleamed with malice. "Really, Uthorion — you would have me expend some of my precious occult energies to save you from the consequences of your own failure?"

"I did not fail! I was betrayed!"

"By your own incompetence!" the Gaunt Man raged. "Allowing stormers to catch you unawares and slay your Viking form, then fleeing into the body

of this ludicrous beast. It makes me wonder why I ever saw the makings of a Possibility Raider in you."

"I have come seeking your aid," the dragon snarled. "If you will not bestow it upon me, I will take my leave."

The Gaunt Man reached out toward his lieutenant, then clenched his skeletal hand into a fist. Instantly, Uthorion let out a scream of pain as his entrails grew spikes within him and began to writhe. Crimson blood began to spill from his great fanged mouth.

"Never forget who is the master and who the slave, Uthorion," the Gaunt Man said in a harsh whisper. "Do not dare presume to speak to me in such a manner. You are owed — nothing! You may ask for — nothing! And if you depart Illmound, it will be at a time of my choosing. Do you understand?"

Uthorion's response was another cry of pain. The Gaunt Man gestured and the agony was gone.

"Now we will discuss the price of your restoration to my favor, Uthorion. It seems that Malcolm Kane made an ill-fated attempt to become a High Lord, allying himself with Kurst's former Darkness Device."

The name of the Dire Wolf, once a High Lord and now calling himself a "Storm Knight" brought a menacing look to the Gaunt Man's features. It was Kurst who had dared to lay hands upon him when those foolish stormers had forced him into the maelstrom. There would have to be a reckoning for that ...

"But Kane is dead, my lord," Uthorion offered.

"I know that, you imbecile! But the Darkness Device escaped! It has returned to its home cosm, Kantovia, and there is the slightest of chances it could fall into unpleasant hands there. Your task is to travel to that ruined cosm and find the Device. Do so, and it is yours to take where you will. Fail, and I doubt very much you will be alive to trouble me with your pleas again."

The dragon smiled. "Then it shall be mine at last, as it was always meant to be. I shall not fail you, my lord!"

With that, Uthorion took to the air and soared toward the maelstrom bridge that wound its way into the

storm-swept sky. Once on Gaea, he would follow the long trail of bridges back to Kantovia, site of the Gaunt Man's first conquest.

And if my suspicions are correct, he will die there, the Gaunt Man mused. But at least he will serve to warn my enemies that I am aware of their existence.

The master of Illmound Keep chuckled and returned to his dark work, secure in the knowledge that all was proceeding as he wished.

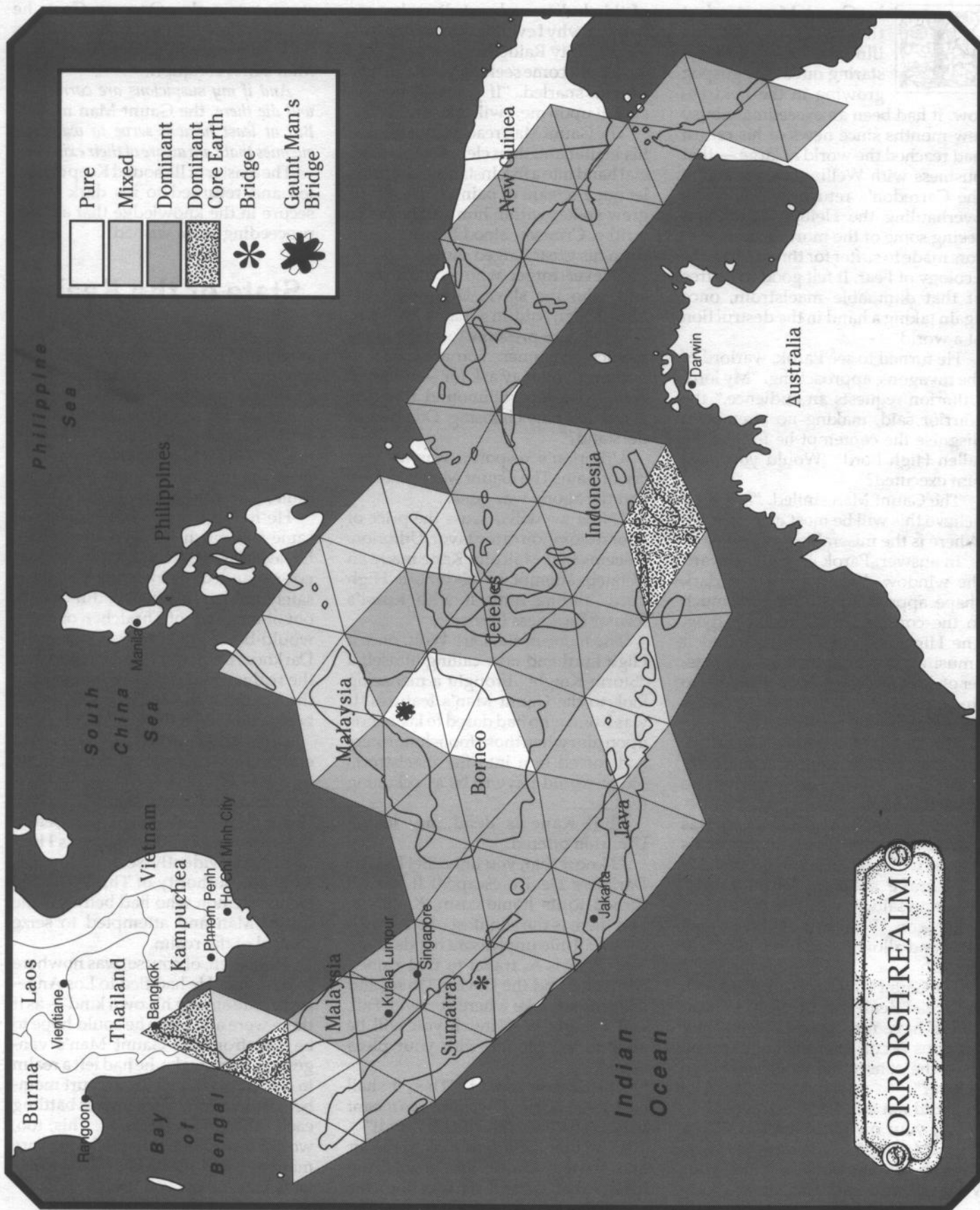
State of the Realm

Orrorsh has been witness to many staggering events within the past few months, chief among them the victory of the Gaunt Man over the eternity shard known as the Heart of Coyote. With the shard drained of possibilities, the Gaunt Man was able to emerge from the maelstrom and reclaim dominion over the horror realm.

He found a realm both much the same and much changed from when he saw it last. Its stelae boundaries had not expanded, as Heketon had been safely hidden in a pocket dimension, out of the reach of Thratchen or other would-be High Lords. Without the Darkness Device to charge new stelae, the realm could not grow, something the Gaunt Man would immediately take action to rectify.

Orrorsh had, in fact, been forced to endure the spectacle of 3327 and the forces of Nippon Tech seizing territory that had been claimed by the Gaunt Man in meetings held before the invasion of Earth. Nippon's High Lord had evidently seen fit to challenge the authority of Thratchen, the techno-demon who had betrayed the Gaunt Man and attempted to seize control of the realm.

Thratchen, of course, was nowhere to be found. He had fled to Los Angeles to hide among his own kind — as if there were any place he could hope to be safe from the Gaunt Man's vengeance. In his wake, he had left a realm in disarray, with Hellion Court members and various Nightmares battling each other for supremacy. This, too, would have to be attended to before matters could proceed to their inevitable conclusion.



ORRORSH REALM



The upshot of all this has been a rapid expansion of the Orrorsh realm, done in such a manner as to avoid direct confrontation with Nippon while at the same time making the best use of limited stelae. The Gaunt Man has seen his domain move eastward, encompassing two-thirds of New Guinea before dipping south and creeping along Australia's Great Barrier Reef. While the dropping of far fewer stelae might have brought Orrorsh to the land "down under," it would have meant seizing territory that boasted little population. Instead, Gaunt Man targeted the towns along the eastern coast, with his eyes ultimately focused on cities like Melbourne.

Trail of Terror

As noted above, the Orrorshan realm has expanded rapidly in the last four months. Dominant zones of the horror realm now extend over western and central New Guinea and portions of eastern Australia, including Cape York, Cooktown, and Cairn.

In addition, an Akashan reality tree with an Orrorshan horror within was planted in New Orleans some months before the Gaunt Man's return was made known. This transformed that city and nearby Baton Rouge into Orrorshan/Core Earth mixed zones (see below).

New Guinea has been particularly hard hit by horrors, who have taken advantage of the fact that, in some areas of the island, headhunting and cannibalism are still common practices. There is a very strong vein of superstition to be mined here, and it is also an area ripe for colonization by the Victorians. Her Majesty's troops, aided and abetted by Sacellum missionaries, have traveled to the island in droves and begun "saving" the native population.

Australia has been a different story, which is why the realm only extends a short distance on to this continent. Despite the corruption of many high-ranking Victorians, it has been difficult to sell them on the idea that a nation of men much like themselves needs salvation. Thus, the horrors sent

here have been committing very public atrocities, trying to draw the Victorians into the fray and thus allow for more dominant Orrorshan zones to be created in the future.

For their part, the Australians have long been expecting some kind of an attack and were not caught completely unprepared. The Australian military has managed to protect most of the inland areas from incursion and officials are determined not to let the horrors move any farther south than they have already. Having already signed a contract with the Guildmaster some time ago, and currently playing host to a Storm Guild training facility, Australia does not want for Storm Knights to aid her in her time of need.

In addition, some horrors have been seen in battle with what look to be aboriginal warriors, who disappear shortly after dispatching their foes. Pocket dimension experts feel certain that the gateway to the Dream Time is located somewhere on this continent, and it is from there that these mysterious figures have emerged.

A Fear Grows in Vieux Carree

Some time ago, a group of Akashan Monitors bearing a reality tree seed were waylaid while journeying to Nippon Tech. When the brief battle was over, they had been slain and their precious cargo stolen. Their killers were Orrorshan horrors, who saw a way to use the bizarre seed to win favor in the eyes of Thratchen. Already under orders to bring Orrorshan talismans to the American city of New Orleans, the horrors brought the alien item as well.

In the heart of Vieux Carree (the French Quarter), they planted the tree, one of the horrors bonding with it. The result was an Orrorshan/Core Earth mixed zone encompassing both New Orleans and Baton Rouge, and a terror far beyond anything the residents had ever known before.

New Orleans has always been known for, among other things, the prevalence of voodoo, or Vodoun, beliefs and practices. Along with Haiti, it is one of the major centers of this reli-

gion. Now the practitioners find that it is far easier to perform their rituals, due to the higher *Magic* axiom of Orrorsh. But the *loa* they summon are not always benevolent, and seem to enjoy tormenting the priestesses and leading them into corruption. Festivals, such as that of St. Jacques Majeur, which once culminated in the sacrifice of an animal have now been twisted to involve the slaying of humans. More and more houngan (voodoo priests) have become *bokor*, dark magicians, "one who serves the loa with both hands." Rather than simply using drugs to create zombies, they now actually reanimate the dead.

Normally only seen in the swamplands, zombies now roam the city by night, mindlessly slaying those unfortunate enough to anger a *bokor*. True zombies can be told from artificial ones by giving them salt — sodium will counteract the effects of the "zombie's cucumber" (the drug that saps the will of a living person) and free them from domination by the bokor. A zombie resurrected through sorcery will be unaffected by the salt.

Not having received any real direction as to what to do with New Orleans (since there was no possibility of dropping a bridge there at the time the reality tree was planted), the horrors have concentrated primarily on generating fear in the city without attracting too much attention from Storm Knights or the military. Tharkoldu have also been spotted in New Orleans, apparently concerned about having a little bit of Orrorsh so close to their realm. Thus far, an uneasy truce seems to exist between the technodemons and the horrors, both sides waiting for a clearer idea of the relationship between their High Lords. Should the Gaunt Man and Jezrael come into conflict at some point, look for New Orleans to become a blood-bath.

Days of Dread

The first item on the Gaunt Man's agenda after his emergence from the maelstrom was the reorganization of the Hellion Court. Through his mirror, Wicked, the Gaunt Man discov-



ered that General Avery Wellington planned to betray his High Lord and his fellow Court members by using an occult ritual to destroy Singapore. After setting Storm Knights on his trail, the Gaunt Man recruited two new members for his Court, Hatha and Thanys (See the super-adventure *The Gaunt Man Returns* for more details on this).

Another item of concern to the Gaunt Man was the discovery that Huitzilopochtli, the Kantovian Darkness Device, had been exiled to its devastated home cosm by Storm Knights. Although there is no doubt that universe is long dead, the Gaunt Man apparently believes that it would be possible for forces opposed to him to gain access to the Device while it is dormant there. He has dispatched Uthorion to Kantovia to secure possession of the Device before such a thing can happen, although this may well be nothing more than a convenient way of disposing of the failed High Lord.

The third major action of the Gaunt Man's past few months has been his journey to the Waiting Village to resurrect the spirit of the Carredon. In an unusual event, the Gaunt Man saw to it that the soul would return to a form similar to its original, monstrous body. His plans for the Carredon are unknown, although Storm Knights are said to be aware of its planned return to the realm and are acting to stop it (see the *Torg* adventure, *No Quarter Given*).

Coming-Out Party

The return of the Gaunt Man also means the return of Lord Bryon Salisbury, the false identity used to allow him to move about in Victorian society. The official story is that Salisbury has been away on an expedition for the last two years, and the Gaunt Man has enjoyed weaving tales of terror about the things he "saw while away" and watching partygoers pale.

Save for those who are aware of his existence as a High Lord, there are few in Victorian society who would dare question Salisbury or suspect him of

doing evil. Victorian social classes, particularly on the higher levels, are very much a big club, where non-members are considered suspect and those who enjoy the benefits of belonging are above reproach.

Because of this, a Victorian Storm Knight may face some problems when dealing with another Victorian of a higher social class. As a general rule, interactions between members of disparate classes mean that the attitude of the participant of higher status should be dropped one level. For instance, a Victorian shop owner is normally *friendly* toward average Storm Knights. But when dealing with a Victorian Storm Knight who is a common laborer he will be *neutral*. In addition, the laborer suffers a +3 to the difficulty of *charm* or *persuasion* attempts on the shop owner.

Victorian social structure is organized as follows:

Royalty

Nobility (Lords, Ladies, Dukes, Earls, Counts)

High Clergy (Sacellum heads, Bishops, Archbishops)

Officers (Army and Navy officers of captain's rank or higher)

Landed Gentry (wealthy people with large real estate holdings but no titles)

High Mercantile (bank presidents, company presidents or chairmen)

Common Clergy (Sacellum priests)

Intelligentsia (professors, doctors, researchers, explorers, scholars)

Most Victorian Storm Knights

Common Military (Army and Navy members ranging from lieutenants to common foot soldiers. Also includes police.)

Common Mercantile (store and shop owners, heads of guilds)

Skilled Servants (Educated Victorian butlers and maids)

Most Non-Victorian Storm Knights

Common Laborers (average Victorian workers, farmers, sailors)

Non-Victorian Servants

Non-Victorian Laborers

Gypsies

These classes are only slightly malleable in regards to social situations. For example, at a military ball, a general may be accorded more deference than a bishop — though the bishop won't be accorded less. It is an important distinction that respect due to class and respect due to achievement must be interwoven in Victorian society. Class is the official, and always recognized, factor, but achievement can often allow for temporary "promotion" or "demotion" between class levels.

New Horrors

The Death Fly

Bred by the Gaunt Man for a planned invasion of New Orleans prior to his conflict with the Heart of Coyote, the death fly resembles a three meter tall butterfly with huge wings. It is black and red in color and has a skull head of obsidian. Its mandibles gleam bone white in the moonlight.

If the creature is killed by any means other than its true death, it has the power to possess someone — normally an Ord — and continue. For some reason, it is able to give that person the ability to work occult magic at a highly skilled level. It will incubate for a week inside its new host before tearing free of him as if emerging from a chrysalis.

The Death Fly

Reality: Orrorsh

DEXTERITY 15

Dodge 19, flight 22, unarmed combat 20

STRENGTH 17

TOUGHNESS 16

PERCEPTION 12

Find 16, trick 18

MIND 8

Test 20, willpower 19

CHARISMA 9

Taunt (25)

SPIRIT 13

Faith (Orrorshan evil) 16, intimidation 25, reality (Orrorsh) 21

Possibility Potential: all

Natural Tools: wings, speed value 16; mandibles, damage value STR+10/27

Powers: armor defeating attack, dark vision, blur form

Corruption Value: 19

Fear Rating: 2

Perseverance DN: 14

Weakness: any holy symbol or ward

True Death: Immersion in water for five rounds

"Number-Crunchers"

Among Skutharka's favorite horrors, "number-crunchers" are corrupted accountants whose method of killing with teeth and claws brings new meaning to the phrase "internal audit." Their *modus operandi* is standard — they will harry a victim for some days before attacking, wrecking his car, severing his phone lines, cutting off electricity and heat to his apartment. Once the victim is sufficiently frustrated, the number-cruncher attacks.

The creatures rarely spend time feasting on their victim in public, but remove some choice internal organs for later consumption. A hastily scrawled list of the parts taken is usually left behind on the body ("itemized deductions"). In

addition, the victim's nose is commonly cut off to spite his face.

Number-crunchers are humanoid and wear three-piece suits (male and female versions), albeit with holes in the jacket for large, leathery, bat-like wings to emerge. They are said to resemble particularly persistent harpies.

Number-Cruncher

Reality: Orrorsh

DEXTERITY 12

Dodge 15, flight 16, maneuver 16, unarmed combat 18

STRENGTH 15

TOUGHNESS 16

PERCEPTION 15

Evidence analysis 20, find 20, scholar (accounting) 21, tracking 23

MIND 12

Test 14, willpower 18

CHARISMA 5

Persuasion (25), taunt 27

SPIRIT 5

Faith (Orrorshan evil) 10, intimidation (19)

Additional Skills: one at +2 adds

Possibility Potential: some (60)

Natural Tools: teeth, damage value STR+3/18; claws, damage value STR+3/18; wings, speed value 9

Power Rating: 3

Corruption Value: 19

Fear Rating: 1

Perseverance DN: 18

Weakness: successful use of *intimidation*

True Death: Constant use of the number-crunchers methods against it will cause it to wither and die.

Skill Notes: Number-crunchers are incapable of *charming* or being *charmed*

Optional Rule

Vampyres as Player Characters

Just as it is possible to have werewolf player characters in *Torg*, it is also possible to have vampyre player char-



acters (provided, of course, both gamemaster and players agree to their inclusion). In the back of this book, you will find a vampire character template.

Vampire player characters are people who were attacked *but not slain* by vampires, but *were* infected. According to the rules for the power *infection*, this is not possible (the character must die first), but a new wrinkle in the Power of Fear can make it work.

Infection II

A two-point power, *infection II* is only available to particularly powerful horrors that the Gaunt Man has chosen for this test. This power works just like *infection*, and the horror must also have *life drain* or *shape change*, but the life drain does not kill the victim. Instead, the victim is infected when he or she is “overcome” by the infection — in the same way he or she would have been killed by *infection*. Then, the character takes on some of the abilities and characteristics of the horror that infected him or her, as defined below.

Currently, only powerful vampires have access to this power. The Gaunt Man hopes that, by infecting living people, he will be able to more certainly corrupt them — and at a higher level of corruption than before. The Corruption Value of evil living vampires is likely to be much higher than that of the undead — because they had “freedom to choose” much longer.

Of course, this leaves the infected character with a way out. Some few living vampires are able to resist corruption and the Gaunt Man for a time — perhaps forever. But this could just be another convoluted scheme of the master of Evil.

Vampire Characters

Vampire player characters begin with eight Corruption points. This arises out of their being infected, and means they must be particularly careful about performing *Wicked* acts, lest they become a horror (and a gamemaster character).

Vampire player characters have a

power rating of 2, but must choose from among the following powers: *elemental alteration*, *shape change*, *blur form*, *darkness*, *dark vision*, and *silence*. These powers can be used by the player character without automatically risking further corruption. All other two point and one point powers are available to the player character at gamemaster’s discretion, but a corruption check is required each time they are used due to their nature. In some campaigns, gamemasters may choose to make the player character vampire take a restricted power in order to “tempt” him or her toward corruption.

In addition, upon becoming a vampire, the character may have one three-point package applied to any one attribute not already increased by a package. This costs one Possibility per adventure and the character must pay it or lose the package forever. As said above, the vampire is no longer subject to cosm limits on attributes. Living vampires have a limit of 16 to any attribute if they are of Orrorshan reality. Other living vampires use their cosm limits and may cause a contradiction.

Vampire player characters may be good, bad, or somewhere in between. Many are fighting the High Lords for their own reasons, rather than because they wish to save Earth. But all should be concerned with garnering further Corruption points and falling under the sway of a Nightmare.

Thus, they should be made aware of the fact that drinking the blood of a living person is a *Wicked* act, as is slaying an innocent for their blood. Vampires need to feed at least once per day, and may at times be forced into unorthodox methods (robbing blood banks, etc.) to obtain the blood they need. It is also possible to use the blood of animals, although this is not as nourishing and two or more feedings may be needed in a day when such is the case. Likewise, blood from banks or storage facilities is not as nourishing, and, if the blood has been stored for more than one day, it is not good at all.

A vampire who has not fed for three days will begin to suffer from starvation. The character’s *Dexterity*,

Strength, and *Toughness* and all related skills drop by -1 on the fourth day, and for every day thereafter in which the vampire does not feed. As soon as he does feed, all stats will return to normal. If the character never feeds again (say, he is sealed somewhere where he cannot get to prey) he will eventually die. Player characters (living) vampires cannot go into dormancy like their undead cousins — they must feed.

Vampires are considered to be enchanted creatures, and therefore can exceed the attribute limits for their cosm. These increased attributes are a contradiction in any cosm whose *Magic* axiom is less than 10.

As they are not horrors, player character vampires do not have weaknesses or True Deaths (any death will mean their final end), nor can they make use of the Power of Fear. Only by fully embracing the corruption of Orrorsh can they gain these things, at which point they become gamemaster characters.

Keep in mind that the corruption points they do have mean that those with *true sight* will be able to detect the taint of evil about them and their presence may cause other problems. Gamemasters and players may wish to discuss such things beforehand — does the vampire have an instinctive aversion to holy objects, an inability to enter private dwellings into which he has not been invited, etc.? Remember, it may not be a weakness as such, but if the character *believes* that vampires cannot go into sunlight, he may react as if the sun is indeed harmful to him.

Again, use of vampire player characters, as with techno-demons, is something we present as an option to make your campaign more interesting. But there should be some agreement between the gamemaster and other players that the use of such characters will not disturb the flow of the game before they are introduced.

Roleplaying the Vampire

Some hints for the not quite undead:

- You are an enemy of life and exist purely by feeding directly off of the life essence. While you are not corrupt (yet) and have no weaknesses, you



begin to see the living as food the longer you survive.

- Growing things, such as plants and animals, are anathema to you. Other than blood, you cannot consume *anything* else without becoming ill.

- You are *not* immortal, though you cannot grow old and die. The death you see is a violent one, and will eventually come for you. After death, it is likely you will be banned from any afterlife other than the Waiting Village, and then only if you turn evil.

- When hungry, you are *consumed* by hunger. That is your essence and your nature: *to feed*. As you starve, you lose more of yourself to the hunger. If you wish to remain free from corruption, you must feed often and carefully.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Space Gods TM

Rotan Ulka looked out over the valley that surrounded the Sacsuayhuaman Fortress and watched teams of Monitors training for war. Once this place had been the home of Incan leaders — now it sheltered and protected the Akashan High Council, shielding them from the madness that consumed the outside world.

Ulka had learned much in the time he and his people had spent on Earth. He had met those willing to trust in the unknown, as well as those who mindlessly feared that which they did not understand. He had seen violence of the sort that only a Lorbaat could find pleasing, rivers of blood flowing through newly-revived jungle. Many were the times he had considered ordering the lightships renewed and abandoning this place to its fate. Perhaps Sarila had been right, all those months ago — perhaps this was not the Akashans' war.

But then he would remember the corpses of his people, butchered by servants of the High Lords. In particular, he recalled those frightened unto death and the theft of the reality tree seed they carried. It would only be later that he would learn that the tree had been used to spread terror among more innocents.

They had come here seeking aid against the Comaghaz virus. Now that virus had spread to this planet and Akashan biotechnology was in the hands of madmen. There were some who said they had done enough damage to this place and should leave, and others who felt they had an obligation to make things right before they left this world to its fate.

And he was Rotan — it was his job to decide what the Akashans would do. He had pondered for many days before finally announcing that they would remain, and more, fight to reclaim what had been taken from them.

As the last rays of the sun colored the Monitors a blood-red hue, Ulka prayed that he would not live to regret that decision ...

State of the Realm

True to their word, the Akashans have made no effort to expand their mixed realm in the past year. Although many of the Coar believed that action needed to be taken to ensure the survival of the rain forest, Ulka ruled that there would be no further plantings unless a further threat to the Akashans' survival could be shown to exist.

Ulka did, however, grant his approval to a plan to airlift edeinos and other Living Land denizens from their rapidly collapsing realm and settle them in a mixed area within the Amazon basin. (See Chapter Three, "The Living Land/Core Earth/Land Below.")

In addition, Ulka finally began allowing the distribution of reality trees. Storm Knights, particularly those in the Living Land and Nippon, have been aggressively planting the trees. However, none have as yet grown sufficiently for someone to enter into them. Thus far, one seed is known to have been stolen by Orrorshan horrors and used to create an Orrorshan/Core Earth mixed zone in New Orleans. (See Chapter Six, "Orrorsh.")

The Tharkoldu Factor

Conflicts between the Akashans and the Tharkoldu have been increasing in intensity and bloodshed over the past year. Coar Akashans began by supplying weapons to Storm Knights who were fighting the techno-demons. After suffering a number of humiliating defeats, the Tharkoldu tracked the weapons back to their source and began eliminating any Akashans that they encountered in Los Angeles.

After viewing bodies mangled by techno-demon talons, an enraged High Council, led by Sarila, called for a war against the Tharkoldu. Ulka wasted no time in agreeing with them, viewing the techno-demons as perhaps the worst of the invaders, their brutal savagery wedded to a love of "dirty" technology.

Teams of Monitors are being sent to Berlin and Los Angeles to aid Storm

Knight groups in the battle against the Tharkoldu. Unfortunately, the first group to arrive was ambushed and killed by techno-demons, who seized their weapons and brought them to Sterret. The Demon Prince is currently attempting to discern a way in which to merge biotech with occulttech.

The Comaghaz Conspiracy

For her part, Sarila is backing this assault because of rumors she has heard that the Tharkoldu have developed a chemical agent effective against the Comaghaz plague. Not completely understanding what she has created, she fears that the destruction of the group mind might lead to the destruction of her mind as well.

Already, she wonders if madness has begun to grip her. She hears a voice in her head much like that of a Comaghaz carrier, but not subservient to her. It seems that, somehow, someone else has developed an immunity to the plague and is attempting to seize control of the group mind. Thus far, Sarila has been able to resist this being, whose identity and gender remain a mystery. But she is concerned that someone powerful enough to be infected with the virus and still dominate it might be able to one day enslave her along with the rest of the afflicted.

Overall, Sarila has been less than pleased with the spread of the plague in the past year. True, she has watched Comaghaz carriers spread to Nippon Tech, the Nile Empire and even Orrorsh, but she has yet to achieve the domination of the Akashan realm that she had hoped for. Storm Knights entering the realm are wary of Comaghaz attack and have been defeating her troops consistently. It is only when the infected are sent to confront Storm Knights outside the realm that they have met with any great level of success. Currently, a small cell is operating within the Cyberpapacy, having infected at least three groups of Knights so far.

Biohorror

Regrettably, Sarila is not the only biotechnician to have let her pursuit of knowledge (and power) overshadow her good sense. A number of these scientists have found employment with other High Lords (particularly 3327 and Malraux) or South American drug rings. Some have even begun delving into the secrets of Those Who Wait.

The most horrifying and tragic of these instances is that of Sur Allaan, an Akite bioengineer who traveled to northern Columbia to investigate ancient Akashan sites. While there, he discovered a forgotten lab with a number of old biotech experiments held in stasis within.

While exploring, Allaan accidentally activated the lab's defenses. Trapped within, the Akashan was attacked and overwhelmed by a biotech creation. The creature merged with Allaan to form an inhuman blob of protoplasm.

Despite Storm Knight efforts, the thing that was once Sur Allaan escaped and is still loose in the Colombian countryside.

Sur Allaan/biocreature

Reality: Akasha

DEXTERITY 11 (14)

Biotech weapons 16 (19), dodge 13 (16), unarmed combat 14 (7)

STRENGTH 12 (18)

TOUGHNESS 10 (20)

PERCEPTION 13

Psionic manipulation 20, trick 15

MIND 13

Psionic resistance 21, test 16

CHARISMA 11

Charm (20), persuasion (20), taunt (15)

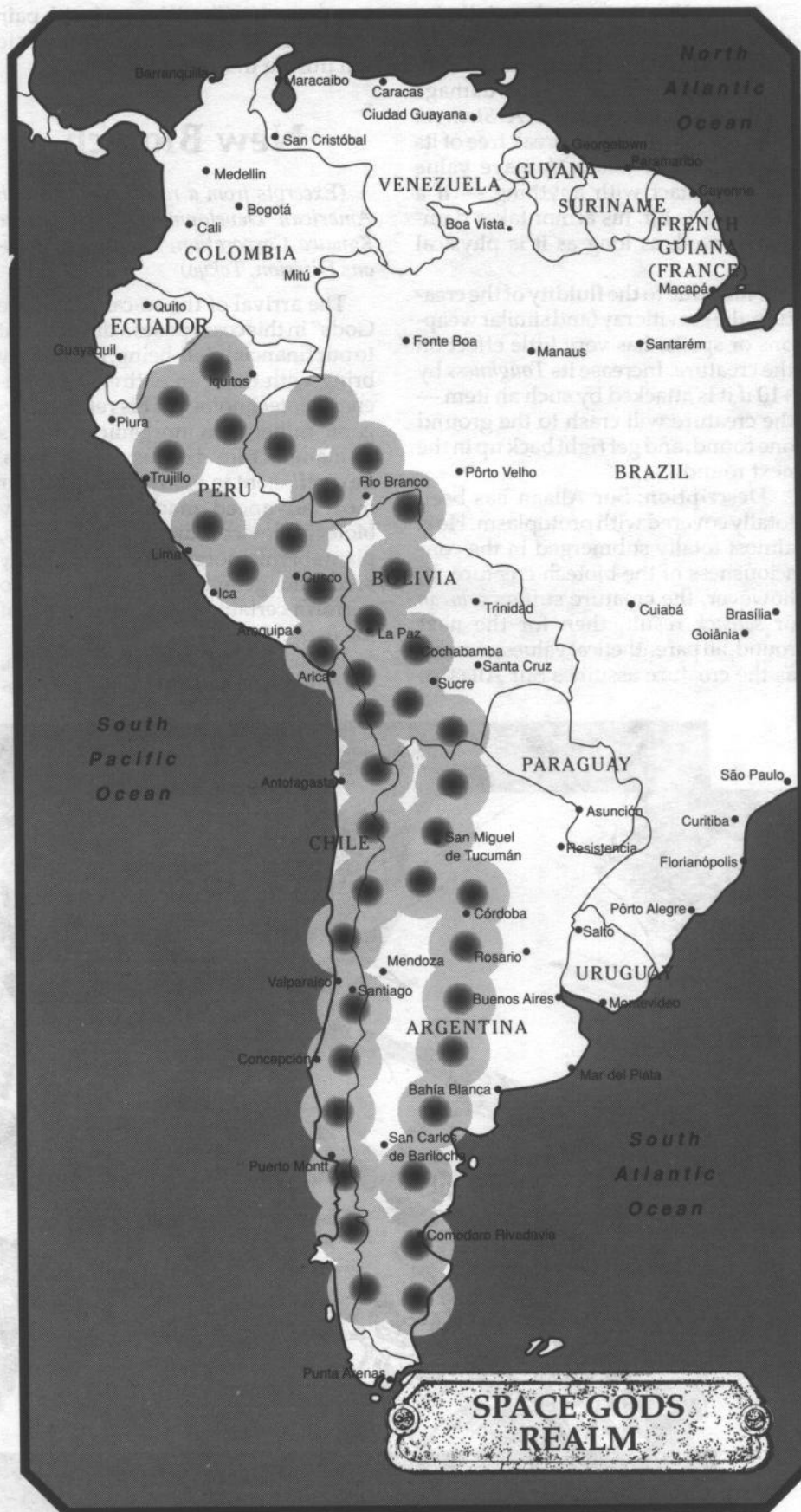
SPIRIT 13

Intimidation 17 (25), reality (Akashan) 21

Possibilities: 15

Note: Parenthetical values are those of Allaan while merged with the creature

Psionic Powers: Akite group (all); Kinesis group (containment, energy routing, telekinesis); Psionic Defense group (general resistance (self), psychic screen); Psychic Senses group (awareness, life sense, psi detection)



Natural Tools: protoplasmic limbs, damage value STR+7/25—on a wound or better, target is stuck to the creature and suffers digestive juice damage each round (see below). A *Strength* total of 21 is needed to break free of its grip; digestive juices, damage value 19 on contact with anything — if a character is hit, his armor takes damage as well, as long as it is physical armor.

Note: due to the fluidity of the creature, the gravitic ray (and similar weapons or spells) has very little effect on the creature. Increase its *Toughness* by +10 if it is attacked by such an item — the creature will crash to the ground one round, and get right back up in the next round.

Description: Sur Allaan has been totally covered with protoplasm. He is almost totally submerged in the consciousness of the biotech creature. If, however, the creature suffers a *break* or *setback* result, then for the next round, all parenthetical values go away as the creature assumes Sur Allaan's

true form. It will still be mad with pain and hate, but it will be much easier to kill during that round.

New Biotech

(Excerpts from a report by the South American Development Trust to the Kanawa Corporation, Hachiman Weapons Division, Tokyo)

The arrival of the so-called "Space Gods" in this cosm poses a direct threat to our financial well-being, in that they bring with them an entirely new science: biotechnology. This relies on organic rather than inorganic materials to manufacture devices; living tools, more efficient in many cases than our most advanced machinery. Many biotech "devices" are, in fact, animals, plants or microorganisms, specifically bred and genetically engineered to perform certain tasks at the behest of the user ...

While Hachiman sales remain high, even in the face of both legal and ille-

gal biotech labs appearing all over South America, there are indications that this quarter may show a moderate to serious loss.

Suggested strategy: a two-pronged approach to weapons sales. While we maintain sales of contemporary weaponry in South America, it is imperative that Hachiman get a grasp on the principles of biotechnology. Certain operatives of the company should attempt to acquire "controlling interests" in biotech labs throughout the "Space Gods" realm. In addition, it is important to cull as much data as possible from illegal biotech, condemned by the Akashan High Council as "unethical;" if they won't sell it, we can, and corner the market on experimental biotech.

The following is an update of a previous report listing known biotech devices within the Akashan realm. These newly-discovered devices are either experimental, banned or just recently developed in the black market labs of Lima and Santiago.



Pelota

This lethal weapon was inspired by the popular game of *jai alai*, played throughout Latin America. *Jai alai* is played using a small, hard ball (called a *pelota*) and a scoop-shaped, glove-like wicker basket called a *cesta*. The *pelota* is hurled from player to player, caught in the *cesta* and hurled out almost simultaneously. After watching a game, an Akashan bioengineer was inspired to fashion a weapon to simulate this sometimes deadly sport.

The eventual result was a small, spherical creature dubbed the *pelota*. This creature is covered with thick, brown hair and has a diameter of 10 centimeters. The only interruption of its otherwise perfectly round body is its mouth, a wide arc at the creature's thickest point, stretching more than halfway around the creature. The *pelota* is able to open its mouth wide enough so that it becomes two furry hemispheres linked by a small flap of skin.

In combat, the *pelota* is hurled at a target the use of a special, smooth plastic *cesta*. The *pelota* opens its mouth wide in midair, so that if it strikes its target (doing initial damage equal to the thrower's STR+1/13) and gets a *wound* or better result, it can clamp down its powerful jaws and feed. Once it has locked on to a target, it continues to do damage 13 per round until removed (requiring a *Strength* total of 11).

The *pelota* is a vicious little creature, usually ravenous (needing to be fed twice a week), and can only be safely handled immediately after it has been fed.

Kros-Hek

The *kros-hek* is a horrible biotech weapon, long banned by the High Council but now finding a market among unscrupulous consumers in the South American underworld. The weapon is a long, slender shell, shaped like a cylinder, with one end tapering off into a cone, and a small hole at the point. The shell houses the *kros-hek* itself, a virtually mindless creature.

Touching a stud set into the shell's

blunt end causes the creature to extend its stinger, a long and needle-like projection, through the end of the shell. The *kros-hek* can then be used as a stabbing weapon in battle, causing damage value STR+3/16.

The true damage done, however, may not be apparent until sometime after the attack. The *kros-hek* uses its stinger for the act of reproduction — while it is hermaphroditic and capable of creating the initial zygote, a living host is required for the zygote to feed upon as it develops. Any attack made with the *kros-hek* that causes a *wound* or better causes the creature to inject its embryonic young into the victim. If treatment is immediately administered (a *medicine* total of 13 within the first hour), the zygote can be killed. If not, the creature will spend the first hour swimming up the host's bloodstream and attaching itself to her heart, making it considerably harder to kill (*medicine* difficulty of 22).

Over the next 72 hours, the zygote will begin to grow at an astonishing rate, feeding off its host. The act of feeding has an increasingly detrimental effect on the host as well (TOU-1 every two hours; when TOU is at 0, the host falls into a coma). At the end of three days in the host body, the creature will burst forth from the host's chest, doing damage value 25.

Within the shell, the creature is cylindrical and a pale reddish hue. Specifically bred to reproduce in that horrible manner, *kros-heks* were long ago ordered destroyed by the Akashan High Council. However, its gruesome efficiency has ensured its survival as a weapon.

Kros-heks must be fed once a month.

Scorpion Armor

The latest innovation in biotechnology is offensive armor. Unlike other biotech suits, scorpion armor is fairly bulky (fatigue penalty). It provides a bonus of TOU+8/28.

The suit resembles a large harness and is composed of a chitinous organic substance, with 12 to 20 clumps of organic material attached with metal wire. Each clump is home to a strange and vicious creature that resembles the Core

Earth scorpion. Each scorpion is physically attached to the organic growths, like a turtle in its shell, and cannot leave the suit. The wires connection each clump are actually physiological regulators for the creatures — using electrical and chemical stimuli released through the wires, the creatures are kept docile and sedate.

A wire also leads from the suit to a pad affixed to the wearer's temple so that, with a thought, she can awaken the scorpions and rouse them to anger. The scorpions have been conditioned not to attack the suit's wearer, but will lash out at anyone or anything else. Each scorpion is "armed" with a powerful envenomed stinger at the end of its tail (damage value 17). Whenever the wearer performs a successful *unarmed combat* attack (or is the victim of such an attack), the scorpions emerge from the shells and attack (with an *unarmed combat* value of 10), using its stinger (damage value 15). This ability on the part of scorpion armor has made "the bear hug a lethal weapon," in one Storm Knight's words.

Scorpion armor is still relatively rare in the realm, found mostly among elite Monitor squads or Council members. But a few suits have made it into the black market, just the same.

Quonal

The *quonal* is a curious creature that doubles as both a melee and missile weapon. It is tetrapodal in shape, looking something like a four-limbed starfish. It is indigenous to land and a muddy brown in color, with rough skin much like sandpaper. The *quonal* has a radius of approximately 16 centimeters from its mouth (in the center of its body) to the tips of its tentacles. Two control studs set into the creature's body allow the wielder to place it into one of two configurations:

1) With all four tentacles extended outwards, as straight and stiff as possible, the *quonal* can be thrown like a shuriken. The *quonal* becomes rock-hard in this position, doing damage value STR+3/20.

2) Folded inward, the *quonal* can be wrapped around one's fist to augment the damage of a punch (damage value STR+2/17, *melee weapons* skill use). In



this position, the quonal also provides TOU+1/20 protection to the wearer's fist.

When not in use, the quonal can be affixed to belts or clothing with ease, as it secretes a sap-like fluid from its mouth when in repose, making it easy to stick on to things. Quonals are one of the few biotech "devices" that are used as something other than a tool — many Akashans, in fact, keep them as pets.

White Dragon

"White dragon" is the slang term for a devastating new biotech firearm, a prototype of which was stolen from

a Monitor-controlled research laboratory. The Akashans' answer to the flamethrower is now literally the hottest thing on the black market.

Held in one hand, the white is fairly compact, perhaps the size of a large pistol. Like other biotech devices, it is almost completely organic, with the outer surface being almost blindingly white (hence the weapon's nickname). The white dragon is egg-shaped, with a small orifice at one end. A bone-like handle projects from the other end. When the user squeezes the handle tightly, the weapon spits out a viscous white glob of highly flammable material, which ignites on contact with oxygen. The fireball does damage value 26 when it hits — if a *wound* result or

better is done, the flaming goo continues to do damage value 26 per round to the target until extinguished with foam or carbon dioxide or cut off from oxygen. Left unchecked, it will continue to burn until it has consumed all the fuel in an area.

The flames are a ghostly phosphorescent white, and each shot leaves a trail of white light when fired, giving it the appearance of a single continuous flame.

White dragons must be fed once every two weeks. Each feeding gives it enough energy to produce five rounds of flammable liquid; after all five are shot, it cannot be used again until after its next feeding.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THANKS



CHAPTER EIGHT

*Tharkold*TM



Seizou Kobashi sat in the Ichi Burbank cafeteria, reviewing his appointment schedule for tomorrow. It was full, of course

— his employers frowned on letting any time go to waste. It was for that reason Seizou had stayed late. It would not do to spend a portion of the morning organizing his calendar.

He sensed the presence of Mieko long before he looked up to see her smiling at him. She had been with Ichi for almost a year now, a transfer from the downtown office shortly before it closed. She and Seizou had formed that rarest of things in a mega-corporation — a true friendship — and she often came to him for advice on how to handle the internal politics of Ichi.

Now she was standing before him in the otherwise empty dining area, a cup of tea on her tray, waiting to be asked to sit down.

"Doozo," he said, indicating the empty chair across from him.

"Domo arigatoo," she replied softly, accepting his invitation. "Have you seen that extra security has been requested for the Beverly Hills shoot tomorrow?"

Seizou nodded. "Perhaps they are expecting company."

"Wakarimasen," Mieko said, indicating she did not understand his cryptic comment.

"That area is not safe," he explained, thinking once again how charming her naivete was. "There are many dangers there. They simply wish to be prepared."

"Ah. The demons," she said. "It seems a great risk to take, given the circumstances."

"Yes," said Seizou.

"One hears so many rumors," Mieko said. "It is said that Ryuchi Kanawa himself is funding this motion picture. It must be very important. You must be honored to be associated with this project. Tell me, when will it be finished?"

"You should not listen to rumors, Mieko," Seizou snapped. "You should not speak of such things."

"Sumimasen," she said apologetically. "It is only that I wish to understand."

Seizou frowned. He had not meant to hurt her feelings. Truly, there was no way she would ever rise in the company if she did not learn why things were done.

"I suppose it will do no harm to tell you," he said. "But you must promise to speak of this to no one. *Wakarimasu ka?*"

"*Wakarimasu*," she replied, her eyes flashing.

"There is no film," he said quietly, though there was no one around to overhear. "It is all a trap. They hope to lure the demons there and then slaughter them. It is certain to work, and then we will be able to perform our tasks with greater peace."

Seizou dropped his eyes back to his schedule, ashamed at himself for having revealed the secret. Still, Mieko could be trusted ...

"*Domo arigatoo*," she was saying. Then her voice became guttural as she added, "That is all I wanted to know."

Seizou looked up, shocked. No longer was there a young, beautiful *nihonjin* seated across from him, but rather a demon of horrible visage with wires and metal emerging from all parts of its body. It seemed to smile as it reached out a claw and lifted Seizou

into the air.

"You have been so kind to poor, sweet Mieko," the Tharkoldu said, laughing obscenely.

Seizou struggled vainly in the thing's grip, shouting, "Where is she? What have you done with her?"

The Tharkoldu's sickening grin grew wider, and a second later it was Mieko who held him high in the air. There was a wanton look in her eye that had not been there before, an evil smile on her lips. Then she was gone, replaced by the techno-demon.

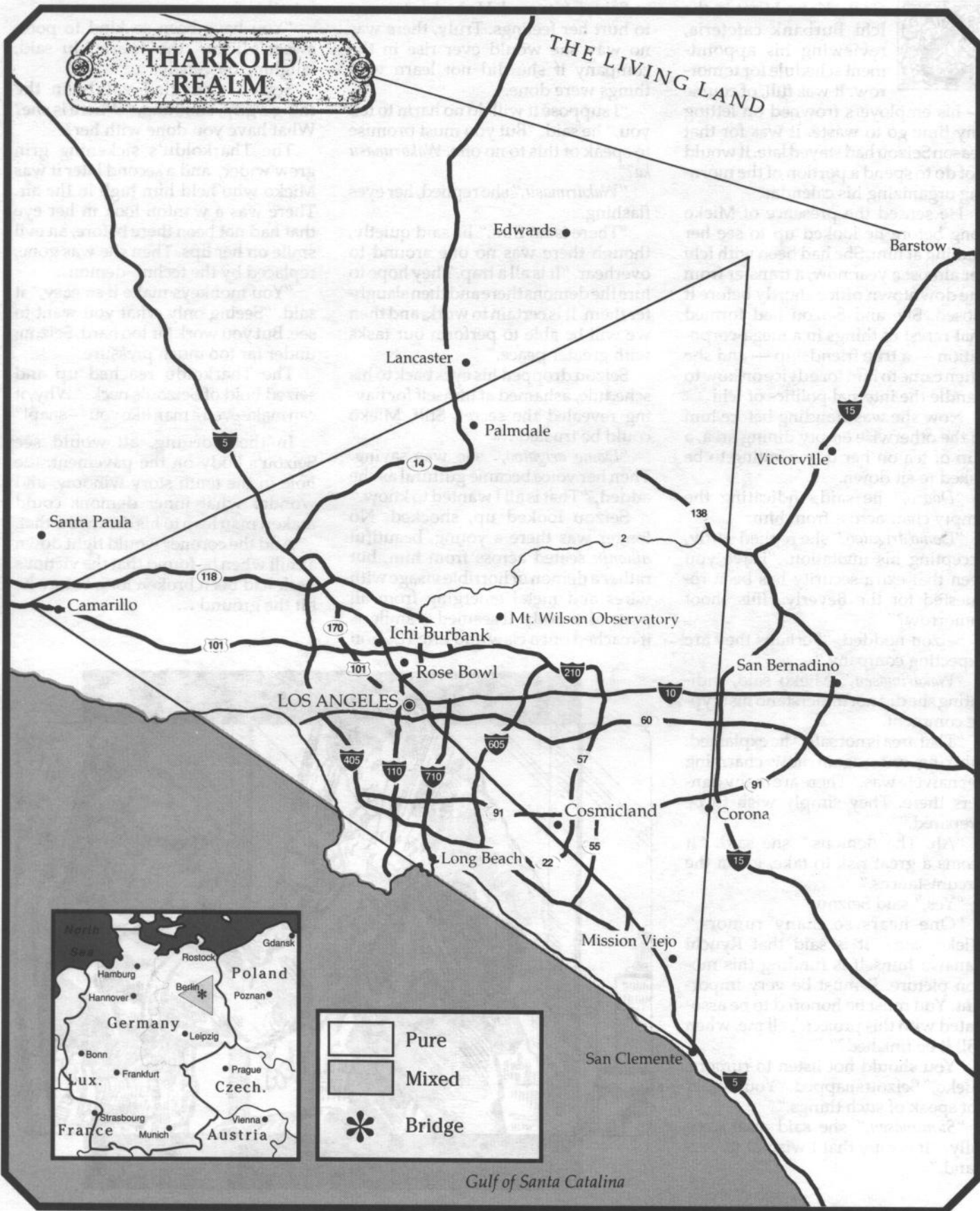
"You monkeys make it so easy," it said. "Seeing only what you want to see. But you work far too hard, Seizou, under far too much pressure."

The Tharkoldu reached up and seized hold of Seizou's neck. "Why, it can make even a man like you — snap!"

In the morning, all would see Seizou's body on the pavement, the hole in the tenth story window, and wonder what inner demons could make a man leap to his death like that.

And the coroner would fight down a chill when he found that the victim's neck had been broken long before he hit the ground ...





State of the Realm

In the end, Jezrael knew it would be impossible to keep the Tharkold invasion of Los Angeles a secret, as 3327 had his conquest of Sacramento for so long. But she did not expect Storm Knight reaction to be quite so fast and furious as it has been. And although her realm stands, and indeed, has expanded significantly, it has been a battle every inch of the way.

Still, she comforts herself with the knowledge that in any other realm — Nippon, for example — such constant warfare would mean certain destruction. But her techno-demon warriors thrive on bloodshed, and the fact that she has led them to a cosm where enemies are on every side has actually strengthened the bond between the creatures and their new High Lord.

With her second maelstrom bridge established (albeit, not without unexpected difficulties), Jezrael has made a firm commitment to her troops and Malgest, her Darkness Device, to fight until this cosm has drowned in its own blood.

Bridge of Pain

It began with the murders of several Ichi Entertainment executives in Los Angeles. Although all were slain with a Hachiman Arms 9mm Beretta, corporate troubleshooter Yoshiko Nakata suspected that the true culprit was a Tharkoldu techno-demon, of the sort that attempted to invade the then Soviet Union.

Nakata recruited Storm Knights Mark Dyer and Abbas Sombol and set them on the Tharkoldu's trail. Along the way, they linked up with Kadandran warrior Kreyna Keena-Three, who had come to Earth to stop a second Tharkoldu invasion of the cosm.

Although they were unable to stop the Tharkold bridge from crashing into the Ichi Entertainment building, Keena did reveal the existence of the Apocularum, and occulttech device that made it possible for stelae to be teleported from one location to another. The only restriction on their movement was that stelae could not

remain connected to each other if they were more than 187.5 kilometers from each other.

Working together, the three Storm Knights were able to sabotage the Apocularum, thereby preventing Tharkold from immediately increasing the size of its realm. This was the first taste of defeat for Jezrael's lieutenant, Sterret of the Blades, and it was not one he would soon forget.

The Apocularum has since been repaired, but Jezrael refused Sterret's request that the stelae triangle in California be expanded and more be planted. Instead, the High Lord decided to keep Earth's defenders and the other Possibility Raiders off balance by dropping a bridge on another continent and giving the techno-demons another foothold in the cosm (see below).

The Return of Thratchen

(Note: the statistics given below supersede those presented in earlier products, representing Thratchen as he is now after several months back in his native realm.)

The Demon Prince known as Thratchen has been many things in his time: warrior, servant, spy, betrayer, and his most exalted title, High Lord Regent of Orrorsh during the time the Gaunt Man was trapped in the maelstrom. One thing Thratchen has never been is a fool, and he knew well what would happen to him should the Gaunt Man emerge from the storm before he was able to gain control of Heketon, the Orrorshan Darkness Device.

Survival in the horror realm had not been easy for Thratchen. The pure zone around Illmound Keep would not support his LifeCyber, thus he had been forced to bring a Tharkoldu talisman with him when he first came to Earth. After that expired (and with no Tharkold High Lord on Earth to recharge it), Thratchen made an arrangement with the Nightmare known as Skutharka. Using an occult ritual, Skutharka made it possible for Thratchen's cyberware to keep functioning in the low Tech realm, as well

as temporarily maintain the high attribute values associated with being a Demon Prince. (These last did eventually fade away, however, as his followers in the Tharkold cosm abandoned him for other masters.)

The ritual had to be repeated on a regular basis, and each time it grew less effective. Thratchen would eventually have to abandon Illmound Keep, transform to Orrorshan reality, or find the Darkness Device (a seemingly impossible task).

His decision was made for him by the weakening of the maelstrom that held the Gaunt Man and the simultaneous arrival of a Tharkold bridge on Earth. Although Kranod, his former master, was dead, Thratchen felt certain that he could find refuge in this new realm if he could but ingratiate himself with the new High Lord.

With this as his goal, Thratchen spent some time observing the realm and learning the political situation there, meanwhile ignoring Orrorsh. What he discovered was that a powerful techno-demon named Garthak planned a rebellion against Sterret and, by extension, Jezrael. Were he to be victorious, it would almost certainly lead to a Nippon victory in California.

Seeing this as an ideal opportunity to curry favor with Jezrael, Thratchen contacted some Storm Knights and explained the situation to them. With their reluctant aid, it became possible to set the Nippon forces and Garthak's demon pride against each other, resulting in severe damage for both. Meanwhile, Thratchen challenged Garthak and slew him, thus assuming control of his pride. However, he was unable to get his claws on the eternity shard Garthak carried, which was taken by the Storm Knights.

Still, once again having a large pride of his own has elevated Thratchen back to Demon Prince status. He has moved the pride out of Garthak's old stronghold, but still remains in the Compton area. Jezrael has welcomed him back into the fold, as she prefers to have so treacherous a being where she can see him.

Thratchen, of course, is keeping a watchful eye out for signs that the Gaunt Man may attempt to retrieve him. He is fully prepared to lead his

pride in rebellion against Jezrael if she and the Orrorshan High Lord make a deal that involves returning him to the horror realm for punishment.

Thratchen

Reality: Tharkold

DEXTERITY 15

Dodge 17, energy weapons 17, fire combat 16, flight 18 (19), maneuver 18, stealth 18, unarmed combat 23

STRENGTH 18

TOUGHNESS 24(29)

PERCEPTION 24

Alteration magic 26, divination magic 26, evidence analysis 26, find 27, scholar (the Nameless One) 27, scholar (Orrorshan realm lore) 26, scholar (Tharkold realm lore) 29, tracking 25, trick 26

MIND 25

Apportation magic 27, conjuration magic 27, cybertech 28, occult 26, test 27, willpower 27

CHARISMA 16

Charm 21, persuasion 22, taunt 23

SPIRIT 24

Faith (Cult of the Dominant) 29, focus 30, intimidate 26, occulttech 28, pain weapon 25, reality (Tharkold) 29

Possibilities: 40

Natural Tools: teeth, damage value

STR+2/20; *alpha sense* (Perception total); *combat dominance* 25; *death chance* 25, *demon luck* 25; *evil ward* (faith defense); status armor +5; wing strike, *unarmed combat* to hit, damage value STR+7/25; *swift flight*, speed value 11

Arcane Knowledge: *death* 2, *true knowledge* 1, *darkness* 2, *entity* 2, *folk* 1, *inanimate forces* 1, *living forces* 1, *metal* 1

Spells: *monkey form*, *command obedience*

Equipment: Cyberware: Nanocord, nervejacks (six in a row across his forehead), EMVue, Sharpshot, Cyberwings (pair, +1 value), cybertalons (pair, damage value STR+5/23), cyberarm (right), LifeCyber, Mem-Sift, Cyber value: 20. Res-14 laser, damage value 25, ammo 50, Kap/5 Synthi-leather armor, value TOU+5/29

Miracles: Thratchen has access to all miracles of the Cult of the Dominant

Mem-Sift

Difficulty Number: 12

Wound: Mortal

Cyber Rating: +3

Cost: 40, 000 (23)

The Mem-Sift is used to quickly draw information out of a subject, usually with fatal results. By connecting himself to another person's nervejack, the user of the Mem-Sift is able to search the other person's memories for a specific piece of information.

The user generates a *Mind* value against a difficulty number of the *willpower* or *Mind* of the subject (who can actively resist). The result points are reason on both the Interrogation column of the Interaction Results Table and on the Combat Results Table as mental damage. Use the interrogation rules to determine if the desired information is gained or not. Negative result points are read as damage inflicted on the user of the Mem-Sift but any *wounds* taken are converted into shock damage by the cyberware (four shock per wound). The subject does not gain any information from the user in such cases.

Mem-Sift can be used until either the desired information is learned or the subject dies from the mental trauma inflicted. Subjects who survive the experience are immune to the effects of another Mem-Sift until the mental damage has fully healed.

For every *wound* a subject sustained from the Mem-Shift, the gamemaster must check for permanent brain damage. For every *wound* a subject takes from the Mem-Shift, the gamemaster should generate a total (the base number is 8). If the result is greater than the original *Mind* value of the subject, the subject loses one *Mind* point permanently.

Bloody Intrigues

Thus far, the Tharkoldu approach to the war has been rather scattershot. With Jezrael occupied in the Tharkold cosm and Sterret in charge of operations on Earth, techno-demons have largely been allowed to pursue their own plans. The strategy has been to keep Storm Knights occupied while the Apocularum was being repaired.

Tharkoldu efforts have ranged from the blatantly brutal (such as stalking and slaying visitors to Cosmicland) to

the insidiously subtle. One of the more ambitious Tharkoldu plots involved manipulating edeinos warriors and human bikers into attempting the sabotage of a Nippon factory in Redside, CA. When their surrogates failed, the Tharkoldu attempted to destroy the factory themselves, only to run into an Orrorshan horror who had taken up residence there.

While it is not a big secret that the Tharkoldu have landed — the Kanawa-controlled media has seen to that — most Los Angelenos have yet to see a techno-demon. They hunt by night, and often their targets see only flashing talons before they meet their ends.

Gamemasters should keep in mind that, although on Earth the Tharkoldu seem like the most powerful beings around, in their home cosm there are numerous creatures that are just as dangerous, if not moreso. Techno-demons are, above all, predators — they prefer stealth and sudden assault to toe-to-toe battles in the open. What makes LA so dangerous is that you never know where they might come from next.

One of the other interesting developments in the Tharkold realm has been the equivalent of an arms race. The weapons best suited for taking down techno-demons are their own, and in the past few months, rogue alphas have appeared who are willing to provide Knights with Res-14 lasers and other equipment in return for certain services.

In addition, weapons dealers with access to biotech devices — as well as Akashans willing to fight against the Tharkoldu — are in incredibly high demand right now. Where a .45 slug might do little damage to a techno-demon, a gravitic ray will give him something to think about. Tharkoldu now actively hunt any Akashans who come into their realm.

This has had a bizarre result of its own. The capture, torture and dissection of Akashans is rumored to have led Tharkoldu scientists to the first step toward a cure for the Comaghaz virus. Whether this is true, or simply a Tharkoldu ploy to get the Akashans to back off, is unknown. If it is true, it lead either to an uneasy truce between



the two realms, or an intensification of the war if the Akashans decide to try and wrest the cure from the techno-demons by force.

Ich Bin Ein Tharkoldu

Easily the most significant event of the past year for the Tharkoldu has been the dropping of their second bridge into the city of Berlin. This was the first step in Jezrael's grand strategy to force the denizens of Earth to fight the Tharkoldu on many fronts, rather than being able to concentrate their efforts on one area. Unfortunately, things did not go quite as planned for the Tharkoldu here, and their success has a mixed one at best.

It should be understood from the outset that Berlin has been a "free city" for much of this war. Situated in a country that is still Core Earth, yet close to the borders of Aysle and the

Cyberpapacy, Berlin has been both a place of refuge and a jumping-off point for both Storm Knights and the military. Ayslish and CyberFrench refugees have filled the city, while Nippon investors have poured tremendous amounts of yen into certain sections.

The upshot of all this has been the creation of unofficial "zones" in the city, born of mutual distrust and the need to be around the familiar in an uncertain world. Thus, Ayslish refugees tend to stay in the same neighborhood, Nippon businessmen target the same areas, etc. A Cyberpapal Storm Knight who cannot prove he has business in the Ayslish part of town is advised not to go there unless he wishes to be beaten, robbed and unceremoniously dumped into the Elbe. By the same token, Nippon security men have orders to detain, question and, if necessary, terminate any "prowlers" they may encounter.

Into this powderkeg came the Tharkoldu, looking for a major city in which to duplicate their success in Los

Angeles. Its proximity to the Cyberpapacy also made Berlin attractive as a staging area for techno-demon assaults on Malraux's realm. In short order (and complete secrecy), the Tharkoldu planted stelae southwest of Rathenow, south of southeast of Eberswalde and well east of Cottbus. Confident that their stelae would remain undetected, they did not bother transporting a duplicate of the Apocularum to Berlin prior to the dropping of the bridge.

The link between Tharkold and Core Earth was established and techno-demons began to slowly infiltrate the city. What they did not realize was that Dr. Mobius' agents in Berlin had gotten wind of the initial stela plantings. The Nile High Lord ordered the southernmost stelae uprooted and replaced with one of his own.

As soon as this deed was done, the Kefertiri Idol and Malgest made contact. In the end, it was agreed to let the stela area stand as a mixed zone, much like the Nippon/Living Land zones in

California. To seal the deal, the Kefertiri Idol agreed to let the Tharkold bridge stand, though it would not guarantee the good behavior of its High Lord.

The clash of Nile and Tharkold realities has produced many strange amalgams. Techno-demons who feel compelled to relate their plans and give their victims sporting chances to win their lives. Some Nile villains have taken to cold-blooded murder in place of intricate doom traps, and Nile heroes suddenly forced to struggle with the darker sides of their natures. All of this has transformed Berlin into a bloody crucible from which no Storm Knight emerges unscathed, a hotbed

of murderous intrigue where every shadow conceals death approaching on cybernetically-enhanced wings.

Suddenly, techno-demons are traveling about, equipped with invisibility belts. Nile pulp villains have acquired occulttech devices and are attempting to combine them with their "weird science" equipment to make themselves even more formidable.

The German government is unwilling to commit tremendous amounts of resources at present to battle the Tharkoldu, relying instead on Storm Knights to fight the battle for them. They fear the possibility of a Cyberpapal-Tharkoldu alliance — di-

verting the military from the western front to Berlin could spell disaster should Malraux decide upon a military strike.

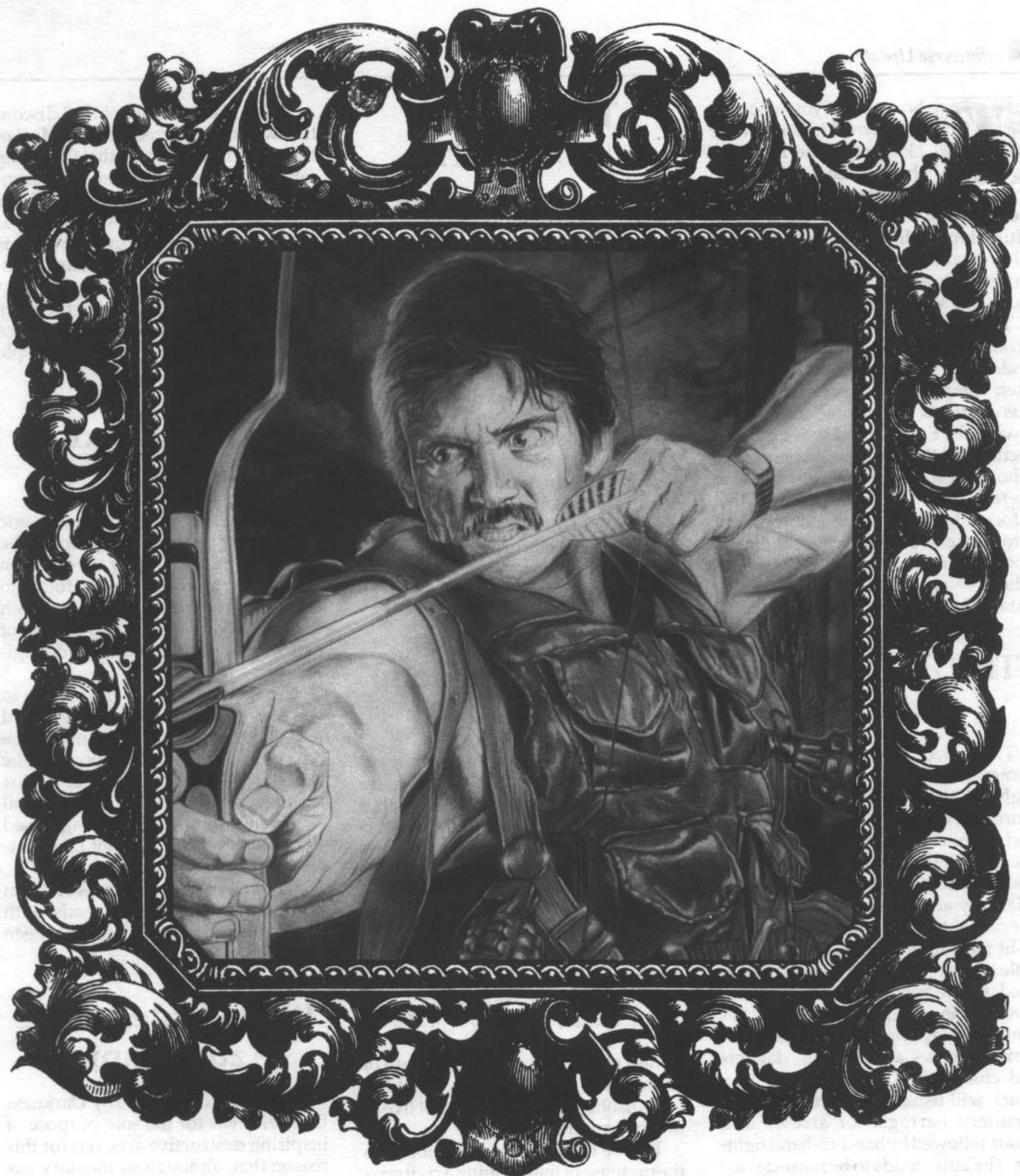
For now, Berlin remains a mixed bag of stormers and Ords from various realities, all attempting to take and hold neighborhoods or simply to survive for one more day. As the municipal government struggles to deal with the various factions, more and more stormers become their own law. It is an atmosphere made to order for the vicious, brutal Tharkoldu and crying out for the help of the Nile Empire's Mystery Men.



And less, the proximity to the Cyberpapal, made Berlin more live as a warping area for technology and reality. In addition, when in that area, there is a strong sense of "otherworldly" or "alien" feeling. This is due to the fact that the area is a mix of different realities, and the people who live there are often from different worlds. The area is also a mix of different cultures, and the people who live there are often from different backgrounds. The area is a mix of different realities, and the people who live there are often from different worlds. The area is also a mix of different cultures, and the people who live there are often from different backgrounds. The area is a mix of different realities, and the people who live there are often from different worlds. The area is also a mix of different cultures, and the people who live there are often from different backgrounds.

Cyberpapal, Berlin has been both a place of great danger and a place of great opportunity. The area is a mix of different realities, and the people who live there are often from different worlds. The area is also a mix of different cultures, and the people who live there are often from different backgrounds. The area is a mix of different realities, and the people who live there are often from different worlds. The area is also a mix of different cultures, and the people who live there are often from different backgrounds. The area is a mix of different realities, and the people who live there are often from different worlds. The area is also a mix of different cultures, and the people who live there are often from different backgrounds.

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CHAPTER NINE

The Aztec Empire



those who of you who read *Infiniverse Update, Volume I* know that the results of the *High Lord of Earth* adventure were a massive

defeat for Malcolm Kane and Huitzilopochtli, his Darkness Device. This means there is no Aztec Empire in the official *Torg* campaign as produced by West End.

However, there were a fair share of groups who, in one way or another, ended up with an Aztec Empire in their campaign. We received numerous requests for axioms and world laws of the Empire, and so we put this section together for those gamemasters who need it. (Note that, just because there is no Aztec Empire on Earth, this information can still be incorporated into your campaign. Perhaps there is a pocket dimension similar to this, somewhere — see Chapter Ten for more data on such places.)

The Technological Axiom: 16

The Aztec Empire's *Tech* axiom is somewhat deceiving — although higher than that of Aysle, it refers primarily to their knowledge of science and architecture rather than equipment and weaponry extant in the realm. The Aztec Empire has access to relatively advanced concepts of engineering, astronomy and mathematics.

In fact, although musketry is possible at level 16, nothing of the sort is used in the realm. Huitzilopochtli's love for the ancient Aztec culture has limited weaponry to javelins, dart blowers, bows and arrows, daggers and clubs called *macanas*. An Aztec attack will usually be prefaced by an "artillery barrage" of arrows and spears followed by hand-to-hand fighting. The latter tends to be more devastating than the former, as the Aztec *macanas* were commonly studded with sharpened pieces of obsidian.

The Spiritual Axiom: 17

Religion is key to many aspects of life in the Aztec Empire. The realm is a theocracy led by the *chachalmeca* (the high priest/High Lord), with the priesthood and military castes the most important.

Most Aztec residents have some knowledge of the gods and their powers, but few have been gifted with the ability to discern the will of the gods. All accept the fact that sacrifices must be made to retain the gods' favor and consider it an honor to be chosen for death. Certain temples within the realm are believed to be imbued with the power of the god to whom they are dedicated. Adventurers who brave the perils of these places may be rewarded with an encounter with a god's manifestation.

The Social Axiom: 20

A relatively large religious bureaucracy exists within the Aztec Empire to carry out the will of Huitzilopochtli and the *chachalmeca*. Rigid castes exist and complex trading relationships have sprung up between the Aztecs and those nations foolish enough to believe exchanging goods will stave off invasion.

A huge amount of resources and manpower are poured into making the military machine run efficiently. The Aztec Empire is able to field massive, well-trained and well-disciplined armies and knowledge of the chain of command is all-important. A soldier who disobeys an order does not live to disobey another.

Unlike the Cyberpapacy, not even the pretense of maintaining a civil government is attempted. All major decisions are made by the priesthood, with military operations coordinated between them and the generals. A battle not favored by the gods will not be waged. Warriors who have attempted to bribe the priests to gain favorable omens have been put to death.

There is very little political discontent within the Aztec Empire. Most of the transformed believe that the strong must rule the weak, an excellent argument for expanding the realm. Those who retain Core Earth's reality organize in small cells, but even there, it is difficult to coordinate a mass resistance movement. Too many feel that the Aztec Empire is restoring the glory of ancient Mexico and will punish those who have exploited the nation's people for so long.

The Magic Axiom: 14

Although all four types of magic are possible in the Aztec Empire, the sorcerous arts are rarely used. When they are, Aztec magic is often found to be similar to Nile magic, in that both realms have extensive knowledge of astronomy, mathematics and engineering.

Use of magic is frowned upon in this realm, however, as the High Lord fears anyone with such skill might one day pose a threat to his power. The stated reason for the low esteem is that a citizen who wishes a supernatural occurrence to take place is supposed to ask the gods for aid, not take matters into his own hands.

There have been instances of realm residents blessed by the gods with magical abilities, but these have been exceedingly rare.

World Rules of the Aztec Empire

Huitzilopochtli, like any Darkness Device, exists for the sole purpose of inspiring destructive acts. It is for this reason that, although its memory has returned, the Device remains enamored of the Aztec civilization. Under Huitzilopochtli's corrupting influence, the original Aztecs turned to conquest and blood sacrifice to impress their gods, something that is being repeated in the modern-day Mexico of the Aztec Empire.

The Law of Sacrifice

Huitzilopochtli demands sacrifices from among its followers, as did many of the gods of the Aztec pantheon. Any character of the Aztec reality may gain the benefits of performing such a sacrifice, even if he is not a follower of the High Lord.

There are certain restrictions imposed by this law. A sacrifice to the Aztec gods must be performed with a melee weapon made of obsidian, be it dagger, sword or spear, and the name of the god to whom the sacrifice is being made must be invoked at the time of the killing (see *scholar (Aztec lore)*, below). Victims must be prone, conscious and unwilling or unable to resist (this applies to human sacrifices only—animal sacrifices must be on an obsidian altar when slain).

Animals, non-believers and believers can be sacrificed for the greater glory of the Aztec gods. The successful sacrifice of an animal bestows upon the worshipper an *up* condition for one round. It must be used within an hour of the sacrifice or it is lost.

Slaying a believer in the Aztec pantheon provides the worshipper with an *up* condition for one round that must be used within the next day or it is lost.

Sacrificing an enemy of the faith (the most difficult type, as they are so rarely willing to be killed) earns the worshipper two *up* rounds that must be used within the next day or be lost.

The Law of Divine Will

It is of paramount importance that the wishes of the various gods be heeded. Failure to do so condemns the individual to eternal punishment, not to mention helping to bring about the fall of the realm as a whole.

Naturally, one cannot carry out the will of the gods unless one knows what it is. It is for that reason that the most respected members of the priest class are possessed of the *will of the gods* miracle, which allows them to consult with the deities and determine their views on a given matter. Those wishing to take advantage of this world



law must consult with such a cleric to learn the deity's wishes before embarking on a course of action.

Once the will of the gods has been divined (say, the gods think capturing a Nile spy in the area is a very good idea), the character will receive a +2 bonus to any action that brings him nearer to achieving that goal. Any action that runs contrary to that goal suffers a -2 penalty.

This condition remains in effect until the goal has been achieved or the character converts to another faith.

The Law of Conquest

The Aztec Empire is a warlike, militaristic realm, far moreso than even the Nile Empire. Huitzilopochtli has built this trait into the world laws to guarantee a steady supply of death and destruction.

The Aztec Empire must remain in armed conflict with someone at all times — these wars can range from something as minor as raiding nearby villages for food and gold to a massive attack on a neighboring country.

If the Aztecs go three months without going to war with someone, they must enter into "wars of the feather" among themselves. These are mock wars between different Aztec armies, which frequently escalate into large-scale bloodbaths. Too many of these "practice conflicts" could sorely deplete the supply of Aztec warriors and so are to be avoided.

Aztec Empire characters travelling outside of the realm must also enter into combat with someone (be it a fist fight or a firefight — some kind of physical conflict) within a given period of time. Read the character's *reality* skill or *Spirit* value as days — if he does not enter into a fight at some point within that period, he will turn on his comrades and attack them. His fellow Knights must be aware of this and learn not to use lethal force against their comrade — as soon as some blood has been shed (his own, or another's) he will return to normal. (Holding out your hand and letting him nick it will not work — there has to be actual combat.)

For example, Itzcoatl has a *reality* skill of 14. That means that, when outside the realm, he must enter into a combat at least once every 14 days. If he does not, he will attack anyone around him to satisfy the requirement of this world law.

Non-Aztec characters entering the realm are subject to the same world laws, unless they are protected by a reality bubble (the Law of Conquest being a passive world law, one that is present in the environment but cannot be used like a tool). They too must enter into some conflict within a period of time equal to their *reality* or *Spirit* value in days. This requirement ceases when they leave the realm.

New Skills

Perception-Related Skills

Divination Magic (Omen Interpretation)

A specialized type of *divination magic*, this skill can be used only for interpreting signs regarding future occurrences. It requires a *Magic* axiom of 14 to operate.

When using *divination magic* (*omen interpretation*), the character attempts to derive from the patterns of stones, the feathers of birds, and other natural objects just what the future holds. The character must inquire about a specific course of action — the difficulty number is based upon how far into the future he wishes to look (see the "Omen Interpretation Difficulty" chart).

Level of success determines the amount of information derived from the omen interpretation:

Minimal/Average — A general feeling that good or ill will result from a particular course of action.

Good — A more concrete idea of what form the results will take, i.e. "I see death at the end of this path."

Superior — A better idea of just who will be most affected by these results, i.e. "I see death for John at the end of this road."

Spectacular — Information on the source of the good or ill results, i.e. "I see death for John at the hands of Conundrum."

Divination magic (*omen interpretation*) cannot be used unskilled.

Scholar (Aztec Lore)

This skill provides the character with a rudimentary knowledge of the Aztec pantheon. When calling for divine aid, seeking the will of the gods, or making a sacrifice, it is crucial that one knows the proper gods to invoke. Anyone transformed to the Aztec reality while in the Empire automatically receives this skill at one add.

Here are some of the major gods of the Aztec pantheon:

Coatlicue: Supposed mother of Huitzilopochtli, cannibalistic goddess of serpents. Clawed hands and feet, a skirt of snakes, a necklace of hearts and hands with a skull pendant.

Huitzilopochtli: Aztec war god, who showed the Aztecs the necessity of blood sacrifice. Many of the feats ascribed to him arose from the powers of the Darkness Device (see *High Lord of Earth*).

Quetzalcoatl: Feathered or plumed serpent god, lord of wind.

Tezcatilpoca: One of the most important Aztec gods, gods of the night, associated with witches, evildoers and death. Represented with his face painted different colors and an obsidian mirror for a foot. Some believe that legends of Tezcatilpoca may have arisen from the fragmented memories of Huitzilopochtli regarding the Gaunt Man and Heketon.

Tlaloc: God of rain, wind, thunder, lightning and agriculture. Pictured with tusk-like teeth and snakes around his eyes.

Aztec Miracles

Will of the Gods

Spiritual Rating: 17

Community Rating: 11

Difficulty: 14

Range: na

Duration: performance

Effect: imparts to cleric the opinions of the gods on a planned course of action.

When successfully cast, the cleric can ask the gods about a single course of action. One of three responses will be received: the gods favor the mis-

Omen Interpretation Difficulty Chart

Time Period	Difficulty
One minute	8
One hour	10
One day	13
One week	16
One month	20
One year	25

sion; the gods oppose the mission; or the gods are indifferent.

Should either of the first two results be achieved, apply the Law of Divine Will accordingly.

Earth Swallow

Spiritual Rating: 17
Community Rating: 12

Difficulty: 15

Range: three meters

Duration: performance

Effect: traps target character in a pit

When successfully cast, a pit will suddenly open beneath the feet of the target character. He must generate a successful *dodge* total against a difficulty of the cleric's *faith* value. If he

fails, he falls into the pit.

Upon entering the pit, the walls will immediately begin to close in. The victim must generate a successful *climbing* or *Strength* total against a difficulty number of the cleric's *faith* value to escape. If he does not, he suffers damage equal to the cleric's *faith* value.

CHAPTER TEN

Pocket Dimensions



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Pocket Dimensions



he ascension of the Land Below in the Eastern United States had the result of weakening the fabric of Earth's reality. It is

suddenly far easier to pass through gateways into pocket dimensions that are connected in some way to this cosm. Thus far, there has been no significant emigration of beings from these dimensions to Earth, but some Storm Knights are known to have traveled to these new worlds in search of aid against the High Lords.

The following are but a few of the pocket dimensions so far explored:

Atlantis

Thousands of years ago, the island nation of Atlantis boasted a great civilization whose scientific and cultural advances put all others to shame. There is no telling just how high a *Tech* level they had reached, but what has been pieced together is that work had begun on reality-warping technology.

In 9560 B.C., two Atlantean scientists tested a device somewhat similar in principle to that used by Dr. Alexis Frest to send Storm Knights from Terra to Earth. The machine backfired, tearing a hole in reality and blasting the entire island through it and into a pocket dimension. Atlantis' cities were devastated by the force of the abrupt shift and the scientists responsible were destroyed along with their device.

Shortly after their arrival, the Atlanteans discovered that much of the world they now inhabited was composed of great oceans, with no land masses near their location. They also discovered, to their horror, that Atlantis itself was sinking, albeit extremely slowly. It was estimated that, within one thousand years, the island would be completely submerged.

This came to pass, but the Atlanteans did not perish. Instead, the constant encroachment of the sea, the knowledge of their plight and the strange nature of this dimension's waters combined to evolve them into merpeople. Now able to survive be-

neath the water, the Atlanteans set to work rebuilding their cities, using coral and other materials that could survive immersion.

Today, Atlantis rules a mighty empire that spans six of the seven great oceans of their dimension. The seventh ocean, dubbed the "Sea of Blood" due to its reddish hue, is home to barbarian races who have threatened Atlantis on more than one occasion.

The gateway to Atlantis is a whirlpool in the Mediterranean. Statistics for a typical Atlantean are given below. Cosm attribute limits for Atlanteans are 13, save for *Toughness*, which can go as high as 14.

Standard Atlantean Warrior

Reality: Atlantis

DEXTERITY 9

Dodge 10, maneuver 11, melee weapons 11, stealth 10, swimming 12, unarmed combat 10

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 7

Find 8, tracking 8, trick 8, water vehicles 8

MIND 7

Survival 9

CHARISMA 7

Taunt 8

SPIRIT 7

Faith (Talumnor) 8, intimidation 8

Additional Skills: two at +1 adds

Possibility Potential: some (45)

Equipment: spear or trident, damage value STR+3/12; sword, damage value STR+4/13

Description: Atlanteans resemble humans in most respects, save that their skin is made up of smooth scales and is greenish in color. They also have two sets of gills along the sides of their faces and necks. They are capable of breathing and speech underwater, and are prodigious swimmers. Most Atlanteans cannot function out of water for more than a few minutes, though a few exceptional individuals have been amphibious — rare (75). Of course, very few of the amphibious Atlanteans would ever experiment to find out their true nature.

The Technological Axiom: 19

Atlantis was, at one time, at the pinnacle of technological achievement. But after the Great Cataclysm, the people turned against advanced technology, and many of the ancient marvels were scattered to the seas and abandoned. Much of the old knowledge has been forgotten, including the means of creating gunpowder and explosives, and the *Tech* axiom slipped to 19.

The Atlanteans remain relatively advanced in the fields of chemistry, medicine, architecture and other sciences. Their weapons, however, are crude — consisting of tridents, spears, nets, swords and others made of rust-proof metal or stone. The need to travel great distances to visit outlying portions of the empire has led to the development of submarines, but these are not armed.

Many of the ancient artifacts are still operational, but few attempt to use them, fearing the punishment of the gods. Only in some isolated portions of the empire have the Atlanteans begun toying with the wonders of the past: personal and heavy energy weapons, incredibly fast underwater craft, etc.

The occasional visits by air-breathers from other cosms has led to the construction of watertight rooms for their convenience. Most of these are located within the capital itself.

Fuels for machines (and some weapons) are chemical-based. Obviously, fossil fuels and the like do not burn under water, so the Atlanteans have learned to harness chemical and biological catalysts and energies. Their fuels are extremely efficient, surpassing anything on Earth, and very clean. Unfortunately, this efficiency is made up for by the general lack of power their fuels can produce.

The Social Axiom: 10

Atlantis is the seat of an empire, ruled by the Empress Marissa. Repeated attacks by barbarian raiders, as

well as encounters with monstrous native creatures, have prompted the city to maintain a standing army 10,000 strong. Over the last 10 millennia, Atlantean forces have conquered much of the planet.

Atlantis enjoys a code of laws, called the Writs of Kancree (after the Fourth Emperor of the realm), which prescribe harsh penalties for all who transgress against them. The area immediately surrounding the city is littered with the mummified bodies of those who have broken the laws, preserved for all time in their agony.

The Atlantean economy is not terribly advanced. The unit of currency is the silver *nol*, and trade with other parts of the empire has only just begun to take place. Most Atlanteans serve in the army, work as farmers or hunters, or pursue careers as craftsmen. Despite being led by a woman, there is not equality of the sexes in Atlantis — women are expected to care for their families and their husbands, although some have made careers for themselves in science, medicine or the arts. Male-female segregation is the norm in most of Atlantean society, and both sexes seem to prefer it that way.

The Magic Axiom: 10

Enchantments are not a major part of Atlantean society, although the Empress does maintain a wizard at court. But it rapidly became clear after the Cataclysm that this pocket dimension contained creatures that were magical in nature and could not be defeated with normal weapons. Thus, the primary duty of Atlantean magicians is the creation of enchanted weapons, talismans, etc. for hunters and warriors.

Within the markets of Atlantis, one can buy amulets to protect one from harm or disease, or aid in the tracking of an enemy. There are also magical objects that can help detect dishonesty, and even some that can be used to create "something from nothing." (These tend to work poorly, as the conjurations vanish after a brief time and rarely resemble what they are supposed to be.)

Magic in Atlantis is either looked at

as a toy for the amusement of the knowledgeable (or the deceit of the gullible) or as a very useful and expensive tool. It does not fit into any middle category. The magic available to the general populace is unreliable or minor in nature — but there are powerful spells and artifacts all over the Atlantis dimension. They are just hard to come by.

The Spiritual Axiom:

13

The priest caste in Atlantis is composed of clerics who lead the daily worship of the sea god, Talumnor, and lesser divinities, and the seers. The latter are responsible for voicing prophecy, and most suffer from some physical disability (blindness, etc.) that acts as compensation for their second sight abilities.

Priests are capable of performing miracles, and none who have witnessed one can doubt that the power of Talumnor is genuine. But the god is a capricious one, like most sea gods, and has been known to deny his aid on a whim.

There are rumors of a cult that worships Dark Gods, a twisted religion that dates back to the days on Earth. It is not known if this sect truly still exists. There are, however, constant reports of cultists — or pretenders of the cults — waylaying travellers or attacking settlements in the outlying reaches of the empire. The Cult of the Deep Gods is the most popular of these "bandit divinities," and the most powerful. While no reliable witnesses can testify that they have seen anything other than robbery at work, others, some mad with terror, preach that the Cult is the harbinger of doom and darkness for Atlantis.

Miracles of Atlantis

The Miracles of Talumar are very similar to those found in the *Torg* basic set, and the more low-powered ones in the *Aysle* sourcebook. Usually, they deal with healing, prophesy, and protection against enemies. Many miracles also include blessings on births, plantings, and harvests, but very few

player characters will be interested in those rituals.

The Law of Artifacts

Although they are regarded in many places in Atlantis as evil, most of the pre-Cataclysm technological devices still survive. Like "weird science" in the Nile Empire, although their functions require a *Tech* axiom higher than that of the cosm (roughly 26), they can still be used within Atlantis without fear of contradiction (by natives of this reality.) Storm Knights not from Atlantis with *Tech* axioms lower than 26 may also make use of them, but it is a one-case contradiction within Atlantis.

Often, finding the artifacts is more difficult than making use of them. Many are buried, hidden in undersea caverns and protected by beasts, in the hands of barbarians, or cursed. Once found, it helps to have someone with knowledge of the Atlantean tongue to decipher the inscriptions on the artifacts, lest a disaster along the lines of the Cataclysm take place.

Most of the artifacts buried in the silt and hidden in the trenches of the Atlanteans domain have forgotten, but generally harmless, functions. But that does not keep the Atlanteans from practicing their fierce superstitions. Many Atlanteans would rather fight to the death rather than let anyone activate the least of these mechanisms — and Atlantean knowledge is almost certainly needed to make use of the artifacts.

Note that no remnants of the reality-warping technology that forced Atlantis into the pocket-dimension are known to have survived.

The Law of Prophecy

This world law states that prophecies made by seers of Talumnor will come true. Divine intervention, when it occurs, is direct and it is important that the gods not be made angry by mortals willfully ignoring the words of the seers. The words spoken by the prophets detail what the gods wish accomplished — they are scoffed at only at great peril.

Unfortunately, the seers tend to be somewhat vague in their prophecies. Something is apparently "lost in translation" between the words spoken by Talumnor and those that pass the seer's lips. Prophecies such as, "The light will fail, only to be rekindled by a beast of iron," are not uncommon, and divining their meaning can be as difficult as acting upon it.

Characters receive a +1 to any action that aids in a prophecy coming true. Characters do not receive a penalty to actions that run counter to a prophecy, but divine wrath may be visited on them at some point in the future for doing so.

Do not let players know whether or not they are receiving a bonus in this situation. After all, they may have misinterpreted the prophecy, but would have no way of knowing without further investigation. Their actions may very well be the opposite of what the gods desired!

Also note that not all seers in Atlantis are truly in contact with Talumnor. Many are simply frauds looking to make some money by mouthing prophecies. Their words are not governed by the Law of Prophecy.

Player characters who want to be oracles of Talumnor can, but they are difficult on the gamemaster. As a general rule, over the course of an adventure, no character should be allowed to make more prophecies than he has *faith plus focus* adds divided by two. And then, the gamemaster should only "speak the prophecy" to the player running the character, telling him or her what Talumnor has decided he or she should know. Usually, these prophecies will be used to start an adventure ("The Great Trench will be the font of great evil unless the Spoken Word is brought to its very depths"), give hints along the way ("If the Beast of Raluum is not harnessed by the blue of day, it will cause great suffering in Mere Klinior"), or to finish up an adventure with a flourish ("The last Power of the Dark Regiment has fallen. No more will they trouble the waking world, 'til all else has grown evil again"). These prophecies are seldom of immediate use, though they should come into play enough to make the players pay attention to them. They



are more to add flavor to your Atlantean adventures than anything.

Avalon

Somewhere in Southern England, there exists a beautiful lake with a single island in its center. Here, the wind does not blow, and rain and snow have never been known to fall. Here, as well, is the primary gate to the pocket dimension of Avalon, home to

the legendary warriors of England.

And "legendary" is an accurate description, for this is a realm formed from the tales told around hearth fires for hundreds of years. The Arthur who resides here is truly the Arthur of myth, the ruler of Camelot and husband of Guinevere. Here light and dark magic do battle for eternity, while noble knights go on mystical quests, risking both life and soul.

Avalon itself resembles a slice of medieval England, with its rolling hills,

massive fortresses, and dark and ominous forests. At its center is the court of Camelot, where reside the knights of the Round Table. In this land, the final battle between Arthur and Modred has yet to be fought; Lancelot has fled Camelot with Guinnevere, no one knows to where; Merlin remains sealed in stone; and the hours weigh heavily upon the king as he plans the next stroke in the war with his evil half-sister, Morganna Le Fey.

Unlike most pocket dimensions, there are known to be at least two other gates leading to it, both in England. One exists at Glastonbury Tor and the other at Stonehenge.

Cosm attribute limits for Avalon are 13.

Standard Knight of Avalon

DEXTERITY 11

Beast riding 15, maneuver 13, melee weapons 16, unarmed combat 15

STRENGTH 10

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 9

Find 11, scholar (Arthurian law) 11, tracking 11, trick 11

MIND 8

Test 10, willpower 10

CHARISMA 10

Charm 11, persuasion 12

SPIRIT 10

Faith (Christian) 13, honor 13*, intimidation 13, reality (Avalon) 11

Possibility Potential: all

Equipment: plate mail, armor value TOU+5/15; broadsword, damage value STR+6/16; lance, damage value STR+5/15

Description: The True Knights of Avalon are all heroic, legendary figures—as are their ladies, their squires, and their foes. They are truly larger than life, and they embody nobility and strength at all times.

Or so it *was*.

Now, with the disappearance of Lancelot and Guinnevere, the evil of Modred and Morganna Le Fey, and the melancholy of King Arthur penetrating the land, the Knights have gotten grimmer, less heroic, and more desperate. Most of them still struggle to hold on to the legends that made them—but it was never a struggle before.

*This is the *minimum honor* a True

Knight of Avalon may have—most have more. A False Knight of Avalon is usually a bewitched creature—often controlled by a sorcerer or the powers of Evil—and has *corruption* adds of at least four or more.

The Technological Axiom: 15

Technology in Avalon is strictly on the medieval level. Although some crude firearms are available, most prefer swords, pikes and bows as weapons. Knights wear plate armor, while lower-level soldiers wear chain mail or cuir bouilli.

While medicine is advanced to the point that anatomy is understood and many ailments can be treated with some certainty of success, most people still go to local healers who use leeches and worry about bodily humors. Others turn to magicians for cures for what ails them.

Printing is possible, but generally only done by monks. Monasteries are the seats of knowledge in the realm, and it is here that one turns to get a glimmer of what terrors await on a quest. The monks compile bestiaries and other volumes of use to a knight heading into unknown lands.

Printing and scribe work not done by court clerks and monks is often associated with evil. A knight or squire *may* know how to read and write, but the written word is a powerful tool indeed. It is not to be abused or debased, lest it be turned to the working of evil.

The Social Axiom: 12

Avalon operates under a feudal system. Arthur is recognized as king by most lords, and they had pledged their service to him. They, in turn, have vassals pledged to their service, and so on down the line to the peasants.

The economy is small-scale, with produce and crafts sold at market. Weaponsmiths are in great demand, as are armorers and virtually anyone else skilled with a forge.

After the monarch, the most pow-

erful force is the church. Arthur has, for the most part, been successful in keeping the bishops on his side. But doing this has required sending some of his most noble knights to their deaths on holy quests, and it has been a dear price to pay. Also, more than a few monasteries are havens of corruption and dark practices, and a knight would be well advised to investigate such a place thoroughly before venturing within.

Parts of the realm—those under the sway of Morganna Le Fey and Modred—remain in anarchy, with no real government and no written laws binding the people. Within Arthur's area of dominion, all are required to obey Arthurian law, which protects the weak and defenseless from those who would prey on them.

Hedge-knights and Bandit Kings are becoming more prevalent in these troubled days. While they do not, as yet, threaten the power in the center of Avalon, they do pose a problem for the people and places they are nearest to. If the Knights of Avalon do not ride against such robbers and usurpers, they stand unchallenged in their small domains. Their subjects are slaves and their power comes from evil and corruption.

The Magic Axiom: 17

All four primary types of magic are practiced in Avalon, but not everyone can cast spells. Rather, certain people (such as Merlin or Morganna) are gifted with the ability to work powerful magics, both for good and evil. There is no white or black magic, as such, in Avalon—all magic is a combination of the two. Because of this, sorcerers cannot benefit from the effects of the Law of Right Makes Might (see below), as they are not pure of heart.

The most common types of magic in Avalon are alteration and divination, although conjuration sometimes comes into play. Many lords have sorcerers or wizards in their employ as advisers, as Arthur once employed Merlin. Others use them to aid their armies in battle, and some—like Modred—have even ordered their dead raised to fight another day (one

of the foulest acts imaginable).

Many wizards, of varying degrees of power, live in the forests and may aid or harm travelers. Often, they appear to be no more than eccentric hermits, but woe betide the man who scorns them or takes a crust of bread from them without paying. Entire areas of a wood, and all the creatures therein, may be under the command of a single sorcerer.

The Spiritual Axiom: 19

Many places in the cosm of Avalon are holy sites, where miracles occur on their own with no aid from a cleric. Among these are hills where many have seen visions of great and bloody battles being fought, springs whose waters can heal, and caverns where dark and malignant spirits dwell. Weapons forged in these places are among the most powerful objects in the cosm, and knights have been known to go on quests that lasted years for an opportunity to wield a sword blessed with divine power.

Another benefit of the high axiom is that one need not be a cleric to call upon miracles. If one is pure of heart (see the Law of Chivalry, below), it is possible to call upon miracles to aid one in a holy cause. Lancelot was said to be able to give life to the dead, but it is not known if his affair with Guinnevere has so tainted his soul that he has lost his ability to perform such deeds.

Use the miracles of Aysle for those in Avalon, but also create some for your adventures. Most miracles deal with healing and cleansing, though a very few also deal with the Wrath of God. Because of the high Spiritual axiom, miracles do not need to be as structured or as formalized as those available in most other cosms. They fulfill immediate needs and come from a fairly attentive higher power.

The Law of Chivalry

The Law of Chivalry rewards, in its own way, both good and evil. The good are expected to defend the weak

and fight for just and holy causes. Most of all, they are expected to resist the temptations of evil, which has power of its own and can warp the soul in such subtle ways that the victim is not even aware of it until it is too late.

One noticeable difference in Avalon is that "too late" is a very malleable term. Ogres and evil knights have "seen the light" in the heat of battle, becoming honorable and good in a second. This does not happen often, but it is possible for a truly evil being to convert over to good — if the impetus and the desire are right.

As the gamemaster, you should not overuse this. Only beings with a true desire to repent will do so — the honor inherent to the realm will see to that. Most would rather die than give up their ways, but a few can overcome evil through love or strength of heart.

The Law of Chivalry is essentially similar to the Ayslish Law of Honor and Corruption, and the *Spirit* skills *honor* and *corruption* are a part of this reality as they are that one. See pages 49-53 of the *Aysle* sourcebook for details on this. Note that "patchwork realm" rules do not apply in Avalon.

One more note on this Law: to win in the realm of Avalon is to defeat evil — not necessarily to *destroy* it. Converting evil to good is the greatest victory possible in this realm — killing an enemy without giving him a chance to repent is the greatest evil.

Characters with four or more honor adds have the ability to try to invoke the power of God once per act of an adventure. The character must be in desperate circumstances (one of her friends has been mortally wounded, or she is beset by terrible evil) and she must be acting out of pure nobility of purpose. If this is the case, then the character needs to "pray" using her *honor* adds as *faith* adds, and making a roll.

The base difficulty to invoke the power is 18, modified by the gamemaster, up or down, depending upon the desperateness of the cause, the nobility of purpose, and the willingness of the character to "follow the true path." Characters who try this invocation may not abuse any of their powers or privileges, and must act in

a manner true to the Knights of Avalon. Non-Knights of Avalon who are in Avalon may attempt this (as a one-case contradiction), but automatically receive a +5 to the difficulty number (though other pluses and minuses may apply).

A successful total means the character receives aid — though what kind of aid is totally up to the gamemaster. Often, it will be what the character wanted to happen — her friend may be healed, or she may receive assistance — but not always. It is not uncommon for the aid to be indirect or seemingly useless, but it is *never* really useless. Often, the power in Avalon does not step forward and directly aid its champions not because they aren't worthy, but because that is not "according to plan." For example, Arthur is destined to kill Modred in battle, and be killed by him. Even though Arthur fights for right, and is a true King and Knight of Avalon, his aid does not save his life. However, it does allow him to live on forever as a legend to inspire good deeds and justice, and he triumphs in the end.

The Law of Right Makes Might

Characters in Avalon who are willing to fight for right receive special benefits under this cosm's world laws. Characters with seven or more *honor* adds are considered "pure of heart." In addition to other benefits, this gives them the ability to be *up* once per act in an adventure, providing the action they are attempting advances a just cause.

Note that, if a character's *honor* adds drop below seven because he has committed a corrupt act, he loses this benefit.

This ability is in addition to all others accrued through gaining *honor* adds. There is, however, a dark side to this law — characters who are "pure of heart" will be targeted by agents of evil, determined to tempt them or, failing that, kill them. As one gains more honor, quests become more challenging and infinitely more dangerous. Great warriors benefit from this law more than others, not only be-



cause of increased opportunity to do good, but because they are the only ones who have survived long enough to gain sufficient skill adds.

Also in Avalon, characters can lose honor adds *without* performing corrupt acts. They do this by doing *nothing*. Each adventure must be a battle that challenges the character's faith and honor as well as his strong arm. A king gains and keeps *honor* by ruling justly and making hard decisions well. A lady may do so by retaining her virtue and helping her chosen knight on his quests — or taking on her own (in a ladylike fashion).

The Law of Legends

Avalon is a place where legends live, and so tales of heroes and villains have great power here. A tale that is believed by the majority of people in a given area will come true. For instance, stories have been flying around the village of Murton that a dragon

emerges from the bowels of a nearby cavern at night and stalks the streets, slaying livestock and those foolish enough to wander about in the dark. If most of the people in the village come to believe this tale — locking their doors at night, seeking out talismans to protect them against dragons — the dragon will be brought to life by their belief.

By the same token, a local legend that says that a mountain spring has the power to wash away wounds to the soul may be sufficient to infuse the waters with just that ability. Naturally, one must be very careful about what stories he tells late in the night, lest they have come true by morning. And, of course, the people of Avalon do *not* “have a care” about what stories they tell — they are, after all, *within* the realm of stories.

Characters can aid in the formation of legends. Subplots and Campaign cards can be the spark to start tales about their deeds, and the Martyr card

is a powerful legend maker. Any character who accepts a Martyr subplot while in Avalon gains a bonus during his last adventure: a +1 bonus number is the lowest he can roll during his last, heroic quest. All bonus numbers lower are treated as +1 (this does not include other modifiers — a character who performs a multi-action or *vital blow* attack may still end up with a negative *total* bonus. The die roll itself is the only part affected). This is the character's “road to glory.”

However, if during the last adventure, the character begins to “stray from the right,” he forfeits the bonus number until he gets back on track. Also, if the character decides at any time to not play out the *Martyr* subplot, then he loses the bonus number modifier *and* two adds of *honor* for “backing down in the face of danger.” If the character has less than two adds in *honor*, then he loses points from his *Spirit* to make up the difference. Often, only performing more heroic sacri-

fices are enough to get the *honor* back.

The Cartoon Cosm

One of the more bizarre pocket dimensions to emerge from *Torg* in the past year, this brainchild of Ed Stark was created in response to huge ... well, moderate ... all right, one guy asked for it ... demand by our audience. Like the Aztec Empire, the Cartoon Cosm is NOT a part of the "official" *Torg* campaign — but, hey, feel free to play in it. (Or even have it invade your game—it's the only realm capable of taking territory without benefit of stelae!) (What? Wait a minute! C'mere, Ed, let's talk about this ...)

The Axioms of the Cartoon Cosm

Sorry, there are none. At least, none we can find. Well, not really. let us explain.

If a Cartoon Character tries to use a tool of another cosm, it will disconnect on a one through four. However, because it carries its own personal Darkness Device — <SFX> *Dun, da dun dum!* — and see "World Laws," below — it can easily reconnect the next round. Generally, CCs use a special kind of tool unique to their cosm.

The Acme-ums

All types of limits on the cosm are imposed not by axioms, but by *Acme-ums*. Here are some examples:

Technological Acme-um: 42

Being the rough numeric equivalent of axiom values, it should be noted that the *Technological* Acme-um of the Cartoon Cosm far exceeds the maximum of the *Torg* universe, which is 33.

Oh, well.

But that does not mean that the Cartoon Cosm's tech is better than anything in the *Torg* universe — just really different. A Cartoon Character, utilizing Acme-ums, can perform in-

credible, spectacular feats far beyond the abilities of mortal ... what? That's trademarked too?!

But there are drawbacks. You've heard of "weird science"? Well, weird science if positively *normal* — no, *boring* — when you look at Acme Tech, which promises and does the impossible.

The only requirements of Acme Tech are two things: it either has to be mail-order (which is no problem, because Acme delivers anywhere, anytime, instantly) or it has to be constructed from spare parts and monstrously complicated blueprints. A Storm Knight who even looks at an Acme Tech blueprint of device must make a four-case contradiction check; an actual scientist needs to make an insanity roll (roll *Spirit* versus the actual effect value of the device, subtracting any *science* adds the character has from the total). On a failure, the scientist has an irresistible impulse to look at any audience present, stand rigid, and run his or her index finger up and down between his or her lips and make "brubba-brubba" noises for a round.

Spiritual Acme-um: 0

Excluded from the original text of the Cartoon Cosm, the description of the *Spiritual* Acme-um of the realm will be included here. Originally, it was decided that lampooning (or cartooning) religion would not be prudent. But, since this is a full-fledged book and not some scrawny newsletter, it is covered by the "please don't get offended; we didn't mean to mess with your religion" clause in all *Torg* products. So, we can discuss, at length, all the aspects of the Cartoon Cosm's *Spiritual* Acme-um.

There aren't any.

Magic Acme-um: 33

This is a rough equivalent to *Torg's* upper *Magic* axiom. Virtually anything imaginable is possible. But, for some reason, Cartoon Characters only use magic in trivial ways (perhaps that is

because everything else they do is pretty trivial.) They even adopt psychological "crutches" to help them restrict their powers.

The Magic Wand

Many Cartoon Characters have run across magic wands on occasion. In order to use one, the Cartoon need only point it and gesture (though sometimes they hit you with it — ouch!) While these wands can do just about anything, the Cartoons seem to limit themselves to simple (and, of course, humorous) alteration spells — although conjuration and apportation are not ruled out when the occasion warrants.

Fortunately (for everybody else), the wands are capricious. They seldom do *exactly* what that character wants — perhaps this is another psychological crutch. Subtle changes in the spell become apparent immediately. Most often this manifests itself as "theme magic" (see below).

The Magic Lamp

Yeesh. Ooop. Eeeeeegg. This is nasty. If you see a Cartoon Character pick up a lamp — any lamp, even if it's one you've used for years — RUN! Bad things are going to happen. Heck; make tracks if they are even carrying a flashlight (you never know what those Acme Techs are going to come up with next ...)

For those who thought the magic wand was capricious, don't even try the lamp (shudder!) You see, the lamp is powered by a genie (don't even think about Barbara Eden, guys) and unlike in the stories, the genie is usually pretty ... annoyed at being cooped up in the lamp. In fact, it's a near guarantee that whoever releases him — especially with greed in his heart — will bear the brunt of his wrath.

Storm Knight: Hmmm. What's this? A strange-looking lamp. Well, I'll clean it up (*rub, rub*).

Smoke pours out of the lamp and forms the upper half of a large, green man.

Genie: Who summons the genie of the lamp?

SK: All right! My very own genie!

First I want a car, then a big gun, then a million —

Genie: What's that, Master? My hearing is going from all that time I spent in *that stupid lamp!* (Poof!)

SK (in the form of a toad): Ribbit, ribbit.

Genie: Ah, I thought not. Well, when you come up with something you want, I'll be in Hollywood ... I've got to look up this Barbara Eden babe...

You get the picture.

Of course, good characters who don't want more than, say, a *really good* ham and cheese sandwich or who wait to be *asked* (right, a Storm Knight who waits to be asked) can make out from such a genie.

The Magic Book

Then there is the Tome of Knowledge, the Grimoire, the Scrolls of Ancient Lore ...

The Cookbook for Trouble.

This book contains detailed instructions for casting spells, either by brew or by word (for the former, see a distorted version of *Macbeth*) The word-type spell is the easiest to use.

First, create a magical word. Guidelines: it will almost always have some form of "Abracadabra," or "Hocus pocus," in it. Then, decide what the spell does for the duration of the act.

Of course, devious players and blindingly idiotic Cartoons will play around with the words: "AbracaPocus," "Hocuscadabra," and, of course, "Walla Walla, Washington" will bounce in occasionally for no apparent reason.

Oh, and the same word or combination of words *will not* have the same effect twice! This might seem like a nightmare to deal with, but see "Theme Magic" for some tips.

Theme Magic

Theme magic is the only way magic seems to work in this dimension. Perhaps this is another world law, or perhaps it is just the product of a sick and deranged mind (yep, that's it). This means that all magic follows a *theme* — and sometimes it isn't even a musical

one. Whether it be a common object-derivation idea (from "flying bat" to "baseball bat" to "baseball" to "umpire") or whether there is a pun involved (from "umpire" to "vampire" to "Empire State Building"), it doesn't matter. Think of a theme and beat it to death, then switch.

Social Acme-um: ?

Yeah, right. You gotta be kidding. While it is very true that Cartoon Characters have *some sort* of social structure, *we're* not going to spend enough time around them to figure it out. Just when you get comfortable, you get a pie in the face and a bomb in your shorts. No, thank you.

The only time these guys work together is to mess you up.

The World Laws

The Cartoon Cosm has several world laws that allow it to exist in a foreign cosm without the bother of planting stelae. One of these very important world laws is called:

The Law of Darkness Devices

<SFX>Dun, da dun dunn!

As you may have already discovered, the first facet of the Law of Darkness Devices —

<SFX>Dun, da dun dunn!

— is that you can't say "Darkness Device" —

<SFX>Dun, da dun dunn!

— without a subsequent sound effect. Namely, a deep, eerie, ominous —

<SFX>Dun, da dun DUNN!

STOP IT!!!

The second, more important, aspect of the Law of Darkness Devices —

<SFX>Dun, da dun dunn!

— Sigh. Where were we? Oh, yeah. The second aspect of the Law of ... the Law We've Talked About Above is that *every character native to the cosm has his own Darkness Device!*

<SFX>Dun, da dun dunn, DUNNN!

But What About Play Balance?

"Play balance?" Whattayamean, "play balance?" There's no play balance in the Cartoon Cosm — it's insane. If you send your Storm Knights into the Cartoon Cosm, they're in *trouble*, okay?

But back to the world laws:

The Way This Works

Every character in the Cartoon Cosm carries a distinctive object on his person at all times. It could be a funny hat, a long and silly beard, or even some sort of orange vegetable that will remain nameless so we don't get sued ... whatever. This is the character's own personal Darkness Device —

<SFX>Dun, da dun dunn!

Damn. Anyway, it is unlike the ... artifacts belonging to the High Lords of the realms in that it is portable and, apparently, non-intelligent.

(**Secret Gamemaster Note:** It has been revealed that these ... objects possessed by the Cartoon Characters are intelligent. In fact, they are *so* intelligent that they refuse to involve themselves directly in the affairs of Cartoons and Men (or Women, or Elves, or Little Furry Guys that Steal Your Left Sock Out of the Dryer). Their mentalities are so far removed from the universe as we know it that they are just, well, oblivious to what's going on right in front of them.)

The Characteristics of a Cartoon Darkness Device

<SFX>Dun, da dun dunn!

Right.

The object is indestructible, of course — though it may, at times, *appear* to be destroyed. It may *look* like it's been blown to cinders, or it may *appear* that the character is eating it (blech!), but it is really only turning into energy and back again. Y'ever notice how, in one scene, the Hunter Cartoon Character has his hat incinerated by the Grey Furry Rodent with the Smart Attitude and then, in the next scene, it's back? *That's* how it works.



L aw of Humor

Type of Action	Difficulty Numbers	Effect
Very improbable	12	Sinking all the balls on a break in a game of pool
Super improbable	15	Flipping a coin 100 times and getting heads every time
Really incredibly improbable	18	Flipping a coin so it lands on its edge
Okay, just plain impossible	22	Causing the law of gravity to ignore an object
More than just impossible	*	Causing the law of gravity to work differently on different parts of an object

**You figure it out.*

Next, each ... *thingy* ... has certain powers. It confers total, partial invulnerability to the characters who possess it.

Huh? Total, partial invulnerability?

Right. The invulnerability conferred by the ... *thing* is not always as immediate or as complete as the character might like. The character will never get killed (at least, not for long), but it may end up in traction, or in splints, or even floating up to Heaven playing a harp (or on the *other* track ...) but none of this is permanent. As a general rule, a character is never incapacitated for more time than it takes to reach the end of a scene or, at most, an act.

Unless, of course, it's funny.

Which leads us into the next world law ...

The Law of Humor

This law is somewhat misleading. Officially, it means that anything that's funny *can* happen. A character can suddenly fly ... *if it's funny*. The character may be transformed into a werewolf ... *if it's funny*. This may seem like a gamemaster's nightmare, but it really isn't, for two reasons:

One, the character must come up with a device —

<SFX>Dun, da —

No, not that kind of device! A *modus operandi* or a "hook" for making the effect work. If a player wants to, for example, turn her character into a monster, the character has to come up with a way of doing this. It may be a magic/weird science potion, a spell, or some other strange process ... but it has to be funny and it has to make

some sick sort of sense.

Two, the gamemaster has to think it's funny!

Ah hah! That makes things so much easier. Generally, if the gamemaster doesn't laugh when you state your effect, then the effect probably won't work. If he doesn't smile, then your character is going to take some "damage" from the effect (see below for how Cartoon Characters take damage). And if, instead of laughing, the gamemaster takes on an evil, malicious grin, *look out!* Something bad (but funny!) has happened to your character!

(Gamemaster Note: As a general rule, when your players are coming up with cute, semi-funny gimmicks to use on the non-player characters and each other, let it ride. But, when it is important or when they get into a rut ... let 'em have it! Twist their plans into evil, hilarious ones of your own.)

When this happens, you character often gets out of your control. He may lose his temper and do stupid (i.e., more stupid than usual) things, or he may metamorphosize into a totally different being (under the gamemaster's control) for a time. Don't worry about it! Sit back and enjoy the panic shared by the *other* players — your character will be okay!

Example: Marvin the Malamute is trying to befuddle his long-time nemesis and co-star, the Green Moon Man. However, Greenie has locked Marvin in his sub-basement laboratory and has decided to experiment on him. But the doorbell rings — the friendly Avon lady is talking Greenie's ear off. Meanwhile, back in the lab, Marvin

manages to mangle the manacles malevolently restricting his mobility, and he decides to use the Moon Man's lab against him. Mixing several liquids together into an inferno of sparkling beverage, he downs the radioactive sludge. The player states that he wants Marvin the Malamute to become Marvin the Monster!

Ho, hum. The gamemaster is not particularly impressed. He invokes the Law of Humor and stretches an evil grin across his face. When Greenie finally returns, he does not find Marvin the Malamute in his lab, he finds Marvin the Mocha Mouse.

Applying the Law of Humor

Of course, there is a game mechanic that allows the Law of Humor to operate. When a character performs an "impossible" (or highly improbable) action, he must use his *reality* skill to bend the physical laws of the universe to meet the Law of Humor. The character then rolls on his *reality* skill to beat a difficulty number assigned by the gamemaster. See the "Law of Humor Difficulty Numbers" table for some sample DNs.

Depending on the situation, the difficulty number may be modified. Representative modifiers are shown in the "Law of Humor Modifiers" table.

In addition to making the *reality* check, the character must *sacrifice* one Possibility. This Possibility does not affect the roll, it just allows the action to proceed. An opposing character (cartoon or otherwise) can spend to cancel this Possibility. More than one Possibility may be spent to perform the action, and additional Possibilities can

Law of Humor Modifiers

Action

Action is funny

Very funny and creative

Very funny and puts the character at a disadvantage

Not funny at all

So not funny it's funny

Character is not a cartoon

Victim is not a cartoon

Modifier

-2 DN (a pie in Thratchen's face)

-4 DN (a pie in Thratchen's face with brick filling)

-6 DN (the pie in Thratchen's face is still connected to the character by a Pie-O-Matic Piecaster)

It doesn't work (trying to sell Thratchen life insurance)

* (trying to sell Thratchen life insurance while he's chewing your arm off)

+15 DN

-5 DN

*See footnote in the "Law of Humor Difficulty Numbers" table.

be spent to modify the actual roll.

Example: Marvin the Mocha Mouse is about to be trampled by the Green Moon Man in his lab. Marvin looks wildly for an escape and find none. "But," he says, "what about this syringe filled with SleepyTime MoonMan Sleep Liquid?"

"What syringe?" the gamemaster asks.

"Why, this syringe," Marvin triumphantly yells, pulling a syringe out of nowhere.

"Make a roll."

The player marks off a Possibility to perform the "super improbable" action of finding a syringe containing the appropriate liquid in the lab, and the Green Moon Man cancels. Marvin spends again, and this time, the Moon Man lets him. Since the action was ruled "super improbable," Marvin needs a reality roll of 15 to produce the syringe. While the gamemaster doesn't think of the action as highly humorous (i.e., no extra modifier), it is humorous enough to succeed.

Marvin gets a reality roll of 16,

succeeding, so now he's got to stab the Moon Man's foot before it crushes "his widdle head!"

How to Integrate Cartoons Into Your Torg Campaign

Don't. Not even a little. Or, if you must play them, don't tell us — please. We'll call the men in the white coats to take you away, we swear.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

DISPATCHES & RUMORS



ne of the continuing features of *Infiniverse* is the "Dispatches and Rumors" section. Here, readers are presented with four short adventure hooks, along with a varying number of "news briefs" from the *Torg* universe that might — or might not — be true. Gamemasters can introduce both into their campaign, and use a response form similar to the one on page 128 to let us know how their group did in the adventures and which rumors are true.

The Response Form

A response form for the dispatches and rumors included in this chapter is included in this book, on page 128. Refer to it while reading the following section, which explains the various sections on the sheet.

Campaign Number

All *Infiniverse* subscribers are assigned a campaign number, for purposes of bookkeeping on the part of WEG. If you are an *Infiniverse* subscriber, put your campaign number in the box indicated. If you are not a subscriber, simply write "NA" in that space. Your responses will be factored in with those of subscribers.

Storm Knights

Enter the number of player character Storm Knights in your group. Do not include Storm Knight gamemaster characters you may introduce into the adventure.

Dispatches

Each dispatch in this book has a number (1-4). In the boxes provided, list the numbers of any dispatches you have played.

Rumors

Each rumor in this volume also has a number (1-3). In the boxes provided, list the numbers of any rumors your group has investigated. In the space after the slash, write "T" or "F" to indicate whether the group determined the rumor to be true or false.

Adventure Realms

Under this section, the various realms of *Torg* are listed. Check off each realm in which a significant scene of your adventure took place (i.e., a battle fought in Tharkold is significant — simply passing through the Nile Empire without anything occurring

there is not).

Next, determine which realms were most affected by your adventure. These are rated on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being greatly affected and 0 being not affected at all. Thus, if you stopped a Cyberpapal plot to destroy the Resistance in Paris Liberté, you would put a "10" next to the Cyberpapacy. If you stopped a Cyberpapal plot to spread the GodNet to Tokyo, you might put a "5" next to Cyberpapacy and a "5" next to Nippon Tech, as both realms were affected.

Your adventure realm numbers must add up to 10. That means if you adventure in more than one realm, you may be forced to make a judgment call. Which realm did your adventure most affect? Was one a 7, and one a 3? Remember, realms your party passed through but took no action in probably only rate a "1" at best.

Adventure Outcome

The adventure outcome measures how well your group did in their mission, on a scale of 1-9. Dispatches explain the requirements for achieving certain numbers, in a section labelled "Critical Event."

Here are the explanations for each numerical rating:

1: Complete failure. The Knights failed in their mission and gained no

knowledge that can help them in future adventures.

2: Serious loss. The Knights failed in their primary mission, but may have achieved a secondary goal or learned something that will be of use to them later.

3: Costly victory. The Knights succeeded in their mission, but have fewer resources (including Possibilities or Knights) than they started with.

4: Decent victory. The Knights accomplished their mission, at least broke even on Possibilities, and gained knowledge that will help them later.

5: Success. The Knights succeeded in their mission and ended with a surplus of Possibilities.

6: More than successful. The Knights achieved everything listed under "5" and played a *Glory* card at some point in the adventure.

7: Heroic. The Knights met the criteria of "6" and sparked the people (see page 104 of the *Torg Rulebook*) and resolved any subplot cards in play. There must have been at least one active subplot in play for a 7 to be awarded.

8. Outstanding heroism. Knights must meet the criteria of "7" but play two *Glory* cards rather than just one.

9. Incredible success. The Knights accomplished everything listed under "8" and did it in such a spectacular way that you, as the gamemaster, feel they deserve special recognition.

Starting and Ending Possibilities

Next to Starting Possibilities, list the total number of Possibilities the Knights had (total for the group) at the beginning of the adventure. Next to Ending Possibilities, list how many they had when the adventure came to a close — including the adventure award. Make sure to add these up before the players began spending to improve their characters. Next to card total, list the number of ending Possibilities the Knights gained as a result of *Drama* or *Glory* cards.

Herald Messages

This is a space to write any messages you wish to send out into the "infiniverse." An assortment of these are printed in every issue of the newsletter.

Dispatches

1

The higher echelons of the Delphi Council are growing increasingly concerned about the actions of President Leland Nicklaus. He has shown an unwillingness to heed Delphi advice and firmly believes that Japan has been invaded and the Kanawa Corporation is connected to it all. The fact that Delphi has been working hand-in-glove with Kanawa for some time has Nicklaus talking privately about disbanding the entire body and turning conduct of the war back over to the Defense Department.

The initial response of the Delphi Council was a smear campaign against Nicklaus. Congress demanded to know just where he had spent his vacations over the past three years and rumors began to swirl that Nicklaus was on the payroll of the Rauru Block. A California Senator went so far as to say that Nicklaus was an agent of the Cyberpope, though he had no evidence to back his claim.

When none of this had any effect, the Council began considering other ways to eliminate the problem Nicklaus represented. The solution they have hit upon is a radical and deadly one: the assassination of Nicklaus at the hands of an Akashan ambassador. This will have the dual effects of disposing of Nicklaus and discrediting the Akashans, whom the Council does not trust.

The Storm Knights get wind of the fact that the Akashan ambassador has been acting strangely — failing to recognize people he has known for months, cancelling speaking engagements in Houston, etc. Investigation reveals that all of this began after he was given a tour of the city, with Delphi Council Spartans providing the security.

A Rauru Block agent will hint to the Knights that the Akashan is not who he seems to be, and some threat to Nicklaus is involved. The agent will then be killed by a biotech weapon. All of this should lead the Knights to the Akashan embassy, where Monitors will fight to defend their ambassador, not knowing he is an impostor.

If the Knights defeat the Monitors, they will find the ambassador gone. He has dropped all pretense of his disguise — he is a Spartan assassin, trained in the use of biotech weapons, and is on his way to the Houston White House to kill the President.

Spartan Assassin

Reality: Core Earth
DEXTERITY 12

Biotech weapons 15, dodge 18, fire combat 16, maneuver 17, stealth 20, unarmed combat 19

STRENGTH 11

TOUGHNESS 11

PERCEPTION 11

Disguise 18, find 17, land vehicles 18, language (Akashan) 16, scholar (Akashan lore) 15, tracking 15, trick 18

MIND 10

Artist (actor) 14, test 15

CHARISMA 10

Charm 13, persuasion 15, taunt 16

SPIRIT 9

Intimidation 16, reality (Core Earth) 20

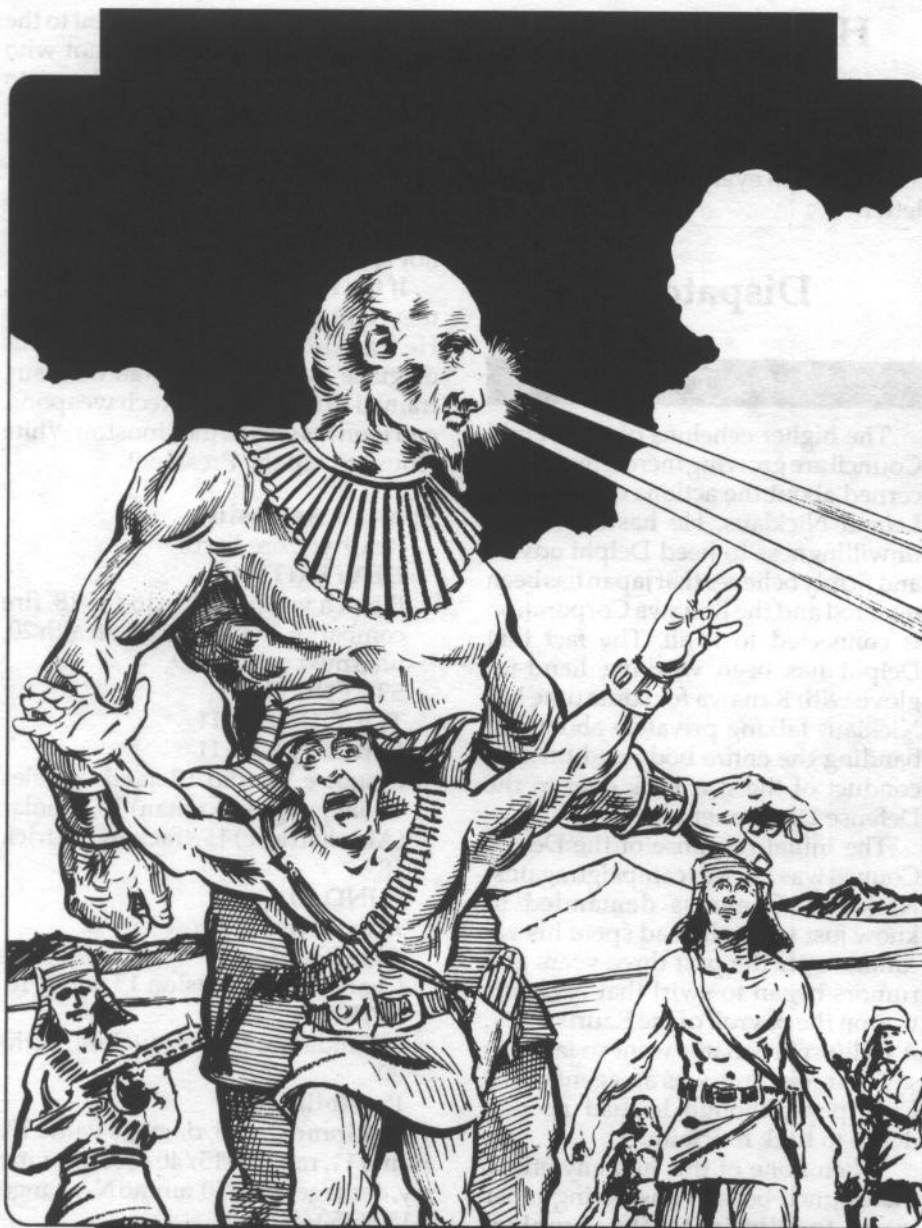
Possibilities: 20

Equipment: Uzi, damage value 17, ammo 11, range 3-15/40/100; gravitic ray, damage value 30, ammo NA, range 3-150/350/500

Critical Event: The Knights must stop the assassination of Nicklaus and expose the true identity of the would-be killer. Doing so is a *Good* result (5 or better); failing is a *Bad* result (3 or less).

2

An unholy alliance is in the making between the Serpentors (see Chapter Three, "Living Land/Core Earth/Land Below") and the Nile Empire's Sisters of the Serpent. Frightened by the relentless advance of Mobius into Europe, the Cult of Wadjet is seeking aid against the High Lord. They believe that the Cobra Cult priests share



rivals to Wadjet's throne.

Critical Event: The Knights must find a way to a) avoid being sacrificed and b) figure out just what is going on so unnecessary bloodshed can be prevented. A Serpentor attack on Mobius would spark Nile Empire retaliation against the Land Above, and a Serpentor-Storm Knight war would result in countless deaths on both sides. Cooling the situation off is a *Good* result (6 or better). Failing to prevent one of the two above conflicts from erupting is a *Bad* result (3 or less).

3

Nile ships have been disappearing at an incredible rate in the Mediterranean in recent weeks. At first, Mobius believed that the Cyberpapacy was responsible, but this theory was soon dismissed. Eyewitness accounts made the incidents sound more like the work of magic, making the Ayslish the likely suspects.

Mobius has placed the blame on Light refugees in his realm and has ordered their arrest. Most are being put to work in diamond mines and at other back-breaking labor and dozens of Ayslish have died since the program began. There are far too many held prisoner, in far too many places, for a simple rescue to be effective. Rather, Mobius must be shown that the Ayslish are not responsible for his ships' disappearances.

In truth, they are not — Mobius' vessels have been sucked into the whirlpool that leads to Atlantis (see Chapter Ten, "Pocket Dimensions.") They are currently in the hands of barbarians, who are planning to use the weird science subs against the Atlanteans. Meanwhile, some of the Nile crews have uncovered Atlantean artifacts and are planning to bring it with them when and if they escape.

The Knights must go to Atlantis and prevent the barbarians from wreaking havoc with the Nile subs. At the same time, they must keep the Nile troops from getting their hands on Atlantean technology and bringing it back to Mobius. (The High Lord might believe that his men have truly been to Atlantis, but without concrete evidence that the pocket dimension could be of

the same goals, and by combining their powers, they could bring their individual gods to life. (Wadjet is already breaking free of her bonds, thanks to Mobius' ill-conceived massacre in Ethiopia.)

For their part, the Serpentors are interested in the offer, but wary. This world is still very new to them, and they do not know just how powerful this Mobius might be. The Sisters of the Serpent have assured the Cobra Cult priests that Mobius is no more powerful than any other Storm Knight.

As a show of good faith, the Wadjet cultists have offered to capture a band of Knights and turn them over to the Serpentors for ritual sacrifice.

Once again, the Sisters are playing a dangerous game. If the Serpentors kill the Knights, they will be flushed with confidence and make excellent cannon fodder to toss against Mobius while the Wadjet cult pursues its own agenda. If the Knights escape, they will spread the word that the Serpentors are a threat, and this will lead to the destruction of potential

use to him, probably won't deign to explore it further at this time.)

And, of course, there's always the chance an Atlantean patrol might mistake the Knights themselves for barbarians ...

Critical Event: The Knights must do the above, and bring at least one Nile trooper back alive so he can tell Mobius the Ayslish were not responsible for the vanishing ships. Doing this is a *Good* result (6 or better). Failing to do so is a *Bad* result (3 or less).

4

Illuminated manuscripts containing details of Modred's centuries-long war with Arthur have been found near Stonehenge by a patrol of rock trolls. Although they could not understand the scrolls, they knew enough to send them back to their superiors. The manuscripts are currently in the hands of a dozen Storm Giants, who are proceeding north toward Scotland.

The Warrior of the Dark already suspects Avalon's existence. If she obtains this evidence, she will make efforts to contact Modred and propose an alliance between them. With Dark Knights of Avalon at her side, the siege of Oxford will rapidly turn into a rout of the forces of Light.

Critical Event: The Knights must waylay the Storm Giants and prevent the illuminated manuscripts from reaching the Warrior of the Dark's lieutenant in Scotland (ideally, the scrolls should be returned to Avalon). Doing so is a *Good* result (6 or better); failing to do so is a *Bad* result (3 or less).

Rumors

1

Amat-Ra has returned!

As predicted in the "Tablet of Terror," (see *Infiniverse Update, Volume I*) the Terran Egyptian pharaoh murdered by Sutenhotep, aka Dr. Mobius, now walks the Earth seeking revenge upon his killer. It is his curse which has plagued Mobius for so many years, and there are reports that the incredibly powerful pharaoh destroyed an entire battlegroup in Libya. He is said to be on a relentless march toward Thebes, destroying anyone and anything that gets in his way.

Witnesses report Amat-Ra is two meters tall, dressed in the full regalia of a pharaoh. A field of energy seems to surround him, and he has been seen to fire beams of pure power from his eyes. His voice is said to shake the desert. Those who know of the Terran legends believe that his long period of time on the other side of Death's veil may have driven the great pharaoh mad.

Mobius is said to be huddled with his priests of Sebek, preparing a mystical defense against the day that Amat-Ra arrives. The High Lord is hoping to eliminate the curse that has rested upon him for so many centuries.

2

The Whisper is recruiting Storm Knight agents to go into Berlin and kidnap a great alpha techno-demon named Tekar. This demon, it seems, is

responsible for the transformation of a score of Nile denizens to Tharkoldu reality. These heroes and villains are then sent back to the Nile Empire to slowly corrupt the strict dichotomy of good and evil that is the basis of that realm.

The Whisper wants Tekar taken out of Berlin and smuggled back to Cairo, where he will be forced to reveal which Knights he has transformed so they can be located and flipped back to Nile reality. Tekar himself will then be reality stormed to some other reality — perhaps the Living Land, if the Whisper is feeling particularly nasty — and sent back to Berlin to disrupt Tharkoldu operations there.

Storm Knights who undertake this mission may well be rewarded with permanent positions as agents of the Whisper.

3

The inhabitants of several small villages in Sweden have been attacked, their souls drawn out of them through sorcery and their bodies left in the streets, suspended between life and death.

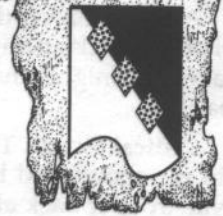
The culprits are sorcerers in the employ of the Warrior of the Dark. It seems that the rulers of Hel, the Norse land of the dead, demand souls in exchange for the soldiers they are providing the High Lord. These innocents have been chosen as the most expendable by the Warrior, and their spirits have been transported to the deepest pits of the netherworld.

Storm Knights are needed both to stop the sorcerers and to enter Hel itself to save the villagers' souls.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Best of

YOUR LETTERS



have a question of a general nature about reconnection numbers. How do you derive the difficulty numbers for the Link Difficulty Chart on page 100 of the *Torg Rulebook*? I would like to know as I want to devise my own brand of trouble for the hapless denizens of Core Earth (as if Orrorsh, Nippon Tech, etc. were not enough).

— Stephen Cawkill
Norfolk, UK

Here is the formula: to find the reconnection numbers for a character from realm A in realm B, first look at the axioms for both realms. Find the A axiom that exceeds the corresponding B axiom by the greatest number (see the example below). That is the base difficulty number. Now add +1 for each other axiom set in which realm A exceeds realm B.

All right, you have your total. One more piece of addition — if the total you arrived at is 0-5, add +3; 6-10, add +2; 11-15, add +1. (Yes, there are zeroes on the "Link Difficulty Chart" on page 100, and yes, using this system they should be threes. But for reasons of clarity, use the numbers as printed on the chart.)

Here's an example of how this formula works. A Core Earther visits the Living Land. The axiom pairs are *Magic* 7/0; *Social* 21/7; *Spirit* 9/24; *Tech* 23/7.

The *Tech* is highest by the greatest margin ($23-7=16$). The base reconnection difficulty is 16. Core Earth's *Social* and *Magic* axioms are both higher than the Living Land's, so add +1 for both. The final reconnection number is 18.

If you use this formula for all the realms, you will find that many of them don't quite add up. That is because there are additional "judgement call" modifiers added in for World Laws and realm incompatibilities. But this is a good formula to start with.



How often may a Storm Knight attempt to reconnect?

— Wade A. Warren
Lakeland, FL

A Storm Knight (or stormer) may attempt to reconnect once per round (in a round-by-round situation, such as combat). If not in a round situation, the character may attempt to reconnect *whenever anyone in the party is rolling for a legitimate action* — i.e., if someone does a *find* check on a room, you can attempt to reconnect. If there are no rolls being made (say you're between adventures), it's every 24 hours.



If a person were to have all his possibilities and reality adds removed by a storm, is it no longer possible for another possibility-rated character to invoke a storm against that person until he at least regains some possibilities?

— Pete Venters
Wales, UK

Yes, it is possible for that person to become the target of a second invoked storm. Remember, the rules state that the target character must be *possibility-rated*, not necessarily have any possibilities. Someone who's lost a storm, all his possibilities and *reality* adds is still possibility-rated — he still has the *reality* skill, just no adds in it. This is why the *reality* skill is different from other skills. It is even possible for a character with no reality adds to invoke a storm against someone.



Now for some questions about the *Infiniverse* response form:

1. What do you do with the indicated dispatches? What happens to popular and unpopular dispatches?

2. Why are you interested in where Storm Knights travel? Isn't the indication of impact enough?

3. Do you read all the herald messages? How do you decide what gets included?

4. How do you decide which questions get printed?

— Joe Farrell
No. Merrick, NY

1. All dispatch results are entered into a massive computer program created by Barb Schlichting and managed by Ed Stark. This allows us to not only know who receives which generics and dispatch responses, but to see what the overall results of a dispatch are.

For instance, if we do a dispatch about an attempt to turn Madagascar into glass (a particular favorite around here). We get a bunch of responses and find that the majority of Storm Knight teams stopped this from happening. This is probably a blow to the High Lord behind it, and may affect his future plans — it will certainly affect ours. For one thing, Madagascar isn't glass in the official *Torg* campaign.

Or perhaps the vast majority of the groups failed. In the "official" campaign, Madagascar is now glass, and that will be taken into account in the future. You may not see the results right away, but we'll find some way to make use of it.

Rumors work much the same way — they let us try out ideas to see what people like, and do a little foreshadowing. For instance, who would have thought our players would be so crazy about ninja vampyres, or the Cyberpapal-Nile war in Yugoslavia? And let's not forget poor Skippy the edeine, who it turned out doesn't actually have the crown of King Pellinore.

2. We like to know which realms people have adventured in so we know which are the most popular and which might need more development. Adventure outcomes are factored into figuring out how much possibility energy a given High Lord has to work with at any one time.

Also, if certain realms have lots of Storm Knights "passing through" but not doing anything, the High Lord of that realm may decide it's time to set traps for these ignorant fools (yes, Mobius is a big fan of this tactic). Also, there is a better chance of stories being created and passed along in these areas.

3&4. It depends upon who's doing



the column in a particular month. Some of us lean toward rules questions, some toward story questions. But we try to get everyone in, and answer the ones that are asked most often or seem most interesting.

Such as:

When a character enters the Net or the Grid, what goes with him? Does he still gain *Perception* bonuses from cyberware? What about skill adds from cyberware? What about skill adds from chips? If he has an on-line

SpiritChip, does the spirit in the chip come along? If the spirit does, are the decker and the spirit running duo, or are they both part of a single entity?

—Chris Butz
Madison, WI

1. The VX images of tools carried by the Storm Knights can be brought into the Net, but their game and damage values are no longer applicable. A machinegun's power, for instance, would be derived from the *Perception* or *Mind* of the user. (See page 25 of *The*

GodNet for a more detailed description of this.)

2. Cyberware counts as a tool and is governed by the same rules. A low-light eye, for instance, would not function unless the decker possessed a program that could simulate its effects.

3. Chipware can function normally in the Net (save for skill chips that provide bonuses to skills that are not *Perception* or *Mind*-based. The spirit in a SpiritChip could come along the decker so chose. They would be considered a single entity for purposes of running the Net.



1. How can a character build or improve a cyberdeck? What skill is needed?

2. Are necessary parts available only in the Cyberpapacy, or would a character be able to find parts in Nippon Tech or Core Earth?

— Jim Ogle
Socorro, NM

1. A character could build a cyberdeck using the *cybertech* skill, although it is often easier just to buy a ready-to-deck. The technological advancements that go into decks take months of research for teams with dozens of members — a cyberdecker operating out of his basement can hardly hope to come up with a major advancement.

A character must make a *cybertech* difficulty of 12 just to know enough to repair a damaged deck with replacement components (*acquiring* those components is difficult to begin with).

To build a deck with components from other machines (like, for example, integrating a processor from a Priestburner (2) with the response capabilities of an AngelBlaster (+4) requires a *cybertech* total of 20 to determine the blueprint (this first skill check takes one week).

To actually build the deck, the character must make a roll against a difficulty of 26 (base difficulty of 20, plus 6 for the One-On-Many). If the roll is failed, all of the components are destroyed, and the builder must acquire

new components. Building the deck takes one month of constant work. If the roll is successful, all of the existing components have been successfully integrated.

To improve existing mass-market decks (not prototypes, such as in the example above), the decker can attempt to improve one portion of the deck per roll: Response, Stealth, Processor or Storage. Each roll is made against a difficulty of 18. For Response and Stealth, find the results on the Speed Push Table. For Processor and Storage, find the results on the Power Push Table. Each deck "attribute" can only be improved once in this manner.

To improve prototype decks, each deck's "attribute" must also be rolled separately, but against a difficulty of 24.

2. The necessary parts are manufactured only in the Cyberpapacy; a very small amount of these parts may have been smuggled to other realms, but they are very difficult to find and very expensive.

...the spirit in a SpiritChip could come along the decker so chose. They would be considered a single entity for purposes of running the Net.

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CHARACTER RECORD SHEET

Christian Missionary

1

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

*D: Difficulty B: Backlash E: Effect A: Axiom Level C: Community Rating CR: Cyber Rating R: Range



CHARACTER RECORD SHEET Christian Missionary

Cosm: Core Earth

Background: Trained in a western missionary, you have a burden for people who have not heard the Gospel. You have come here to help people of other nations, and tell them about God, not to dismantle their culture or Westernize them. When the Wars came, your mission took on an added urgency. The lives and souls of millions are now in dire peril.

Fortunately, you have also found that your prayers have been answered in the most miraculous ways.

Now, you not only seek out evil to destroy, but also people to help. This world needs heroes, and if you can be one, then that's fine with you. And if a few more people can hear about God in the process, so much the better.

Personality: You take your Bible seriously, and attempt to emulate its examples best as you can. You are honest, kind to others, helpful, and you refrain from overindulging in food, liquor, and luxuries. However, you sometimes get caught up in your evangelical furor and begin preaching rather excitedly. You also have no tolerance for any non-Christian religions.

Equipment: Bible, cross, first aid kit, complete set of the *Chronicles of Narnia*.



Quote: "Removing evil is not enough; we must replace it with acts of good and heroism."

Skill Notes: Your tagskill is *faith* (Christian). You may select a branch of Christianity or keep it general.

NOTES



Miracles				
Name	C	D	E	

[illegible][illegible]

CR: Cyber Rating R: Range

*D: Difficulty B: Backlash E: Effect Ax: Axiom Level C: Community Rating CR: Cyber Rating R: Range



CHARACTER RECORD SHEET Reluctant Vampire

Cosm: Orrorsh

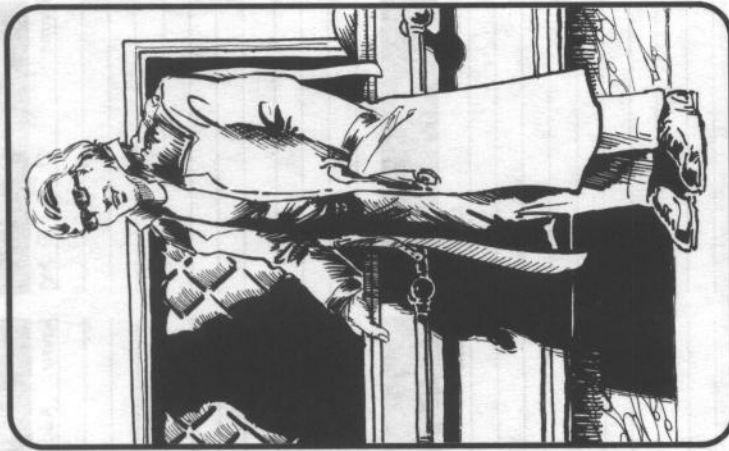
Background: Your old life is unimportant now — it ended the day the fangs of a powerful vampire found your throat. Somehow, in a way you still do not understand, you survived, but with the creature's curse. Now you, too, felt the craving for human blood, and it has taken every shred of your willpower to resist becoming a worse monster than the one who doomed you.

You discovered that, with the hunger, came certain powers. You have used these to strike back at the followers of the Gaunt Man, sometimes in the company of Storm Knights, sometimes alone. You have found that many of those who oppose the High Lords care not for the company of a vampire — even a living one.

You exist each day with the sweet song of corruption in your ears. It would be so easy to yield, to savage those who stand in your way and drink their warm blood. But to do so would be to consign your soul to a worse hell than it already knows and to award the final victory to the forces of evil.

Personality: You are quiet and given to brooding. When possible, you conceal your true nature from those around you, fearing that they will turn upon you should they know your secret.

Equipment: Lee-Hollings Light Re-volver, damage value 15, ammo 6, range 3-5/10/25



Quote: "Is that fear I see in your eyes? It should be — I am every nightmare that has ever haunted your sleep, every terror that has made your heart pound as if it would burst."

Note: Your Corruption Value is 8. You have a power rating of two, and may choose from *elemental alteration*, *shape change*, *blur form*, *darkness*, *dark vision* and *silence* without risking further corruption.

NOTES



CHARACTER RECORD SHEET

Taoist Monk

Skill	Add	Attribute	Value	Attributes		Approved Actions
Acrobatics		DEX		Dexterity	10	Maneuver
Dodge		DEX		Strength	8	
Maneuver		DEX		Toughness	7	
Marital Arts (Taichi)		DEX		Perception	10	Trick
Stealth		DEX		Mind	11	Test
Disguise		PER		Charisma	8	Taunt
Find		PER		Spirit	12	Intimidate
First Aid		PER				Reality

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

*: Difficulty B: Backlash E: Effect A: Axiom Level C: Community Rating CR: Cyber Rating R: Range



CHARACTER RECORD SHEET Taoist Monk

Cosm: Core Earth

Background: Born into poverty in rural China, you were sent to a mission where you learned Taoism. From that point on, you spent your years as a humble Taoist monk until the Possibility Wars began.

At first, you chose not to get involved. Eventually however, Kanawa began building factories in China, factories that polluted the land.

While attending an ecological demonstration against Kanawa in Shanghai, you were hit by the axiom wash. The Tao harmony with nature enabled you to resist the wash, but at that moment you realized that you had to take a more active role in the fight against the Raiders.

This determination was strengthened when, in your role as a language translator, you were asked to translate some Japanese documents into Chinese. The documents revealed to you the scope of Kanawa's power, and the threat he poses to the environment.

Personality: You are one with nature, and will only drink water, tea, or fruit juices. You are a vegetarian. You are cheerful, optimistic, and very helpful, though you tend to be somewhat naive.

This naivete of yours makes you rather gullible at times. You truly believe that Kanawan CEOs would mend their ways if they only were educated about nature. Sometimes, you seem childlike, showing wonder and amazement at new places or things.

Equipment: Staff (STR+3/11), Chinese Broadsword (Tech:9, STR+6/14), Tao te



Ching (Book of Taoist poetry), flute, go set.

Quote: "These executives have removed themselves from nature; we must bring nature to them, then I am certain they will see the error of their ways."

Skill Notes: Your tag skill is *faith* (Tao). The only *martial arts* skill you can take is *tai chi*, which requires *meditation* and *maneuver*. Due to your Taoist education, *martial arts* costs only one skill point for the initial add.

NOTES



1

	C	D	E	Ax
Name _____				

[illegible][illegible]

CR: Cyber Rating R: Range

*D: Difficulty B: Backlash E: Effect Ax: Axiom Level C: Community Rating CR: Cyber Rating R: Range



CHARACTER RECORD SHEET

Victorian Butler

Cosm: Orrorsh

Background: Your family has served Victorian nobility for generations. During that time, your family has noted the decay of Victorian society, but unfortunately, has not been in the position to do anything about it. Until you came along.

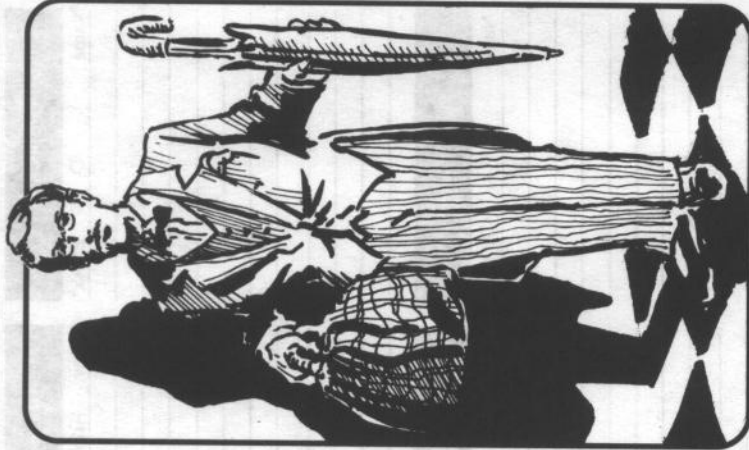
Though you are a gentleman's gentleman, and quite a loyal manservant, you realize that if people do not act, the superior Victorian way of life will vanish.

You have attempted to convince your master to fight for what is right, and warn him of the occult dangers. If he does not choose to believe you, you leave his service and seek employment with a Victorian gentleman who is doing something about it.

Personality: Though you come across as stuffy, unemotional, and unflappable, you care a great deal for Queen and Country, and for your master. You loyalty, honesty, and candidness is appreciated even by non-Victorian Storm Knights.

You are well-educated, level-headed, and very efficient and tidy. You cannot abide a mess anywhere you go. Deep down, you truly believe that manners, decorum, and breeding must always be maintained, even in the direst predicaments.

Equipment: Rutherford Double Barreled shotgun (Tech: 19, Value 17, Ammo



2, Range: 3-15/20/35), valise (with whisk broom, feather duster, shaving kit), white gloves, umbrella, 100 Sterlings.

Quote: "Shall we hunt beasties tonight, sir? Very good, sir!"

Skill Notes: Your tag skill is *scholar* (*home economics*).

NOTES



CHARACTER RECORD SHEET
Victorian Nobleman

Player Name: _____

Character Name	Home Gaia Cosm		Possibilities	
Age	Wound Level	Shock Damage	Magic	Social
Height	Wound Hvy Wound Mortal Dead	K	15 Spiritual	20 Tech
Weight		O	17	19

Skill	Add	Attribute	Value	Attributes	Approved Actions
Beast Riding		DEX		Dexterity 10	Maneuver
Dodge		DEX		Strength 8	
Fire Combat		DEX		Toughness 10	
Heavy Weapons		DEX		Perception 8	Trick
Maneuver		DEX		Mind 7	Test
Melee Weapons		DEX		Charisma 12	Taunt
Unnamed Combat		DEX		Spirit 11	Intimidate
Stealth		DEX			Reality
Evidence Analysis		PER		Weapons & Armor	Axiom Level S Range M L
Find		PER			
Language		PER			
Trick		PER		Armor	
Occult		MIN			
Test of Wills		MIN			
Willpower		MIN		Weapons	
Charm		CHA		Cross Hvy. Rev.	16
Persuasion	3	CHA	15	Sword Cane	+5/13
Taunt		CHA			
Training		CHA			
Intimidation		SPL			
Reality		SPL			

Equipment	Axiom Level	Notes	Equipment	Axiom Level	Notes
Kerosene Lantern	8				
Occult Kit	7				
Playing Cards	10				
Dice	10				
Hip Flask	8				

Bonus Chart	
Die	3 5 7 9 11 13 21 26 31 36 41 46
Roll	1 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 +5
Bonus #	-12 -10 -8 -5 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 +1

Spells		Arcane Knowledge		Miracles	
Name	D B E Ax*	Know.	Add	Know.	Add

Cyberware		Powers & Gizmos		Natural Tools	
Name	CR E	Name	Cost E Ax	Tool	E

Martial Arts		Psionics		Other	
Style:	Style:	Name	D R E	Name	E Ax
Maneuver:	Maneuver:				

*D: Difficulty B: Backlash E: Effect Ax: Axiom Level C: Community Rating CR: Cyber Rating R: Range					
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CHARACTER RECORD SHEET Victorian Nobleman

Cosm: Orrorsh

Background: Ever since you were a child, you had everything you wanted. Being the son of a Victorian Duke, you never had to work a day in your life. You went to the finest schools and universities in Victoria, and were kicked out of most of them.

Since Gaea does not really have very many interesting places or opportunities to do some travelling abroad, you managed to get your father to convince the Governor of New London to take you along to Majestic.

This new planet is all very fascinating, and you have become enamored with the idea of actually fighting some of the invaders who wish to ruin this charming little world.

You have joined a Victorian Secret Society, more out of curiosity than anything else. To you, the idea that Victoria is filled with horrors is "pure rubbish." It's the rest of the world that's messed up.

Nowadays, you travel the world, righting what you think are wrongs, and living in luxury.

Personality: You are a spoiled, snobbish, arrogant, easily bored aristocrat. Chasing women, carousing, gambling, those are your ideas of fun. You do have a glimmer of curiosity about Core Earth, which is why you made the silly decision to actually expose yourself to danger. You tend not to take matters seriously.

Despite these flaws, you are a man of your word, and you do believe that as a nobleman you have the obligation to act refined and honorable, for no other reason than to make those of lower



class (or no class at all) to look bad.

Equipment: Cross Heavy Revolver (value 16), ammo, sword cane (STR+5), kerosene lantern (with 2 pts. kerosene), Occult Kit, playing cards, dice, very dressy clothes, hip flask with brandy, 5,000 Victorian Sterlings.

Quote: "How fortunate for all that I am here! Once I start a quest to destroy evil, I never waver, and ... I say, who is that attractive woman over there?"

Skill Notes: Your tag skill is *persuasion*.

Note: This character is best played if someone else plays the Victorian Butler, who acts as a personal manservant.

NOTES

Mini-Adventure

(Played at GenCon/Origins '92)

HELL ON EARTH



Gamemaster Note

This adventure pits the Storm Knights against the terrors of Tharkold — however, save for the first two scenes (and possibly the last, depending), it is not set in the realm of Tharkold. This is because, being a convention adventure, there is a good possibility that many of your players will be new to the game. As much of the appeal of *Torg* lies in the ability to use all sorts of different tools, the feeling was that playing in a pure zone might cramp the players' styles. Thus this adventure is set in the Core Earth dominant zone around Lancaster, California.

The adventure is constructed to be slightly less linear than last year's. The Knights must find a way to stop a manifestation of the Tharkoldu Angel of Death — however, there are two ways in which they can attempt this, outlines of both of which will be provided to the players early on in the adventure. They may choose to follow Path A or B, or split the party and follow both. The latter is most unwise, as it is doubtful a halved party of Knights will survive the adventure.

Character Creation

Since this adventure does deal with Tharkold creatures, we decided to give the player characters a little help. After the players choose their pre-generated

characters, tell them that, as they have been adventuring for a while prior to this adventure, they have six more adds to place on their templates. And no, they don't get any extra Possibilities.

The only restrictions on placement are that they cannot put more than two adds into a new skill or add more than two to a pre-existing skill.

Props

For your convenience, all props and maps have been included in a special section at the end of the adventure. See page 121 for adventure props and maps.

The Major Beat

The Storm Knights are contacted by a Race warrior with a problem — mysterious happenings believed to be Tharkoldu-related have been reported in Lancaster. Agents sent into the area have reported great devastation, but none of them have ever returned. Race manpower is limited — would the Knights agree to investigate? He provides the Knights with information on a Race cell in northern L.A. and a rogue Tharkoldu said to have great knowledge, both of whom could be of help to the Knights.

As the Knights leave, they see a Tharkoldu techno-demon swooping toward them. It crashes at their feet,

and can be seen to be roughly 2000 years old. As it dies, it whispers the name, "Suricai."

The Race soldiers provide more details on just what is going on in Lancaster. The rogue Tharkoldu identifies Suricai as his species' "Choose of the Slain," whose touch can age and who is said to be protected from harm by the forces of time itself. There are only two ways it can be destroyed: through the construction of a special weapon or through the death of he who summoned the Suricai. He provides the Knights with information on where to get the three components of the weapon, as well as a lead to who might have conjured up the Suricai.

At this point, the Knights have a choice: they can attempt to gather the parts of the weapon, attempt to find the Suricai's master, or both. Neither course is easy — and before they decide, they get a dramatic demonstration of the Suricai's power.

Pursuing the weapon will bring the Knights into conflict with a synthecycler, a nest of skat, and a demented techno-demon who must be talked into revealing the location of one of the components.

Chasing down the Race slave responsible for summoning the Suricai means encounters with street gangs, a werewolf and a pair of techno-demons.

Suggestions are given throughout as to ways to extend or shorten scenes,

should the adventure be running too long or too short.

Adventure Background

Ralnet (Sel) Aar-5412/Dzis-3111 is a Raceslaves specialist brought to Earth by Sterret of the Blades to work on occulttech equipment. His assignment was to modify an existing piece of equipment for possible use against some of the more troublesome gangs in L.A., one that would make manifest their worst fears.

Unfortunately, the device worked better — and faster — than anyone realized, drawing upon the minds of the techno-demons sent to guard Ralnet and drawing forth Suricai. Because Ralnet was working on the machine and is technically the one who summoned the Angel of Death, he is linked to it — his death will cause it to vanish.

Barring that, Suricai can only be destroyed by a weapon still largely in the theoretical stage, one which could bypass his temporal shield and disrupt his molecular cohesion. No working model of the weapon exists, as it is specially designed for use on Suricai and would not work on anyone else.

With this powerful being at his command, Ralnet has been devastating the town of Lancaster, preparing for a more serious strike against Los Angeles, villains and victims alike.

IMPORTANT NOTE

If the Knights gather all the pieces of the weapon, cut **immediately** to Scene Nine for the final confrontation with Suricai.

SCENE ONE: Slow and Steady, Sins the Race

The Situation

Standard. The Storm Knights have received a message to meet a Race

agent near a beachcomber's shack on Venice Beach, late at night. The situation is obviously critical, as Race rarely reveal their presence to anyone, let alone ask for help.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

Venice Beach is unusually cold this evening. In the distance, you can see Kanawa Corporation oil derricks out to sea, blowing black smoke into the sky. The sand is more like swamp, after so many months of rain. The only sounds are gulls, protesting the foul air and water.

Have the Knights generate *find* or *Perception* totals. On an 11, they hear the sound of someone approaching from the south. If they turn to look or react in anyway, they will suddenly hear a drunken song being sung by the newcomer.

The man approaching them looks like a bum — stooped over, bearded, dressed in a heavy winter coat, reeking of cheap liquor. He approaches the group and angrily asks what they're doing on his beach.

There are any number of things the Knights might do here: tell the old man to move along, say they're waiting for someone, make up some other excuse for being there. Regardless, the old man looks them up and down and says:

"Well, as my old mother used to say, the battle is not always to the strong ... nor the race to the swift. It's damn cold out here this time of night — why don't we go into my shack and have a drink?"

If the Knights agree, the Race agent leads them inside the shack. If they do not agree to go with him, he drops his voice to a whisper and drops the drunken act, telling them that he is their contact and he would prefer to speak to them indoors.

Once inside, the Race agent drops his drunken pose and explains why he has asked to meet the Knights. Investigating rumors of a planned Tharkoldu northern expansion, Race agents in Lancaster discovered a wave of devastation passing through that community. Details were sketchy, and contact had been lost with the agents. A team sent in to find them had not returned.

Although this is outside the realm, it seems likely the Tharkoldu are some-

how behind what's occurring in Lancaster. He is reluctant to commit more of his few trusted agents to the matter, and asks the Knights to investigate. He suggests that, if they are interested, they contact a Race spy named Altor in North Hollywood. He can provide more information on events in Lancaster. The Race agent gives them the operative's address, as well as instructing them to speak the words, "Ihear Ichi's planning more lay-offs," when in front of the building.

Another likely source of information is a rogue Tharkoldu techno-demon living in Griffith Park. Although an outcast, he is knowledgeable about matters both inside and outside of the realm and has provided aid to the Race before.

The agent gives the Knights a segment of a circuit board — taken from a Tharkoldu touchboost — which can be passed to the rogue demon as proof of their connection with the resistance movement.

He also offers the Knights a cache of 11/Alph Automatic pistols (Tech 26, damage value 16, ammo 21, range 3-10/30/50), one per Storm Knight.

If the Knights ask about contacting him again, he assures them that he will be in touch should it be deemed necessary. There will be no point in searching for him, as he is abandoning his Venice beach bum cover, which was blown by the Knights of Tempest Fugitive. He will leave the shack first, and the Knights should follow ten seconds later. (Whether or not they agree to this is unimportant — if they insist on leaving with him, he will go back into his act and then vanish into the darkness.)

When the Knights leave the shack, cut to "Will You Still Need Me When I'm 2064?"

Will You Still Need Me When I'm 2064?

As the Knights step out on to the beach, have them generate *find* or *Perception* totals. On an 8, they spot a large winged creature — a techno-demon, surely — silhouetted against the moon. It is evidently flying directly toward them. An *evidence analysis* total of 10 reveals that the techno-demon is fly-

ing unsteadily, as if weak or wounded.

Allow the Knights one round to take whatever action they choose to. Akranis, the techno-demon, has a *Dexterity* of 6 and a *dodge* of 7 (sit tight, all will be explained). If the Knights shoot and hit him, or do nothing, he crash lands at their feet. Try not to let the Knights utterly destroy him—it won't be harmful to the adventure as a whole, but will sacrifice a dramatic moment. Take it for granted that virtually any damage done will be enough to bring Akranis to the ground in his weakened condition.

The techno-demon strikes the sand and lies still. He isn't dead, but very close to it. An *evidence analysis* of *Perception* total of 7 will reveal the techno-demon to be incredibly old—at least 2000 years, if he's a day.

The demon looks up at the Knights and, with his final breath, whispers "Suricai." Then he dies.

This techno-demon was a victim of Suricai. Attempting to get back to Bellflower, he was blown off course by a storm. It is doubtful he even recognized the party as Storm Knights.

The techno-demon is not carrying any weapons or equipment the Knights can salvage.

If the Knights go to find their Race contact, Altor, cut to "Hooray for Hollywood." If they track down the techno-demon in Griffith Park, cut to "Sunday in the Park With Gore."

Hooray for Hollywood

The Storm Knights arrive in North Hollywood, seeking Altor, their Race contact. This area of L.A. remains relatively intact, dominated as it is by the Shadowdancers, a Cyberpapal youth gang that confines itself largely to computer hacking.

As the Knights travel through the streets on the way to their meet on West St., they can see some of the sights of the city—perhaps the man who plays "Rex Able, Freelance Fighter" drives by, or a Video Vigilante truck races down the road on its way to cover a breaking story.

Altor (Nesh) L-9012/Gnal-3094 lives in the basement of an abandoned

high-rise. When the Knights reach the building, they should speak the words given to them by the "beach bum." Altor will then emerge from the alley to the side of the building, gun drawn, and beckon them inside.

Altor

DEXTERITY 10

Dodge 11, energy weapons 12, fire combat 13, maneuver 12, melee weapons 12, running 12, stealth 11, unarmed combat 12

STRENGTH 10

Climbing 11

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 11

Find 13, tracking 12, trick 14

MIND 8

Medicine 15, survival 10, test 10

CHARISMA 9

Persuasion 10

SPIRIT 8

Intimidation 12, reality (Tharkold) 11

Possibilities: 6

Equipment: slave collar; Alph/11 automatic, damage value 16, ammo 21, range 3-10/30/50

Description: Altor is a striking woman with black hair and pale white skin. She lives the dangerous life of a spy—she has no patience for idle chat or foolish questions. She is aiding the Knights because her superior ordered her to, and not out of any love for them.

If some foolish Knight panics and attacks Altor, she will fight back. Someone will have to intervene and stop the fight before a potential source of information is killed, or all the Knights are.

Altor will lead the Knights to her basement refuge and fill them in on what she knows about Lancaster. She was in contact with one of the groups prior to their disappearance. They claimed that entire buildings were crumbling into dust for no apparent reason. Many of the residents were dead, all suffering from extreme age. A Race team sent in a week before was also found dead, incredibly aged over 1000 years in seven days!

The only clue her team had been able to offer prior to their going silent was that *something* had been sighted in the town... something resembling a techno-demon, yet more fearsome somehow. They were planning to in-

vestigate the sightings, but were never heard from again.

Altor can offer nothing more. If the Knights mention the name "Suricai," it will sound vaguely familiar to her, but she cannot identify it.

If the Knights have not already visited the techno-demon in Griffith Park, Altor will offer to accompany them there, as she doesn't trust any demon, rogue or not.

If the Knights have already been to see the techno-demon, their next logical step is to begin working toward the defeat of Suricai. Cut to "The Choice."

If they are off to see the techno-demon, cut to "Sunday in the Park with Gore."

Sunday in the Park with Gore

The Storm Knights arrive in Griffith Park. Read aloud or paraphrase:

The park is still and quiet. Few Los Angelenos walked through its environs at night before the war, and no one sets foot there now if they can avoid it. If the presence of the Black Diamond gang in the area were not enough, there are said to be... things... among the trees.

Let the Knights walk around for a short while, occasionally hearing strange, skittering noises ("Could be squirrels. Could be swarmrats. Who knows?") Then have them generate *find* or *Perception* totals.

On an 8, they hear the sounds of a struggle from up ahead. Around a corner of the path, they'll see a young woman at the far end of the path, being assaulted by what appear to be two ninja.

Before the Knights can take action, a winged shape streaks from the trees and smashes into the ninja, scattering them as if they were made of straw. In two swift motions, the thing tears out their throats. The woman runs off into the night.

If Altor is with the Knights, he will want to attack this techno-demon. If the Knights do attack, the techno-demon, Conag, will dodge them, but restrain himself from attacking for at least the first few rounds. Instead, he will at-



tempt to convince the Knights that he is the one they were sent to meet.

If the Knights do not attack, he will land before them, blood and gore on his claws, and identify himself. He will then ask to see the circuit board the Knights received in Venice Beach. Once he has seen that, he will speak freely.

Conag

Reality: Tharkold
DEXTERITY 12

Dodge 20, energy weapons 14, fire combat 14, flight 16 (19), melee weapons 15 (18 defense), missile weapons 16, stealth 15, unarmed combat 18 (21)

STRENGTH 17

Lifting 20

TOUGHNESS 17 (23)

PERCEPTION 10

Alteration magic 13, divination 13, find 12, first aid 11, land vehicles 12, scholar (realm lore) 15, tracking 16, trick 16

MIND 13

Apportation magic 16, conjuration magic 16, test 18, willpower 20

CHARISMA 10

Persuasion 11, taunt 16

SPIRIT 12

Faith (Tharkoldu Evil) 16, pain

weapon 17, intimidation 18, reality (Tharkold) 16

Possibilities: 3

Arcane Knowledges: darkness 2, living forces 3, entity 2

Spells: chilling darkness, foe stech, pleasure flip

Natural Tools: teeth, damage value STR+2/19; talons, non-cybered limb, damage value STR+3/20; wing strike, unarmed combat to hit, damage value STR+7/24; wings, speed value 10

Equipment: pain baton, pain weapon+3/20; Cyberware: Nanocord; balance-wires (+3 to skills using agility, noted in parentheses above); nanodoc (medicine 19); voice mimic; interdermal plate, armor value TOU+6/23; talons, enhance normal talons to damage value STR+5/22; cyberwings (+3 to push for flight, lifting while flying (cyber value 3); life-cyber; 3-slot chipholder. Cyber value: 18

Description: Conag is a rogue techno-demon who has worked at times (though uncomfortably) with the Race. He is also a student of Tharkoldu mythology.

He will help the Storm Knights, though he may ask for something in return (pick some inconsequential item the Knights are carrying with them — techno-demons value strange things).

What Conag Knows

Conag has a good deal of information of use to the Storm Knights. Listed below are some of the questions the Knights might wish to ask, and the answers Conag will give.

Q. Who or what is Suricai?

A. Suricai is the Destroyer. The Chooser of the Slain. In your mythology, the "Angel of Death." Even the Tharkoldu, who treat Death as a mistress, fear his coming — for he makes them old and weak. But he was always believed to be a myth.

Q. Why is he here?

A. If he has come to this plane, he must have been summoned. I do not know how this could have been accomplished. But I do know that our legends state if the summoner is slain, Suricai will return to his own dark region.

Q. Is there any other way he can be destroyed?

A. There is a theory — and it is only a theory, monkeys — that a weapon which could disrupt Suricai's molecular cohesion might slay him. But the components of the weapon are four, and all but one difficult to obtain. Are you prepared to face this danger to save people you do not know?

(If the Knights say yes, Conag will offer to give them a housing for the weapon.)

Q. What are the three other parts and where do we find them?

A. You will need the sensor array from a synthecycler; kerenium wire of the sort used by skats to build their nests; and the final piece is a circuit board, of a type known to be in the possession of only one techno-demon, a rogue named Krast. He makes his home in the shadows of Los Angeles' amusement park, CosmicLand.

Assemble these pieces in a way I will show you and you may challenge Suricai. But at all costs, beware his touch.

Q. Do you have any idea who might have summoned Suricai?

A. I know of no one who would be so foolish. But I have heard tales — they say the Vampyre gang has taken over a manor near Caliente (near Lancaster). It is said they know many things — more than, perhaps, are

healthy. Perhaps they may be able to help you.

If the Knights do not ask any or all of the above questions, Conag will volunteer the information. He will not offer to accompany the Knights or help further, beyond giving them the weapon housing, should they wish it. While he fears Suricai, he is confident that he would escape the notice of the Destroyer.

Conag will tell the Knights that synthcyclers have been spotted to the north, outside of the realm, and are best challenged beyond the zone of Tharkoldu reality. The same can be said for skats. He will also give them written directions on how to assemble the weapon. If the stories he has heard of Suricai's rampage are true, the Knights should waste no time in leaving the city and traveling to confront him.

Eve of Destruction

As the Knights leave the park, read or paraphrase the following:

In the distance, you hear a rumble like thunder. It is long and sustained, as if a massive storm were moving in.

Have the Knights generate *find* or *Perception* totals. On a 9, they see a figure standing atop a building, far in the distance. It is obviously a techno-demon, but it seems larger, more powerful, than any they have seen before.

The instant they see him, the rumble grows louder and the building collapses in a cloud of smoke and dust. The figure is barely visible hovering in the air, and then is gone.

(Assume that the villain has initiative here — Suricai is gone before the Knights can take an action.)

If they travel to the site of the destruction and examine the rubble, an *evidence analysis* or *Perception* total of 10 will reveal that the steel of the building fell apart due to extreme age. A *Mind* total of 10 will reveal that this particular building was only constructed one year ago.

Altor will interpret this incident to mean that Suricai knows the Knights seek him, and will be waiting in Lancaster.

The Choice

There are two paths the Knights can follow to victory: pursue the components to construct the weapon to destroy Suricai, or try to track down the person who summoned the Destroyer to Earth. Neither option is more correct than the other — it's purely the choice of the party.

It's also possible that they might choose to split up the party and pursue both. Altor, before he leaves the group to attend to his own area of responsibility, can warn against this — at half-strength, the party faces a greater risk of failing at both tasks.

Flags

If a *Connection* card is played, one of the Knights has contacts in Lancaster, whose stories mirror those of the Race scouts.

If a *Personal Stake* card is played, one of the Knights has friends in Lancaster and will be concerned with saving them in the most direct manner possible.

If a *Suspicion* card is played, one of the Knights will be convinced that the whole thing is an elaborate trap and have to be talked into going along.

If an *Idea* card is played, one of the Knights has heard rumors of a secret Tharkoldu project in the Lancaster area. His source of information (now deceased) was based in Hollywood, the home turf of the Vampyres.

Cut To ...

Once the party makes its choice, cut to the appropriate scene. If they choose to visit the Vampyres, cut to Scene Three, "Danse Macabre." If they decide to go after the synthcyclers, cut to Scene Four, "In Harm's Way." If they decide to find a skat nest, cut to Scene Six, "Just a Bird in a Gilt-Edged Cage." If they decide to go straight to the rogue Tharkoldu for the circuit board, cut to Scene Two, "Divine Madness."

Note that it is possible that the Knights might decide to go down one path, then change their minds and pursue another. This is perfectly ac-

ceptable — however, keep an eye on the time if they should shift gears.

Note also that, from Scene Two on, all action should occur outside of the Tharkold pure zone, in a Core Earth dominant zone. The Knights can't afford to waste time in Los Angeles — they need to get moving toward Lancaster.

SCENE TWO: Divine Madness

The Situation

Standard. The Knights travel to CosmicLand (see Prop 1) to seek out the rogue techno-demon, Krast, who holds a key piece of the Suricai weapon.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

CosmicLand is dark and deserted — "closed for repairs," the sign says. Actually, the bad publicity engendered by Tempest Fugitive's publication of photos showing a techno-demon stalking the park forced the owners to close down, if only temporarily. That techno-demon has since been rooted out and destroyed — but according to your source, another can be found within.

The Action

The wrought-iron fence in front of CosmicLand is padlocked (*lock picking* total of 9 to undo). Climbing the fence requires a *climbing* total of 10. The fence is three meters high. There are no alarm systems intact — the last Storm Knight group to go through here disabled them, and the owners were never apprised of that fact. Krast has added security of his own.

The techno-demon has animated the lifelike mechanical figures (the Auditrons) and fitted them with Pe-6 Ion Guns. The Auditrons will challenge any trespassers in manners befitting the "land" in which they reside (we're going for a "Westworld" feel here).

Auditrons

DEXTERITY 8

Dodge 10, energy weapons 16, stealth 10, unarmed combat 10

STRENGTH 14

Lifting 15

TOUGHNESS 15

PERCEPTION 7

Find 17, trick (16)

MIND 5

Test (18)

CHARISMA 4

Charm (25), persuasion (25), taunt (25)

SPIRIT 4

Intimidation (21)

Possibility Potential: none

Equipment: Pe-6 Ion Gun, Tech 26, damage value 23, ammo 30, range 3-10/50/100; sensor array (use *find* value).

Description: The appearance of the Auditron varies depending on which part of the park it resides in. The Westernland robots resemble gun-fighters; Natureland is "Tarzan" types; Futureland, aliens; Funland, farm animals in suits and ties; Medievalland, knights in armor; Princess Quark's Castle boasts the princess herself and her royal parents; and, of course, Horrorland is a collection of movie monsters.

The Funhouse Mirrors

The Funland Funhouse features a series of mirrors that distort the image of those who look into them (making them taller, shorter, elongating their limbs, etc.) The difference here is that Krast has placed an *alteration magic* ward on the mirrors — anyone looking into one of the mirrors is attacked by the illusory spell, which makes the Knight think his height or proportions have changed radically without changing his mass.

The Knight must be within one meter of the mirror to be affected. Compare the spell's effect value of 3 to the height value of the Knight on the Power Push Table. The result is the value by which the Knight's height increases or decreases (i.e., a result of +1 means the Knight's height increases or decreases by a value of 1 — gamemaster's choice — or one meter.)

The duration of this spell is one

hour. Being illusory, the spell can be disbelieved on a *Mind* or *willpower* total of 13.

Knights who wish to *dodge* or *maneuver* past the mirrors to avoid the spell need a total of 16 to do so.

To have some fun, let the Knights spot a few meter long insects, or perhaps a very strange dog with elongated legs and neck, before they arrive at the funhouse.

Confronting Krast

Krast is, to put it mildly, completely insane. This techno-demon is convinced that the Possibility Wars are over, and he won — designating himself as High Lord/Torg of CosmicLand. He is currently residing in the Vampyre's Keep exhibit in Horrorland.

When the Storm Knights arrive, Krast will believe them to be his own minions, returned from planting stelae. He will tell them glorious tales of how he slaughtered the other High Lords, and only wished the Gaunt Man had been around for him to smash. He will proudly display his maelstrom bridge (actually a ladder to the second floor of the exhibit) and his Darkness Device (the very circuit board the Knights are seeking)

It should rapidly become obvious that Krast is a few synapses short of jacking in — he talks to a nonexistent Jezrael, who he believes is chained to the wall, questions the Knights about events they supposedly brought about (the fiery destruction of Aysle, the vivisection of Cyberpope Malraux, etc.)

The Knights will have to tread very carefully here — they are dealing with a psychopathic monster of incredible power, who will squash them like bugs if they say the wrong thing. The Knights can attempt combat, of course, but are better off trying to *trick* or *persuade* Krast that his "Darkness Device" is in peril and needs to be relocated for safekeeping.

Krast

Reality: Tharkold

DEXTERITY 11

Dodge 19, energy weapons 13, fire combat 13, flight 15 (18), melee weapons 14 (14 defense), missile

weapons 15, stealth 14, unarmed combat 17 (20)

STRENGTH 16

Lifting 19

TOUGHNESS 16 (22)

PERCEPTION 10

Alteration magic 13, divination 13, find 12, first aid 11, land vehicles 12, scholar (realm lore) 15, tracking 16, trick 16

MIND 13

Apportation magic 16, conjuration magic 16, test 18, willpower 20

CHARISMA 10

Persuasion 11, taunt 16

SPIRIT 12

Faith (Tharkoldu Evil) 16, pain weapon 17, intimidation 18, reality (Tharkold) 16

Possibilities: 6

Arcane Knowledges: *darkness* 2, *living forces* 3, *entity* 2, *living forces* 6

Spells: *chilling darkness*, *foe stech*, *pleasure flip*

Natural Tools: teeth, damage value STR+2/18; talons, non-cybered limb, damage value STR+3/19; wing strike, *unarmed combat* to hit, damage value STR+7/23; wings, speed value 10

Equipment: pain baton, pain weapon+3/20; Cyberware: Nanocord; balance-wires (+3 to skills using agility, noted in parentheses above); nanodoc (*medicine* 19); voice mimic; interdermal plate, armor value TOU+6/23; talons, enhance normal talons to damage value STR+5/21; cyberwings (+3 to push for *flight*, *lifting* while flying (cyber value 3); life-cyber; 3-slot chipholder. Cyber value: 18

Flags

If a *Mistaken Identity* card is played, Krast will be convinced that one of the Knights is actually Dr. Mobius, being brought to him as a captive.

SCENE THREE: Danse Macabre

The Situation

Standard. The Knights travel to Caliente, the new home of a Vampyre



gang splinter group, to obtain information on who might have summoned Suricai to this plane.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

The mansion before you might have once been a showplace. Now it has gone to seed, under the tender care of the Vampyres.

There is a raucous party going on as you arrive. The front door stands open and a trio of guests languidly recline on the porch, their deathly pale faces speaking volumes about this party's "entertainment."

The figures on the porch are not vampyres — they are merely humans enthralled by the hedonistic lifestyle of the gang. They have been bitten, but still live.

If the Knights speak to any of them, they will be too befuddled to give coherent answers. They will refer the Knights to "Simon," inside.

The Knights can go right through the front door, if they wish, or they can sneak around and come in the back

(that door is shut, but unlocked). No matter how strangely they may be attired, the Knights will most likely be mistaken for guests (it's an open party).

Once inside, *evidence analysis* or *Perception* totals of 8 allow the Knights to spot the four Vampyre members. They are all clad in black, wearing silver half-moon pendants, chatting with their guests. Three of the Vampyres are male, one female. Any partygoer will point out the tallest of the males as Simon.

An *evidence analysis* total of 11 will reveal that all of the wooden furniture in the room — chairs, mostly — is covered from top to bottom with upholstery.

The Knights can, if they wish, attack, although this will not gain them the information they need. If the Knights do attack, the guests will scatter and the Vampyres will defend themselves and fight until killed. In the midst of the battle, the Huntsmen Club members will arrive and aid the Knights — cut to "Party Crashers."

If the Knights choose to converse with Simon, he will agree to hear them out. He has no great love for the Tharkoldu, although they have kept the Nippon agents too busy to harass his gang. Strangely enough, the idea of scores of people being killed in Lancaster is disturbing to him — after all, the already-dead are of no use to a vampyre.

If the Knights get a *yes* result on a *persuasion* attempt, Simon will agree to tell them what he knows. But before he can, the Huntsmen Club comes calling. Cut to "Party Crashers."

Simon

Reality: Orrorsh

DEXTERITY 12

Acrobatics 19, dodge 20, maneuver 16, running 18, stealth 19, unarmed combat 21

STRENGTH 14

TOUGHNESS 16

PERCEPTION 10

Find 13, land vehicles 11, language 16, scholar (Orrorsh) 13, trick 15

MIND 12

Streetwise 15, test 20, willpower 20

CHARISMA 12

Charm 24, persuasion 18

SPIRIT 9

Faith (Orrorsh) 16, intimidation 16, reality (Orrorsh) 16

Possibilities: 12

Natural Tools: fangs, damage value STR+2/16

Equipment: black clothing; silver jewelry

Powers: hypnotism, attack form resistance (spiritual attacks), life drain, infection

Corruption Value: 20

Weakness: severe weakness (wood)

True Deaths: Variable

Description: Simon is charming, urbane, and eminently practical. He sees the Storm Knights' arrival as a blessing in disguise: after all, if they are busily bashing on rival gangs, they're not around to interfere with Vampyre doings. (In fact, Simon moved his sect to Caliente to avoid clashes with the Night Serpents and other Vampyre-hunters.)

Standard Vampyre Ganger (3)

Reality: Orrorsh

DEXTERITY 12

Acrobatics 18, dodge 19, maneuver 16, running 18, stealth 18, unarmed combat 20

STRENGTH 14

TOUGHNESS 16

PERCEPTION 10

Find 12, land vehicles 11, language 14, scholar (Orrorsh) 12, trick 14

MIND 12

Streetwise 14, test 20, willpower 20

CHARISMA 12

Charm 23, persuasion 18

SPIRIT 9

Faith (Orrorsh) 16, intimidation 16

Additional Skills: one at +2 adds

Possibility Potential: some (18)

Natural Tools: fangs, damage value STR+2/16

Equipment: black clothing; silver jewelry

Powers: hypnotism, attack form resistance (spiritual attacks), life drain, infection

Corruption Value: 20

Weakness: severe weakness (wood)

True Deaths: Variable

Party Crashers

Reginald Mucklinston and four members of his Huntsmen Club have been tracking Simon and his Vampyres for some time. They have finally cornered him in Caliente.

If the Knights were in the process of attacking the Vampyres, the Huntsmen will side with them. If the Knights should capture Simon, they will need a *negotiated agreement* result on a *persuasion* attempt to get him to talk — he will demand to be released in exchange for telling what he knows.

If the Knights were already in conversation with Simon, they have a few options: they can join with the Huntsmen in attacking the Vampyres; they can attempt to spirit Simon out the back in the confusion and get him away from the Huntsmen; or they can join the Vampyres in fighting to drive off the Huntsmen. (There are, of course, other possible courses of action — just for the record, Mucklinston will be *hostile* to any attempt to talk him out of killing vampyres.)

Sir Reginald Mucklinston

Reality: Orrorsh

DEXTERITY 9

Beast riding 11, dodge 11, fire combat 13, melee weapons 12, unarmed combat 12

STRENGTH 10

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 12

Disguise 14, evidence analysis 18, find 16, first aid 14, scholar (Orrorsh) 17, tracking 13, trick 15

MIND 12

Test 16, willpower 15

CHARISMA 11

Persuasion 13, taunt 12

SPIRIT 12

Faith (Sacellum) 16, intimidation 16, reality (Orrorsh) 15

Possibilities: 8

Equipment: Lee-Hollings light revolver, damage value 15, ammo 6, range 3-5/10/25; Weston bolt action, damage value 17, ammo 8, range 3-60/120/250; rope; Johnston lantern, carbide, fuel, one lb.; hammer; wooden stake (damage value, when struck by hammer, STR+5/15; on its own, STR+3/13)

Standard Huntsmen Club Member (4)

Reality: Orrorsh

DEXTERITY 8

Beast riding 9, dodge 9, fire combat 10, melee weapons 10, unarmed combat 10

STRENGTH 8

TOUGHNESS 8

PERCEPTION 8

Evidence analysis 11, find 9, first aid 9, scholar (Orrorsh) 10, tracking 11, trick 9

MIND 7

Test 9, willpower 9

CHARISMA 7

SPIRIT 10

Faith (Sacellum) 12, intimidation 12

Possibility Potential: some (25)

Equipment: Lee-Hollings light revolver, damage value 15, ammo 6, range 3-5/10/25; hammer; wooden stake (damage value, when struck by hammer, STR+5/15; on its own, STR+3/13)

Simon Says

However the Knights get him to talk, Simon will tell them the following things:

- He knows nothing of the Suricai legend. This is the first he's heard of it.

- He is aware that, just before the strange events began in Lancaster, two Tharkoldu techno-demons were seen travelling with a third figure — as yet unidentified — and a fair amount of equipment north, toward Lancaster. They moved only by night — Simon believes the third figure must have been a human, for they traveled in a truck and he drove. The two techno-demons and the equipment were in the back. Where they went once past Caliente, he doesn't know.

- He is aware of a small group of Black Diamonds — the Ayslish gang — operating on the outskirts of Lancaster (they're doing something with moving pictures, though he's unsure what.) They might have more information on this matter — he tells them to look for them about two kilometers outside of town.

Variables

This can be a very simple scene for the Knights — go in, do some persuading, and walk out.

Or it might not be ...

Here's some ways to spice it up: have a Vampyre (or would-be Vampyre) approach one or more Knights and turn on the charm. There are lots of empty rooms in the house where they could retire for a quick bite, after all ...

If the Knights try to shoo away the living guests, expect the Vampyres to get irked. The Knights may politely be asked to leave, and will have to do some fast talking to get Simon's attention.

Should Simon be killed during this scene, the Knights will find on his body (*find* total of 8) a small black book, his journal. In it is recorded the information listed above.

Flags

If a *Personal Stake* card is played, one of the Knights will recognize one of the guests on the front porch. He will be determined to get her, at least, away from the Vampyres.

If a *Romance* card is played, one of the Knights will be irresistibly attracted to a Vampyre of the opposite sex.

If a *Nemesis* card is played, either Simon or Mucklinton will come to regard one of the Knights as an enemy, and may appear in future adventures.

Cut To ...

If the Knights wish to track down the Black Diamonds, cut to Scene Five, "Awake in the Dark."

SCENE FOUR: In Harm's Way

The Situation

Standard. The Storm Knights challenge the might of a synthecycler in the first part of their quest to obtain the weapon of Suricai's undoing.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

The area just outside of Los Angeles shows little evidence of the kind of devastation that can be found within the city. But it is not a situation that can be expected to last for long — the civil war in the Western Land has forced US troops to that battle front, leaving Tharkold's northern border relatively undefended. Creatures and equipment from the realm have already been spotted in the area between LA and Bakersfield.

All of this goes through your mind as you approach a small city, one apparently deserted save for the large, ominous looking machines roaring through its streets, blasting buildings into rubble and then consuming the remains.

The Knights have reached the city of Rosamund, a veritable ghost town where synthecyclers have begun wholesale destruction to gather more resources for the Tharkoldu. The ones spotted by the Knights are medium synthecycler. They are roughly 150 meters away from them when they spot them.

The Knights have some options available to them. There are bushes nearby that can provide soft cover partial concealment, and a large billboard whose framework could be scaled (*climbing* difficulty of 5, one round needed) that would provide soft cover and medium concealment.

The Knights might also choose to split up and come into the town from another direction (see Map 1).

Whatever the Knights choose to do, they must generate *stealth* totals periodically as they go, or risk being detected by the synthecyclers. (Difficulty is 18). If they are detected, the synthecyclers will start moving toward them and firing. (So one Storm Knight could conceivably lure a device into an ambush.)

The control circuitry for the sensor array is inside the synthecycler — a machine will have to be "killed" for the Knights to obtain what they need.

Medium Synthecycler (3)

Reality: Tharkold

DEXTERITY 9

Energy weapons 18

STRENGTH 19

TOUGHNESS 14 (22)

PERCEPTION 11

Find 18, land vehicles 12, trick (25)

MIND 11

Survival 13, UltraCAD 13, test (30)

CHARISMA 0

SPIRIT 0

Possibility Potential: none

Note: Synthecyclers cannot be charmed, persuaded, taunted, or intimidated

Equipment: pulse-lasers, damage value 24, range 3-25/100/150; over-run attack, damage value 23; Integral Chod/8 armor, value TOU+8/22; sensor array (auditory, infrared, magnetic field, radar, seismic and visual sensors. Use *find* value for any of these forms). Tracked, speed value 11; hover, speed value 13

Description: The medium synthecycler is two meters long by two meters tall and 125 centimeters wide. It resembles an inverted trash dumpster, accompanied by the same sort of smells.

The lasers can fire at anything more than three meters away. They fire in a 45-degree arc, and so cannot necessarily hit a target less than three meters from the synthecycler. A character within the three meter range who makes a successful *maneuver* against the synthecycler cannot be hit by the lasers in that round.

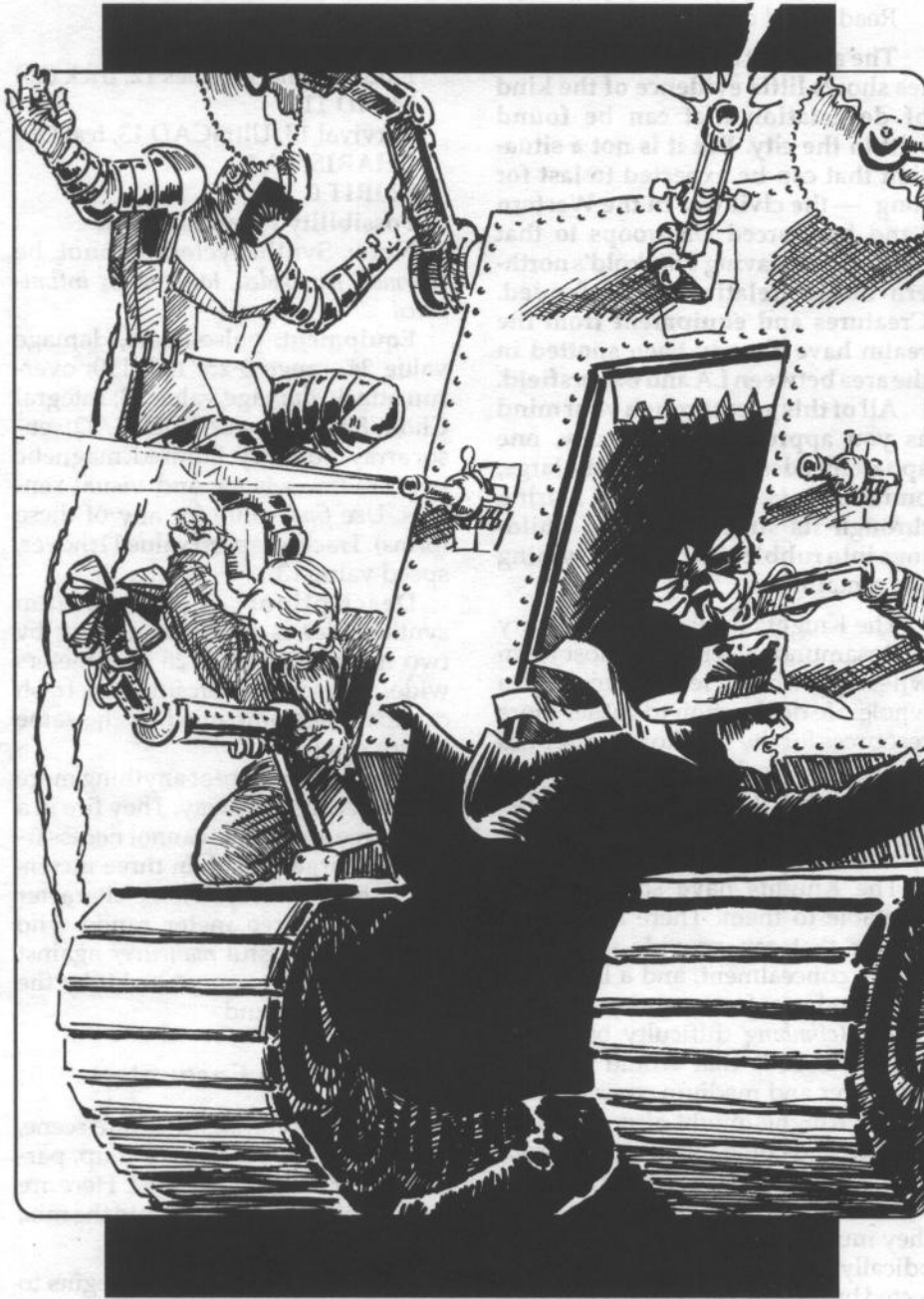
Random Encounters

This is a very straightforward scene, but you may wish to spice it up, particularly if it's going too fast. Here are some events you can toss into the mix, if you so choose:

- A chimney crumbles and begins to topple toward one of the Knights. Have him generate a *Perception* total (DN 10) — if he fails, some bricks hit him, doing damage value 18.) Perhaps one of his comrades spots the chimney falling and has to save his friend.

- In the midst of the battle, the Knights hear a scream. A woman is about to be crushed by a tumbling wall. She is roughly three meters from the nearest Knight. The Knights have one round to act.

- A group of four Ord looters (all attributes 8) armed with shotguns



(damage value 17, range 3-15/25/40) arrive to plunder the town. They have *dodge* of 9 and *fire combat* of 10.

- Fires reach a gas station and blow it up. Flames and smoke rapidly spread throughout the area — have the Knights generate *Toughness* rolls (DN 8) to avoid taking a *fatigue* result from the smoke. Increase the difficulty of actions involving vision by +3 due to smoke.

Flags

If an *Idea* card is played, one of the Knights gets an idea regarding the firing arc of the synthecycler (summarize the last paragraph of the synthecycler description).

Cut To ...

If the Knights have obtained the sensor array, let them move on to the

next step in their quest. If they are going after the skats, cut to Scene Six; the rogue Tharkoldu, Scene Two; Suricai himself, Scene Eight.

If they prefer to seek out the Vampyre gang, cut to Scene Three.

SCENE FIVE: Awake in the Dark

The Situation

Standard. The Knights encounter the Black Diamonds, and suddenly find themselves a small part of California's most famous industry.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

The air is cooler in the foothills north of Caliente. From somewhere above you, you can hear someone shouting in a strange language.

An Ayslish character who generates a *Mind* total of 8 will recognize the language as that spoken by elves. A *Superior* success on this check will allow the Knight to tell that the speaker is cursing.

As the Knights watch, first one, then a small knot of Ayslish elves appear. They are arguing with one who is holding a video camera, which apparently no longer works. The Knights see one seize the camera, which suddenly comes back to life (the original cameraman had disconnected — he'll reconnect in the next round).

If the Knights wish to remain hidden (*stealth* totals of 13), they can follow the elves back to where they are filming. If they should be spotted, or simply approach the elves, the Diamonds will at first react with some trepidation. If the Knights explain why they are here, the elves will begin whispering to one another, and then make the heroes an offer: they will share what they know about this business, if the Knights will consent to make an appearance in their film.

If the Knights say no, the elves will haughtily dismiss them. The Knights can attack if they wish, but it will serve little purpose, and may get them killed. It would be possible to *intimidate* the information out of one of the elves, but

there's no guarantee it would be the truth.

If the Knights agree to help out with the movie, cut to "Cut — and Slash and Rip and Tear."

Standard Black Diamond (8)

Reality: Aysle

DEXTERITY 12 (9)

Dodge 15, fire combat 13, maneuver 13, melee weapons 13, missile weapons 13, stealth 13, unarmed combat 13

STRENGTH 8

TOUGHNESS 8

PERCEPTION 12 (9)

Find 13, scholar (film lore) 13, tracking 13, trick 13

MIND 8

Alteration magic 15, streetwise 9, test 9

CHARISMA 7

Charm 9, persuasion 9

SPIRIT 8

Intimidation 9

Additional Skills: two at +1 adds

Arcane Knowledges: inanimate forces 4, fire 3

Possibility Potential: some (45)

Equipment: elf longsword, damage value STR+8/16; MAC 10, damage value 18, ammo 10, range 3-15/25/50

Description: The Black Diamonds are an elfen gang who came to California hoping to break into the movies. Having had no luck as yet, they have decided to try and make their own films (low-budget, of course).

The Diamonds feel certain that all Hollywood moguls are afflicted with insanity, since they do not recognize the obvious talent of the elves. They are extremely conceited and arrogant.

Cut — and Slash and Rip and Tear

The Black Diamonds lead the Knights over a rise, where they see a beautiful young woman chained to a rock. (She is a Core Earther from a nearby town, who jumped at the chance to make it big in the movies.) The Knights are supposed to essentially play themselves, wandering heroes who happen upon the helpless

maid and free her from her captivity. The "director" will hand the Knights their script (give out Prop 2) and, as the video camera rolls, shout "Action." The Knights enter the clearing where the woman is and read from the script.

Just as the Knights reach the end of the page, one of the elves scurries out on his hands and knees and hands one of the Knights Prop 3, the latest rewrite. He whispers that the Knight should read the lines on it.

As soon as these lines are read, three werewolves appear, springing out from behind a rock and attacking the Knights. The director shouts that the Knights should subdue the werewolves and save the girl (although, in truth, the Black Diamonds couldn't care less who wins the battle, as long as it's good cinema).

The chains binding the girl require a *Strength* total of 23 to break. The cuffs can be *lock picked* with a total of 10. If the Knights defeat the werewolves without setting the girl free, the Black Diamonds will free her as soon as the director yells "Cut." (The woman, at this point, will have changed her mind about this particular film crew and asks the Knights to take her away from here. The Diamonds will grumble a bit, but let her go — would-be starlets are a dime a dozen out here, after all).

The Knights do not have to kill the werewolves to end the combat — just knock them unconscious so the woman can be rescued. Then the Black Diamonds will hold up their end of the deal and tell what they know. Cut to "What the Elf Saw."

Werewolf (3)

Reality: Aysle (transformed)

DEXTERITY 12

Dodge 13, maneuver 18, running 14, stealth 13, unarmed combat 18

STRENGTH 12

TOUGHNESS 17

PERCEPTION 11

Tracking 12

MIND 6

Test 9, willpower 17

CHARISMA 5

Taunt 8 (12)

SPIRIT 10

Faith (Orrorsh) 15, intimidation 12, reality (Aysle) 11

Possibilities: 2

Natural Tools: claws, damage value

STR+2/13; teeth, damage value STR+10/22

Description: The Black Diamonds captured these former member of the Wolfpack and reality stormed them to Aysle long ago. No longer able to rely on the Power of Fear, the werewolves have learned to rely on their wits and their claws to see them through.

They is not happy with their current situation.

What the Elf Saw

The Black Diamonds are aware that two Tharkoldu and a Race specialist passed through this area on their way to Lancaster some time ago. They don't know where they went to, but they did hear one of the Tharkoldu speak of Sterret's "newest weapon against monkey Storm Knights." Apparently, there were plans to test this weapon in Lancaster.

The Diamonds had originally been planning to film their movie in that town, but their "studio" was wrecked by a massive Tharkoldu, whose touch caused the entire building to collapse. One of the Diamonds had attempted to cast a lightning spell against the intruder, but it was ineffective — somehow, its duration had expired before it could reach the enemy.

The only other piece of information they can offer is that there is a cave about a kilometer to the north, one they have learned to avoid. They are unsure just what may be in there, but two of their number went to scout it for a possible location shoot and didn't come back. Perhaps this is where the Tharkoldu and their weapon can be found?

Flags

If a *Personal Stake* card is played, one of the Knights is acquainted with the female "captive."

If a *Romance* card is played, the woman will fall in love with one of her male rescuers.

If a *Suspicion* card is played, one of the Knights will suspect that the woman is really a Delphi Council agent, and the whole situation is a plot to test the Storm Knights' abilities.

Variables

If the Knights refuse to participate in the movie, and instead beat or intimidate the elves into talking, they will tell them of the cave, but that's all they'll tell them.

If the Knights kill the werewolf, the elves might make some fuss about it — i.e., "Oh, that was marvelous! Now where are we going to get another werewolf?" "Don't quit your day jobs!" and "I don't think you're ready for the big screen. Maybe you should try daytime television."

SCENE SIX: Out, Out, Damned Skat!

The Situation

Standard. The Knights confront a quartet of skats in their efforts to obtain some kerenium wire.

The Knights do not have to travel far to find skats. As they travel north, they will hear a sonic boom. A *find* or *Perception* total of 8 will reveal that four skats, in formation, have flown by, on their way west.

As the Knights walk, they will pass a stream of refugees heading east, hoping to take advantage of the collapse of some Living Land zones (as the Delphi Council has installed a new version of the "Homestead Act"). If they ask any of these people why they are leaving, they will explain that metallic birds have been preying upon them from a nest atop the Mills Building. It has finally reached a point where they can take it no more.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

The Mills Building is not difficult to spot — it's the highest in the area, a natural site for a skat nest. The signs identifying the various companies making their offices there are battered and worn. Windows are broken throughout the building. The outer walls are covered with burn marks where the skats were evidently practicing their strafing runs.

The skat nest can be spotted on the roof of the building from a distance, a

pile of metallic items bound together by wire, gleaming in the sun.

There are a number of ways the Knights can reach the roof. A fire escape leads up the building — taking these stairs is a simple action, and it will take four rounds to reach the top (start flipping cards the minute the Knights set foot on the escape, just to make them nervous — have them generate *stealth* totals, etc.)

A *lock picking* or *Dexterity* total of 9 will get the Knights through the front or back doors of the building. The interior of the building is dark, dusty and smells of rotting meat. The elevators are not working, but there is a staircase leading to the roof. The roof door requires a *DEX* or *lock picking* total of 10 to open.

If the Knights to take the interior stairs, scare the hell out of them. Go into rounds, have them make *stealth* rolls, tell them they hear noises. Roll dice behind your gamemaster screen for no reason and frown thoughtfully. Make them sweat every step of the way.

Just as the Knights reach the roof, the skats return — have them generate sonic booms, as detailed below. The Knights need to get some of the wire (only about a meter's worth) from the nest to accomplish their mission here — removing the wire requires a *Dexterity* total of 9.

The skats, of course, are outraged that someone is violating their nest. If the Knights are escaping down the fire escape, the skats will strafe them as they climb. If they go down the interior stairs, expect one skat to blow the roof door off its hinges and fly down after them. The other three will wait until they emerge from the building and go after them.

If the Knights can kill two of the skats, the other two will break off the attack.

Skats (4)

Reality: Tharkold

DEXTERITY 13

Dodge 16, energy weapons 16, flight 17, maneuver 17, stealth 15, unarmed combat 14

STRENGTH 8

TOUGHNESS 6 (15)

PERCEPTION 9

Find 25, trick 10 (15)

MIND 9

Survival 12, test (15)

CHARISMA 3

Taunt (20)

SPIRIT 6

Intimidation (25)

Possibility Potential: none

Natural Tools: strafe dodge 26; sonic boom, damage value 18, blast radius 10/25/40; internal laser, damage value 22, range 3-25/60/250; talons, damage value STR+3/11; interwoven metal-composite armor, value TOU+9/15. Speed value 19

Description: Skats are gleaming mechanical predators that look like small rocket-powered pterodactyls. Skats have great eyesight and their eyes change from amber to red when they are hunting.

Skats soften up foes by flying low overhead, in formation, at Mach 1.4, causing a sonic boom. When doing this, the skat uses its speed value as its *dodge* value. Record the damage total of the sonic boom. The boom deafens all characters within its blast radius. To hear any sound other than severe ringing in the ears, a character must generate a *Perception* total equal to or greater than the damage total of the sonic boom. The deafness lasts for 10 rounds or until the character makes the successful *Perception* check. The effects of sonic boom runs are not cumulative — a second run will not deafen the characters for 20 rounds, etc.

The skats then break into two groups for strafing runs. A strafing skat uses its *strafing dodge* value to avoid return fire. It shoots at targets with no penalty. After a strafing attack, a skat must spend a round getting back into position for another attack. Skats may not make sonic boom runs and strafing attacks in the same round.

Skats can be tricked by wounded characters into landing to feast too early. If the character is not suffering from at least a *wound* condition, the skat's senses pick up the deception. If the character is wounded, a successful *trick* that stymies the skats gets them to land to begin feasting early. If the character is not at least *wounded*, the skat's sense pick up the deception. If the character is hurt, a successful *trick* that

stymies the skats gets them to land to investigate. A *setback* gets them to land and *stymies* the skats, while a player's call gets them to land and hands them a *setback*.

Flags

If an *Idea* or *Alertness* card is played, one of the Knights guesses the information in the paragraph above.

SCENE SEVEN: Doom, Thy Name is Legion

The Situation

Standard. The Knights travel to the cave mentioned by the Black Diamonds, only to find something infinitely more bizarre than Tharkoldu within.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

The cavern extends well back into the mountainside. There is no sign of Tharkoldu presence here, but you can see light coming from deep inside.

The Knights can approach the cave by whatever means they wish. If they enter, have them periodically generate *stealth* totals. On a 16 or better, they go unheard — failure means the occupants of the cave hear them and will be prepared for their arrival.

The cave currently serves as the headquarters of Dr. Destruction and the Legion of Doom, members of the LA-based gang of the same name. Having obtained an eternity shard (the Eye of Horus) while in the Nile Empire, they are using its group power — *create hardpoint* — to invest ankhs with Nile reality. They are then using these ankhs as talismans (for reasons noted below).

As the Knights move through the cavern (it will take them three rounds to reach the Legion's base), have them generate *find* or *Perception* totals. A 9 allows them to hear voices from up ahead — human voices, by the sound

of them. Periodically, there is a peal of mad laughter.

As they round a bend, they see a figure blocking their path. An *evidence analysis* or *Perception* total of 8 will reveal that it appears to be a statue of an elf, made of glass. The elf has a look of terror on his face. (This is, in truth, one of the two Black Diamonds sent to scout this area. *Detect magic* rites will be useless here — he was transformed using weird science.)

When the Knights reach the cavern proper, they will see six men and women clad in outlandish costumes. Hoods, scarves and goggles obscure their features, and they wear something that looks like a combination long underwear and radiation suit. One holds a red and blue gem about the size of a fist, and the others are emptying crates filled with gold ankh symbols.

In the far corner is another elf "statue," this one made of blue cheese. The elf's right arm is missing — as the Knights watch, one of the Nile villains scrapes off a portion of the elf's left arm and spreads it on a cracker.

The Knights can, if they wish to, barge right in — if they attack, the Legion will fight back. The Knights could also attempt to persuade them that they're here to help, or simply lost (Legion members are *hostile* to such attempts).

Whether or not the Knights are captured; victorious; arrange an information exchange; or simply stay outside the cave and listen, they will get to hear Dr. Destruction's master plan.

The Elements of Doom

Dr. Destruction's master plan is fiendishly simple:

The Legion of Doom has succeeded in constructing an elemental transmutation gun (currently housed in Los Angeles). The condition of the elves is a result of an on-site test of the device.

The Legion is currently creating Nile hardpoints which will be used as talismans and deposited in various locations in Los Angeles and points north (the Golden Gate Bridge, etc.) If the Legion's demands are not met, the

gun will be used on these locations, turning the bridge to glass and Catalina Island to tapioca. (They haven't begun yet because the Legion has yet to decide what they'll be demanding.)

Note that the talismans project a Nile pure zone in a 1.5-meter radius, and a Nile dominant zone in a 3-meter radius.

The only possible hitch in the plan was the presence nearby of a pair of Tharkoldu and one of their Race slaves, testing a weapon of their own in Lancaster. The Legion dislikes and fears the Tharkoldu, and the mass destruction in Lancaster made it impossible to do a fair test of the elemental transmutation gun. That's why the gun was shipped back to Los Angeles.

Having heard this, the Knights may decide to smash this nest of rats. Let them, if they wish — the quest for the gun could become a future adventure.

If they simply wish to get the information on the Tharkoldu, the Legion will provide it to them, then ask for something in exchange. When the Knights ask what, the Legion members will fall to squabbling among themselves: "They could deliver the ransom note to the governor"; "200,000 pounds of uranium — the good kind, not that cheap stuff Kanawa uses"; "galley proofs of the *Six Realms* game"; etc. (This would be a good time for the Knights to make their escape.)

Doom Deductions

Yes, the Legion members did see the Tharkoldu and the Race specialist arrive in the area — they proceeded into Lancaster. One of their number, since transferred to LA, followed them using an invisibility belt. They had holed up in a warehouse, but they have since transferred their operations to the basement of the mayor's home.

They are unsure of the nature of the weapon, but believe it must have had results the Tharkoldu did not intend. For instance, when they first arrived, the techno-demons ordered the Race slave about — now they seem to obey him. And, of course, there's the devastation in Lancaster — normally, Tharkoldu activities are subtle, designed not to draw the attention of the Core Earthers.



Dr. Destruction**Reality:** Nile Empire**DEXTERITY 10**

Dodge 13, energy weapons 15, fire combat 13, maneuver 11, melee weapons 14, stealth 11, unarmed combat 12

STRENGTH 10**TOUGHNESS 11****PERCEPTION 14**

Air vehicles 15, evidence analysis 17, find 16, land vehicles 17, trick 16, water vehicles 16

MIND 12

Science (chemistry) 15 14, test 15

CHARISMA 10

Charm 13, persuasion 14, taunt 15

SPIRIT 9

Intimidation 14, reality (Nile Empire) 13

Possibilities: 6**Powers:** grow (value 17; substitute this value for *Strength* — *Toughness* increases to 18); physical attacks against a character using this power are increased by +5)**Equipment:** Eye of Horus (+3 to sight-based, *Perception*-related skills); steel bullwhip, damage value STR+3/20**Standard Legion of Doom Member (5)****Reality:** Nile Empire**DEXTERITY 7**

Dodge 8, energy weapons 9, fire combat 9, maneuver 8, stealth 10

STRENGTH 7**TOUGHNESS 7****PERCEPTION 9**

Air vehicles 10, evidence analysis 12, find 12, land vehicles 10, trick 13, water vehicles 10

MIND 10

Science 14, test 11

CHARISMA 8**SPIRIT 8**

Intimidation 10

Additional Skills: two at +2 adds**Possibility Potential:** some (40)**Equipment:** Colt .45 revolver, Tech 19, damage value 16, ammo 6, range 3-10/40/60**Description:** The Legion of Doom members are not hardened warriors, but carry some extremely dangerous toys. They are bush-league Mobius' — techno-geeks with unimpressive physiques and the capacity to be very, very dangerous.**Eye of Horus****Cosm:** Nile Empire**Possibilities:** 50**Tapping Difficulty:** 14**Purpose:** To revive the glories of ancient Egypt**Powers:** Wielders of the Eye of Horus receive a +3 bonus to all sight-based, *Perception*-related skills**Group Power:** Create hardpoint**Restrictions:** The shard's group power may only be used to create Nile hardpoints, out of objects intimately connected to ancient Egypt**Variables**If the Knights should kill Dr. Destruction and his henchmen before getting the relevant information, they can find a copy of the report he was preparing for Mobius, hidden in a copy of *Spicy Mystery Tales*, with a *find* total of 9.**Flags**If a *Mistaken Identity* card is played, Dr. Destruction will mistake the Knights for disguised Legion of Doom members, sent from LA to help with the project.**Cut To ...**

When the Knights have the information on the techno-demon's location, cut to Scene Eight, "Fearful Symmetry."

**SCENE EIGHT:
Fearful Symmetry****The Situation****Dramatic.** The Knights travel to the home of the mayor of Lancaster, only to find a fearsome welcoming committee.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

Lancaster is a disaster area. Fires burn unchecked throughout the

town, buildings lie in rubble. Down the street you can see what might have once been a warehouse, crushed as if by a giant hand.

The only structure seemingly untouched is a two-story house up on a hill at the far end of town.

The Action

The house the Knights are viewing is the late mayor's home, whose basement is currently serving as headquarters for Ralnet, the Race specialist, and his two techno-demons.

The Knights can approach the house in any way they wish. (See the Mayor's Home map.) Note that the basement has no windows, therefore the Knights will not be able to immediately spot the Tharkoldu presence.

The front door is unlocked. The back door is locked, and requires a *lock picking* total of 10 to open.**The Entry Hall**The first thing the Knights notice is a horrible stench. Have them generate *Toughness* rolls against a difficulty number of 9. Failure means they take a shock point.

On a table in the hallway, a small framed photograph sits. The picture shows a smiling, middle-aged man, his attractive wife and their beautiful 20-year old daughter.

The Living RoomThis room is dark, and the smell is more powerful here (no *Toughness* roll is needed, however). A *find* or *Perception* total of 7 will reveal the source of the smell: a dead body is affixed to the wall with a dagger. It is the man in the photo, although he has been dead for some time. His body was ripped open from throat to crotch, and a tremendous amount of dried blood stains the rug at his feet.The weapon is a Tharkoldu monofilament dagger (Tech 26, damage value STR+4/18). A *Strength* total of 10 is required to pull the dagger out of the wall.

The Dining Room

There is nothing of note here.

The Second Floor

When the Knights reach the top of the stairs to the second floor, they hear a pathetic human cry. Suddenly, they are assailed by an ancient woman, crying hysterically. She is not actually attempting to hurt the Knights, but she is badly frightened.

A *persuasion* total of 9 will calm her sufficiently for her to reveal that she is Caroline, Mayor Zimmer's 20 year old daughter, now aged by Suricai. She can warn the Knights that the techno-demons and the Race scientist are somewhere around, but she does not know where. When they first seized the house and killed her parents (yes, Mom's dead, too), she overheard "the human one" talking. Caroline can now give the Knights the background on the machine and Suricai's creation, as covered in the "Adventure Background," above.

There is nothing of note in any of the rooms upstairs.

The Kitchen

The kitchen is a slaughterhouse. The mayor's wife was torn to pieces in here by the Tharkoldu and dried blood and scattered body parts litter the room.

An *evidence analysis* of *Perception* total of 10 reveals scratches in the walls, as if something metallic had been scraped against them.

The kitchen also features a back entrance (*lock picking* total of 9 to open) and a door to the basement.

Basement Stairs

If the Knights open the door to the basement stairs, they will see that all is pitch black down there. On a *Perception* total of 9, they'll hear a slight hum, as of a machine — perhaps a generator — in operation.

If the Knights shine a light down, they'll see that the stairs curve down at the bottom. They cannot see into the basement proper from where they are. A *find* or *Perception* total of 14 will

allow them to hear a whirring sound, like servo-motors in operation, coming from below.

If the Knights start down the stairs, have the lead Knight generate a *find* total. On a 12, he spots a techno-demon beneath the staircase. If he reacts to this in any way, the techno-demon bursts up through the stairs and attacks.

If he fails the *find* roll, the techno-demon waits until he has passed, then reaches up through the space between stairs, grabs his ankles and hurls him down the steps.

If the Knights look down the basement steps, then think better of it and close the door, the techno-demon bursts through the door and attacks in the next round.

Unless the Knights actually reach the basement floor, the second and third techno-demon will not become involved in this combat.

The Basement

The basement is littered with tables and piles of empty crates. On the east side is a large machine (Toughness 26) that is responsible for drawing Suricai to Earth. It is being operated by a Race slave specialist, who will fight to protect the machine.

If the first techno-demon has been killed or otherwise disposed of, the other demons will conceal themselves in the basement and spring out on the Knights. Have them generate *stealth* totals against the highest *find* in the party.

Destroying the Creator

Should the Knights succeed in "killing" the machine, the Race specialist and techno-demons will still try to kill them. Since the machine maintains the link between Suricai and the Race specialist, it will eliminate the "Angel of Death's" threat.

Should the Knights kill the Race slave specialist, that will also end Suricai's threat.

If you wish to juice up the ending a little, cut to "Variables."

Tharkoldu Techno-Demons (2)

Reality: Tharkold

DEXTERITY 10

Dodge 14, energy weapons 14, fire combat 12, flight 15 (18), melee weapons 12 (15 defense), missile weapons 12, stealth 11, unarmed combat 15 (18)

STRENGTH 16

Lifting 18

TOUGHNESS 16 (21)

PERCEPTION 10

Alteration magic 13, divination magic 13, find 14 (17), first aid 11, land vehicles 12, tracking 14, trick 12

MIND 11

Apportation magic 14, conjuration magic 14, test 15, willpower 15

CHARISMA 9

Persuasion 11, taunt 13

SPIRIT 11

Faith (Cult of the Dominant) 16, intimidation 16, reality (Tharkold) 15

Possibilities: 5

Arcane Knowledges: folk +3, entity +3, inanimate forces +2, living forces +2, darkness +2

Spells: monkey form, pleasure flip, pain flip, chilling darkness

Natural Tools: teeth, damage value STR+2/18; talons, non-cybered limb, damage value STR+3/19; wing strike, unarmed combat to hit, damage STR+7/23; wings, speed value 10

Equipment: Nanocord; windsniffer (+3 to *Perception* or *find* skills using smell, as noted above; balance-wires (+3 to skills using agility, noted in parentheses above); interdermal plate, armor value TDU+5/21; talon, enhance normal talons to STR+5/21; cyberwings (+3 to push for *flight*, *lifting* while flying); life cyber; 3-slot chipholder. Cyber value: 16

Description: These two techno-demons were assigned to watch over Ralnet. When Suricai was inadvertently summoned and bound to Ralnet, the Angel of Death ordered the two demons to serve the Race Specialist. Fearing the wrath of the entity more than that of Sterret, the techno-demons have complied.

Ralnet

Reality: Tharkold

DEXTERITY 10

Dodge 14, fire combat 14, presti-

digitation 11, running 11, unarmed combat 15

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 12

Find 13, trick 13 (16)

MIND 10

Test 12, willpower 12

CHARISMA 9

Taunt 10 (15)

SPIRIT 10

Occulttech 17, reality 12

Possibilities: 4

Equipment: slave collar; 11/Alph Automatic, Tech 25, damage value 16, ammo 21, range 3-10/30/50

Description: Ralnet's encounter with Suricai left him mad. He plans to destroy this world using the Tharkoldu Angel of Death, and then return to his home cosm and destroy that, as well.

Variables

If the adventure is running short, or the Knights seem to have had it too easy, introduce the following variable:

When the machine explodes, it kills Ralnet, or, when Ralnet dies, he crashes into the machine and it explodes. The feedback draws from his mind the things he most fears and manifests them — quon, the frighteningly efficient killing machines from the Tharkold cosm. They will immediately attack the Knights and will fight on until destroyed.

Quon (2)

Reality: Tharkold

DEXTERITY 8

Dodge 13, maneuver 13, running 15, unarmed combat 14

STRENGTH 14

TOUGHNESS 17 (26)

PERCEPTION 9

Find 15, trick 10 (15)

MIND 6

Test (15), willpower 9

CHARISMA 3

Taunt (18)

SPIRIT 6

Possibility Potential: none

Natural Tools: pincers, damage value STR+5/19; coring-tail, damage value STR+8/22; interwoven metal-composite armor, value TOU+9/26. Running speed 10

Description: The quon's quick axion system gives the quon a second chance at any failed *Dexterity* or *Perception*-based action. Other than the attribute restrictions, the ability is identical to the *second chance* card. The quon rolls again only if the first action fails.

The liquid metal blood and repair systems allow the creature to generate a repair total from a repair value of 26. Compare the total to the quon's *Toughness* and read the result points on the Combat Results Table. The quon repairs that much damage from the total amount taken so far. The repair action may be performed as part of a multi-action, the quon making the repair the primary action.

Aftermath

If the Knights have managed to end Suricai's presence on Earth, they will find when they return above that Caroline has been restored to her natural age. She has been through her moment of crisis and is now a Storm Knight, and will announce her intentions to join with Tempest Fugitive in Los Angeles.

Race agents will contact the Knights over the next few weeks and reward them for their services with weapons and equipment (gamemaster's discretion).

Cut to "Adventure Awards."

SCENE NINE: Age Isn't So Bad, When You Consider the Alternative

The Situation

Dramatic. As soon as the Storm Knights have all the pieces of the weapon, Suricai appears.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

Suddenly, you feel a chill like death in your bones. A building not far from where you stand collapses into rubble, and through the smoke and dust, you see a massive figure

that can only be Suricai approaching.

The Action

It will take Suricai one round to reach the Knights. That gives them one round to say their prayers.

Putting the weapon together is a three-step use of Dramatic Skill Resolution (ABC). A *Mind* or *science* skill total of 11 is required to get the parts together in the proper manner. In the meantime, the Knights will have to fight off the angry "Angel of Death."

Suricai should be played like a force of nature — cold, cruel, but not good or evil by his own standards. It literally lives to destroy — that is the reason for its existence. More than likely, it will not speak during the battle — simply eliminate the Knights as swiftly and efficiently as possible.

The weapon, when completed, will do damage value 22 to Suricai. Note that this is read against his parenthetical *Toughness*. Suricai must suffer four wounds to be killed — the scene ends when either Suricai or the Knights are dead.

When Suricai suffers damage from the weapon, it will have all the standard game effects. But there will be no visible effect on Suricai until the fourth wound is suffered (this way the Knights don't know for certain if the weapon is working on him or not).

Molecular Dispersal Rifle

Tech 26, damage value 22 (effective against Suricai only), ammo 50, range 3-25/50/100

Suricai

Reality: Tharkold

DEXTERITY 14

Flight 18, maneuver 17, melee weapons 16, stealth 19, unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 23

TOUGHNESS 30 (9)

PERCEPTION 17

Alteration magic 25, evidence analysis 19, find 20, tracking 18, trick 18

MIND 18

Apportation 25, test 20, willpower 21

CHARISMA 9

Charm (18), persuasion (20), taunt (12)



SPIRIT 18

Faith (Cult of the Dominant) 28, intimidation 25, reality (Tharkold) 27

Possibilities: 10

Arcane Knowledges: *entity 7*

Spells: *horrifying arrival, pop*

Equipment: none; note that Suricai has no cyberware, having come from a time before the collapse of the Magic axiom. His current axioms, however, are those of the Tharkold cosm, having sprung from the minds of the two techno-demons.

Natural Tools: Suricai has both an aging field and an aging touch. If Suricai causes a *wound* or better result with an *unarmed combat* attack, his aging touch causes the target character's *Dexterity*, *Strength* and *Toughness*, and all related skills, to drop by -1. These attributes will return to normal if Suricai is destroyed.

The aging field extends three millimeters from his body — it will affect weapons, magic spells, miracles, etc. directed against them. The field effectively ages the weapon 300 years — a spell or miracle will find its duration expired long before it can strike him. A metallic weapon will oxidize and collapse to dust, etc. This field does not affect living tissue, so *unarmed combat* attacks can be made against him without undue fear.

The parenthetical *Toughness* value is his resistance to the special weapon constructed by the Storm Knights.

Aftermath

If Suricai should be killed by the weapon, read or paraphrase the following:

You hear a piercing sound, some-

where between a hum and a wail of horror. Before your eyes, Suricai's form begins to waver and break up, his atoms slowly drifting away from each other. Soon, his original shape is no longer discernible; soon, even the screaming stops.

The Tharkoldu "Angel of Death" is himself dead.

Race agents will contact the Knights over the next few weeks and reward them for their services with weapons and equipment (gamemaster's discretion).

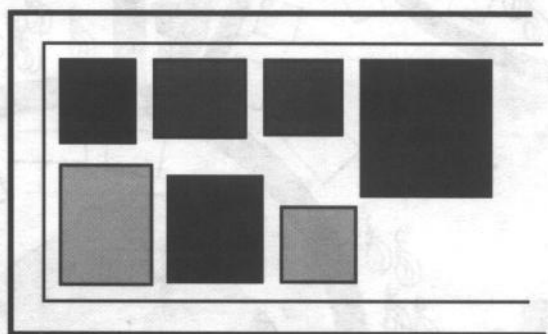
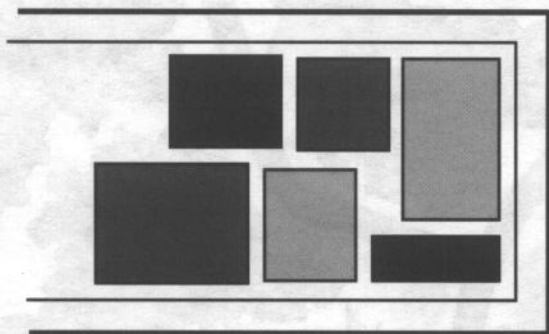
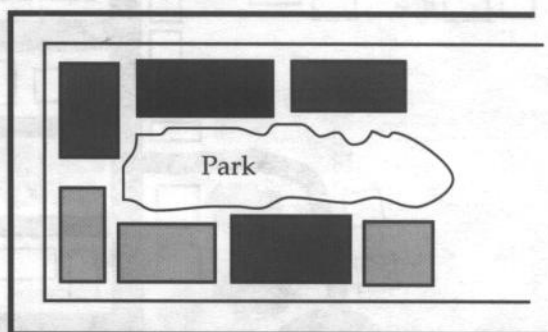
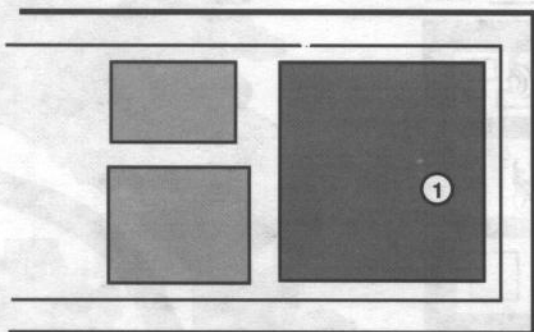
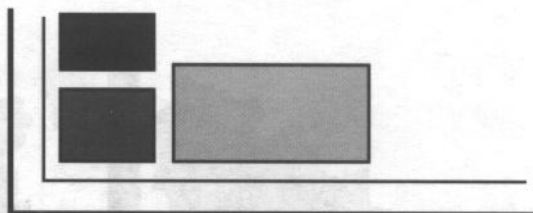
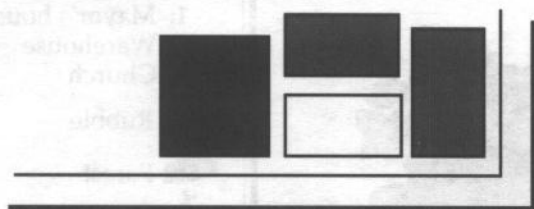
Cut to "Adventure Awards."

Adventure Awards

Award the Knights nine Possibilities for successfully completing this adventure.



Hell On Earth: Map 1 **The Synthecycler Area**



Key

- 1. Warehouse
- 2. Synthecycler



Storm Knights' Approach



Hell on Earth: Map 2 Lancaster

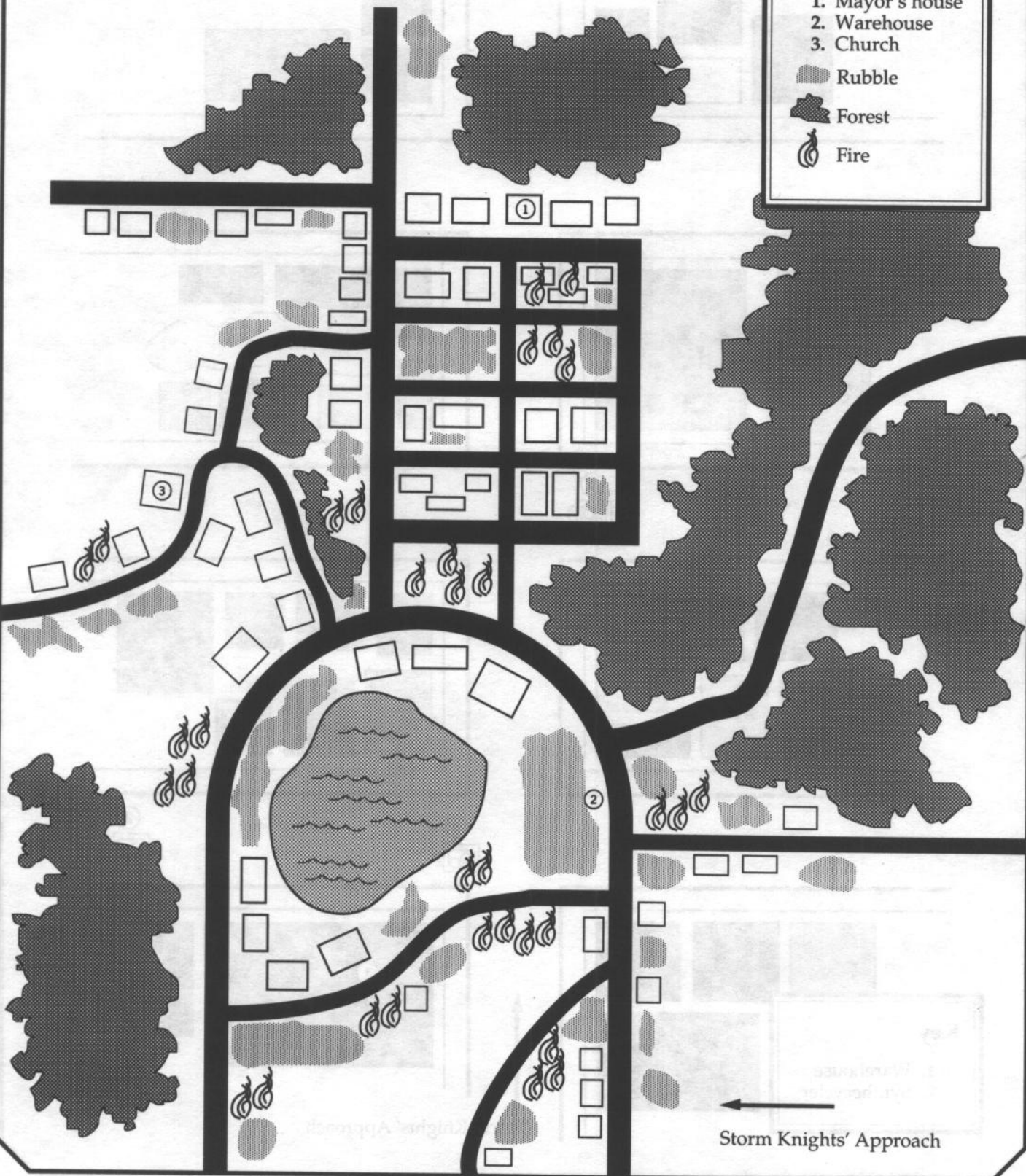
Key

1. Mayor's house
2. Warehouse
3. Church

Rubble

Forest

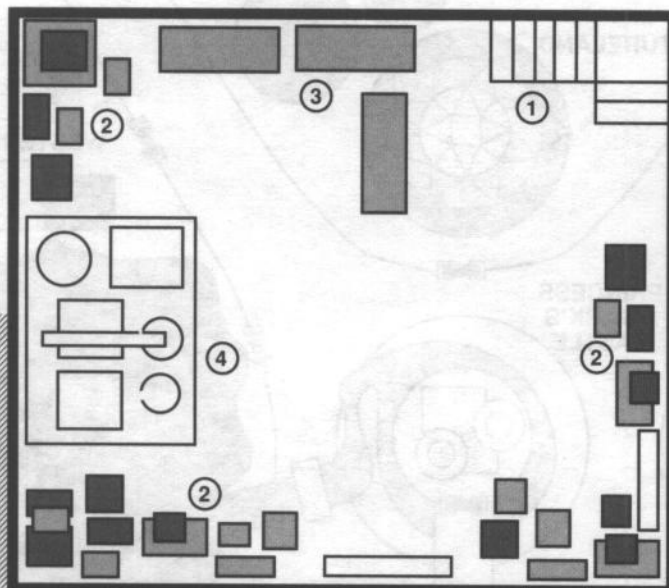
Fire





Hell on Earth: Map 3

The Mayor of Lancaster's House

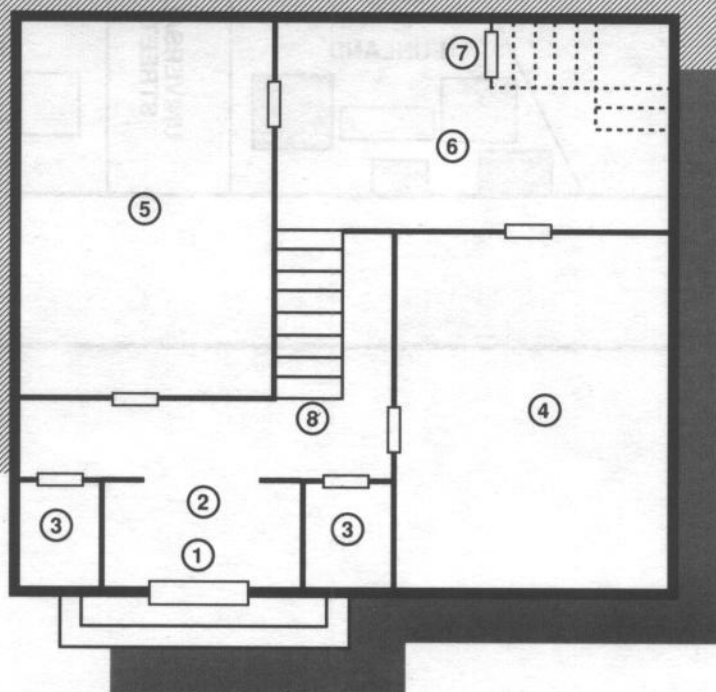


Basement

1. Stairs to first floor
2. Crates
3. Tables
4. Tharkoldu machine

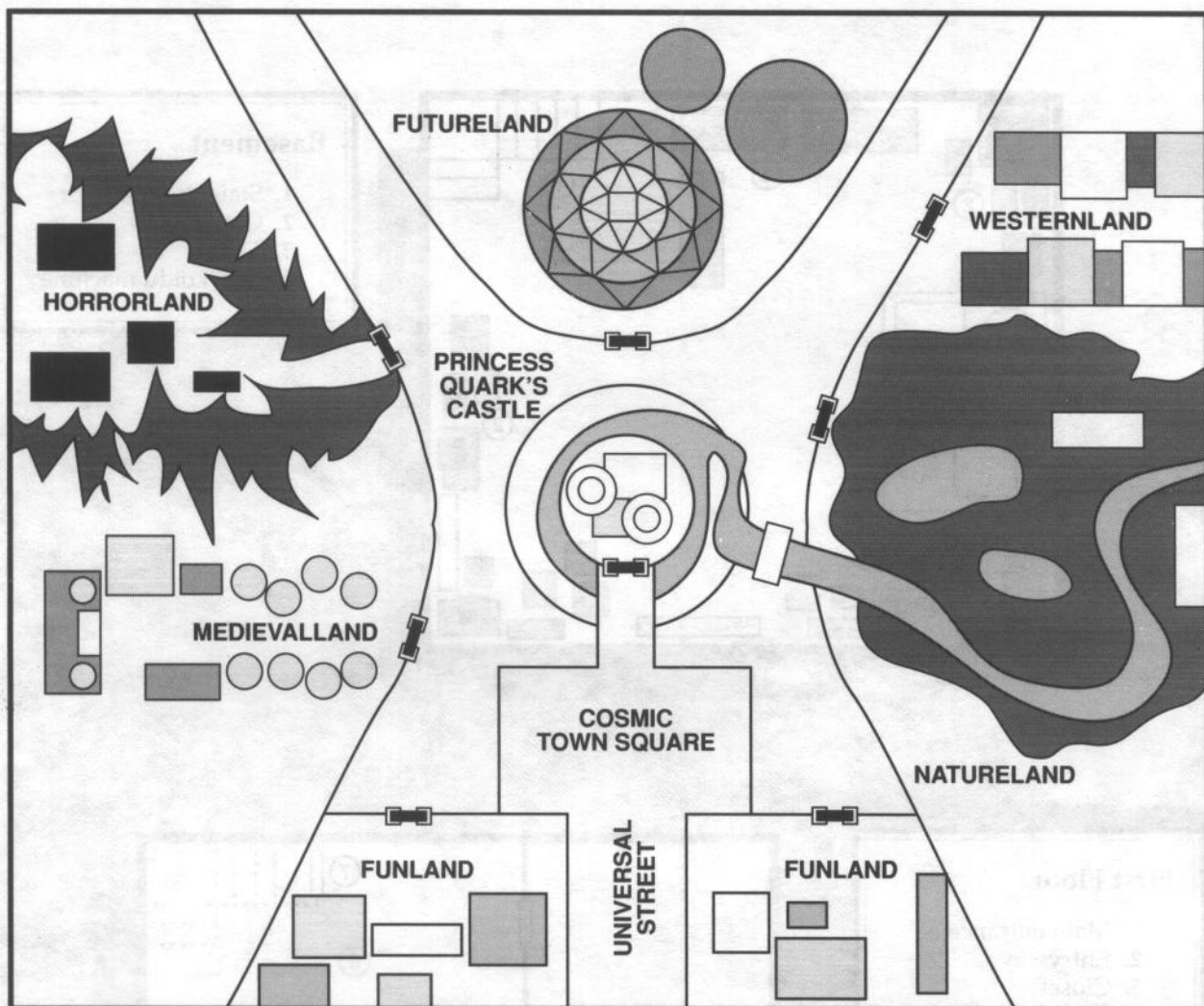
First Floor

1. Main entrance
2. Entryway
3. Closet
4. Living room
5. Dining room
6. Kitchen
7. Stairs to basement
8. Stairs to second floor





Hell on Earth: Prop 1 **Cosmicland**





Hell on Earth: Prop 2 Movie Script

"Those Magnificent Elves" — Scene 162

(Long shot of a valley. We zoom in on the faces of a group of Storm Knights, weary after a battle.)

First Knight: That was a close one. Who expected there to be Vikings inside that big wooden dragon?

Second Knight: Who expected there to be a big wooden dragon in the middle of Hollywood Boulevard?

Third Knight: All I can say is, thank heaven those elves happened along! I don't know what we would have done without them.

Fourth Knight: Yes, when the Possibility Wars are done, I think you'll find that elves were the unsung heroes.

Fifth Knight: So what do we do now?

Sixth Knight: If we wander around long enough, we're sure to stumble onto some new adventure. Perhaps we'll even run into some elves who can use our services.

First Knight *(scornfully)*: Come on, when did you ever meet an elf who needed anyone's help?

Second Knight: Hey! Look over there!

Third Knight: It's a woman chained to a rock! Looks like she needs rescuing.

Fourth Knight: This isn't Orrorsh, is it? 'Cause if it is, I'm not going near her.

Fifth Knight: Shut up and get out the lock-picking tools. This should be a snap.

Sixth Knight: Right. But I sure wish those elves were here right about now.

First Knight: Wait! Look over there!



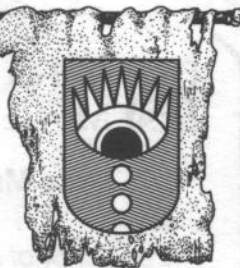
Hell on Earth: Prop 3 Movie Script — Revised

"Those Magnificent Elves" — Scene 162 — addendum

(Tight close-up of frightened Storm Knights.)

Second Knight: Good Lord!!! Werewolves!!!

Torg Master Charts



The following pages offer summaries of the basic information relating to all the known cosms and realms of the infiniverse.

These charts have been updated to include *all* the cosms covered to date, in one consolidated source listing the quantitative values used when dealing with those cosms and realms as

well as summaries of the axioms and every skill currently available in *Torg*. Additionally, should more detailed information be required, page numbers are provided for easy reference.

THE AXIOMS OF THE COSMS

Cosm	Magic	Social	Spirit.	Tech.
Aysle	18	18	16	15
Core Earth	7	21	9	23
Cyberpapacy	10	18	14	26
Orrorsh	15	20	17	19
Land Below	12	8	17	10
Living Land	0	7	24	7
Nile Empire	12	20	17	21
Nippon Tech	2	22	8	24
Star Sphere	7	27	13	30
Tharkold	12	20	17	26
Tz'Ravok	7	18	17	12
Aztec	14	20	17	16
Atlantis	10	10	13	19
Avalon	17	12	19	15

COSM LIMITS TABLE

Cosm	DEX	STR	TOU	PER	MIN	CHA	SPI
Aysle	14	15	15	14	14	13	13
Core Earth	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
Cyberpapacy	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
Orrorsh	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
Land Below*	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
Living Land	13	14	14	13	13	12	14
Nile Empire*	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
Nippon Tech	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
Star Sphere	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
Tharkold**	13(17)	13(19)	13(24)	13(24)	13(25)	13(17)	13(24)
Tz'Ravok	14	17	16	13	13	13	13
Aztec	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
Atlantis	13	13	14	13	13	13	13
Avalon	13	13	13	13	13	13	13

* One Attribute may be as high as 14.

** Parenthesized values are the cosm limits for techno-demons.

LINK DIFFICULTY CHART

Character is from:	Character is in:													
	AY	CE	CP	OR	LB	LL	NE	NT	SS	TH	TZ	AZ	AT	AV
Aysle	0	14	7	6	13	20	8	17	13	8	14	7	7	6
Core Earth	11	0	6	8	15	18	6	8	3	4	14	11	8	12
Cyberpapacy	12	9	0	9	17	21	8	12	7	3	16	8	3	10
Orrorsh	8	11	8	0	15	17	6	15	11	6	12	3	3	6
Land Below	4	11	7	3	0	15	3	12	17	3	8	15	12	10
Living Land	10	16	12	9	9	0	9	16	12	9	10	17	15	19
Nile Empire	10	11	8	5	14	16	0	12	8	3	13	5	3	8
Nippon Tech	11	5	7	8	16	19	7	0	3	5	15	14	11	16
Star Sphere	16	11	12	13	22	25	12	10	0	10	20	10	6	12
Tharkold	14	12	6	9	17	21	8	14	8	0	17	5	3	8
Tz'Ravok	6	10	7	3	12	15	3	12	8	3	0	11	10	13
Aztec	7	10	12	7	3	9	8	11	16	12	3	0	6	7
Atlantis	12	13	12	13	8	12	14	14	18	14	11	3	0	11
Avalon	8	12	13	11	3	8	12	12	16	13	8	11	7	0

THE WORLD LAWS OF THE COSMS

Laws	Summary	Description
AYSLE		
The Law of Observation	Anything which can be perceived is real.	<i>Aysle</i> , pages 48-49
The Law of Magic	Ayslish characters born with one magic skill and one arcane knowledge.	<i>Aysle</i> , page 49
The Law of Honor	Good and honor reflected in the appearance; allows <i>honor</i> skill.	<i>Aysle</i> , pages 49-50
The Law of Corruption	Evil and corruption reflected in the appearance; allows <i>corruption</i> skill.	<i>Aysle</i> , page 50
CORE EARTH		
The Law of Prodigy	Starting character can buy prodigy package (start with +6 in tag skill) for three possibilities.	<i>The Delphi Council Worldbook</i> , Vol. 1, page 9
The Law of Hope	Characters not from Core Earth decrease difficulty numbers on the "Transformation Table" by one step.	<i>The Delphi Council Worldbook</i> , Vol. 1, pages 9-10
The Law of Glory	+2 to Core Earth character for <i>persuasion</i> during planting of story seed.	<i>The Delphi Council Worldbook</i> , Vol. 1, page 10
CYBERPAPACY		
The Law of the One True God	Increase difficulty level for members of other religions when attempting miracles.	<i>The Cyberpapacy</i> , page 67
The Law of Heretical Magic	+3 to spell difficulty and backlash; if backlash other than just shock points, demon attempts possession; +5 to effect of successful spells.	<i>The Cyberpapacy</i> , page 68
The Law of Ordeal	Must prove innocence through a trial by ordeal if accused by priest.	<i>The Cyberpapacy</i> , pages 68-69
The Law of Suspicion	+3 to <i>willpower</i> or <i>Mind</i> when resisting <i>charm</i> or <i>persuasion</i> (only +1 if character attempting has proof of identity); +3 to <i>taunt</i> or <i>intimidate</i> .	<i>The Cyberpapacy</i> , page 69
ORRORSH		
The Power of Fear	Until Power of Fear is overcome, may not invoke reality storm or play to critical moment; Perseverance.	<i>Orrorsh</i> , pages 60-66
The Power of Corruption	Wicked acts lead to Corruption.	<i>Orrorsh</i> , pages 57-59
The Law of Eternal Corruption	Monster is reincarnated if not killed by True Death.	<i>Orrorsh</i> , pages 35-37
LAND BELOW		
The Law of Savagery	May only use Drama or Hero cards during combat for physical attacks or to reduce damage; if Attack is approved action, only get card if all-out attack is used; one extra possibility at end of each Act if <i>romance</i> subplot played; +3 to <i>Charisma</i> tests involving opposite sex.	<i>The Land Below</i> , pages 66-67
The Law of Action	Can spend two possibilities on actions and choose either result.	<i>The Land Below</i> , page 67
The Law of Wonders	Use <i>engineering</i> to construct buildings which exceed the <i>Tech</i> axiom.	<i>The Land Below</i> , page 67
LIVING LAND		
The Deep Mist	Visibility is reduced; easy to become lost.	<i>The Living Land</i> , pages 65-66
Lanala's Love of Life	Dead things decay rapidly.	<i>The Living Land</i> , page 67
The Law of Lost Valuables	Living beings will become separated from their non-living objects.	<i>The Living Land</i> , page 70
NILE EMPIRE		
The Law of Morality	Good or evil only; neutral action is one-case contradiction; lose one possibility if action against Inclination; Inclination abilities: Detect Inclination, Inclination Seduction; The Price of Evil.	<i>The Nile Empire</i> , pages 60-62
The Law of Drama	Adventures move at dramatic, breakneck pace; obstacle piling.	<i>The Nile Empire</i> , pages 62-63
The Law of Action	Can spend two possibilities on actions and choose either result.	<i>The Nile Empire</i> , page 63
NIPPON TECH		
The Law of Intrigue	+3 to <i>stealth</i> and <i>Perception</i> checks against <i>stealth</i> ; +3 to <i>charm</i> and <i>persuasion</i> based on lies/deception; +3 to <i>persuasion</i> for bribes; reduce <i>Perception</i> success level by 1 against <i>disguise</i> ; traitors in large groups.	<i>Nippon Tech</i> , pages 69-70
The Law of Profit	Goods and services cost less when purchased by those of means.	<i>Nippon Tech</i> , pages 70-71
The Law of Vengeance	Receive six possibilities at end of act in which vengeance is exacted.	<i>Nippon Tech</i> , page 71
STAR SPHERE		
The Law of Religious Compatibility	Different religions may work together to perform miracles; no spiritual struggle.	<i>Space Gods</i> , page 50
The Law of Acceptance	Characters may use own world laws in Akasha with no contradiction.	<i>Space Gods</i> , pages 50-51
The Way of Zinatt	Alignment with <i>Aka</i> , <i>Coar</i> or <i>Zinatt</i> .	<i>Space Gods</i> , pages 51-52
THARKOLD		
The Law of Ferocity	All-out attack ignores all K, O, KO results; +3 to <i>intimidation</i> and <i>taunt</i> bonus numbers; +3 to <i>willpower</i> or <i>Mind</i> against <i>charm</i> or <i>persuasion</i> ; no normal surprise; complete surprise = normal surprise.	<i>Tharkold</i> , page 38
The Law of Pain	Roll <i>again</i> if inflict or receive K, wound, or better.	<i>Tharkold</i> , pages 38-39
The Law of Domination	Submissive suffers -3 to actions against dominant, +1 to actions aiding dominant; +3 to dominant for <i>persuasion</i> , <i>intimidate</i> , <i>taunt</i> and <i>charm</i> on submissive.	<i>Tharkold</i> , page 39-40
TZ'RAVOK		
The Law of the Most Real	Cannot disconnect.	<i>Ravagons</i> , page 40
The Law of Survival of the Fittest	Ords use "Possibility-Rated" column of "Combat Results Table."	<i>Ravagons</i> , page 41
The Law of Transcendence	Can <i>possibility rip</i> characters at transcendence.	<i>Ravagons</i> , pages 41-42



Roleplaying the Possibility Wars™

Response Form

Name _____

Address _____

Campaign No. _____

Issue No. _____

Infiniverse Update
Vol. II

Number of
Storm Knights

Starting: _____

Ending: _____

Dispatches / Results

(# / G, A or B)

/	/
---	---

/	/
---	---

(G: Good • A: Average • B: Bad)

Rumors / Results

(# / T or F)

/	/
---	---

/	/
---	---

/	/
---	---

(T: True • F: False)

☐ Starting Possibilities

☐ Ending Possibilities

☐

Card Total

☐ Adventure Realms

☐ Aysle™ _____

☐ Core Earth™ _____

☐ Cyberpapacy™ _____

☐ Land Below™ _____

☐ Living Land™ _____

☐ Nile Empire™ _____

☐ Nippon Tech™ _____

☐ Orrorsh™ _____

☐ Space Gods™ _____

☐ Tharkold™ _____

Other: _____

☐ Adventure Outcome

Herald Messages

WEG Notes

INFINIVERSE™

CAMPAIGN GAME UPDATE

by Greg Farshtey

The Infiniverse™. Uncounted realities were created by Apeiros, with no knowledge of each other's existence, being born, evolving, struggling, and dying all at once and not at all. More than just distance separates them.

But now, some realities have begun to discover each other. The Destroyer, the Nameless One made certain that Apeiros' creations could not exist, each alone in the Infiniverse, playing out their destinies. He created the Darkness Devices™, artifacts of incredible power, able to breach space and time and reality ...

To conquer.

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